

Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

Minutes of Meeting – 23.11.21 (Remotely)

Attendees:

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Denis Maher (DECC), Karen Egan (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Mary Breslin (DECC) Suzanne Campion (IF), Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair).

Apologies: Donal Kennedy, Pdraig O’Riordan, Francis O’Donnell.

Agenda item 1 – Adoption of minutes

Meeting opened with welcome to all. Minutes of 19 October 2021 meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes was proposed and seconded.

Matters arising

1. Maritime Area Regulatory Authority’s (MARA) remit on protection or the potential to take on this role was discussed. DECC will request further information from MARA re marine protection and information would be sought re their ability to carry this out.
2. EFSA and IFSA raised the issue of the 6-mile nautical (NM) limit again. The overfishing of sprat is having a huge impact on sea species. DECC has contacted DAFM to request discussion on the 6NM limit issue and is awaiting a response as regards a potential meeting date.

Action Point: DECC will advise EFSA in writing on this issue.

1. DECC to invite, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage representative to a meeting of the ACCI. This will be included on the agenda for a future meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Detailed discussion and action points for Theme 4 (Species Specific Policy & Stock Management) of the Work Programme

ACCI Co-Chair (DECC) opened the discussion on Work Programme Theme 4 “Species Specific Policy and Stock Management”.

Pike Policy Review

The pike groups IFPAC and IPS have not received the pike report from IFI, this was first requested in 2019. IFI and the DECC were asked why pike groups had to go through the onerous task of requesting FOI's when they have been promised this report since 2019. IFI were asked if the recommendations of senior management on the pike policy review team were implemented. One such recommendation is that the use of gill nets should not be permitted. It was also recommended that gill netting would cease if electro fishing was successful. Pike groups said the request for the pike policy report is being deferred and IFI are going backwards in relation to the pike policy. IFI were asked if the annual stock management plan for 2022 has been signed off. IFI hope to have the stock management plan available to view in Jan-Feb 2022.

Action Points: It was recommended that the pike groups draft their questions on the information received in FOI's to be answered by IFI before the next meeting of the ACCI. Chair recommended that the pike policy review will be the first item on the agenda for December's ACCI meeting. IFI to forward a copy of the pike report to ACCI. ACCI have requested a copy of the stock management plan from IFI when it becomes available in 2022. IFI to facilitate zoom meeting with Pike Bodies as suggested by Co-Chair (ACI).

Draft policy papers

DECC have two draft salmon policy papers, one on the management of salmon, the other on the impact of aquaculture on wild salmon i.e., sea lice, and the breeding of escaped farmed salmon with wild fish. Water quality and climate change policy papers are also drafted. DECC will continue to work on policy papers for other species including pike, coarse, trout and sea angling species. DECC were asked if there was any consideration given to sprat collection by the aquaculture industry as the policies completed to date focus on salmon. DECC said that there was a concentration on overall aquaculture and a proposed move to closed containment technology and this should help to mitigate impacts of aquaculture. DECC thanked IFSA for the provision of information regarding the use of 'cleaner fish' and the impact on these stocks.

Action Point: ACCI (IFSA) to forward DECC links to reports on sprat collection. Consideration to be given to include recommendations from these reports in the aquaculture policy paper.

DECC were asked what the status of IFI was in relation to onsite inspections on salmon farms. IFI have no statutory authority in onsite inspections of salmon farms. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the statutory authority for fish farms with its agency, the Marine Institute, carrying out inspections. Could consideration be given to some involvement from MARA in inspection of salmon farms?

It was noted that tuna fishing returns were down significantly in numbers in 2021 when compared to 2020. It was suggested this could be due to a lack of food at sea. DECC said that research from the Tuna Chart scientific fishery should be available soon and that this scientific data may shed light on the cause of any reductions.

Agenda Item 3 – Updates

National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF)

IFI advised that it is preparing a press release at present to announce the new chairperson of NIFF. The first meeting will take place in January 2022. The Terms of Reference have been finalised and representation on the group will be discussed with ACCI. It will be streamlined but will encompass all relevant stakeholders.

Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations (WSSTSRs)

Draft Regulations were published and are open to public consultation since 10 November. The closing date for public consultation is 9 December. Details published in a national newspaper and on gov.ie website. There have been several submissions received to date. A new provision is included in the draft regulations to close a loophole in relation to persons inadvertently catching a salmon in a river other than recognised salmon rivers.

Judicial Review - ALAB decision on Shot Head

IFI advised that the matter was for mention the following Monday however, it was likely that it would be adjourned for another two weeks.

Agenda Item 4 – Introduction of IFI's new Corporate Plan (Presentation)

Inland Fisheries Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025 (<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/publications>) was presented via video. The corporate plan consists of seven new high-level objectives. The objectives focus on fishery protection, habitat, water quality, engagement with stakeholders etc. IFI were commended for their ambitious presentation.

Agenda Item 5 – AOB

- DECC updated ACCI on the planned IFI press release – Angling for Science: Sea anglers' experiences harnessed to develop new scientific data collection method - which acknowledges the sea angler community's contribution to scientific research.
- Access issues on Greenways have been brought to the attention of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. DECC are awaiting a reply. IFI to provide update at December meeting on access issues on Blueways following their meeting with Waterways Ireland.
- Issue of the killing of Bream Hybrids to be part of discussion on the Pike Culling Management Programme.

Date of next ACCI meeting (Remotely): Tuesday 21 December 2021 - 16:30

All those in attendance were thanked by Co-Chairs.