

# Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

## Minutes of Meeting – 21.12.21 (Remotely)

### **Attendees:**

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Denis Maher (DECC), Karen Egan (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Suzanne Campion (IFI), Frances O'Donnell (IFI), Cathal Gallagher (IFI), John Chambers IFPAC).

**Apologies:** Donal Kennedy (ICSA), Pdraig O'Riordan (IADA), Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Mary Breslin (DECC, Co-Secretary).

### **Agenda Item 1 – Adoption of minutes**

Meeting opened with welcome to all. Minutes of 23 November 2021 meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes was proposed and seconded.

### **Matters arising**

No matters arising.

### **Agenda Item 2 - Pike Policy Review**

IPS advised that they were unable to attend the meeting 16 December 2021 due to unavailability of members. The questions submitted in advance of ACCI meeting were relevant to Agenda Item 2 and it was confirmed that further questions would be tabled. IFI advised that they would briefly address the IPS/IFPAC questions at the meeting and any further questions would be discussed in more detail in the IFI/IPS/IFPAC meeting committed to by IFI in early 2022.

It was agreed that issues around pike legislation would be addressed between IFI, IPS and IFPAC and that ACCI would be updated accordingly. Discussions on the legislation should be underpinned by supporting documents and research from IFI.

**Action Point:** IPS to forward any further questions to IFI in advance of meeting. If the questions are in the context of the work of ACCI they should be circulated to all ACCI members.

The list of questions pre-submitted by IPS/IFPAC were screen shared and addressed by IFI/DECC.

**Question 1 – Can IFI and the Dept clarify their position on pike related bye laws and if there are any current plans/discussion or proposals to alter/ remove or rescind any current pike related bye laws? What is the timeline?**

IFI advised that there were no plans to alter, remove or rescind any pike related bye-laws. IFI's position was set out in its submission to the public consultation on the draft Designated Salmonid Waters Bye-law. IFI stated that there had been no further discussions between IFI and DECC in relation to the Conservation and Prohibition on Sale of Coarse Fish Bye-law No. 806, 2006 and the Conservation of Pike Bye-law No. 809, 2006.

DECC advised that, based on the submissions to the public consultations, there are diverse views on the management of pike and assured the group that any legislative proposals would be consulted on in a clear and transparent manner.

**Question 2 - “Pike (Esox lucius) in Ireland: Developing knowledge and tools to support policy and management” 2018, “The Diet of Pike in Irish Watercourses” 2014, “Genetic Structure of Pike and their History in Ireland” 2014. Can IFI provide an update on application of key findings into policy?**

IFI advised that there is no update on the policies referred to in question 2. IFI advised that senior managers need to complete an internal review of the documents and reports.

**Question 3 - Natural colonisation of Pike into Ireland incl. national implications of WFD non-native classification. Can IFI provide a comment/ update?**

IFI advised that they have a document on the classification tools used for rivers and lakes and had previously responded to an IPS query on the matter. IFI advised they would email the document to DECC for circulation to ACCI members. IPS confirmed they had received the response but had further questions that they would raise at the meeting in early 2022.

**Action Point:** IFI to circulate classification document to DECC for circulation to ACCI members.

**Question 4 - Can IFI provide a comment/ update on any current research relating to pike?**

IFI confirmed the board have asked the research department to complete further research in relation to pike diet. IFI confirmed its view that there are concerns in relation to the Pike Diet Study completed in 2014 and that further research was deemed necessary. IFI are working on a new research strategy. IPS queried if this was a reversal on the position of the board as they had previously welcomed the 2014 research. IFI reiterated that the board believed further research was necessary.

**Question 5 - Can IFI confirm what outputs from the SMT review of the pike review groups report have been adopted into current management policy/ operations?**

IFI are to discuss the Senior Management Team (SMT) review internally in advance of the IPS/IFPAC meeting in early 2022. IFI to provide an update on the SMT review issues raised following consultation with members of the SMT and sub-group. ACCI requested that measures need to be clearly identified and put in place early to prove the effectiveness of the management plans.

### **Question 6 - How is pike management evaluated by IFI?**

IFI advised that several pike are removed from designated lakes and an evaluation completed on the success of this operation. IPS advised that the stated objectives of the operation were to improve brown trout stocks and while IFI have sought to manage pike, there appears to be no measures in place to determine if these operations are effective. There is a need to confirm what impact removing pike is having on wild brown trout populations and evidence of the success of the measures in terms of impact and the stated objectives. IPS suggested there is evidence of a 25% decline in trout stock numbers in some lakes where a pike stock management plan has been implemented.

### **Question 7 - What is the status of the Western Lakes Management Plan? Who are the members of the group defining and drafting the content of the Western Lakes Management Plan?**

IFI have submitted a high-level plan to DECC and are awaiting recommendations from the Minister.

IPS queried if there had been any stakeholder engagement. IFI confirmed the Minister requested their views. IPS advised that there has been a suggestion that Lough Ennell would be brought under the remit of the Western Lakes plan. DECC confirmed that Lough Ennell is not part of the Western Lakes plan and management requirements for other waters will be considered separately.

DECC confirmed that Lough Sheelin is included in the Western Lakes plan. ACI questioned the close season for fishing on Lough Sheelin – it is designated a trout fishery but cannot be fished for pike during the winter. ACCI recommended that winter pike angling be reviewed.

DECC confirmed there has always been a different management plan for Lough Sheelin due to stakeholder balance and it will be looked at in terms of the plan submitted.

IFI referenced a 1684 document from the Royal Irish Archaeological Society which may be further evidence that the introduction of pike to the Western Lakes may be a man-made recent event. IPS queried the author and findings of the document. IFI confirmed the author as Roderic O'Flaherty.

**Action Point:** IFI to share 1684 document from the Royal Irish Archaeological Society with IPS in advance of IFI/IPS/IFPAC meeting.

Members were somewhat disappointed with progress of ACCI and felt that it was taking too long to get responses to queries or certain submissions. DECC advised that some issues raised are in the statutory remit of other departments. Requests were sent and, despite reminders, responses are awaited. In some cases, legal judgements are awaited. While ACCI understands the input from external departments is required, they requested that DECC continue to follow up with these departments and provide an updated response to ACCI as soon as possible. DECC confirmed that follow-up is ongoing on inter-departmental submissions.

## Agenda Item 3 – Theme 5 of the Work Programme Governance & Funding

A number of points were raised by EFSA on governance and funding for the angling sector. EFSA believes that ACCI should have some level of input into the management of funds allocated for sport fishing. Some points fell outside the remit of ACCI. It was felt that overall improvement in response time should be prioritised.

**Action Point:** DECC to circulate Governance & Funding document submitted by EFSA.

SSTRAI representative advised that he has been in discussion with ICSA regarding funding for the ICSA and requested an update. DECC advised that a detailed proposal was put forward five months ago on behalf of the ICSA regarding a funding scheme to cover costs due to COVID-19 restrictions. A response is awaited.

**Action Point:** SSTRAI requested a formal written response from DECC to ACCI on the matter.

FISSTA representative raised the issue of increases in salmon licence fees for 2022 and stated there was no public consultation on this. He believes there is no understanding of the contribution that angling tourism brings to the economy. IFI stated it was a decision by the board of IFI to increase the fees in line with international costings. There has been no increase in the national licence fee, and it has been 12 years since any change to salmon licence fees. Funds are required over the next five years for the commitment to habitat improvement and recruitment of specialists.

**Midlands Fisheries Fund:** A number of questions were raised on the disbursement of this fund. IFI stated 50% of the fund is released for development works within the region and the remainder is used by IFI to supplement its work in the areas of protection and development.

Co-Chair (ACI) advised the permit arises from a historical agreement between the Central Fisheries Board and the ESB. IFI advised that this agreement continues, and the fee contributes towards, but does not cover, the costs of IFI's management of ESB fisheries on relevant midland lakes and rivers.

IFI advised a focused discussion is required regarding the management of ESB fisheries. IFI confirmed there is an area of concern where alleged illegal fishing is occurring on the Shannon and are committed to enhancing the protection programme for 2022.

ACCI noted that there are many state agencies and departments involved in the control, licencing and management of fisheries. It was recommended that an inter-agency group meeting would be helpful to progress issues of importance and keep ACCI up to date on plans for the future of angling. It was noted that many changes are being introduced or implemented without any meaningful input from the angling sector. DECC Co-Chair noted that the angling sector is fragmented and the role of ACCI is to provide structured engagement with other bodies. ACCI members noted that those present are united and want to move on and strive to improve angling in Ireland.

A general discussion took place on ACCI funding that was announced by former Minister Seán Canney to set up the angling sector representation group (now ACCI). It was decided that a sub-group on ACCI funding be set up.

### **Action Points:**

1. Interested parties to send their names to DECC for inclusion in sub-group on funding.
2. DECC will circulate a list of abbreviations/acronyms relevant to the inland fisheries sector. SSTRAI offered to assist with the compilation of this list.

## **Agenda Item 4 – Updates**

### **1. Access Issues - Update from Waterways Ireland (WI)/IFI Meeting**

- A high-level discussion took place between IFI and WI regarding synergies and opportunities in terms of fisheries management. Discussions also took place regarding weed cutting, access issues and the live removal and transfer of coarse fish to recipient waters. IFI advised there was no commitment made in relation to access issues, but it would be kept on the Agenda. WI are committed to working with IFI on common issues. ACCI agreed to identify specific issues in this regard and would forward these to IFI.
- IFI would welcome a list of requirements from ACCI, it would be helpful to progress issues.
- IFI and WI are scheduled to meet 22 December 2021.
- IPS queried if there is research to be done before the removal of any potential native species from freshwater bodies, in particular when they are taken from a Special Protection Area (SPA) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC). IFI to discuss with IPS/IFPAC when they meet.
- IFSA raised the issue of the angling sector being notified by way of public notice of any progress, developments, and achievements within the angling community.

**Action Point:** ACI to identify a specific location where access for angling is a problem and to liaise with IFI.

### **2. National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF)**

IFI confirmed Chairperson for the forum has been agreed. The first meeting will be held Q1 2022.

## **Agenda Item 5 – AOB**

DECC advised that Minister Ryan will shortly be writing to DAFM Minister McConalogue outlining his concerns on the impact of aquaculture on inland fisheries. He will be proposing that the two departments need to work on improvements to the regulatory framework on aquaculture so there is an agreed position between both departments. This important step was welcomed by ACCI members, and a copy of the letter was requested.

**Action Point:** DECC will keep ACCI up to date on discussions and advise ACCI when this letter has issued.

DECC thanked members for their input during the year and noted that through ACCI, members were provided with detailed information and were given opportunities to input into draft documents and this was very positive. Members were encouraged to continue to work together under ACCI. ACCI members thanked DECC for their time and work during the year.

## **Agenda Item 6 – Date of next meeting**

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.