

Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

Minutes of Meeting – 25.01.22 (Remotely)

Attendees:

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Denis Maher (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Suzanne Campion (IFI), Frances O'Donnell (IFI), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair) Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Mary Breslin (DECC, Co-Secretary).

Apologies: Donal Kennedy, Pdraig O'Riordan, Warren Doyle, John Chambers, Karen Egan.

Agenda Item 1 – Adoption of minutes

Meeting opened with welcome to all. Minutes of 21 December 2021 meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes was proposed and seconded.

Matters arising

No matters arising.

Agenda Item 2 – Theme 6 - Inland Fisheries Ireland Management Regimes

IFI confirmed that they had received a number of detailed queries from the pike organisations and are in the process of responding to them. Some of the queries relate to stock management plans and how they affect species within the western lakes.

IFI advised that they submitted a draft of a high-level document to DECC. DECC advised that this draft is comprehensive and is currently being examined with a view to an initial response to IFI as soon as possible. IFI advised that they would be better positioned to respond to some of the questions when DECC replies in relation to the document. IFI will endeavour to answer all questions received.

IPS asked whether IFI were using research and modelling from the best scientific advice available. IPS is also of the view that this information is available to IFI and should be integrated. Co-Chair (ACI) suggested that a sub-group be set up to liaise and discuss the pike queries with IFI and DECC.

Action Point: Interested parties to send their names to DECC for inclusion in sub-group.

IFI gave an update on habitat management and advised that a draft report was ready for board review on 26 January 2022. IFI reiterated that protection was one of the main objectives within their statutory functions. IFI intend to refocus fishery development, becoming more active in the management of habitat and fisheries. A Habitat Specialisation

Unit is to be formed in line with IFI's corporate plan and is expected to be in place by February 2022.

Co-Chair (ACI) requested an update from IFI CEO on Inland Fisheries Management Regimes in relation to habitat management. IFI CEO advised they have a different approach to habitat management this year. Each River Basin District (RBD) director is required to present a document to the board of IFI detailing their plans for habitat management. RBD directors' submissions will specify what works they intend to complete, including the timeframe for completion. A number of screening and archaeological reports are required, not just in relation to salmonids but coarse fisheries. The works will need to be approved by the board of IFI within funding availability. IFI advised there is a very strong focus on protection. IFI will now look at completing these works, however, they advised that currently they do not have the required number of specialists needed and are consulting with DECC around resource needs. IFI have detailed plans for 2022 that they intend to execute, subject to budgetary provision.

Co-Chair (ACI) advised that he was aware that IFI are using funds from the Salmon Conservation Fund for salmon development and asked if there was a budget for trout and coarse development this year. IFI board are to decide on the budget shortly.

Co-Chair (DECC) advised the Minister is very supportive of IFI management plans and will be writing to IFI shortly asking them to set out capacity and resource constraints and how the organisation might be resourced to enhance existing functions and potentially take on additional related functions. Co-Chair (ACI) advised that the Minister's support is welcomed.

Co-Chair (ACI) suggested that where issues are raised by organisations bilaterally with IFI, an update on progress is sufficient for ACCI purposes and there is no need to reiterate at ACCI meetings the detail of bilateral discussions.

IFSA raised a question with IFI regarding offshore issues facing the sea angling sector – the mass removal of bait fish, sprat, crab and sand eel by large trawlers fishing inshore. IFI acknowledged that this was a major issue, but their responsibility was mainly inshore fisheries. This is with the exception of salmon, sea trout, sea bass and tuna. IFI suggested that there may be an opportunity to develop relations with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) who have recently appointed a new CEO. IFI to work with the Loughs Agency and fishery protection authorities in all sectors in areas such as joint patrols and surveillance from 2022.

IFI to continue the good work on fishery protection and surveillance and continue with cross stakeholder engagement with all fishery bodies both inland and offshore.

Agenda Item 3 – Updates

Co-Chair (DECC) advised that updates had been provided as part of earlier discussions.

Agenda Item 4 – Draft policy paper - Impacts of Climate Change and Water Quality

DECC briefed the meeting on the draft policy paper which was circulated before the meeting. The paper will go to public consultation and other departments/agencies will also have an opportunity to comment. DECC intends to circulate the second draft policy paper on the impacts of aquaculture to ACCI members before the next meeting and expressed appreciation for the inputs of IFSA in that regard. A further paper on options for salmon management is being finalised and will be circulated to the group as the third policy paper. SSTRAI and FISSTA thanked DECC for the draft policy papers and that they support DECC and IFI's move to protect salmon and sea trout. Co-Chair (DECC) advised that the roadmap published in January 2021 gives a clear outline of what future policy papers will focus on. FISSTA have raised questions on salmonid issues bilaterally with IFI regarding the draft policy framework. FISSTA welcomed the policy paper and hopes there will be clear, strong deadlines that are not impeded due to funding issues. They will support the efforts of DECC and IFI in ensuring progress is made.

Action Point: ACCI members to submit their comments on the draft policy paper 'Towards a Policy Framework for Inland Fisheries in Ireland – Impact of Climate Change and Water Quality'.

Agenda Item 5 - ACCI Draft Work Programme for 2022

The ACCI draft Work Programme for 2022 was discussed briefly. Co-Chair (ACI) suggested a review of the 2021 ACCI Work Programme in the first instance. This will allow for a brief discussion between ACCI, DECC and IFI on what has been achieved thus far and what needs to be concluded early in 2022.

A number of policy papers will be issued by DECC and these will provide a basis for meaningful discussion for ACCI.

Co-Chair (DECC) suggested that ACCI focus on the forthcoming policy papers from DECC going forward for 2022.

Action Points:

1. Review of 2021 Work Programme to be presented at meeting on 22 February 2022.
2. Forthcoming policy papers from DECC could be an important focus going forward for ACCI Work Programme 2022.

Agenda Item 6 - AOB

1. FISSTA asked when the Minister would issue response or sign off on the high-level Western Lakes Management Plan paper. DECC advised that they are currently examining this very detailed document. Priority in November and December 2021 was the legislative imperatives for the protection of salmon. DECC intends to complete the examination of the paper and will issue a response to IFI when this work is complete. FISSTA asked if they could review the draft paper before it is finalised. DECC said that was not possible as it is

still at draft stage and the Minister has yet to be advised on it. IFI stated when it is completed a copy will be sent to all stakeholders at the same time in the interest of fairness. FISSTA also queried why it was not made available within three weeks as the department envisaged. DECC advised that the asserted three-week deadline was never envisaged, and the priority is a comprehensive examination of what is a detailed preliminary plan for the management of the western lakes. Co-Chair (DECC) assured members that DECC would seek to expedite a review of the very detailed preliminary plan.

2. Minister Ryan has written to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on the detrimental impacts of aquaculture on wild stocks with the content of the letter to be issued at a later date. While previous Ministers have written to former Agriculture Ministers in this regard, Minister Ryan is seeking engagement at ministerial level in the first instance to establish the framework for subsequent discussions between officials. The aim is to ensure that aquaculture policy and licencing affords the maximum protection to wild fish stocks and the reduction of negative impacts of aquaculture.

3. DECC has circulated an acronym document to the members used by the department, agencies and fishery organisations. This was welcomed by ACCI members. Members were asked to contact DECC if there are further additions to be suggested.

Action Points:

1. DECC to circulate draft Impact of Aquaculture on Wild Fish policy paper in advance of February 2022 meeting.
2. ACCI to discuss content of letter to DAFM Minister at a future date.
3. IFI to issue high level Western Lakes Management Plan when finalised and agreed.

Agenda Item 7 - Date of next meeting

Tuesday 22 February 2022 (Remotely)