

Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

Minutes of Meeting – 01.03.2022 (Remotely)

Attendees:

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Noel Carr (FISSTA), John Chambers (IFPAC), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Denis Maher (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Dr Cathal Gallagher (IFI), 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, Peter Walsh.

Agenda Item 1 – Adoption of minutes

Meeting opened with welcome to all.

Co-Chair (DECC) apologised for the postponement of the ACCI meeting scheduled for 22 February, due to unavailability of some members. It also allowed members more time to review the draft policy paper - Mitigating the impacts of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Fish Stocks.

Minutes of 25 January 2022 meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes was proposed and seconded.

Matters arising

No matters arising.

Agenda Item 2 - Draft policy paper – Mitigating the impacts of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Fish Stocks

Co-Chair (DECC) emphasised the importance of this draft policy paper and provided some background to the depth and strength of the position of Minister Ryan and the Department. This has led to recent communications from Minister Ryan to Minister McConalogue outlining the strong concerns raised by many parties as regards aquaculture licensing and regulation. Minister Ryan has sought engagement at ministerial level to seek a resolution to these concerns.

DECC introduced the draft policy paper outlining the main concerns of anglers, environmental, biodiversity and ecological stakeholders in relation to the impact principally of sea lice, escapes and other issues on wild salmon stocks. DECC noted that the recommendation to move to closed containment should mitigate many of the concerns currently noted. IFSA's contribution on the use of cleaner fish by the aquaculture industry was acknowledged by DECC.

Co-Chair (DECC) requested observations on the draft policy paper from members.

IFI welcomed the draft policy paper and explained the issue of 'escapes' and the 'threat from escapees' into the spawning catchment which is mitigated by closed containment.

Co-Chair (ACI) thanked DECC for the draft policy paper and queried the timeline of its progression. The draft policy paper was well supported by IFI scientists and expeditious action is required.

Co-Chair (DECC) advised that this and the previous draft policy paper would form a constituent part of the draft policy statement that was committed to by ACCI. The draft policy statement will go to public consultation and other departments/agencies will have an opportunity to comment. It is proposed to have the policy statement concluded by the end of 2022. This timeframe is ambitious but achievable.

FISSTA expressed concerns with the draft policy paper and recommended DECC oppose Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's (DAFM) proposals on salmon aquaculture rather than recommending mitigating measures and should seek that the salmon aquaculture industry in Ireland be closed down as it is insignificant in terms of international output in comparison to Norway and Scotland. Co-Chair (DECC) asked FISSTA to submit their observations to ACCI in advance of the next meeting. FISSTA's comments on the draft policy paper are based on not having sight of the correspondence from Minister Ryan to Minister McConalogue. It should be noted however that FISSTA are pleased that there is strong correspondence from Minister Ryan to Minister McConalogue and a robust draft policy paper.

FISSTA also noted that no part of the draft policy paper referenced threats to wild salmon in far distant feeding grounds. DECC advised that there is no Irish aquaculture in those areas and this matter was outside the scope of the aquaculture paper. It is intended that this issue is referenced in a draft policy paper dealing with international aspects of salmon management.

In response to FISSTA, DECC advised that engagement with other departments/agencies will be undertaken.

SSTRAI thanked DECC for the draft policy paper and noted the three most pressing concerns in terms of adverse effects of salmon aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon were - sea lice, pathogens and escapees. SSTRAI suggested that the impact of disease and pathogens on wild Atlantic Salmon and sea trout be included in the IFI draft policy paper.

IFSA welcomed the inclusion of the use of wrasse and other cleaner fish and agreed that additional queries and proposals being put forward by ACCI members are welcome. Discussions can continue concurrently with ongoing meetings.

IFI noted that it is a good opportunity for ACCI to have input and make recommendations and will support and assist as needed. Minister Ryan has strongly outlined to Minister McConalogue the serious concerns and negative impact salmon aquaculture industry is having on Wild Atlantic Salmon. While there have been many exchanges between Ministers on this issue, Minister Ryan's letter to Minister McConalogue is by far the most robust and forthright communication to date.

Co-Chair (DECC) reiterated that it is a draft policy paper which is open for further discussion and asked for written observations from all ACCI members.

Action Point: ACCI members to submit any observations on the draft policy papers.

Agenda Item 3 – Updates

1. Aquaculture Licence Appeal Board (ALAB) on Shot Head, Bantry Bay.

It is still in the Judicial Review process. There is a possibility that ALAB have issued a licence and that the foreshore licence has also been issued or will issue.

2. Draft River Basis Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027

Co-Chair (ACI) gave a short update on the process to date. Closing date for submissions is 31 March 2022.

3. Western Lakes Management Plan – Proposed meeting with IPS/IFPAC and IFI.

IFI are responding to a number of questions from stakeholder groups which require technical and management input before meeting to discuss in detail.

FISSTA acknowledged the response given to the written questions submitted to Co-Chair (DECC) and asked that they be shared along with the minutes of this meeting.

Co-Chair (DECC) agreed to including them as an information item and will re-circulate.

A discussion took place on the set up of the Pike Sub-group. IPS and IFPAC noted the potential for perceptions of conflict of interest, with regard to pike and salmonid angling. IPS offered to discuss the matters of concern bilaterally with CEO of IFI.

Sub-Groups

- Funding of ACCI – 3 Groups interested
- IFI Stock Management – 3 Groups interested

Co-Chair (ACI) asked that arrangements are put in place to have the first meeting of these two groups and reissued the invitation to interested parties.

Action Point: DECC to facilitate sub-group meetings.

Agenda Item 4 - Review of 2021 ACCI Progress

Co-Chair (DECC) acknowledged the achievements of the ACCI as outlined in the Review of ACCI Progress document circulated prior to the meeting. It was intended to capture the items that were discussed and the different outputs from the group.

IFPAC asked FISSTA to work with the Trout Anglers Federation of Ireland (TAFI) and National Anglers Representative Association (NARA) to encourage them to participate in ACCI. DECC mentioned that the National Coarse Fishing Federation (NCFFI) should also be encouraged to participate. Co-Chair (DECC) advised that membership remains open and suggested that if other groups are aware of the benefits of participating and the successful outputs of ACCI it may encourage them to join.

EFSA advised that the Review of ACCI Progress document should include a reference to the issue of bait collection and challenges thereof. The question of bait collection was raised at the October ACCI meeting and it was clarified by IFI that there appears to be no restrictions in current protected areas. It was agreed that the document would be updated accordingly.

Co-Chair (DECC) advised that ACCI members can bring forward items for inclusion on the agenda of any future meetings.

Action Point: Review of ACCI Progress 2021 to be updated with reference to the issue of bait collection, noting that it is permitted.

Request for funding support update

DECC has had no formal response to the funding support request for the Irish Charter Skippers Association (ICSA) and will follow up on the matter.

SSTRAI advised that there is serious potential of losing more charter skippers this year due to losses incurred during Covid-19 restrictions. These charter skippers were unable to qualify for business funding support under any of the government business schemes. The sums sought were very modest and would help keep them afloat while providing the national angling organisations and casual anglers with an opportunity to access our rich resources. The sea angling tourism market would benefit greatly from attracting the European and World Boat Championships.

EFSA advised that Tuna Charters are seasonal and are limited in numbers. They can obtain up to €1200 for a standard Tuna Charter. Many of the family run charter skippers are leaving because they are not making sufficient income from the business. Should these losses continue, there will be little chance of recovery. Countries, such as France, can no longer host such competitions due to the lack of charter skippers and suitable boats.

Action Point: DECC to follow up on funding submission.

Agenda Item 5 - ACCI Draft Work Programme for 2022

Co-Chair (DECC) advised that ACCI will work on the draft policy papers throughout 2022 with the forthcoming policy papers from DECC forming the draft policy statement which will be subject to public consultation. ACCI will also consider and agree other draft policy papers in parallel.

FISSTA requested that consideration be given to capture the wider value of angling to the economy and our natural environment. IFI to investigate the potential for taking a lead in the analysis of the value of this existing resource over a number of years if the necessary resources and budget was approved by DECC.

Marketing of angling was discussed. Failte Ireland, Tourism NI, Tourism Recovery Steering Group and IFI historically undertook some of the marketing, however at the moment resource challenges within IFI are impacting this work. IFI have maintained some promotion work in terms of stewardship and angling and have attended a number of angling shows. It is important from an international point of view that Ireland is well promoted.

IFSA and EFSA stressed the importance of good PR for national and international events. IFSA and EFSA advised of the excellent potential to host World and European competition across all championship levels and ages.

Agenda Item 6 - AOB

- Move from Zoom to Microsoft Teams for next meeting.
- IFI advised that the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) Symposium will be held from 20-21 June in Randles Hotel, Killarney. It is a joint event with DECC and IFI and the Agenda and topics are available on the IFI website.
- Co-Chair (ACI) suggested an in-person meeting in June – venue to be agreed.
- EFSA advised that their Vice President (Micheál Quinn) passed away on Friday 25 February. Condolences were extended by all ACCI members.

Agenda Item 7 - Date of next meeting

Tuesday 5 April 2022 (remotely)