

# **Angling Consultative Council of Ireland (ACCI)**

## **Minutes of Meeting – 09.05.2023**

### **IFI, Citywest & Remotely via Zoom**

#### **Attendees:**

Philip Nugent (DECC, Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Fergal Bell (IFPAC), Paul Byrne (IPS), Denis Maher (DECC), Barry Fulham (DECC), Dr Cathal Gallagher (IFI), Francis O'Donnell (IFI), Barry Fox (IFI), Colin Byrne (DHLGH).

#### **Apologies:**

Noel Carr (FISSTA), Martin McEnroe (ACI), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Barry McCartin (DECC), Eithne Brown (Co-Secretary, DECC).

#### **Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 25 July 2022 and 23 March 2023 were agreed and adopted.

#### **Agenda Item 2 – Presentation from Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) on the River Basin Management Plan**

Mr. Colin Byrne (DHLGH) presented to ACCI on DHLGH's River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). DHLGH advised that the current cycle of the RBMP is one year late, in terms of delivery, primarily due to COVID related impacts and capacity issues in addition to the requirement for ongoing negotiations with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan.

DHLGH highlighted findings, in terms of water status, which found that 54% of Irish surface waters and 91% of groundwater is in a satisfactory condition but there has been a net decline in water status on a national level. DHLGH indicated that agricultural activity and hydromorphology were the two main factors affecting water quality.

DHLGH outlined that this is the third (five-year) cycle of the RBMP. It contains 527 areas for action reflecting the increased reach and scale of the plan. A 'Programme of Measures' under the RBMP was discussed. DHLGH advised that nitrate regulations across the agriculture space are to be strengthened and they are negotiating with DAFM on aligning measures of action. ACCI's attention was brought to the fact that there has been a lack of compliance with the Nitrates Action Programme and that inspection resources are being strengthened. An additional 21 persons are to be assigned to inspection duties to increase compliance.

DHLGH advised that a National Hydromorphology Programme (NHP) is to be established under the current RBMP so that the structural issues, barriers and pressures that affect water status and biodiversity may be better addressed. A national restoration programme is

to be established under the NHP to mitigate impacts of hydromorphological pressures. A Barriers Mitigation Division of Inland Fisheries Ireland will be mandated to commence work to be overseen by a national hydromorphology expert group.

DHLGH concluded the presentation by noting that the draft RBMP is being finalised for review by the interdepartmental and interagency Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC). DHLGH advised that WPAC is open to further representation from DECC and that it may be useful to have input from the inland fisheries function on the committee.

Chair enquired whether there was a formal proposal with the County and City Management Agency (CCMA) for a shared services approach regarding the work envisaged under the RBMP. DHLGH stated there was not, at this time. Chair queried the 527 'areas for action'. DHLGH stated that they involved targeted measures within regions and that a key element of the RBMP was to track progress with the setting of qualitative targets.

IPS referred to the sum (€1.4bn) to fund eco schemes within the plan and how long the sum is allocated or available. DHLGH confirmed it was available until 2027.

IFI advised that there was a willingness from IFI to assist in inspection measures under the RBMP and they are agreeable to being involved in this enforcement work. This proposal was welcomed by DHLGH.

IFPAC and IPS sought further detail on the duration of barrier mitigation works that are envisaged into the future. IFI suggested that smaller barriers may be dealt with relatively quickly but mitigating larger barriers is more complex and time-consuming. IFI advised that 73,000 barriers have been identified and the Barriers Mitigation Programme classifies barriers as small, medium or large with varying timescales depending on the complexity of the mitigation works to be completed. A detailed mitigation plan will be developed and released in due course.

DECC highlighted the importance of a hydromorphology bill as a legislative measure to underpin efforts at addressing hydromorphological pressures.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Finance sub-group update**

SSTRAI requested clarification on what is being proposed by DECC regarding the funding sought which was set out in a recent submission.

Chair advised that Inland Fisheries Division has secured €50,000 funding to be provided on an annual basis. This funding is secured within the Inland Fisheries Division's administrative budget and is therefore to be transmitted by grant-in-aid after further consultation with the Finance Division of the Department. DECC advised that the disbursement of this funding is to be compliant with public financial procedures and would like to see a prospective budget set out. DECC indicated that grant funding should be claimed on the basis of vouched expenditure.

SSTRAI welcomed the development and raised the potential for ACCI to enlist "professional services or expert advice" where required.

DECC advised that the funding was intended to support ACCI member organisations with certain expenditures such as sub-group meeting expenses, travel to international meetings, travel costs of attending ACCI meetings, support for travel of international teams, support for domestic angling competitions. Other needs can be discussed, and consideration should be given to setting out an annual plan to cover qualifying expenditure so that the annual funding can be adequately planned and budgeted for by ACCI. DECC confirmed that the funding is for member organisations of ACCI.

### **Agenda Item 4 – AOB**

DECC offered to brief ACCI on any relevant NASCO issues arising in relation to the upcoming annual meeting. SSTRAI welcomed this as a positive offer and advised it is not certain it will be able to be represented at NASCO. DECC highlighted the possibility for relevant groups or representatives to attend remotely at NASCO.

### **Agenda Item 5 – Date of next meeting**

1 June 2023 – IFI, Citywest

Opportunity to discuss NASCO related matters in advance of the annual meeting in Moncton, Canada.