

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE ARTS AND LEISURE

-Note of Proceedings-

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE *SALMON AND INLAND FISHERIES FORUM* NI HELD AT DCAL FISHERIES, MAHON ROAD PORTADOWN ON WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2012 AT 2PM

Present

Mr Jack Tisdall
Mr John Mc Williams
Mr Robert Murtland
Mr Edward Montgomery
Mr Michael Crilly (Chairman)
Mr Gary Houston
Mr Jim Haughey
Mr Pat Close
Mr Mark P Horton
Mr Seymour Sweeney

Apologies

Mr Aidan Hannon
Mr Paul Johnston
Mr Francis Conlon

In attendance

DCAL	Mrs Fiona Lavery (Minutes)
DCAL	Mr David Mann
DCAL	Mr Aidan Cassidy
DCAL	Mr Seamus Connor.

Mileage sheets were distributed for completion.

- 1. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 26 September 2012.**

Mr Huaghey requested clarification on Point 5 - Seymour Sweeney to submit his views in writing for consideration at the December meeting. Mrs Lavery advised that this had been addressed by Mr Sweeney in meetings with DCAL officials.

Mr Haughey raised the issue of the short timescale for members to consider the Memo of Understanding; referring to the Standing Orders he advised that he only received the document 5 days ago. Aidan Cassidy apologised for the short timeframe stating that the Ministerial statement on Salmon Conservation had been a priority for the staff. Michael Crilly suggested that members should consider the document as it would only be delayed further. Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 September 2012

2. **Matters arising from the last meeting held on Wednesday 26 September 2012**

All matters will be addressed as Agenda items.

3. **Salmon Conservation – Update on the proposed salmon conservation measures to be introduced to DCAL jurisdiction.**

Aidan Cassidy provided an update on the Salmon Conservation Ministerial Statement by Caral Ni Chuilin MLA and provided a handout which summarised the speech. This had been delivered on 11 December 2012. He advised that the statement had been broadly welcomed by all political parties and asked for SIFF support on the way forward.

Mr Murtland asked if parallel efforts had been made by the marine side to conserve stocks at sea, pointing out that conservation efforts on our side were being negated by what was happening at sea.

Seamus Connor provided a response, noting findings from La Rochelle in relation to marine survival. Mr Kilgore interjected at this point and outlined the issues with the pressure salmon farming put on food stocks, needed to feed farmed salmon. Quote, 100 tonnes of bait species are needed for a fish farm of the size proposed so that, now, salmon are dying at sea of starvation and major processors are taking the food needed to sustain stocks.

In reply Michael Crilly agreed with the statement but felt that SIFF had no impact on the external legislators and should focus on legislation they can influence. An objection could be sent to the regulating body, but the matters nearer home were more crucial. In support Mr Haughey felt the SIFF must support DCAL measures. The main points of the Minister's statement were highlighted:

1. Voluntary catch and release and no commercial netting for 2013
2. Introduction of legislation for the cessation of commercial netting for wild salmon in 2014.
3. Introduce a ban on the sale of rod caught salmon in 2013
4. Introduce legislation for mandatory catch and release of wild salmon for recreational angling in 2014.

Mark Horton queried the need to use barbless hooks and outlined the problems arising when anglers were fishing for dollaghan. In reply Mr Crilly felt that an additional meeting must be held in early January to discuss the impact on methods and enforcement and to hone in on all the points. It was agreed that enforcement was key.

Mr Haughey felt that this was a lot to take in and noted the proposals remained the same for 2013 with no additional legislation. Aidan Cassidy clarified the legislation process and that 2013 licences only had a change to the number of salmon tags issued. Seamus Connor outlined the DCAL bag limits in place and clarified that additional tags could be obtained as required. In reply Jim Haughey felt that DCAL had made progress, it was a legacy issue which was being sorted and suggested that a complete update be placed on the DCAL website and UAF can upload it onto theirs.

Seamus Connor advised that it was DCAL's intention to have meetings with the Angling Clubs similar to the PWB seminars to get the information out.

David Mann outlined the need to get the 2013 licences out to the Distributors and the timescales involved for printing, in addition it would be impossible to introduce changes mid season as licences are issued under the legislation in place at the time of issue. Mr Haughey again stressed the need to support DCAL with this difficult situation. Aidan Cassidy thanked Mr Haughey and highlighted the need for SIFF to input their expertise to make legislation and he wants DCAL to engage with all stakeholders and stressed that the process must be open and transparent.

Mr Kilgore raised the issue of the use of single barb hooks and discussion continued on methods for mixed fisheries. In support of this, Michael Crilly felt that these issues could be addressed by SIFF's input into legislation decisions. Mr Haughey asked that a comparison of legislation between Loughs Agency (LA) and DCAL be undertaken. Allan Kilgore advised that LA provide 3 tags per season – one for the spring salmon tag, one for the need to retain a tag. Advice from LA is that if you haven't a tag you throw the dead fish back. Michael Crilly suggested that a copy of the LA strategy be obtained and used as a basis for comparison with SIFF and DCAL's proposals. A meeting in early January will start the process of consultation within SIFF. Michael Crilly asked would any discussion by SIFF at this meeting have any impact on 2013 regulations. Aidan Cassidy stated that it would not due to the very tight timescale.

- **DCAL to obtain a copy of the LA strategy proposals and provide same to SIFF so that we can benefit from their experiences.**

5. RTW legislation

Jack Tisdall queried the status for Corranry Lough, it was described as a coarse fishery ; he had thought it was a game fishery . It was a Game fishery, DCAL to clarify this. Members supported this recommendation. The application for Gentle Owens was agreed.

Lough Neagh re correspondence 26 November 2012– Seamus Connor clarified the need to extend the commercial legislation to cover the recording of all species of fish caught. Systems are in place via Dealers licence to record information. These systems will improve the management of the Lough Neagh fishery. Pat Close had no objections and members supported this recommendation.

- **DCAL to clarify the previous status of Corranry Lough**

6. Inclusion of SIFF minutes on DCAL website.

Jim Haughey agreed that the SIFF should be open and transparent. Following discussion it was agreed that only approved minutes would be posted to the website. Minutes would be edited by the chair then circulated to members. Seymour Sweeney explained that this was how minutes were dealt with in local government . After examination and approval by all members minutes will be posted on the web site i.e. minutes will be posted after the following S

I F F meeting. In addition, the membership of SIFF would be listed on the website. No objections were recorded. Aidan Cassidy suggested that the Agenda could be available on the website, prior to the meetings. Michael Crilly queried the inclusion of sub group/additional meetings' minutes. It was agreed that these minutes would follow the same process.

Action point D C A L to include a web page for S I F F on their site including role, functions ,membership ,interests , agenda and subsequently minutes.

7. Correspondence to DCAL re SIFF proposals to Minister

Aidan Cassidy advised that given that the Minister's statement had only been made, the response to the correspondence had been deferred but that a reply would be forwarded shortly. In summary Michael Crilly advised that as no response had been received the matter would be placed on the March 2013 agenda.

Action Point D C A L to reply to S I F F's action points as soon as possible, very preferably before the March Meeting.

8. Update on the Ban of Rod caught salmon.

Members were advised that following the Minister's statement the legislation would be in place in 2013. Both Mr Haughey and Mr Crilly felt that S I F F had been instrumental in moving this legislation forward.

9. Update on the Draft Memo of Understanding with DCAL.

Michael Crilly suggested that each item should be discussed and amendments were made starting at point 2.3. Michael Crilly discussed each point and made corrections. Edward Montgomery suggested placing the MOU on the SIFF website. Members supported this with the agreement of Aidan Cassidy. Jim Haughey felt that some of the Standing Orders were repeated in the MOU which was not a good thing giving the example of Standing Order 17 and 18 contradicted the statement on voting. It was agreed not to make any decisions at the meeting but that the concerns should be listed and discussed at the next meeting. Allan Kilgore had some concerns with items relating to the Agenda requirements. Mr Haughey referred to the original document for the recruitment of SIFF members and highlighted the overall policy remit DCAL has, which includes the Loughs Agency area; continuing, he advised that UAF have tried to get clarification from DCAL in relation to areas of responsibility but to no avail. Policy matters are being destroyed because it is unclear what DCAL are actually responsible for. Referring to emails to DCAL he asked for confirmation of DCAL's area of responsibility in policy making. Michael Crilly felt that this matter should be addressed before the MOU is agreed.

Mr Sweeney agreed with Mr Haughey's point that clarification should be obtained suggesting that the Forum a young organization, learning as it goes

along. It was agreed that this item will be placed on the March 2013 agenda and that clarification will be obtained from DCAL.

- **Michael Crilly to formally write to DCAL and obtain clarification on its area of responsibility/jurisdiction with regard to policy making.**

Mr Murtland raised the issue of licensing and discussion was held on the possibility of an overall licence structure across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Mr Tisdall provided an outline from coarse angling; he explained in a very clear and concise manner the very considerable difficulties that coarse anglers faced in border areas causing grave detrimental effects on developing angling potential in Fermanagh. He hoped that an All Ireland licence could be developed and outlined the benefits for angling tourism. Michael Crilly hoped to put recommendations to DCAL on licensing and discussion continued on the DCAL remit and the promotion of angling especially tourist angling. Seamus Connor agreed that the promotion of angling could be done on a wider remit. Aidan Cassidy advised that discussions were ongoing with LA, Tourism Ireland and Sports NI and it was recognised by DCAL that work was needed.

Mr Jim Haughey suggested that the MOU should include the promotion of angling. Aidan Cassidy advised that before the next SIFF meeting DCAL would provide clarification on the angling promotion/development role.

- **DCAL to provide clarification on the angling promotion/development role.**

Mr Mc Williams highlighted the value of a wild salmon to the tourist income.

Seamus Connor advised that he would be meeting with Robbie Marshall re Youth Angling development and considering funding for new rods and the provision of some seized equipment. In addition the Department were investigating encouraging more women into angling. Mr Montgomery advised that they had already written to schools across NI and had some response. He made the offer of some seized rods which were on his premises. Discussion continued on Child Protection measures and Allan Kilgore outlined some of the pitfalls encountered by Kilkeel Angling Club. Mr Tisdall highlighted a number of successes with youth angling in Fermanagh and the strong efforts of the coarse anglers to recruit young anglers

10. PGI – Irish Farmed Salmon

Discussion was held on the lack of feedback from DARDNI on the objections raised to the use of 'Irish Salmon' in the PGI application. Mrs Lavery provided some information from Mr Johnston re an article in The Times. Mr Kilgore had read this article. The U A F had objected but had had no meaningful response. Mr Sweeney advised that an approach should be made to the registering body, or the body who regulates the application and Michael Crilly agreed to contact the regulator in an effort to place the objection on record and to check if the application complies with the criteria.

- **Michael Crilly to discuss this matter with Paul Johnston**

11. River Lagan –Hydros

Mr Houston outlined problems with two Hydro which had become an issue as they were causing damage to salmon and trout stocks.

1. Archimedes' screw at Donacloney and a second abstraction point at Dromore. In both cases no adequate fisheries measures were in place, no screening and no compliance with the E U Water Framework Directive. Michael Crilly summarised that in fact the operator was in breach of the Act and still allowed to operate. Mr Houston suggested the formation of a SIFF Sub group in relation to Hydros and to put pressure on the regulating authorities to enforce the legislation. Mr Montgomery updated the members with a recent court case on the River Trent, where a successful outcome was achieved by taking a case via The Angling Trust. Michael Crilly summarised the best approach was to raise the issue again and put pressure on the regulators as the rules were being flouted and the regulating bodies were not fulfilling their statutory duties. Discussion continued and Mr Haughey suggested that the guidelines were not sufficient to meet the needs and were originally written to suit Hydro Power. The current licensing systems allows for too much water to be abstracted. Members supported Mr Haughey's proposal to reconvene the sub group and to bring proposals to SIFF. Michael Crilly felt it was important to demonstrate that the regulating authorities are not doing their job. Mr Haughey felt the guidelines were insufficient and discussion continued on self- regulation. Mr Houston queried DCAL's responsibility for fishery measures. Seamus Connor outlined that the abstraction applications were going through the technical branch and DCAL have been carrying out assessments on abstraction sites since 2009 to ensure they are compliant with the Act and they are regularly inspected. Michael Crilly agreed that this was a complex issue and agreed that the original sub group should be re constituted with the immediate focus on schemes in place not being compliant. Long term would be to investigate future applications for new schemes. Members considered the inclusion of NIEA. Mr Haughey felt that the sub group should formulate a strategy first and then include NIEA. This strategy was agreed.

Action Point Mr Haughey to reconvene the H E P sub committee and bring information and proposals to S I F F

12. Any other Business.

Mr Haughey raised the issue of the DOE approval of Anaerobic Digestive Plants which can be built without planning permission, the outputs will pollute the waterways and it was proposed that DCAL should respond to this consultation .Mr Montgomery outlined the position on a site near the Bann at Coleraine.

- **Michael Crilly to write to DCAL and propose that DCAL respond to the DOE consultation on Anaerobic Digestive Plants.**

Members were advised that at present there is a proposal of the development of 42 new salmon farm sites in the Republic of Ireland. The sites will be from Connemara up to Donegal. It was agreed that this was a serious situation. Following discussion it was agreed that Mr Haughey would provide a paper to

the SIFF which would provide background to formally objecting via the Department. Mr Mc Williams stated that a site near Tory Island would intercept both Finn and Bush Fish; he queried a report of an expansion of the salmon farm at Glenarm. Mr Crilly asked if planning permission was required and it was explained that they had already got permission as they had spare capacity there. Seamus Connor agreed to investigate this.

- **Mr Haughey to formulate a paper for presentation to SIFF**
- **Seamus Connor to investigate and respond to the report that the salmon farm at Glenarm was to be expanded.**

Michael Crilly proposed that SIFF should develop a strategic view, so far they have been dealing with the immediate issues while being unable to discuss really important strategy matters. He suggested that a strategy for the development of sea trout within the D C A L area of responsibility since salmon stocks were in continual decline and many of the causal factors were beyond our influence or control. He asked for members views and suggested that the strategy should be given to DCAL with the view to them developing the sea trout fisheries within their jurisdiction. Mr Kilgore provided anecdotal information that Kilkeel Angling Club had a good sea trout season but noted his concerns on the marine fishing of sea trout and issues on managing and sustaining a sea trout fishery. Michael Crilly suggested a meeting in Bushmills in the future and possibly to meet with Dr Richard Kennedy with a view to the development of a long term strategy for sea trout. Seamus Connor clarified that sea trout come under the same classifications as salmon in the Fisheries Act.

- **Michael Crilly to write to DCAL to arrange a meeting with Dr Richard Kennedy re sea trout stock strategy.**

Mr Sweeney asked the department representatives if they could provide an update in the salmon counter figures and provide their views on the current stock levels to see if there had been any improvement.

It was agreed that Seamus Connor would provide an update for members at the next SIFF meeting.

- **Seamus Connor to provide update on salmon stocks data for SIFF members at the next meeting.**

Aidan Cassidy advised the members that the Minister had advised that the 2013 licence prices would remain the same as 2012. It was proposed that SIFF members would be consulted on licence increases for the 2014 season.

13. Date of next meeting

Special meeting re salmon consultation – Wednesday 23 January 2013 at 2 pm at Mahon Road Portadown.

Next quarterly SIFF meeting – Wednesday 20 March 2013 at 2pm at Mahon Road Protadown.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting.

