

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 26 September 2012 AT 2PM

Present

Mr Jack Tisdall
Mr John Mc Williams
Mr Francis Conlon
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 Robert Murtland
Mr David Laughlin
Mr Paul Johnston

In attendance

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

Mileage sheets were distributed for completion.

Michael Crilly introduced and welcomed Mr Aidan Cassidy as the new Grade 7 – Head of Policy and Administration –Inland Fisheries Group. Aidan provided a brief update in the background and his reasons for accepting the post in DCAL.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 26 September 2012.**
Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 June 2012.
2. **Matters arising from the last meeting held on Wednesday 26 September 2012**
All matters will be addressed as Agenda items.

3. Forum vacancies – LN Commercial Fisherman/North Coast netsmen/dealers – Update from Chairman.

With regard to the Lough Neagh vacancy, David Mann advised the Forum that the interviews for the vacancy had taken place and the appointment would be made in the near future.

Michael Crilly advised that in relation to the North Coast vacancy Mr Seymour Sweeney was now the full time representative for the North Coast Netsmen, he replaces Patrick Mc Neill. Mr Haughey felt that the recruitment procedures should be similar to the Lough Neagh post. In reply Michael Crilly outlined his views given that the situation had a pre existing history of Mr Sweeney having attended meetings as a substitute representative. David Mann clarified the systems in place for publicly advertised posts and nominated posts. At this point, Michael Crilly proposed Seymour Sweeney as the NCFA representative and Edward Montgomery seconded it. Seymour Sweeney outlined the historical background to his representation on SIFF and the role he now has within his organisation. Michael Crilly fully agreed with Seymour Sweeney and clarified his proposal. Jim Haughey raised concern that the Forum has a representative for a body which does not exist. Mr Sweeney advised he represented a fully constituted body. Discussion continued on the exact situation with the vacancy and Pat Close raised the point that as many interests as possible should be on SIFF, in addition commercial fishing membership was under represented. The procedures should be revisited. Mr Sweeney stressed the point that his organisation still existed and was entitled to representation. David Mann advised the members that the Department had written to Seymour Sweeney for a nomination for the vacancy which was in line with procedures. Pat Close asked Mr Sweeney if another Commercial representative would take the post, in reply Mr Sweeney advised that he would be the only representative. Following a vote of 5 to 3 in favour of representation by the North Coast Fishermans Association the appointment was accepted.

4. Update on submission to DCAL requesting a Memo of Understanding to be drawn up between DCAL and SIFF.

Michael Crilly asked Aidan Cassidy to update members on the process to date with the Memo of Understanding. Members were advised that a draft copy would be circulated to members for approval. This matter would be addressed at the December meeting. Edward Montgomery requested a suitable timeframe to let members consider it.

5. Salmon Conservation – DCAL consultation report submitted to DCAL.

Michael Crilly opted to discuss each point on the Key Findings section. Seymour Sweeney asked for clarification on Point 3 and requested some qualification on 'total cessation' with regard to commercial netting. Michael Crilly offered his personal view that commercial fishing should not return. Edward Montgomery agreed that total cessation meant a complete ending but that the word permanent was not included.

Seymour Sweeney advised that there was a lot of lobbying within the Angling Fraternity and none within Commercial, so the outcome was damming to commercial fishermen. As a group the NCFA had agreed that they would refrain from fishing until such times as stocks return to an acceptable level. Seymour Sweeney felt that the SIFF should consider the option to allow commercial fishermen to return to fishing if stocks return; in addition the implementation of the policy by DCAL should take into consideration the sample taken and the imbalance in numbers. Michael Crilly disagreed and highlighted section of the minutes. In reply Seymour Sweeney argued the point of taking the option of total cessation and asked SIFF to consider that the nets men were prepared to refrain from fishing and that systems should be in place to allow them to return to fish if stocks improved (to be determined by scientific evidence) and asked if SIFF members take a fair minded approach to the requirements of the Commercial nets men.

Jack Tisdall outlined the subsequent options available in the consultation document and Mr Mc Williams noted that large numbers of fish were being captured in Donegal (ROI). Discussion continued on total cessation and Pat Close suggested that this option had been carried at the last meeting by a vote. Michael Crilly suggested that a moral question seemed to exist and asked Seymour Sweeney to submit his views in writing for consideration at the December meeting.

- **Action point – Mr Sweeney to provide a written paper for the December 12 meeting.**

At the request of the Forum members, discussion moved to the other points in the key findings and it was highlighted that a change to the rules would be better than compulsory catch and release. Mr Jim Haughey referred to page 11 – Preferred options for recreational angling and the percentage of responses, querying the UAF membership vis-a vis a single response. John Mc Williams felt that there was an inconsistency approach from anglers as fish were still being killed. In support Edward Montgomery suggested that the Department's enforcement policy would be difficult to operate. Jim Haughey supported Edward Montgomery and highlighted the Lough Neagh rivers and methods used, it needs to be thought through. Michael Crilly discussed the over all culture on killing salmon, referring the culture in USA – simply ban barbed hooks, no questions asked.

Edward Montgomery highlighted catch figures at Carnroe with high catch and release figures which is positive and should be replicated across other areas. Michael Crilly felt that mandatory catch and release would be hard to sell to anglers but would be easier to enforce. Mark Horton advised that the Ballinderry River has an on going campaign but salmon were still being killed. It was agreed that DCAL need a PR exercise and awareness should be increased – similar to the one in ROI. Jack Tisdall asked what the UAF view was on catch and release. In reply, Jim Haughey advised that there was broad sympathy for catch and release. At present it had been implemented on a lot of rivers, but emphasised that the Lough Neagh Rivers were causing problems. Discussion continued on the need to keep anglers on the rivers. Pat Close highlighted that anglers had expectations; they feel they have the right to kill fish. At this point Aidan Cassidy suggested that an option may be to charge for salmon tags or introduce a quota for tags.

Michael Crilly advised that the SIFF members should agree a list of suggestions for consideration by the Department. Gary Houston felt that the legislation should be mandatory catch and release, no tags and single barbless hooks. Following a query from Edward Montgomery, David Mann clarified that the EU infractions only applied to the River Finn. Jim Haughey highlighted that salmon were listed in Annex 2 of the Habitat Directive but had not been included in the Northern Ireland adaptation. David Mann agreed to check this.

- **Response from DCAL re classification of salmon.**

Discussion continued on the classification of the lower Bann as a mixed stock fishery, this is a contradiction in terms of the protection of salmon. Mr Montgomery advised that any change to legislation should be applied consistently across all rivers in DCAL jurisdiction. At this point Michael Crilly asked for all members to consider Point 3 in the Key Findings – Preference for Mandatory Catch and release and to revisit this point and draft a response to DCAL. David Mann advised that the Department intended to speak to the CAL Committee, to consult with AFBI but they needed to move quickly and to be able to make recommendations to the Minister by Oct 12. Jim Haughey was advised that the date to meet the CAL was 02 Oct 2012 to discuss the consultation response. Michael Crilly advised that this must be a thought out package and not a knee jerk reaction. David Mann advised that this is the stage in the process. If the Minister makes a decision then SIFF will have to input into the consultation. Michael Crilly felt that given the limited timescales an additional meeting should be held. It was agreed that **Thursday 29 November 2012** would be scheduled for those who wish to attend. Aidan Cassidy advised that the obligation is on DCAL to provide the information (if Ministerial timescales allow) and to obtain the SIFF position and it include the point made by Seymour Sweeney on total cessation and obtain other views and to focus on the consultation document.

6. DARD Press release –PGI for Irish Salmon.

Michael Crilly advised that a letter should be written to clarify the definition of Irish Salmon. Members agreed.

- **Michael Crilly to formally write to DARD – PGI for Irish Salmon by 9 October 2012.**

7. Update from DCAL on bait fishing on Lough Neagh.

Pat Close raised the issue of bait fishing which was problematic this summer as it was a traditional method. Bait fishing is preferred. David Mann advised that DCAL may to offer some solutions as they were in consultation with AFBI.

8. Discussion on the submission of proposal documents for Draft Policy change document.

Members discussed the draft policy document which had been requested by the Minister at the last meeting with her. Members considered each item and agreed the amended version which will be forwarded to the Minister for consideration.

- **Amend Proposal document and forward to DCAL Minister.**

9. Any other business

Michael Crilly raised the issue of the review of the licence and permit arrangements following the proposals from the Fermanagh meetings. Jack Tisdall outlined some recent meetings held in Fermanagh and noted the positive points which SIFF had supported and forwarded to DCAL, he felt that some diverse groups have been formed. Michael Crilly suggested that all parties with an interest should be included in any consultations.

(b) Ban on the sale of rod caught salmon.

Jim Haughey asked if this matter could be included in the December Agenda as he felt that any legislation should be introduced for wild salmon and trout.

(c) PAE legislation

Members reviewed the proposed amendments to the PAE Byelaws and raised concerns about the use of worms which conflicts with catch and release methods. Members accepted all other proposals except the use of worms. Members approved the Rainbow Trout Water (Cleland's Lake) and approved PAE Byelaws as stated above.

(d) Jim Haughey advised that he had been approached by Fermanagh Anglers to formally raise the matter of bag limits in Fermanagh. David Mann advised that this matter is being investigated by DCAL

10. Date of next meetings

It was agreed to schedule the *additional* - SIFF meeting for **Thursday 29 November 2012 at 2pm** Mahon Road. Portadown.

It was agreed to schedule the next SIFF meeting for **Wednesday 12th December 2012 at 2pm** Mahon Road. Portadown.

