

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 27 June 2012 AT 2PM

Present

Mr Paul Johnston
Mr John Mc Williams
Mr Francis Conlon
Mr Edward Montgomery
Mr Michael Crilly (Chairman)
Mr Gary Houston
Mr Jim Haughey
Mr Pat Close

Apologies

Mr Jack Tisdall
Mr Robert Murtland
Mr Mark P Horton
Mr David Laughlin
Mr Seymour Sweeney

In attendance

DCAL Mrs Fiona Lavery (Minutes)
DCAL Mr David Mann (for salmon conservation consultation agenda item)

Michael Crilly advised the members the reason for the change to the original date of the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 29 February 2012.**
Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 February 2012.
2. **Matters arising from the last meeting held on Wednesday 29 February 2012**
All matters will be addressed as Agenda items.

3. **Forum vacancy – Commercial Fisherman Lough Neagh**

Fiona Lavery advised the members that this had been re advertised in the local press recently. Pat Close asked for details of the newspapers used. Fiona Lavery agreed to obtain this information.

- **Action point – information to be obtained and forwarded to Pat Close.**

4. **Update from meeting with North Coast netsmen/dealers re SIFF membership.**

Michael Crilly provided an update on the recent meeting with the netsmen in Cutts House Coleraine. They accepted that Michael Crilly had acted in a professional manner and the outcome was that Mr Patrick Mc Neill, Mr Martin McNeill and Mr John Morton had resigned. Mr Seymour Sweeney had retracted his resignation and wished to represent the North Coast Netsmen. Mr Montgomery supported this account of the meeting and advised that the meeting was not contentious. Paul Johnston queried the situation in relation to the legal challenge by the Mc Neills. Michael Crilly advised that this was on going. Pat Close queried the representation protocol and Michael Crilly confirmed that he intended to contact Mick Cory DCAL to establish a replacement and he wants to encourage membership from all parties. Discussion continued on membership and representation. Paul Johnston confirmed that the North Coast Fishermen will not be fishing and basically want to retain the right to fish at an appropriate time in the future.

- **Action point Michael Crilly to write to DCAL and formalise a replacement representative.**

5. **Update from Chairman following meeting with DCAL Minister re SIFF effectiveness held on 24 April 2012.**

Michael Crilly provided an oral update to members following the meeting with the Minister. It was proposed that a formal Memo of Understanding would be requested from DCAL. Members supported this and discussion continued on the decision making process within DCAL, especially with the staff changes which had occurred recently. Michael Crilly confirmed that the issue of a ban on the sale of rod caught salmon had been raised and the Minister had assured the meeting that action would be taken as per her letter of 29 May 2012. It was agreed to wait until September 2012 and if no progress had taken place he was prepared to approach the Minister again.

- **Action point – Obtain update from DCAL on the progress of this piece of legislation for the September meeting.**

Continuing Michael Crilly confirmed that he had highlighted the lack of promotion of angling by the Department and had stressed the need for a Review of the Fisheries legislation. Other issues raised were, the lack of representation by DCAL at the SIFF meetings, if this were to be introduced as a normal practice then it was an excellent means to provide the meeting with information and take back the views of the SIFF. Mr Haughey outlined the Agenda used by Loughs Agency, where a report is delivered on work/actions/outcomes which can be debated. Mr Haughey felt that the SIFF was not functioning as it tended to get bogged down with administration and there was no productive approach to fisheries protection as the structure/support was not in place. Mr Haughey suggested the need to review the Departmental structure/approach to fisheries management and as suggested before, to allow Loughs Agency control of the function. In response to a request from Mr Paul Johnson, Mr Haughey outlined the Loughs Agency

meeting format. Michael Crilly outlined some of the political reasons why DCAL and Loughs Agency remain in control of separate jurisdictions.

- **Action point – Michael Crilly to confirm with DCAL that a senior member of staff will attend the SIFF meetings.**

6. Submission to DCAL requesting a Memo of Understanding to be drawn up between DCAL and SIFF (following Minister's request.)

As discussed in Point 5, Michael Crilly agreed to write to DCAL and request a formal MOU. Members fully supported this. –

- **Action point Michael Crilly to write to DCAL and formally request that a MOU be drawn up for approval by SIFF members.**

7. Salmon Conservation – DCAL Consultation report to be submitted by 10 July 2012.

Members discussed each option contained the DCAL Salmon Conservation Consultation document and recorded each response/ preference. The response will be drawn up and circulated for approval and forwarded to DCAL by 10 July 2012. (See separate document). This Agenda item was attended by David Mann.

8. Discussion on Lower Bann AFBI Report and update/minutes from River Flow meeting on 13 June 2012.

Mr Pat Close updated the meeting on the recent meeting at Portna with James Kelly (Engineer). He had obtained proposed date for the completion of the work Gate 3 – December 2012 and Gate 4 May/June 2013. It seems that there is more work involved than originally planned and that the gates need stripped. Pat Close stressed that is currently an unknown situation and the impact is hard to calculate. The current works need to be completed before any agreement can be reached between the eel fishermen and Anglers, in his estimation this will be mid 2013. He confirmed that progress has been made but that scientific evidence definitely required the involvement and contribution from all agencies. Michael Crilly advised that he had requested that DCAL undertake stock surveys for salmon and eels but was advised that no budget was available. Michael Crilly advised that he intends to revisit this and to contact DCAL again to establish what priority this work has on the list and if a budget is to be created for it in the future. Pat Close clarified the minor works completed on the counter and Michael Crilly reiterated the need to request that the Fish Counter is updated.

- **Action point - Michael Crilly to write to DCAL to establish if this work has been schedule for the future and if resources have been made available.**

9. Any other business

Pat Close raised the issue of Bait fishing methods on Lough Neagh, noting that the regulations state that the bait net cannot be towed, this has not been enforced in years and his concerns are that eel fishermen will moved to using

worms which is not suitable given the current eel stocks, this would have disastrous results on stocks. Pat Close asked that DCAL put some research into bait fishing methods and that this item could be discussed at the September meeting. Members supported this.

- **Action point Michael Crilly to write to DCAL to obtain clarification on bait fishing methods on Lough Neagh.**

Table of legislation Proposals for Approval by SIFF

Members were circulated with a list of legislation proposals. It was noted that all but one referred to the Public Angling Estate. Clarification was required in relation to the amendment to the methods for Middle South as the wording was misleading. David Mann confirmed that the wording referred to all anglers. At this point members raised concerns that the introduction of bag limits on the River Bush was in conflict with the current options in the salmon conservation consultation. Mr Haughey felt that not enough time had been given to SIFF representatives, to allow consultation with their membership. Michael Crilly supported this and it was agreed to include this as an agenda item for the next meeting.

At this point Michael Crilly clarified DCAL attendance at meetings with David Mann who confirmed that he would endeavour to attend but highlighted the current staff changes. Michael Crilly requested a copy of the current DCAL Business Plan (2011/2012) which would include the objectives set and targets achieved. David Mann confirmed that the Salmon Management Plan and Eel Management Plan were available on the DCAL website. Mr Paul Johnston queried if the outcome of the salmon consultation would be made available to the SIFF members. David Mann confirmed this.

- **DCAL to provide a copy of the most recent Business Plan.**

10. Date of next meeting

It was agreed to schedule the next SIFF meeting for **Wednesday 26th September 2012 at 2pm** Mahon Road. Portadown.

