

## Note of Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> May 2013

Venue: Armoy Community Association, Armoy

### Attendees:

- |     |                  |  |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 1.  | Claire Vincent   | Principal Scientific Officer - DOE Marine Division     |
| 2.  | Conor Symington  | Regional Manager, NIEA                                 |
| 3.  | Norman Henderson | Regional Operations, NIEA                              |
| 4.  | Devina Park      | Bush & Glens Catchment Management Officer, NIEA        |
| 5.  | Aideen Kelly     | Strangford & Lecale Catchment Management Officer, NIEA |
| 6.  | Roy Carton       | NAAA   |
| 7.  | Donald Walker    | NAAA   |
| 8.  | Allister Stewart | NAAA   |
| 9.  | Gareth Hanna     | NAAA   |
| 10. | Tim Mackie       | Marine Sediment & Ecology Team, DOE Marine Division    |
| 11. | Brendan Kerr     | Ballycastle Angling Club                               |
| 12. | Teddy Roughan    | DCAL   |
| 13. | Gerry Burns      | Armoy Community Association                            |
| 14. | Aidan Kearney    | Lagan Ferrovial Costain                                |
| 15. | Amy Dixon        | Lagan Ferrovial Costain                                |
| 16. | Mark McCaughan   | DARD Fisheries Division                                |
| 17. | Adam Reid        | DCAL Inland Fisheries                                  |
| 18. | Dennis Ensing    | AFBINI   |
| 19. | David Cochrane   | Dundarave Estates                                      |
| 20. | Alex McQuillan   | Northern Ireland Water                                 |
| 21. | Gareth Maxwell   | Northern Ireland Water                                 |
| 22. | John Lynn        | Countryside Management Branch, DARD                    |
| 23. | Alan Morrow      | Countryside Management Branch, DARD                    |
| 24. | Jimmy O'Neil     | Glenarm Organic Salmon                                 |
| 25. | John Russell     | Glenarm Organic Salmon                                 |
| 26. | Tom Lavelle      | Ulster Angling Federation                              |
| 27. | Jenny Robinson   | Consumer Council for Northern Ireland                  |
| 28. | Karen Dickson    | Planning Service                                       |
| 29. | Hugo McCormick   | Glens Angling Club                                     |

### Apologies:

- |     |                 |                           |
|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 30. | Rachel Bain     | Coleraine Borough Council |
| 31. | William Cross   | UFU                       |
| 32. | Robbie Marshall | Ulster Angling Federation |
| 33. | Peter Campbell  |                           |
| 34. | John N. Watson  | Forest Service            |
| 35. | Gregor Fulton   | Woodland Trust            |

- 36. Gareth Greer Rivers Agency
- 37. Verdun Lilley
- 38. Ben Simon Biodiversity Officer, Larne Borough Council
- 39. Campbell Tweed UFU
- 40. Sharon Morrow Friends of Larne Lough
- 41. John Anderson Friends of Larne Lough
- 42. Uel Irwin

**1. Welcome, outline of agenda and introductions**

Claire Vincent (CV) opened the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves to the group.

**2. Update on matters arising from the last meeting**

Devina Park (DP) gave an update on the actions from the last meeting.

Reference	Action	Update
2.1	DP to include an update on commercial salmon cage management at the next CSG meeting	Dennis Ensing (AFBI) presenting project on 'Wild salmon genetic diversity and health' – a DARD Evidence and Innovation Strategy funded project at the Spring 2013 meeting.
2.2	DP to circulate a link to the 2012 Northern Ireland Bathing Water Quality Results	Link circulated

**3. Regional Manager's update on notable pollution incidents and investigations since the last meeting. Presentation from Conor Symington**

Conor Symington (CS) gave an update of local issues dealt with by NIEA Regional Operations since the last meeting, including a breakdown of the number, source and severity of water pollution incidents reported through the NIEA Water Pollution Hotline (0800 807060), and associated enforcement actions taken. He noted that causes of pollution had been evenly distributed between farm, domestic and NI Water sources. Conor also commented that in the Bush & Glens area the number of high severity incidents had decreased over the last 5 years. Roy Carton (RC) asked how frequently river walks would be carried out and how long the river walks schedule would continue. CS said that river walks were dependent on a number of factors including resources, weather conditions and time of year. However, river walks provided valuable information and would be continued in order of priority.

**Action:** Conor Symington to provide pollution incident statistics, showing trends in pollution incidents.

**4. Catchment Management Officer's Update. Presentation from Devina Park**

Devina Park (DP) gave an overview of work carried out in the Bush, Glens & Rathlin and Larne Lough Local Management Areas. She talked about some of the on-going partnership working and asked group members to provide any examples of work they are involved with. Teddy Roughan (TR) said that DCAL had been working with the North Antrim Anglers Association to improve redd counts in the River Bush. DP gave some information provided by Gregor Fulton (Woodland Trust) about funding that will be available for the next few years for supply and

planting of trees. This includes funding for areas of less than 0.2 hectares and riparian planting. In addition, community tree packs (for areas of ¼ acre and 1 acre) are available on the Woodland Trust website (<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>). Anyone requiring further information should contact Gregor Fulton (Woodland Trust). RC asked if there were provisions for permanently excluding livestock from rivers to prevent poaching and bank erosion. Alan Morrow (AM) indicated that fencing and riparian planting options were available under Countryside Management Scheme.

**Action:** Group members to provide Devina with articles on any water environment projects/schemes being carried out in the area for inclusion in the Bush & Glens e-newsletter.

**5. Wild salmon genetic diversity and health: a DARD Evidence and Innovation Strategy funded project** *Presentation from Dr Dennis Ensing*

Dr Dennis Ensing provided a comprehensive overview of the DARD funded project which is running from June 2012 to June 2014. The project will look at the genetic health of wild Northern Irish salmon and the monitoring of sea lice loads in wild NI salmon. He said that there is long term data available on the occurrence of sea lice (*Lepeophtheirus salmonis*) for the River Bush, and that throughout the project, the numbers of sea lice on all wild adult salmon arriving at the Salmon Station will be counted. This will be used as a proxy for sea lice infestation levels across Northern Ireland.

The second component of the project will determine what the impact of farm escaped salmon has on wild NI salmon stocks. Dennis explained the methodologies employed to differentiate between wild and farmed fish. This involves looking at physical differences (fins, scales, body shape etc), and genetic difference assessed through DNA extraction and analysis.

Donald Walker (DW) asked if the fish from the hatchery at Bushmills were diluting the wild salmon stocks. DE said that hatchery fish perform less well at sea, with a survival chance of less than 1% compared to a value of approximately 3% for wild grilse. He said that there are increased numbers of spring fish but that they are running later in the year. This is possibly related to fish travelling further at sea to reach feeding grounds. Hugo McCormick (HM) said that he was concerned about the impact that salmon farms may have if wild fish and farmed fish spawned. The group agreed that the outcomes from the project would be very interesting and that DE would be invited back after next June to update the group.

**Action:** Devina to issue an invitation to Dr Dennis Ensing to provide an update at the autumn 2014/spring 2015 meeting following the completion of the project.

**6. NIEA Monitoring of Seabed under Glenarm Salmon Farm** *Presentation from Tim Mackie*

Tim said that Glenarm Organic salmon held a DARD licence for salmon farming at Glenarm and Red Bay. Under the Water Order, they also had a consent to discharge issued by NIEA. At the Glenarm site, less than 1% of the licensed area is covered by the cages. NIEA divers monitor the area below the cages to ensure compliance with consent conditions. Divers also monitor the sea bed at a distance of 1km from the cages to provide reference conditions. Dives to date indicate that the conditions and marine life directly below the cages is similar to reference site. When items, such as tyres, fish boxes, feed bags are found NIEA staff inform the fish farm to have them removed.

CS asked how fish farms in NI compared to those in Scotland. TM said that the placement of farms in Scotland was mainly in sea loughs whereas the farms in NI were situated further off the coast in strong currents. Mark McCaughan (MM) asked how this information was communicated. TM said that the dives were used for audit purposes alongside the farms own audits. Tom Lavelle (TL) asked about sea lice levels on Glenarm salmon. Adam Reid (AR) said

that monthly inspections were carried out by DARD staff during harvesting at Glenarm and Red Bay. Approximately 60 sea lice per 1000 fish are observed, and as the fish are produced organically, no chemicals are used to control sea lice. John Russell (JR) said that due to the organic status of the Glenarm farm, fish are stocked at approximately half the capacity of the nets. Sea lice are not an issue for the farm and strong currents experienced by the fish contribute to the overall health of the fish. HM asked if sea lice from farms could be impacting on fish survival. MM said that there are much higher numbers of sea lice on wild salmon. JR said that the farm had set up a hatchery on the Glenarm River but this closed due to a pollution incident. He also invited any anglers to contact him if they would like to visit the farm. Roy Carton (RC) asked what protection there was against farmed salmon entering the River Bush. DE said that all smolts released from the River Bush Salmon Station are fin clipped and removed at the trap. Fish at the Glenarm farm are not fin clipped.

#### 7. AOB

Jenny Robinson from the Consumer Council invited all businesses and farm owners interested in saving money and helping the environment to get involved in the Water Champions campaign. The campaign, supported by Northern Ireland Water and Invest Northern Ireland includes the Water Champion Awards which will be granted to businesses and farms that can demonstrate how they have saved money on their water bills, reduced their water usage and put in place water efficiency measures. More information is available at <http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/water/>

#### Summary of actions from the meeting

Reference	Action
3.1	Conor Symington to provide pollution incident statistics, showing trends in pollution incidents for next CSG meeting.
4.1	Group members to provide Devina with articles on any water environment projects/schemes being carried out in the area for inclusion in the Bush & Glens e-newsletter.
6.1	Devina to issue an invitation to Dr Dennis Ensing to provide an update at the autumn 2014/spring 2015 meeting following the completion of the project.