

**24th MEETING OF THE FOYLE CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS  
COMMISSION**

**held on**

**WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2004**

**at**

**BALLYMASCANLON HOUSE HOTEL DUNDALK**

**Present**

**Board**

Peter Savage (Chairperson)  
Lord Cooke of Islandreagh (Vice Chair)  
Tarlach O'Crosain  
Joseph Martin  
Frank Feely  
Jack Allen  
Andrew Ward  
Pat Griffin  
Dick Blakiston-Houston  
Siobhan Logue  
Jacqui McConville

**Loughs Agency**

Derick Anderson (CE)  
Paddy Boylan  
John Pollock

**1. Meeting with representatives from North Atlantic Salmon Fund**

The Board welcomed Newell McCreight, Orri Vigfússon and Paul Johnston who gave a presentation on their proposed Interreg Application.

The Board considered the presentation in light of the timescales indicated by the NASF (they advised that the administrators of the Interreg Measure had requested a response by the 16<sup>th</sup> September). The Board agreed that in view of the necessary approvals and evaluations required to commit the level of financial support sought by NASF they could not provide the formal support sought.

They asked that the FCILC's scientific advisors should consider the information provided by the NASF and provide the Board with their assessment of it.

They instructed the CEO to advise Mr McCreight of their considerations and to seek the opportunity to work with NASF to achieve mutual objectives.

**2. Apologies**

Keith Anderson

### **3. Minutes of the 23rd Meeting**

The minutes were agreed

Proposed Jack Allen

Seconded Tarlach O'Crosain

### **4. Reserved Minutes**

The reserved minutes were agreed and would be made available to the public through the Agency's web site.

Proposed Jack Allen

Seconded Tarlach O'Crosain

### **5. Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

### **6. CE Report**

Fish Counters

Figures to date are down on previous years and generally reports from around Ireland confirm that this is the case this season:

Sion Mills 7949

Roe 1161

Faughan 2293

Owenkilwee 99+ (possible electronic problems)

Finn 3300

Drift Net catch to date with some more returns to be received is 9196 down significantly this season with some indication of reducing effort.

Draft net returns show a catch of 9298, which would be considered an average season with 59 licences issued and this will reduce in the 2005 season with the introduction of the cap to 50.

Prices were generally good this year with €10 - €11 per kilo being achieved which is probably reflected in the number of nets seized so far this year which was marginally up to 157 with approx 10 boats and 1 car also being seized. The protection work undertaken by the Agency resulted in two staff

on duty being assaulted the court case was recently adjourned however it is hoped that it will be heard before Christmas. Also a Riverwatcher was assaulted on his way home by a known poacher and the Garda Síochána are currently investigating the incident and we have instructed the Agency's solicitor to provide all the support necessary.

CE Reported on the large fish kill on 4<sup>th</sup> August in the Cappagh area of the River Strule downstream of Omagh when some 700 adult salmon were recovered together with some coarse fish and some juveniles. The Agency is awaiting the results of an Invertebrate survey, which we believe, will confirm the source of the pollution. Following the incident an emergency regulation to close the fishing on the River Strule upstream of its confluence with the River Owenkilley was introduced on 13<sup>th</sup> September following consultation with the fishery owners.

Electrofishing results of the surveys generally appear to be excellent and they will be reported on more fully at the next Board meeting.

A Smolt Migration survey was carried out by Arthur Niven has estimated that 33,854 smolts left the River Faughan in 2004. This is part of an ongoing trial in both the River Faughan and also River Finn and it will take several years worth of data before it can be meaningfully analysed. We will keep the Board informed on the progress.

The Seed Mussel Allocation Committee reported that seed mussel availability throughout the Island is down this year with only 10,000 tonnes up to August however a further 13,500 tonnes has been found off Wexford which should meet most of the requirements.

The Board were referred to update paper on progress to date with Riverwatch. Visitor numbers are still on the increase however the industrial action by teachers in N Ireland is having an impact. The Board were also advised of the forthcoming Youth Angling Festival and are welcome to attend and meet the participants. The Board congratulated all involved with Riverwatch and were pleased by the visitor numbers to date.

The Board were asked to consider the business case for a Training and Development Programme in Carlingford and gave their approval for expenditure up to £8k.

Proposed Jack Allen  
Seconded Andrew Ward

## **7. Finance Update & Financial Memorandum**

The Board were given an update on the Agency's income and expenditure to date and were advised of the surrender of grant aid (approx £800k) to the sponsor departments. The main reasons for the surrender were lack of primary legislation to allow the full rollout of its aquaculture responsibilities, staffing review and lack of progress on the regional HQ for Carlingford.

The Board were also advised that a further draft of the Financial Memorandum had been forwarded to DFP through DARD and their comments are awaited. It is hoped that this is nearing a conclusion and it is hoped to bring the final draft to the Board at their next meeting for final approval.

## **8. Audit & Finance Sub Committee**

Jack Allen gave an update to the Board on the recent Audit meeting and asked that the minutes be revised to include the approval of the lowest tender for the replacement CEO vehicle and also to record the discussions with Helm the Agency accountancy advisors and NIAO when it was agreed to write off an amount within the 2003 accounts. Also as detailed in the CE report the Board were advised that the Audit committee recommended expenditure for the proposed Team Development to a value of £8k.

The minutes were adopted subject to the above additions

Proposed Siobhan Logue  
Seconded Dick Blakiston-Houston

The Board also considered the Audit Management Letter for the 2001, 2002 and 2003 accounts and also the Internal Audit Report. The majority of recommendations highlight the need for additional staff resources and hopefully this will be addressed by the resolution of the staffing review.

## **9. Salmon & Inland Fisheries Sub Committee**

### *Foyle Area Drift net Fishery*

The CEO detailed evidence which emerged from carcass tagging and genetics work which indicated that the Foyle Drift Net Fishery was intercepting significant numbers of fish returning to the River Bush. This activity breaches the NASCO Convention and is likely to require some management action to protect the Bush stock which is only achieving a

return of approximately 50% of its conservation limit. The CEO indicated that protection of the FCB Area had significantly improved in 2004 and this is likely to have an impact on the Foyle catch of Bush stock. However if this was not the case it is likely that the area seaward of Lough Foyle currently available to the Fishery would have to be reduced probably by moving the boundary between the Foyle and FCB 1 mile westward. The CEO confirmed that the fishermen will be kept informed of developments.

#### *Pre Fisheries Abundance & Generation of Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits*

The CEO advised that approvals for the work on Pre Fisheries Abundance (PFA) and proposals for the Generation of Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits from the salmon stocks of the Foyle Area were awaited from the Sponsor Departments.

#### **10. Shellfisheries - Advisory Forum Focus Group**

The CEO advised the Board on the discussions with the Foyle Oyster Sub Committee and the development of a voluntary code of practice.

#### **11. Business Plan Report**

The Board were provided with a report detailing the Agency's 2004 business targets and noted the progress to date. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

#### **12. Marine Tourism Study**

The Board were provided with the latest draft of the study. The Board agreed that this should be delegated to the Marine Tourism Sub Committee however if any Board members had any comments they should be forwarded to John Pollock they were also advised of invitations that had been issued to attend the workshops both in the Agency HQ and Canal Court Hotel Newry.

#### **13. Licensing of Fishing Engines (Regulation) 2005 Licence Fees**

The Board were provided with a draft regulation detailing the proposed licence fees for 2005. The fees have been increased by inflation and will remain harmonised with the fees set by the Fisheries Conservancy Board (NI). Also the sterling / euro rate was recalculated using the 3 monthly average

following advice from DoF. The Board gave its approval to proceed on this basis.

Proposed Tarlach O'Crosain  
Seconded Pat Griffin

#### **14. Equality- Section 75 Progress Report**

The Board noted the progress made to date both in the Section 75 equality categories and also the promotion of good relations.

#### **15. Pat Toal DARD Permanent Secretary & Brendan Tuohy DCMNR Secretary General**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Toal and Mr Tuohy to meet the Board. They gave an update on the latest position regarding progress on the revision of the Foyle Bill. DCMNR have allocated additional resources and are aiming to meet the commitment by the Taoiseach to publish the Bill by the end of 2004. The Board were advised that the Northern version of the bill would have to be progressed through Order in Council at Westminster and also there would be a requirement for a 12 week period of public consultation. The Board welcomed the progress and the appointment of the additional staff. The Board also expressed their concerns in relation to the lack of progress on staffing review and were given the assurance that it would be progressed as quickly as possible.

#### **16. AOB**

- A, The Board considered the request from Dundalk & Carlingford Sailing Club for assistance with the J24 class qualification for the World Championships. They gave their approval to provide financial assistance of €2,000.
- B, Corporate Plan 2005-7 and Business Plan 2005 – The Board considered the draft plans and gave their approval to proceed. Any comments to be forwarded to John Pollock.
- C, Yerseke Familiarisation Visit – The Board were advised that DARD were organising a visit to the shellfish area at Yerseke in Holland from 27<sup>th</sup> Sept return 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. If any Board members would like to be included they should give their names to John Pollock ASAP.

- D, Operational Costs Auto telemetry Buoys – The Board were advised that the running costs for the auto telemetry buoys for 2005 £36,500 and 2006 £38,000 this includes running costs, maintenance and servicing. A contract will be drawn up between the Loughs Agency, QUB and DARD and the Board gave its approval to proceed.
- E, The Board gave its approval for a Research/PhD Post in Shellfisheries for a duration of 3 years. The cost is estimated between £15k - £20k

Proposed Pat Griffin  
Seconded Jack Allen

## **17. Date of Next Meeting**

Late October or early November – Date and Venue to be agreed.