

40th MEETING OF THE FOYLE CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS COMMISSION

**Wednesday 10th January 2007 @ 11am
Armagh City Hotel**

Attendees:

Board

Peter Savage (Chair)
Jack Allen
Dick Blakiston-Houston
Pat Griffin
Jacqui McConville
Joseph Martin

Loughs Agency

Derick Anderson CEO
John Pollock
John McCartney
Gerard Mills
Barry Fox
Stanley Thorpe

Peter Savage opened the meeting expressing sympathy to Andrew Ward and family for the recent death of his Father.

1. Apologies

Andrew Ward
Siobhan Logue
Tarlach O'Crosain

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed with one amendment. Jacqui McConville to be listed in apologies.

Proposed Jack Allen
Seconded Pat Griffin

3. Reserved Minutes

The minutes were agreed.

Proposed Jack Allen
Seconded Pat Griffin

4. Matters Arising

None

5. CEO Report

The CEO advised the Board that future meetings will include updates from all the new Directors and these will form a standing agenda item. He updated the Board on developments with the Departments following the previous meeting. He advised them of his meeting with the CEO of the SEUPB and the initial discussions on the Agency's proposals which may attract EU Funding. The Board will be advised on progress.

6. Director Updates

The Board were provided with updates by the Senior Management Team each giving a brief overview on their relative areas.

Conservation & Protection

The Board were provided with a brief report by John McCartney outlining comparative figures from 2005 and 2006 on enforcement actions, commercial catches and fish counter data in the Faughan, Finn, Sion Mills and Roe areas.

Although only in post a few days he advised the Board that he is developing work programmes for the staff. He advised the Board that there are some key issues such as increased fishery protection requirements and as a result of the removal of the Interceptory Netting which the Agency must be in a position to deal with effectively. He also has identified areas where the Agency's profile should be raised with other agencies and NGOs. John advised the Board that he will have more to report on at the next meeting.

The Board suggested that a fisheries management conference should be arranged to raise the profile of the Agency and to highlight the work being carried out by the Agency.

Development

Gerard Mills presented the Board with an update on the progress of recent developments, outlining key events/promotional shows taking place in 2007 and put forward to the Board future actions that he has identified.

Discussions covered the Agency's approach to EU Funding for the period 2007-2013.

Communications

He advised the Board that he is working on the communication strategy which will be developed over the coming months with the aim of raising the profile of the Agency and communicating to the public and others the work of the Agency.

Marine Tourism Strategy

Consultation on the draft "Strategy and Action Plan for the Development of Marine Tourism and Leisure" is well underway and he has had some meetings with Stakeholders and also has planned a meeting with the Marine Tourism Focus Group of the Advisory Forum. Following the consultation the document will be finalised and brought to the Board for their consideration.

Aquaculture

Environmental Impact Assessment

Barry Fox advised that preparatory work has commenced on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A steering group has been identified to develop a terms of reference with a view to tendering for consultants early 2007.

Management Agreement

Negotiations are continuing with the Crown Estates Commission and DCMNR to secure a management agreement for Lough Foyle and possibly Carlingford Lough. Discussions on the need to harmonise fees in both jurisdictions are continuing and the Board will be kept informed on progress.

Aquaculture Regulations

Work will commence shortly on the development of regulations for Aquaculture section of the Bill and the draft regulations will be brought to the Board for their approval.

Review of the Bottom Culture Mussel Sector

The Board were advised that following the meeting of the Departments BIM, Loughs Agency and CBAIT it was agreed to initiate a review of the bottom culture mussel industry. The aim is to produce recommendations in relation to the exploitation of wild seed mussels, husbandry practises and management and regulation of the sector. Also to ensure more effective compliance with fish health legislation, environmental sustainability, food safety and economic returns to coastal communities. It is estimated that the Agency's contribution will be in the region of €30k.

Corporate Services

John Pollock updated the Board on the following corporate issues:

Finance

The budget for 2007 is still not approved, however, the Agency is working to the indicative budget of £3.45m.

Audit

The 2005 accounts have yet to be signed off by the C&As but it is anticipated that this will be completed shortly.

The internal audit for 2006 is now complete with no significant findings recorded in the draft report, the Agency will be responding to these shortly and as soon as the final report is available an audit and finance sub-committee meeting will be arranged.

Staff Reviewing/Retrosection

The Board were advised that Departmental approval was given on this issue and payments to all relevant staff were made before the end of December 2006. Payments were retrospectively paid from 2nd October 2003 and the total cost was £300k.

Staffing

The Board were advised of the staffing position in which there are currently four vacancies and work is underway to filling these shortly. They include the Carlingford Inspector, Corporate Services Manager, Angling Manager and Tourism/Development Officer.

Banking

The final transfer of accounts to the Northern Bank is nearly complete and work will commence on developing payment by electronic means including Board members remuneration and expenses.

Financial Statements

The financial statements for 2006 are on target for submission to the NIAO for audit mid February 07. The Agency also plans to meet with the NIAO to discuss audits and their work programme for future years.

2006 Annual Report

Work will commence shortly and is planned to bring forward a draft for Board approval at the next meeting.

Corporate and Business Plan

Work will commence shortly on the 2008 to 2010 Corporate Plan and the 2008 Business Plan, drafts will be brought to the Board for approval when available.

Pensions

A draft IP paper is awaiting approval from the Departments allowing the Agency to regularise its current pension scheme for existing and new members. Approval has now been given to initiate an actuarial review this will provide an accurate assessment of the Agency's pension liabilities for future financial statements.

Equality

No major issues to report other than the staff have received equality awareness training and also disability awareness training provided by the British Disabled Angling Association.

Carlingford Office

DARD is content with the economic appraisal and it will be forwarded to DFP for their approval. The Board expressed their concerns on the time taken to receive approval as they are conscious that outline planning permission runs out in November 2007.

Survey Vessel

The economic appraisal has been forwarded to both sponsoring Departments for their approval.

7. Advisory Forum

The Board were provided with copies of the Advisory Forum minutes.

8. Foyle and Carlingford Bill Consultation

The CEO provided an update on the Bill Consultation and advised the Board there were still a few outstanding issues to be addressed namely wild shellfisheries and the designation of the Foyle Area. The Board discussed at length their draft response and agreed for its submission to DARD subject to any further amendment before the closing date for consultation of the 15th January 2007. Board Members to forward any comments or amendments before noon on the 15th. Copies of Minister Dempsey's speech on the Bill were provided and also DARD's response to the request for an extension of the consultation period by the Advisory Forum.

Proposed: Joseph Martin

Seconded: Jacqui McConville

9. Interceptory Fishing for Salmon

The Board were provided with a draft paper on the Agency's proposals for discontinuation of fishing in the Foyle and Carlingford areas for stocks of Salmon which are below conservation limits.

CEO gave an overview of the paper and advised the Board that the draft had been agreed by both Sponsor Departments and would be released for public consultation. The Board have been asked that any views or comments on the paper are forwarded to John McCartney by the 8th February 2007. The draft paper will be provided to the Advisory Forum Membership, posted on the Agency's website and emailed to other stakeholders and interest groups.

The Board were also provided with Tagging Counter and Catch information for previous years.

10. Regulations – 2007

The Board were advised of the proposed regulations for 2007 which are listed at section 4 of the draft Interceptory Fishing for Salmon Paper. Drafts regulations will be brought forward to future Board meetings when available.

11. Irish Specimen Fish Committee

The Board considered the request for a contribution towards the running of the Irish Specimen Fish Committee, they agreed to provide funding amounting to €3000 similar to the funding provided by the CFB and BIM.

Proposed: Joseph Martin

Seconded: Jacqui McConville

12. A.O.B

The Board were advised of World Wetlands Day which will be held on 2nd February 2007. The Agency is participating in this event and will be hosting some activities at its headquarters in Prehen. The Board are invited to attend and details of timings etc. will be provided.

Jack Allen provided an update on the recent complaint and advised that he had responded on the 13th December, however, a further letter has since been received which refers to legal matters rather than the complaint and

this has been passed onto Agency's legal advisors and the Board will be kept informed on the progress.

The Board were provided with copies of the CEFAS Baseline Survey of Shellfish Resources in Lough Foyle. All comments on the report to be forwarded to Ciaran McGonigle Ciaran@loughs-agency.org;

13. Date and Venue of next meeting

Wednesday 07th March at 11.00am, Loughs Agency Headquarters.

