

49th MEETING OF THE FOYLE CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS COMMISSION

Wednesday 28th May 2008 @ 11am

Loughs Agency Offices, Carlingford

Attendees

Present

Tarlach O'Crosain (Chairman)
Jacqui McConville (Vice Chair)
Joe Miller
Thomas Sloan
Jim Wilson
Denis Haughey
John Byrne
Enda Bonner

In Attendance - Loughs Agency

Derick Anderson CEO
John Pollock – Director of Corporate Services
Gerard Mills – Director of Development
John McCartney – Director of Conservation and Protection
Andrews Sides – Development Officer
Laura French (Minutes)

1. Apologies

Brendan Byrne
Winston Patterson
John Mulcahy
Alan McCulla
Barry Fox – Director of Aquaculture and Shellfisheries

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed with no amendments.

Proposed Denis Haughey
Seconded Jacqui McConville

3. Reserved Minutes

None

4. Matters Arising

None

5. CEO Report

Before the CEO's report the Chairman addressed the Board. Chairman thanked Senior Management Team and Loughs Agency staff for a very informative day on Tuesday 27th May 2008. The Board were taken on a familiarisation visit around the Carlingford area. Chairman added that he and the Board members looked forward to their next familiarisation visit to the Foyle area.

Chairman also passed on his condolences to CEO on the recent death of his brother and also to John Byrne on the recent loss of his Mother.

CEO advised that Board that he, the Chairman and Barry Fox attended the NSMC meeting in Dublin Castle on 21st May 2008. He continued that Minister Ryan was in attendance for DCENR, Minister Gildernew for DARD and Minister Poots for DCAL. CEO added that it was a very positive meeting and all Ministers were very supportive in relation to our proposals and the work of the Loughs Agency. Ministers also added that they were very pleased with the progress the Loughs Agency were making.

CEO reported to the Board that Barry Fox, Director of Aquaculture and Shellfisheries and Kevin Wilson, Corporate Services Manager were currently in New Zealand with a Naval Architect to look at two monitoring vessels with a view to purchasing one of them. CEO added that he had been in contact with Mr Fox before the Board meeting began and he was very positive that they would sign a contract before they left. CEO also added that the Ministers at the NSMC were very supportive of the actions of the Agency to try and purchase a second hand boat.

6. Directors Report

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

Development

Gerard Mills, Director of Development advised the Board that the Marine Tourism and Angling Development is due to be assessed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on the 2nd of July 2008. SEUPB have appointed ASM Horwath to appraise the bid. The outcome is likely to be announced later in the year.

Mr Mills continued that the Territorial Cooperation with the Scottish Centre of Ecology and the Natural Environment (SCENE). The revisions to this bid have been made and we are awaiting the 'open call' under the environment measure to be announced before we can submit. This bid is well supported particularly in Scotland.

Gerard Mills provided the Board with the table below for their information.

Date	Group	Total in Group	Riverwatch	Outreach
01/04/2008	Ardstraw Afterschool	12	Yes	
02/04/2008	Clooney Family Centre	15	Yes	
03/04/2008	WRFB	6	Yes	
04/04/2008	Thornhill	15		RS
07/08/2008	Omagh College	14	Yes	
08/04/2008	St Mary's	45	Yes	
09/04/2008	JIB Launch	45	Yes	
14/04/2008	OTS	6		RS
15/04/2008	St Mary's	45	Yes	
18/04/2008	Knockavoe Special School	15	Yes	
22/04/2008	St Cecelia's	17	Yes	
23/04/2008	Creggan Day Centre	12	Yes	
24/04/2008	Creggan Day Centre	12	Yes	
27/04/2008	St Cecelia's	17		RS
	Total	276		
	counter figure at 30/04/08	932		
	divided by 2	466		
	Less booked groups	276		
	Total off the street	190		
	Total Count	466	Target	600
	* Power cuts during April			

Biodiversity Week

Gerard Mills reported to the Board that the Agency has secured funding to support events and activities during Bio-diversity week. The Foyle system has a wealth of unique and wonderful habitats, including bogs and marshes, estuaries and salt marshes, native woodlands and diverse hedgerows, and particularly unusual places like the undisturbed rocky islands and islets off the coast of Inishowen.

Biodiversity is the shortened version of the term 'biological diversity'. It is the variety of all life forms on Earth - the tiniest bugs living in the water of streams and rivers that make up the Foyle system. The salmon and other fish that feed on them. Otters and dolphins, the whales in the sea!

To celebrate our local biodiversity there is a jam packed programme of free events and talks for schools and the public. Biodiversity week runs from 17th May - 25th May. Some of the events include:

Boat trips to Inishstrahull Island, River safaris upstream of the Craigavon Bridge, Eco Cruises on the Toucan 1, Bat talk n riverside walk, Irish Whale and Dolphin talk, Blue Bell Walks in Prehen Ancient Wood, RSPB site visit to Longfield Bank Sea shore nature trails Wildlife workshops

Lesser Spotted Ulster

Gerard Mills advised the Board that in addition we have been asked to participate in 'Lesser Spotted Ulster' programme to be shown in the autumn. Themes discussed centre around the history of the river, old poaching stories, wild life, conservation & protection work, the future of the river and hopefully a bit on Riverwatch

Corporate Services

Finance

John Pollock, Director of Corporate Services reported to the Board that the Agency were still awaiting Final Department of Finance and Personnel / Department of Finance approvals for our 2008 budget - £5.7m, funded 50:50 by North and South. The second quarter of grant in aid drawn down was due in July 2008. The Hardship Package funds held in a separate account were on target to be paid out in April 2008. The 2007 Financial Statements year end work was ongoing and draft accounts were being prepared for review.

Audit

External Audit by NIAO / C& Ag Audit is nearing completion – with finalisation targeted for June 2008. Internal audit 2007 report is finalised – review carried out on 15th May 2008.

Corporate Governance

Conflict of Interest Declarations issued to all staff, due to be returned by 31st May 2008. Conflict of Interest Declarations to be completed by Board. Directors Stewardship reports complete will be reported on by the CEO at the Audit Committee Meeting. Risk Management workshop has been scheduled for 18th June 2008.

NSMC

NSMC Sectoral meetings are planned for 21st May 2008 and 26th June 2008.

Staffing Recruitment / Vacancies

Temporary recruitment has commenced. There is one vacant IT post and the staffing loading review is to commence as soon as possible. The initial meeting arranged for 19th May 2008 with Business Development Division.

Banking

Electronic payments to suppliers transfer ongoing.

Annual Report

2006 Annual Report currently at design / print stage date for laying June 2008. The initial draft of the 2007 Annual Report is complete.

Corporate and Business Plan 2008 – 2010

Approved at NSMC Sectoral Meeting final DFP clearance.

Pensions

The current pension scheme is under consideration of Sponsoring Department / DFP.

Equality

The Disability Action Plan survey of staff to commence as soon as possible. The Agency is a member of the Age Equality Forum. Section 75 Screening complete on all new regulations. Review of Equality Scheme to commence early 2008. Review of Consultees Underway

Tendering / Procurement

Department of Finance and Personnel Central procurement Directorate SLA under review.

Accommodation

The Architect's draft scoping study is currently with staff for comment. Greencastle accommodation ongoing. Temporary transfer of Carlingford offices complete, IT and telecoms to be finalised.

Advisory Forum

The next meeting of the Loughs Agency Advisory Forum will take place in September 2008.

Information Technology

Current IT requirements under review and tender processes initiated.

Conservation and Protection

John McCartney, Director of Conservation and Protection provided the Board with the following report. The 2008 season has opened with a reduction in the number of Illegal net seizures however there has been noticeable increase in the number of illegal angling activities. These have included over fishing of the stocked lakes and an upsurge in illegal salmon fishing. This rise in illegal angling has sadly been coupled with a number of incidents of violence towards enforcement staff in varying degrees of severity.

The recruitment of the 2008 temporary staff has been completed and within their first few days these staff have been involved in enforcement actions for the Agency.

The validation project for the Agency counters is now with the central procurement directorate and should be going for tender in the next few weeks.

SALSEA

Art Niven (Fishery Research Officer with the Loughs Agency) is currently in the North Atlantic participating in the SALSEA research cruise onboard the Marine Institutes MRV Celtic Explorer. This is the first year of the SALSEA research programme which will attempt to capture Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) post smolts in the marine environment.

Over recent year's monitored stock of Atlantic salmon have demonstrated significant declines in marine survival rates from approx 30% in the mid 1990's to the current level of approx 7%.

The SALSEA project is a multimillion pound international research partnership project involving partners from throughout the Northeast Atlantic region including the Loughs Agency.

SALSEA is designed to improve understanding of the migration and distribution of salmon at sea in relation to feeding opportunities and predation. It differentiates between tasks which can be achieved through enhanced co-ordination of existing ongoing research, and those involving new research.

Smolt Tagging

Smolt tagging on the River Faughan has now been completed with the quota of 2,500 tagged salmon smolts being achieved by the 14th May. This programme has a number of objectives including collection of important biological information from not only salmonid species but other native and non native species.

The tagging of the smolts takes on greater significance in 2008 and 2009 with the potential for recoveries of tagged fish in the SALSEA research cruises, which would provide important corroboration of origin in addition to genetic analysis.

Status Report Timeline

The 2008 status reports should be completed by the end of July 2008 and will be distributed once complete.

Regulations

The North South Ministerial Council have agreed a programme of regulations which the Agency hopes will be adhered to, a copy the table is attached to this report.

Commercial Salmon fishing

The second sets of hardship payments have been sent to the previous salmon licence holders. The new season will begin in June with the same number of commercial nets in operation as was seen in 2007. The Agency hopes to have a comprehensive pre season

meeting with both the drift and draft net fishermen before the season begins.

Enforcement actions

In 2008 so far, Agency staff have dealt with has started with 41 rod related offences, and 37 rod seizures. Agency protection staff have also seized 19 illegal nets, 5 boats, and 1 car.

Pollution issues have also been addressed by Agency staff with 7 sets of statutory samples taken with a view to prosecution.

There have been a number of successful prosecutions with notable fines and costs of over £500 being awarded against defendants for both rod related offences and environmental pollution. One penalty of over É2500 was awarded against a man for illegal fishing with a net and boat.

Comparative Summary fish counter data

	2005 1 st Jan to 30 th April	2006 1 st Jan to 30 th April	2007 1 st Jan to 30 th April	2008 1 st Jan to 30 th April
Faughan	79	38	191	258
Finn	308	357	672	128
Sion Mills	8	1126	1173	109
Roe	37	346	567	108
Corrick	23	Not available	166	65
Newry	Not available	Not available	Not available	64
Omagh	Not available	Not available	Not available	36

Aquaculture and Shellfisheries

CEO provided the Board with the report from Barry Fox, Director of Aquaculture and Shellfisheries as he was in New Zealand viewing the Monitoring Vessel.

Monitoring Vessel Procurement

Two second hand (fit for purpose vessels) have been identified in New Zealand. The economic appraisal developed for the new build in 2006 has now been amended to include the second hand option. The DARD economist has approved the procurement and we are now negotiating with the marine agents in New Zealand. Our intention is to purchase one of these vessels, subject to survey and refit to suit the needs of the Agency.

Regulations

The regulations for the conservation and management of the wild oyster fishery in Lough Foyle have been approved to go to public consultation and are currently seeking comment from our stakeholders. It is envisaged that these regulations will be ready for sign off at the June NSMC meeting.

The regulations for the wild mussel fishery are currently being drafted. I will have copies of these for the next board meeting.

Seed Mussel Fishery

The provisional opening date for the 2008 seed mussel fishery is June 9th. The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Food are awaiting the Ministers sign off on the opening date. Concerns have been raised in relation to sections of the transient mussel seedbeds on the east coast being within Natura 2000 sites. This has the potential to cause difficulty in relation to access to these areas for the fishermen in the future.

CEC/DAFF Management Agreement

Further to our last meeting with the Crown Estate Commission and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, we are still awaiting input from DAFF on the way forward for the development of the Management Agreement.

7. NSMC Report

CEO's report covered this item.

8. Update on Vessel

CEO's report covered this item.

9. Audit Committee

John Pollock, Director of Corporate Services provided the Board with a copy of the minutes of the last Audit Sub Committee meeting which took place on Monday 19th May 2008 for their information. Mr Pollock thanked John Mulcahy who stood in as chair in Enda Bonner's absence. The minutes were;

Proposed Joe Miller

Seconded Tarlach O'Crosain

10. IT Infrastructure Upgrade

CEO provided the Board with a paper on the IT Infrastructure Upgrade and advised the Board that he was requesting their approval to proceed with this upgrade.

Proposed Denis Haughey
Seconded Joe Miller

11. Business Target Update

John Pollock, Director of Corporate Services provided the Board with a copy of the Agency's outturn against the business targets for their information. The Board were asked to note that there are over 1,200 contacts on our mailing list but the Agency are very keen to increase this.

12. Funding Assessments

Gerard Mills provided the Board with a paper on the recent funding assessments and advised the Board that Denis Haughey and Jacqui McConville had been on the assessment panel.

Proposed Enda Bonner
Seconded Thomas Sloan

13. Interreg

Director of Development's report covered this item.

14. All Island Licensing

Gerard Mills gave the Board an update since the last meeting on All Island Licensing. Gerard advised the Board that he and the CEO had met with FCB and DCAL and they were both very enthusiastic and supportive of the Loughs Agency's taking a pilot approach.

15. Commercial Salmon Fishery

- Licences

John McCartney reported to the Board that the commercial fishing season was scheduled to begin on Monday 16th June 2008. He added that all 28 licensees that had taken out their licences in 2007 had applied and were approved to fish in 2008.

- Hardship Package

CEO advised that there are still 6 people outstanding to decommission their nets and collect their cheque. He continued that this had been brought to the attention of the NSMC and the Agency had been advised to issue reminder letters to these 6 people.

16. Annual Report / Accounts

Director of Corporate Service's report covered this item.

17. All Hours Working Allowance

CEO updated the Board on the progress in relation to the All Hours Working Allowance. He advised that he and John McCartney had negotiated a package with the Union representatives but this needed DFP approval. John Pollock advised that he was meeting with DFP after the Board meeting.

18. SEA Management Agreement

CEO advised that the SEA Management Agreement was with Central Procurement at the moment.

19. Pensions

Director of Corporate Service's report covered this item.

20. A.O.B

CEO reported to the Board that the Senior Management Team had met before the Board meeting and had discussed the Agency's Communication Strategy and its relationship with stakeholders. CEO asked the Board if they thought it worthwhile for the Agency to approach MLA's, TD's, and Counsellors in the catchment to advise them of the work of the Agency. All Board members were very supportive of this and were asked to provide Laura French with a list of personnel to invite to these information seminars at their earliest convenience.

21. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission will be held on Wednesday 2nd July 2008 at 11am in Loughs Agency Headquarters, Prehen.