

RESERVED

18th Meeting of the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission

held on

Wednesday 9th July 2003

At

Loughs Agency Headquarters Prehen

Present

Board

Peter Savage (Chairperson)
Lord Cooke of Islandreagh
Dick Blakiston Houston
Frank Feely
Keith Anderson
Tarlach O'Crosain
Andrew Ward
Pat Griffin
Joseph Martin

Loughs Agency

Derick Anderson (CE)
John Pollock
Stanley Thorpe
Paddy Boylan

1. Apologies

Siobhan Logue, Jacqui McConville, Jack Allen

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes were agreed.

3. Reserved Minutes

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

4. CE Report

4.1 Fish Counters

The CE reported that the new fish counter on the Culdaff River has been operational since 1 June and it is powered by batteries which are charged by solar panels. Copies of Fish Counter Data were provided and these included the figures for the Sion Mills counter

on the River Mourne. Figures to date show that targets were met as set out in the Control of Fishing Regulations (30th June: 2400 and 10th July: 4200).

4.2 Enforcement

The CE reported that illegal fishing in both the Sea area and tidal Foyle was still on the decline. Numbers of illegal nets and boats seized to date were down on the 2002 season (table provided). The Agency had received several complaints regarding the illegal use of shrimps by anglers in the Strabane area which were being investigated.

The Agency has agreed to carry out joint patrols with the Fisheries Conservancy Board NI and all licence holders will be notified. There are also plans to carry out similar patrols with the Northern Region Fisheries Board.

4.3 Angling

Water conditions are very low at the moment and there is very little recent angling activity to report. During June there were good catches of grilse reported and fish in the region of 14lbs being caught on both the Finn and Derg. Sea Angling in both the Foyle and Carlingford Loughs has been good. Copies of the latest angling report were provided.

4.4 Commercial Netting

Following the checks have on all licensed netsmen it was reported that there is a drop in activity in the Sea area and the effort in the Lough remaining the same as 2002. The Draft net activity has increased with catches better than average.

4.5 Shellfisheries

Consultation on the Carlingford Lough licences is proceeding with no objections received to date.

The Draft Code of Practice for the Oyster Fishery has been agreed by the Moville and Greencastle Co-Ops and they are to provide a list of names of their members for the Agency to consult with.

The final seed mussel allocations have been agreed by the Seed Mussel Allocation Committee based on a new scoring system. The overall allocation for Foyle is set at 14,424 tonnes and 4,600 tonnes for Carlingford. These represent approximately 24% and 7.5% of the overall allocation for the island and seed will be allocated on this basis as it becomes available.

4.6 *Marine Tourism*

The terms of reference for the recruitment of a consultancy to carry out a “Study to examine the development potential of marine related tourism and recreational activities in both Carlingford Lough and Lough Foyle and the role of the loughs Agency in promoting that development” has been agreed and papers have been forwarded to the North South Ministerial Council Secretariat for approval under the interim procedures mechanism.

4.7 *Riverwatch*

To date the centre had welcomed 3,145 visitors mainly from schools and community groups and these included Irish speaking and a group of profoundly and severely disabled teenagers. Feedback from all groups has been very positive with helpfulness of staff scoring highest.

A meeting was held recently with the DuPont Community Committee and they are keen to develop partnerships with the possibility of assistance with a video on the environmental measures they operate to protect the River Faughan. The Board will be kept informed with developments.

4.8 *Staffing*

The Agency is currently operating with several vacancies EO1, pt AA and 2 Foyle Area Riverwatchers. The recruitment for the 2 Riverwatcher positions for the Foyle Area is nearing completion and approval has been received to place advertisements for the part time Administrative Assistant. Conrad Beardmore the Deputy Coxswain has been appointed.

Arrangements have been made for two students from Glasgow University to QA the Agency’s electrofishing results not only will this help the Agency but will provide the students practical

experience for their thesis. The Board gave their approval for expenditure for their transportation and accommodation costs.

The placement student responsible for GIS has been offered a fulltime job with Ordnance Survey and Paddy Boylan to make contact with the Universities for a replacement.

5. North South Pay

Reserved

6. Netting Buyout

The Board considered a letter issued to each of the members by the Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA) and a petition being circulated by the North Atlantic Salmon Fund. They agreed that a meeting with the Advisory Forum's Salmon and Inland Fisheries Focus Group and the Board's Salmon and Inland Fisheries Sub Committee should be arranged later in the season when more information was available and noted that the proposed workshop on the "Management of Salmon for Sustainability" will further inform their considerations of the issues.

7. Primary Legislation

It was reported that work was continuing on the revised Foyle Bill and was still on target for May 2004. It has now been confirmed by the Departments that the Bill would be prepared both in a form to allow it to be progressed by Order in Council through Westminster and also as a Bill for the consideration of the NI Assembly. The Board will be kept informed of any progress.

8. Regulations

Further amendments to the proposed regulations (Drift and Draft net Regulations, Licensing of Fishing Engines Regulation and Angling Regulations) are being drafted and will be brought before the Board at their next meeting copies will also be provided to the Advisory Forum and Salmon Focus Groups.

9. Accounts/Audit

Reserved

10. Staff Review

The CE informed the Board that the Departments had made a further amendment to the staffing structure proposed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and agreed by the Board. They were recommending that the Director of Corporate Services post should require Accountancy qualifications and that the Director of Development post should only be considered when the Fisheries Recreation and Leisure Development Plan and Marine Tourism Strategy was established.

He indicated that he was deeply concerned about these further changes and delays particularly with regard to the Internal Audit Report and as a consequence had met with senior officials from DARD, DFP and NSMC. He perceived that this meeting had been constructive and that NSMC had given a commitment to ensure that it was. He agreed to proceed the issue ASAP and would advise the Board of the situation at their next meeting.

11. Shellfish Implementation Plan

The Board was asked to consider the first draft of the Implementation Plan and forward any comments to CE as soon as possible. A meeting of the shellfish sub committee will be arranged to discuss the plan in more detail.

The Board recommended that the Agency should carry out a series of parallel studies to save time and these should include Environmental Impact Assessments and Surveys to begin as soon as possible. They also asked that the impact of shellfish farming be considered on the salmon stocks.

12. Board Matters

12.1 On-board training

The Board were advised that the NSMC Secretariat have now arranged training on 6th October for all Board members of the Cross Border Bodies (draft agenda provided). Formal invitations will be issued shortly.

12.2 Audit Committee terms of reference

The Board was provided with copies of a model terms of reference for Audit committees and Treasury guidance. The Audit and Finance Sub Committee to agree the terms of reference at their next meeting.

13. Advisory forum Minutes

A meeting of the Advisory Forum was held on 19th June in Newry the minutes will be made available at the next Board meeting.

14. Audit of Fisheries Based Recreation and Leisure Development Plan

Lestas Consulting have been recruited to undertake the design of a 5 year development plan. They gave an overview of their proposals including the preparation of a discussion paper for consultation with the stakeholders in both the Foyle and Carlingford Areas and this will be completed by the end of August with a draft plan available in October. Lestas also have given a presentation to the Advisory Forum at their meeting in June and will follow up with the consultation document to all members. The Agency to provide contact details of Board and Advisory Forum members and other stakeholders for the mail shot. A discussion workshop followed.

15. AOB

15.1 Linnean Society of London

It was reported that Paddy Boylan (Biologist) has been invited to give a presentation to the prestigious Linnean Society of London all expenses will be provided by the Society. The Board gave its approval to proceed.

15.2 Reappointment of Advisory Forum.

The Board noted the position and asked the CE to prepare papers for their reappointment.

15.3 Staff Awareness Day

The CE sought the Boards approval to hold a staff awareness day which would include a presentation of the genetic research and updates on other aspects of the Agency's work. The Board agrees and approved expenditure of £10 per person for the event.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 3rd September 2003 at the Agency HQ Prehen.