

Reserved
19th Meeting of the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Commission
held on
Wednesday 3rd September 2003
At
Loughs Agency Headquarters Prehen

Present

Board

Peter Savage (Chairperson)
Siobhan Logue
Jacqui McConville
Jack Allen
Tarlach O'Crosain
Andrew Ward
Pat Griffin
Joseph Martin

Loughs Agency

Derick Anderson (CE)
John Pollock
Stanley Thorpe
Paddy Boylan

1. Apologies

Lord Cooke, Frank Feely, Dick Blakiston-Houston, Keith Anderson

2. Minutes of the 18th Meeting

The minutes were agreed.

Proposed Joseph Martin
Seconded Pat Griffin

3. Reserved Minutes

The reserved minutes of the 18th Meeting were agreed and would be made available to the public through the Agency's web site.

4. CE Report

a, Netting returns 2003

Drift Sea – With 11 returns outstanding the returns to date are 1,500 with the extra week only recording 43.

Drift Lough & Sea – With 38 returns still outstanding the returns to date 9,000 with the extra week recording 500.

Overall 2003 Drift net returns are down on those for 2002.

Draft – up on 2002 with a total of 16,605.

The total for the commercial fishery when all returns are received is estimated at 35,000 the 5 year running average.

b, Protection

The number of nets and rods seized is down on that of 2002 (table provided).

c, Angling

Weekly angling report was provided – angling recently has been very poor due to the low water conditions.

d, Electrofishing

All electrofishing sites complete this year. General overall improvement with results on the Owenkillew/Glenelly excellent.

e, Angling Development

As part of the promotion and development of angling in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas the Agency invited several journalists from Angling press including Sandy Levington who was very impressed and will be writing an article for Trout and Salmon shortly. Also Bob Cox spent some time in Carlingford fly fishing for Bass and was successful however more surveying needs to be carried out. He is also planning to survey the Foyle Area before the end of September. Paul Young and the “Hooked” TV programme had great success both with Tope fishing (several large tope and one lost which they estimate would have beaten the Irish record) and Coarse fishing (58kg coarse fish) in the Carlingford Area and have enough footage for two programmes due to be broadcast in early 2004.

f, Fish Counts

Table was provided of counts to date. Figures to date Sion Mills 9216, Faughan 2065, Roe 2203, Corrick 1511, Finn 5168. All counters except for the new Culdaff counter were hit by lightning

on 5th August but were back in operation by 7th August (Finn 25th August). There were further problems with the Roe counter when it was discovered that the electric cables were also fused and this was fixed straight away.

g, Marine Tourism

Pleased to report that clearance has now been given to proceed with the interim procedures for approval to carryout the Marine Tourism Study. It is hoped that this approval will be received within the next few weeks.

The Board was also asked to list any Marine Tourism products for discussion the next meeting.

h, Riverwatch

Update was provided over 3,500 visitors and now taking bookings into 2004 following a recent mail shot. Tarlach O'Crosain thanked the Agency for looking after the children from Romania they enjoyed their visit. It was suggested that when surveying or evaluating the visits that an additional question is included to determine if the groups visited other attractions in the area as we may be able to market the centre as part of a package in the future.

i, Shellfisheries

The returns from the questionnaire re the proposed voluntary code of practice for oysters was very disappointing with only 12 returns to date. Also a programme of monitoring oyster fishing has also been undertaken and the questionnaire will be given to the fishermen directly.

The CE reported that some mussel seed had been discovered in Lough Foyle however some fishermen had already lifted and re-laid 3 loads (500 tonnes) last night and again out today without notification to DARD or DCMNR and this would jeopardise the seed allocation in 2004. The Lough Bradán has been deployed to monitor the boats that have commenced lifting seed without authorisation and both DARD and DCMNR have been informed.

Unfortunately the delay in progressing the primary legislation has not allowed the agency to regulate the shellfishery and a further meeting has been arranged for early October with the Departments and their legal teams to progress it further.

5. Estimates

The Board approved the Agency's Financial Estimates for 2004 and these will be forwarded to the sponsor Departments and the Departments of Finance for their necessary final approvals.

Proposed Jack Allen
Seconded Tarlach O'Crosain

6. 2004 Business Plan

The objectives and targets in the draft 2004 Business Plan were discussed and approval was given to proceed on this basis. Draft plans to be forwarded to the sponsor Departments for the necessary Department of Finance approvals.

Proposed Pat Griffin
Seconded Siobhan Logue

7. Audit Sub Committee Minutes

An update was provided following the recent Audit Committee meeting and the minutes of the meeting were adopted and the final version of the audit committee terms of reference were also approved.

Proposed Jack Allen
Seconded Peter Savage

The Board also asked that their thanks to Ann McPherson were recorded for all her excellent work.

It was also suggested that any future Audits should consider the amount of time spent by Agency staff with their "customers"

The members of the Audit committee were also advised of a forthcoming Audit Committee conference being run by HM

Treasury on 31st October anyone interested should contact John Pollock

8. Staffing paper and Interim Support

The Agency is nearing agreement on the staffing paper CE has to resubmit a staffing paper to both sponsor Departments for forwarding to the Departments of Finance for their approvals. The Board again expressed their frustration with the delay in resolving this matter.

The Audit Committee considered at their last meeting asking for interim assistance to help with some of the recommendations following the Internal Audit review. In particular corporate governance issues and training and development for staff. The Board considered the estimate cost provided by the Agency's accountants and gave their approval to proceed with the proposed interim support.

Proposed Andrew Ward
Seconded Joseph Martin

9. Transportation Policy

The Agency's Transportation Policy was considered and approved.

Proposed Joseph Martin
Seconded Tarlach O'Crosain

10. Fraud Policy

The Agency's Fraud Policy was considered and approved subject to some minor amendments following comment from the sponsor Departments.

Proposed Tarlach O'Crosain
Seconded Joseph Martin

11. Advisory Forum Minutes

The minutes were not yet available and would be presented at the next Board meeting.

The mechanism for appointment of the Advisory Forum in 2004 will be discussed at the NSMC facilitation meeting on 29th September in Armagh.

12. Reserved

13. Draft Regulations

The Board considered the following draft regulations:

a, Licensing of Fishing Engines 2004 which details the proposed licence fees for 2004 and further harmonising of licences between the Agency and the Fisheries Conservancy Board NI.

b, Control of Drift and Draft Net Regulation 2004 which includes a cap on the number of Draft Net Licences of 50.

c, Angling Regulation 2004 includes revised bag limit for spring fish, coarse and pike regulations and restrictions on the possession of shrimp.

The Board approved the regulations and asked that they be progressed as soon as possible through the Departments and interim procedures.

14. Fisheries Based Recreation and Leisure Development Plan

The consultation is progressing well with the period of consultation extended to the end of September. A copy of the Lestas presentation was discussed and it was suggested that early contact should be made to Dr Alan McClure of ILEX. A draft report should be available for the next Board meeting.

15. AOB

a, The Board considered the correspondence from J Haughey member of the Foyle and Carlingford Area Advisory Forum. They were satisfied that Paddy Boylan had provided all the information that was available to him and acknowledged that he had been asked for information that would take some considerable time and

resources to compile and that he had other priorities during the busy season. The Board asked that the CE reply on their behalf.

b, The Board considered the business case for assistance for any groups participating in the adopt a stream programme that are not covered by insurance. Gillian Simpson has sourced an insurance company that caters for this type of insurance and for a small group the cover would be in the region of £195. The majority of groups would be covered and this assistance would only be in exceptional cases up to a maximum of 20 per year. The Board gave its approval to proceed on this basis however asked that the legal liability for the Agency be checked out before giving advice to groups.

c, The Board were provided with the OFMDFM consultation paper “a shared future” and were asked to forward any comments to John Pollock or directly through the consultation web site as soon as possible.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 22nd October in Carlingford Village.