

60th MEETING OF THE FOYLE CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS COMMISSION

Wednesday 20th January 2010 @ 11am

Loughs Agency Offices, Carlingford

Attendees

Present

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

In Attendance - Loughs Agency

Derick Anderson – CEO
John McCartney – Director of Conservation and Protection
Barry Fox – Director of Aquaculture and Shellfisheries
John Pollock – Director of Corporate Services
Gerard Mills – Director of Development
Laura French (Minutes)

1. Apologies

John Mulcahy
Winston Patterson
Brendan Byrne

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Proposed Thomas Sloan
Seconded Denis Haughey

3. Reserved Minutes

The proposed reserved minutes were approved.

Proposed Thomas Sloan
Seconded Denis Haughey

4. Matters Arising

Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all to the 60th meeting of the Board of the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission and extended his and the Boards congratulations to Barry Fox, Director of Aquaculture and Shellfishes and to his wife Susan on the birth of their son Jack.

5. CEO Report

CEO reported to the Board that Rachel Scott and Seamus Cullinan had given a presentation to the ARD Committee on Tuesday 19th January 2010 and this was very well received. He added that it had been a very good meeting.

CEO advised the meeting that the issue relating to unsocial hours allowance had reached the Minister of Finance and the Agency were hoping for a resolution in the next few days. CEO extended his thanks to Joe Miller for his help with the issue and added that he had had a meeting with Union representatives earlier in the week to keep them updated on the current situation

CEO advised the Board that with the help of our legal advisers they had now come up with 8 options in relation to the Loughs Agency pension scheme. He added that the Agency had to select an economist to complete and submit the business case to the Sponsoring Departments and hoped that this would be done by the end of February 2010.

RESERVED

6. Directors Report

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

Conservation and Protection

John McCartney, Director of Conservation and Protection provided the Board with the following report;

The 2010 season has begun with some of the worst weather that many fisheries officers have seen. The rivers have been frozen over and temperatures have dropped below minus 5 degrees Celsius. The Southern crew recorded temperatures below minus 10 in the Omagh area.

Staff have made a valiant effort to get as much of the Redd counting programme completed, and have discovered a variety of pollution related issues on their surveys.

Newry canal and most of the Carlingford lakes are also frozen over limiting the interest in coarse fishing in the area.

Consultations

An updated schedule of Regulations in development and consultations was discussed by the Board Members.

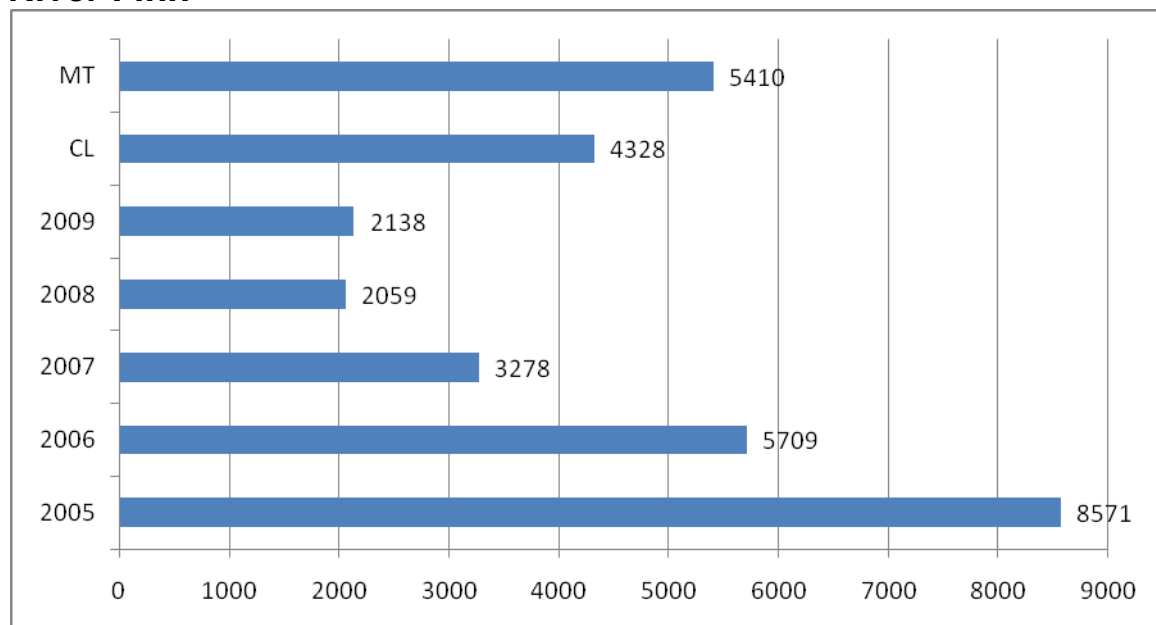
Health and Safety

The cold weather has had its effect on the working arrangements within the Loughs Agency, with one member of staff injured after slipping in icy conditions, and one crew vehicle rolled over when the driver lost control at very slow speed in compacted ice. Luckily the vehicle driver walked away from the vehicle uninjured.

Fish Counters

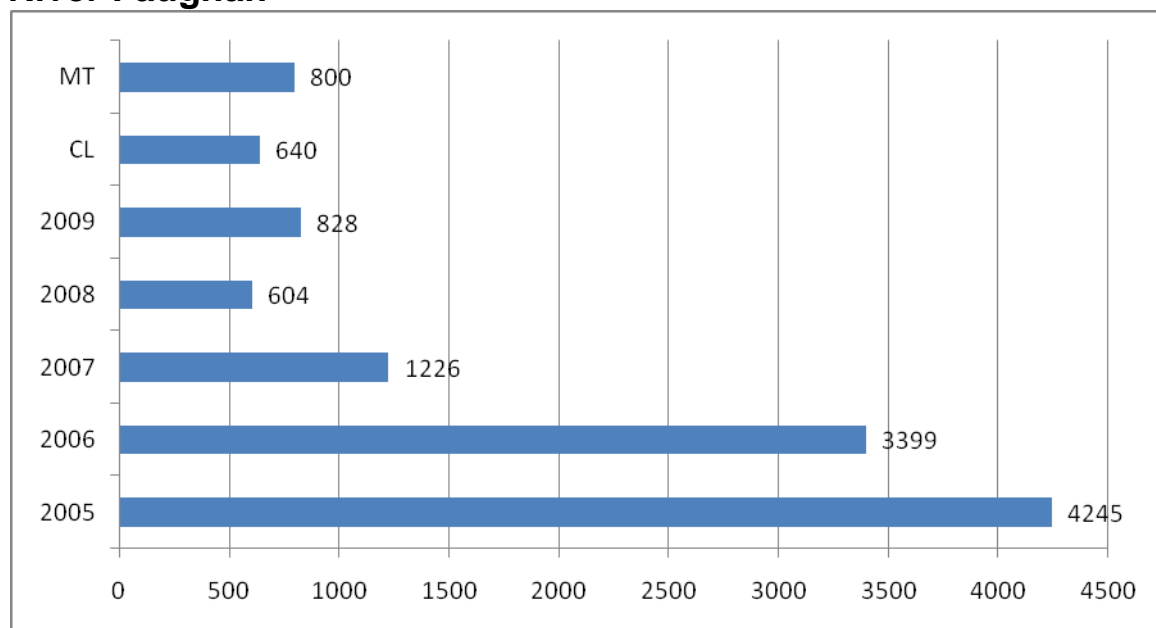
To give Board members an insight into the current status of Foyle salmon stocks I have illustrated below the fish counts on the main river systems from 2005 to 2009 plotted against their Conservation limits;

River Finn



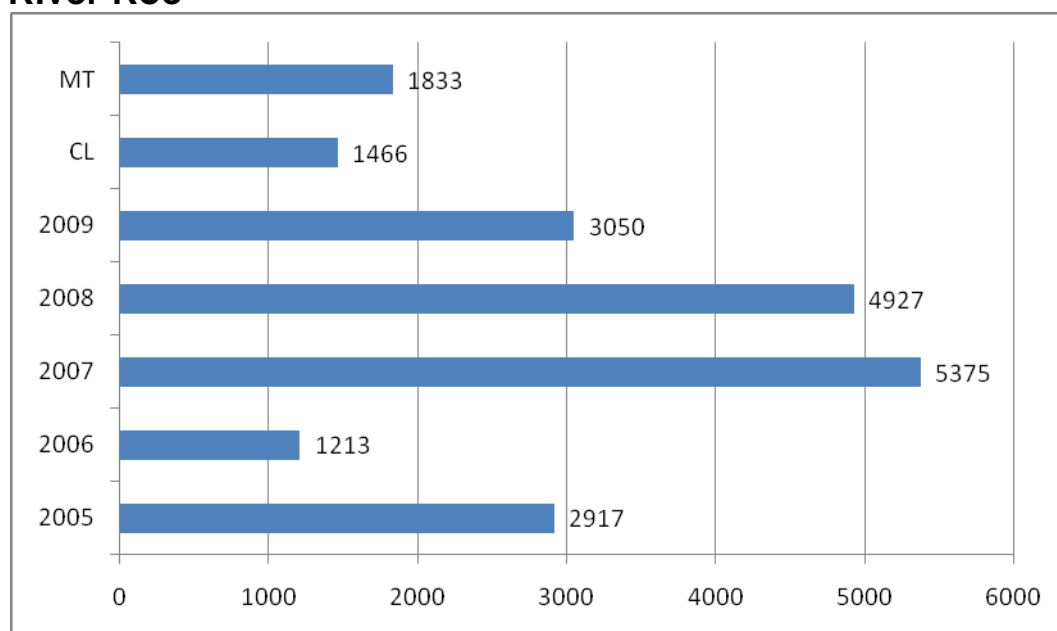
The fish counts on the Finn indicate that the River stock is in difficulty and failing to meet its conservation limits since 2007.

River Faughan



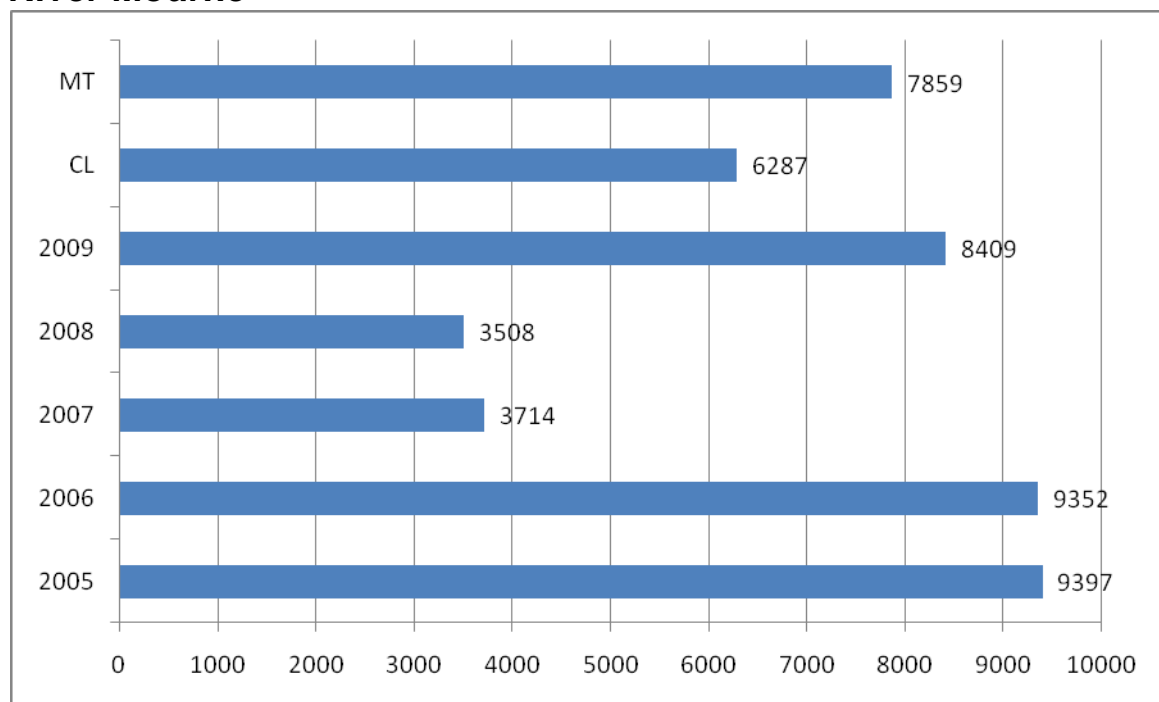
While the River Faughan counter performance is under review, the magnitude of decline of Fish stocks in the river continues to be of concern.

River Roe



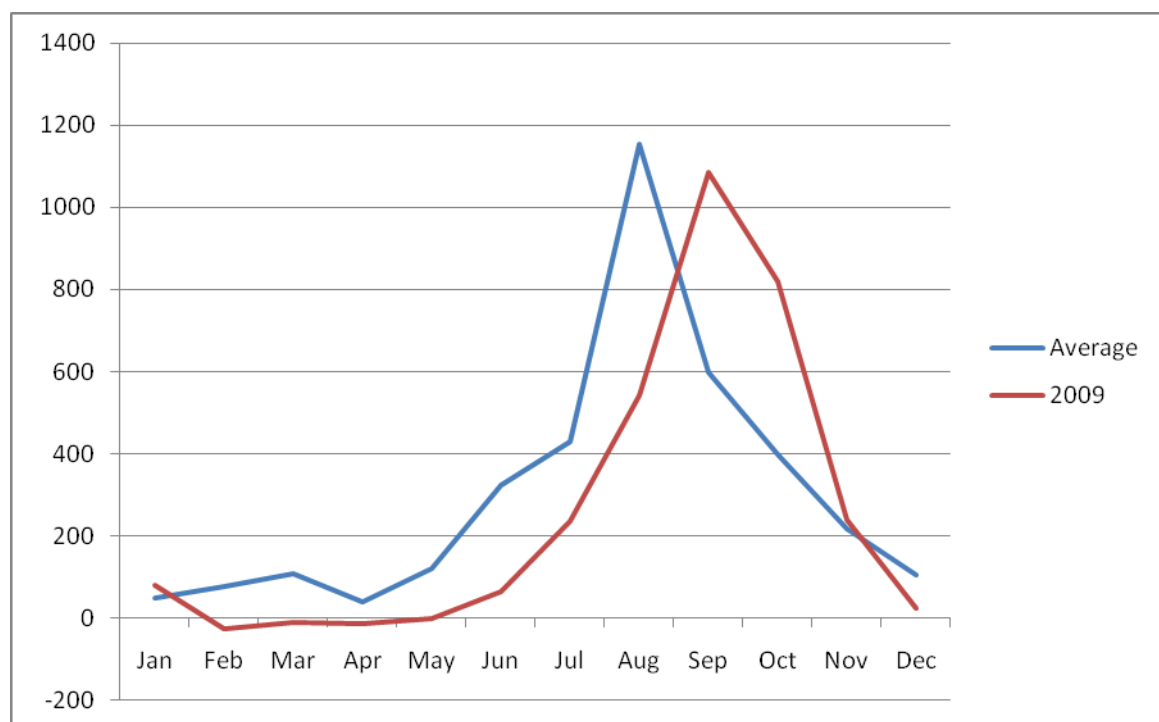
The River Roe shows a decline in stocks after a recovery from the collapse in 2006, however the 2007 to 2009 trend is worrying.

River Mourne



The apparent stock recovery in the River Mourne system is a very positive sign, there were however concerns over the operation of the counter in 2007 and 2008.

One issue of contemporary discussion is on the question of fish running later, and I have displayed below the River Roe fish run for 2009 which clearly show the later grilse run in comparison to the 5 year average.



Coarse Fisheries

The Agency has completed a review of coarse fisheries which is attached to this report, and would welcome comments from the Board members.

Enforcement Actions

Comparative summary including 2009 are shown below, which highlights an increase in net seizures, with a slight decrease in rod seizures. One net has been seized so far in 2010

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Rods | 10 | 26 | 85 | 136 | 102 |
| Boats and vehicles | 1 | 2 | 16 | 14 | 9 |
| Nets | 114 | 97 | 101 | 114 | 130 |
| Fish | 118 | 91 | 58 | 92 | 91 |

Environmental Issues

The Loughs Agency has been publicly criticised by the British Hydro Power Association for its adoption of the “Guidelines on the Planning, Design, Construction & Operation of Small-Scale Hydro-Electric Schemes and Fisheries.” published by Central Fisheries Board and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. They feel that the document which is designed to assist developers is an impediment to the developments they wish to pursue. The Agency strongly disagrees with this standpoint, and emphasises that the guideline document fundamentally requires fisheries impact assessments to accompany hydro power development proposals.

The Loughs Agency with colleagues from Northern Ireland Environment Agency recently convicted a pig farmer of two counts of discharging slurry to the Mourne, and he was fined £500 on each charge.

Corporate Services

John Pollock, Director of Corporate Services provided the Board with the following short report;

Finance

First drawdown request submitted to sponsor departments.

Audit

The Internal Audit Report received on main agenda for discussion. NIAO and C&AG Dublin Audit on 2008 accounts commenced on

20th April 2009. Their draft report is expected shortly and the findings will be tabled for discussion by the Board and audit subcommittee. Audit subcommittee training Wednesday 10th February 2010. Further On-board training for the Board to be arranged.

Corporate Governance

Quarterly Risk Management meetings scheduled for 2010.

NSMC

Next NSMC Sectoral meeting scheduled for early 2010.

Staffing Recruitment / Vacancies

Staffing loading review on hold pending outcome of CEO paper. There are no staff vacancies

Annual Report

NSMC clearance of the 2007 & 2008 annual reports now received to be laid at the Assembly and Oireachtas as soon as the 2008 accounts signed off.

Business Plan 2010

Draft of 2010 Business Plan underway.

Pensions

Discussions ongoing with DFP. Meeting to be arranged with HM Cabinet Office and Revenues North and South. Quote received for pension administration.

Accommodation

Greencastle accommodation partnership with community association still being considered.

Advisory Forum

Next meeting 27th January 2010

Development

Gerard Mills, Director of Development provided the Board with the following report;

Other funding bids submitted and in progress

Submitted

Ayrshire / Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT)/Loughs Agency
One Environment One Future:

A strategic tri-partite transnational project to develop cross border collaboration between the public sector, communities and other stakeholders in understanding and managing sustainably the processes that shape local environments in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Value £1.9 M.

Employment of 5 no. staff [3 Scotland, 1 CCGHT and 1 Loughs Agency.

Outcome is likely to be announced by March/April 2010.

SCENE/QUB Project

Bid has been made and submitted to SEUPB by 10th of July 2009

Outcome is likely to be announced by March/April 2010.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

3 applications

1 for phase 3 of Riverwatch

1 for compelling a visit using commissioned video footage to promote the North West and the South East.

Phase 3 of Riverwatch

Letter of Offer received

'Compelling a Visit' projects are at economic appraisal stage which means they have been successful in the first round of funding.

We await a Letter of Offer

In Progress

Heritage Lottery

The Living Loughs Project

Project focus is to employ 2 project officers to specifically focus on embedding the development of habitats within the region with the communities that live throughout it for a period of three years (as a minimum). The persons will drive community based events that celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of 'The Living Loughs' and will show people of all ages the importance of conserving and protecting the river system as well as how to use and enjoy it responsibly.

Value £370k

Staffing Interreg Marine Tourism Strategy

Paper has now gone to Department of Finance and Personnel for consideration.

Sustainable Development Business Case

Tender received and assessed 20th January 2010 – Gerard Mills to make recommendation to Board at meeting.

Mill Bay and Narrow Water Projects

Projects developed with Mourne Heritage Trust / Northern Ireland Tourist Board / Newry and Mourne District Council and Agency are now through Tender stage with Central Procurement Division. The estimated value of the two projects overall is circa £225,000 and will be the first of the projects identified as part of the Mourne Coastal Route.

Reports on progress will follow.

Omeath and Carlingford Tidy Towns

Project is currently being tendered for, Memorandum of Understanding is in place and the match funding is also secured from the community association.

Cranfield

See plans at meeting – proposal is to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with Newry and Mourne District Council to provide essential remedial works at Cranfield (replacement of gates, provision of section 75 compliant kerbing, repairs to gabian wall defences which have eroded due to tidal action) – Newry and Mourne District Council to contribute 30% to the costs – estimated costs £25,000. Key aim of the works is to retain the beach's blue flag status.

Proposed Alan McCulla

Seconded Thomas Sloan

Aquaculture and Shellfisheries

Barry Fox, Director of Aquaculture and Shellfisheries provided the Board with the following short report;

The Foyle Area (Aquaculture Licensing) Regulations 2010

We are currently working with DARD and DSO to finalise a draft of the Agency's aquaculture Regulations. The final addition to these will be the fees agreed by the CEC, DAFF and the Agency. It is expected that the figure will be finalised in the coming month.

Oyster Regulations

The Agency intends to bring forward Amendment Regulations for the native oyster fishery in the coming months. These will include a reduction in the licence fee and a dealers Regulation allowing them

to retain oysters for sale over a minimum weight while retaining a minimum size for fishermen.

SEA

The Agency and AECOM held public information days in December to get the public and stakeholders views on the proposed options for the licensing of aquaculture in the Agency's areas. The events were very successful and some positive feedback was received. The options report will be completed by the 30th January 2010.

Monitoring Vessel

The MMV Ostrea is currently at berth in Lisahally Docks. Installation of the safety equipment is completed. The trolling valve gear boxes have been delivered and it is expected that these will be fitted in the coming weeks along with a repaint in Kilkeel harbour.

BGMCF

The Agency continues to contribute to the BGMCF. The next meeting of this group will take place in mid February 2010. The delegates have asked for the Loughs Agency's aquaculture Regulations to be added to the agenda for discussion and I have agreed to this.

7. 2010 Angling Fair

Gerard Mills, Director of Development provided the Board with the evaluation of the 2009 Angling Fair and advised that it had been a success and value for money. Jim Wilson advised that he had heard a lot of good reports from anglers who had attended the Fair and the Chairman advised that he had attended the event and it had been a great success. The Board confirmed the success of the 2009 Fair and were content that it was value for money.

An options paper for the 2010 Angling Fair was issued to Board Members for their information. A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to the venues listed in the document. It was noted from the paper that the 2010 Angling Fair would be in Newtown Stewart on the banks of the River Strule on the 17th and 18th April 2010. Gerard asked for the Board's approval to continue on this basis with a budget of £60,000.

Proposed Jim Wilson
Seconded Enda Bonner

8. Angling Academy Interim Report

Gerard Mills, Director of Development provided the Board with the above report for their information. Gerard added that he had received extremely positive feedback from the angling academy and would provide the Board with the final report at their next meeting. Gerard also asked the Board for their approval to fund this pilot project for 2 years following its success.

Proposed Denis Haughey
Seconded Joe Miller

9. Maritime Festival

Gerard Mills provided the Board with a letter from Newry and Mourne District Council were they asked for an update of the Maritime Festival similar to the one run in Foyle every three years. It was agreed that the Agency would write back to Newry and Mourne District Council to ask for further clarification on the information they were seeking.

Proposed Jacqui McConville
Seconded Jim Wilson

10. Mill Bay and Narrow Water Costs

Gerard Mill's, Director of Development provided the Board with list of costs for the above for their information. Gerard added that there had been a few problems at Mill Bay that the Agency were seeking a resolution before they continued and this would be revisited at the next Board Meeting. Gerard asked the Board for their approval to continue with the projects in line with the information provided.

Proposed Denis Haughey
Seconded Jacqui McConville

11. Internal Audit Response

John Pollock, Director of Corporate Services provided the Board with the above for their information. John added that this would be discussed at length at the Audit Sub Committee Meeting but advised that the Agency had rejected quite a lot of the content of the paper as they were out of the Agency's control.

12. Coarse Fisheries Report

John McCartney, Director of Conservation and Protection provided the Board with the above report for their information. He asked the Board to forward any comments they may have to him before the next Board Meeting.

13. British Fly Fair Evaluation

Gerard Mill's, Director of Development provided the Board with a copy of the above for their information and to ensure that this event provided value for money.

14. A.O.B

Board Papers

Joe Miler stated that he thought that receiving the Board papers electronically was a great idea but asked could the disc with the Board papers on be sent out the week before the Board Meeting. It was agreed that this would be done.

15. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 10th March 2010 at Loughs Agency Headquarters, Prehen.