

# **Minutes of Meeting of Aquaculture & Shellfisheries Focus Group Meeting**

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014 7:00pm**

**Armagh City Hotel, Armagh**

## **Present**

### **Forum Members**

Paul O'Donovan	Vice Chairperson
Raymond Dougal	
Daniel Gallagher	
Brendan McSherry	

## **In Attendance**

Barry Fox	Director of Aquaculture & Shellfisheries
Ciaran McGonigle	Marine Scientist
Dr Sarah McLean	Aquaculture & Shellfisheries Officer
Siobhan Wilson	Minutes
Joanne Gaffney	BIM

## **Non Attendance**

Alex Rolston

## **1. Apologies**

Francis O'Donnell	Chairperson
Michael Stinson	
Karen Dubsky	
Liam Farren	
David Friel	

As the chairman sent his apologies Barry Fox asked Paul O'Donovan if he would chair the meeting, Paul agreed and welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the list of apologies.

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Paul asked if anyone had any issues or amendments to the previous minutes, there were no issues noted and the minutes were proposed by Raymond Dougal and seconded by Paul O'Donovan.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Paul asked if any member present had any matters arising from the minutes and Raymond Dougal said that he felt that a lot of the fishermen had little or no interest in the MSC. Sarah McLean responded by saying that the MSC is a positive step for the fishery and the fishermen's business in selling oysters. Barry Fox asked Sarah if she would do her presentation on the MSC at the next focus group meeting for the benefit of the members, Sarah agreed to do so. Joanne Gaffney added that it might be beneficial if Sarah obtained some statements from buyers in relation to the MSC and this would highlight their opinion on the future of the MSC.

### **4. Co-opt Karin Dubsky of Coastwatch and Joanne Gaffney of BIM onto the Focus Group**

Barry Fox invited both Karin and Joanne to the meeting but unfortunately due to a prior engagement Karin could not be in attendance. Minutes of the previous meeting were sent to both Karin and Joanne.

Joanne was in attendance and Barry introduced her to the group then she advised the group in relation to her job with BIM and a brief history of her experiences with Aquaculture and Shellfisheries. Joanne added that her role within the group was on an advisory one and she does not have any voting rights. Everyone in attendance welcomed Joanne to the group.

### **5. Submission of Agenda Items**

Barry Fox advised the chairman that a request for agenda items was sent to all group members and these were to be forwarded to Siobhan Wilson by Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Unfortunately some items arrived after this date and could not be added to the agenda or questions could not be answered in a timely fashion therefore all agenda items or questions for the meeting need to be received by the date stated. Paul O'Donovan reiterated this request to the group members.

### **6. Update on Loughs Agency Activities**

**Ciaran McGonigle provided the following update to the group:-**

The Autumn 2013 Native Oyster Survey is almost complete which is expected to be finished very soon. So far the survey has shown that the figures are similar to those in the last couple of years and there are very little young oysters on the bed. Ciaran expects that production will be down in the season 2014/15 and again 2015/16 and this is very worrying to the Agency in their management of the fishery. Ciaran added that if there is good settlement this year it will still take at least 2 full seasons to reach good levels again. It is reported that over 200 tons of oysters were fished so far and this has been a particularly high production on record.

In relation to the Bonemia identified in the Southside Bed it was necessary to close this area to fishing early in the season. It was feared that increased stress would have adverse effects on the fishery. Ciaran is waiting on further results to confirm if it is still present but he thinks the levels will remain high.

The Agency are continuing to help the IBIS researchers with their work on the Lough in relation to spat fall monitoring.

Other work which will continue is the Spring Survey, Stock Assessment and IBIS research work during the summer months.

### **Sarah McLean provided the following update to the group:-**

Sarah advised the group that shellfish sampling was going well and that there has been more frequent mussel surveying in the Carlingford area.

Sarah added that all 4 sites in the Foyle area are classification B and 2 sites in Carlingford are classification A those being Carriganeen and Ballyedmund.

The IBIS researchers have continued their studies on birds in both Foyle and Carlingford areas gathering information on bird counts in the last 2 months of high and low tides. They are currently compiling all their research with the evidence that foreshore is proving better due to all the invertebrate present.

## **7. Timing of Future Focus Group Meetings**

Paul O'Donovan read a request from Liam Farren who could not attend at the meeting that future meetings be held in the afternoon as the

evening meetings add to an already long business day for some people. This items was discussed and it was suggested that the group meet in the afternoon on the next occasion and get feedback then for the way forward.

## **8. AOB**

It was agreed that the questions which Brendan McSherry put to the Aquaculture Team would be discussed at the next meeting and these would be added as agenda items.

There was a discussion in relation to the tressels along the shoreline and if these are licenced. It was requested by Danny Gallagher and Raymond Dougal that the Agency contact these fishermen and try to discuss this issue with them. Barry Fox and Ciaran McGonigle explained that this is an issue and that it is possible that there are funding opportunities which could be tapped into. They added that they would discuss the matter further with Kevin Wilson (Director of Development) who will know what funding is available at present.

The information gathered at the Forum Meeting in October 2013 will also be used as a basis for agenda items for future meetings.

## **9. Date and Venue of next meeting**

It was agreed that a time in the afternoon will be arranged for the next group meeting possibly in June 2014 and the venue will be Omagh. Siobhan Wilson to liaise with Barry Fox to arrange this and forward all information to members of the group.