

# **Minutes of Meeting of the Salmon, Inland Fisheries and Environmental Focus Group**

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh**

## **Present**

### **Forum Members**

Jim Haughey	Chairperson
Tony French	
Eamon Mullan	
Michael Stinson	
Shane Colgan	FASTA Representative

## **In Attendance**

John McCartney	Director of Conservation and Protection
Laura McCready	Minutes

## **Non Attendance**

Francis O'Donnell  
Ian Gamble  
David Friel

## **1. Apologies**

Robbie Marshall  
Declan Little  
Peadar MacRory  
Alec Rolston  
Peter Archdale  
Enda Craig  
Breffni Martin

John McCartney welcomed everyone to the meeting

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

Michael Stinson highlighted a typo in the previous minutes in relation to Lough Derg. John McCartney asked Laura McCready to amend the minutes. All agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Jim Haughey asked if there was any update on the Galway Bay Salmon Farm. John McCartney stated that he had no further update other than as far as he knew if has been brought to the European arena. Jim Haughey raised concern in relation to this and stated in his opinion if the Galway Bay farm was to go ahead then others could also go through e.g. Swilly, Mulroy and Tory Island and we had not voiced concern in relation to same. John McCartney advised that he had replied to the initial consultation but had received no reply. Jim Haughey asked if John would follow up and seek a reply.

Tony French stated that the River Mourne had not reached its conservation or management targets in the last 4 years and asked why catch and release had not been introduced. Tony added that anglers in Donegal feel discriminated against because catch and release has been in for a number of years on the River Finn. John McCartney advised that catch and release would only be considered after Matt Newtown had completed his PhD. He added that the Agency need accurate information to close a fishery and the counter at Sion Mills was under review.

### **4. Hydroelectric Power Schemes**

John McCartney gave a presentation to the Sub Group on hydroelectric schemes. The group had been given a link from the Agency's website to the presentation prior to the meeting. A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to same.

John McCartney reported that Northern Ireland Environment Agency were rumored to be undertaking a review into hydroelectric power schemes and asked if anyone had suggestions about a way forward, or if the Sub Group were happy for the Agency to work to their existing guidelines. Jim Haughey stated that in his opinion the Republic of Ireland guidelines should be adopted by the Agency and although he didn't agree with it all.

Michael Stinson echoed Jim's point but also highlighted the lack of protection currently offered to trout in our rivers.

## **5. Update on Sand / Gravel at Porthall**

John McCartney advised that he had currently no update in relation to this item. Tony French advised John that with this abstraction now being ceased that Agency staff would have difficulty getting up past Islandmore in a boat with the buildup of sand and gravel.

## **6. Waste Water Treatment Plant at Carnagarve, Co Donegal**

John McCartney advised that Enda Craig had forwarded him more information earlier today which he would forward to all. He added that Enda felt that the Environmental Protection Agency were going to try and process the licence application for this and asked John to see clarification. John advised he had drafted a letter to send in relation to same.

## **7. Dredging / Lamprey Surveys**

The group were provided with a copy of the above document for their information prior to their meeting. The document stated "Removal of silt is a typical procedure in "channel cleaning" or maintenance, as practiced by the Office of Public Works Drainage Division, River Drainage Boards and Local Authorities. Such silt often contains juvenile lamprey that become stranded on the bank slope or spoil heaps. It is clear that such a process can lead to substantial losses of juveniles and has the potential for greater conservation status effects if works are being undertaken within designated Natura 2000 sites, where lamprey species are listed as qualifying interests of the designation".

John McCartney added that the Agency don't currently have legislative remit over lamprey as they were not included in the Prescribed Species Regulation but he suggested trying to change the Regulation to include them. All agreed that John should take this forward.

## **8. Smolt Farm on River Derg**

John McCartney advised that he had no update as such other than he was still trying to get Marine Harvest to meet with its stakeholders and that Derg Valley Angling Club were also pushing for this to happen.

Jim Haughey asked if there were a number of license's involved. John McCartney stated yes there was a discharge consent, an aquaculture licence and a fish movement permitting scheme.

## **9. Draft Salmon Management Policy**

The Sub Group were provided with a copy of this document prior to the meeting for their information.

## **10. River Faughan Mineral Extraction**

Jim Haughey advised the meeting that the River Faughan Anglers Limited had taken the Department of the Environment to judicial review and lost over planning issues. Planning Service had ignored letter after letter and the judge found in favour of Planning Service.

## **11. North Western River Basin – Significant Water Management Issues**

Jim Haughey reported that there would be a consultation launched soon and asked if John McCartney would make a submission. John McCartney stated that he would have to look at the North West and South East schemes. Jim Haughey asked that he make a submission no matter how brief.

## **12. Seal Predation on Salmon**

The Sub Group were provided with a copy of this document prior to the meeting for their information.

## **13. A.O.B.**

### Tree Planting Glenshane area

Jim Haughey asked how the above work program was produced. John McCartney advised that the Agency hired an Arboriculturist who had completed the scheme. Jim asked if he and the Roe Angling Club could have a copy of same. Laura McCready to action.

### Angling Regulations

Jim Haughey asked John McCartney if there would be any changes to angling Regulations this year. John stated that he had advised angling clubs that he would not, where possible, bring in any changes mid-

season and due to increased work load changes could not be introduced before the 2014 season, therefore there would be no changes in 2014.

#### A Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland

The Sub Group were provided with a copy of this document prior to the meeting for their information. Jim Haughey asked if he could have a hard copy of the document. Laura McCready to action. John asked that the Group review the document and raise any points at the Advisory Forum scheduled to take place on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

#### Drift Netting

Jim Haughey was concerned about a Fisheries Committee in the Republic of Ireland who had proposed to allow Tory anglers to drift net for salmon and he felt a counter argument should be made from the Loughs Agency. John McCartney indicated he was aware of a recent Joint Oireachtas Committee meeting where evidence was taken in relation to fisheries management and Loughs Agency weren't invited to give evidence. He added that the Ulster Angling Federation (UAF) and Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA) weren't consulted either. Jim accepted that as a Government Agency the Loughs Agency could not comment unless asked to but felt that a Non-Governmental Organisation like the UAF should. Michael Stinson added that he would enquire from FISTA in relation to same.

#### Sewage Treatment Works

Jim Haughey reported to the meeting that he was recently in Waterford and had met with a man who had developed a sewage treatment facility for a small village of up to 800 using reeds and other plants. He said it was very successful. John McCartney stated that Seamus Cullinan had also visited a scheme in Mayo which was also very successful. John highlighted a few issues with the schemes and also stated that a wetland may be a watercourse under the Water Order.

#### Salmon, Inland Fisheries and Environmental Focus Group

Jim Haughey asked if the minutes from their Focus Group could be uploaded onto the Agency's website. John McCartney stated that when approved they would be placed on the website.

#### Strategic Planning

Jim Haughey asked if the Agency had any comment to make in relation to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement. John McCartney advised that they had no comment at the minute. Jim added that the Ulster

Angling Federation had intended to make a comment and urged the Agency to do the same.

#### Pollution

Tony French raised concern in relation to closed municipal dumps at Lifford, Clady, Strabane and the old dump in Lifford. He added that although closed now there could still be leaks into the river. John McCartney stated that this is the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Agency in the Republic but added that he would write to them for an update.

#### Invasive Species

Eamon Mullan asked if there were any long term statistics in relation to invasive species. A discussion ensued in relation to giant hogweed, balsam and Japanese knotweed on the river banks.

#### Meeting Venue

Breffni Martin had sent his apologies before the beginning of the meeting but had requested that meetings be held in venues further down the Country. It was agreed by all in attendance that they were happy with Omagh as a venue but were open to change if this was discussed again by other sub group members at future meetings.

### **14. Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

Date and time to be arranged.