

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

Thursday 27th October 2016 at 7pm

Canal Court Hotel, Newry

Present

Forum Members

Jim Haughey (Chairperson)
Brendan McSherry
Robbie Marshall
Peter Archdale
Eamon Mullan

In Attendance

John McCartney Director of Conservation and Protection

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted from:-

Enda Craig
David Friel
Declan Little
Alec Rolston
Peadar MacRory
Bob Kevitt
Breffni Martin
Shane Colgan

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record on the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

INTERREG Project

The Interreg Project as presented by Paddy Boylan on the Sea Monitor appears to have fallen. The Catchment Care Project appears to be viable and may be going ahead subject to SEUPB.

4. Update on the licencing of the River Derg Smolt Facility

It would appear that Jim Haughey had been in communication with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine (DAFM) and has had no reply. It was noted that Donegal County Council had issued a fresh discharge consent under the Water Pollution Act.

5. Points for Discussion

Sea Bass Stock Level

There was concern raised by the meeting that the Loughs Agency area regulations for sea bass had not moved forward and asked that JMcC write to the Sponsor Departments to ask if this can be expedited.

Statutory Consultations Report

There was some discussion in relation to Brexit.

Biological & Chemical Monitoring of Freshwaters

There was a significant discussion in relation to some of the poor quality indicated within these reports.

Sea Trout Report

Dealt with under AOB

Asian Clam

JMcC highlighted the seriousness of the issue and that he had corresponded with both National Parks and Wildlife and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency but at this time had not had a response. PA suggested that habitat management finance may be available from SEUPB and that this should be looked at.

6. E-Licensing Update

JMcC informed the group that there was a new Loughs Agency E-Licensing System and from the floor there was some concern raised that

there would be two systems in operation and they would like that minuted. There was also concern that club PRWs would have no access to the new licensing scheme.

7. Ardmore Hydro Application Update

There was an update on the Ardmore Hydroelectric Application and a question raised from the floor is “Why has the abstraction and impoundment licensing team continue to process the application while it has been turned down by the planning appeals commission?” In relation to the planning appeals commission, it was noted that a comment from the Commissioner that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was substandard and it was agreed that JMcC would draft a letter to Planning Service to request information in relation to the scrutiny of these EIAs for hydroelectric schemes.

8. Regulatory Review

JMcC highlighted the issues currently with the Clanrye river designation regulations and highlighted that Loughs Agency had potentially the opportunity to revisit some of the primary legislation issues. JH asked if a net buy out provision could be included within this primary legislation review. There was some debate in relation to the sea trout paper and the potential regulations which may fall from that. A significant discussion in relation to the designation of fishing areas as coarse fish or rainbow trout or mixed and while it was recognised that the DAERA area had already taken this step by bylaws there was some degree of caution as to the best way to move forward.

9. Summary of Fish Counts

JMcC said he would include within the minutes a full up to date picture of the fish counts.

10. A.O.B

Biodiversity Strategy

JMcC highlighted to the group that Paddy Boylan was now working on this and hoped to have a first draft available by the next meeting. PA indicated that there was no Northern Ireland implementation strategy and felt this was of significant concern.

Alien Species

There was a significant debate into the management of Japanese Knotweed.

NASCO Report

JMcC indicated he would attach the NASCO report to the minutes.

Waste Water Discharge

There was a discussion in relation to the water treatment plant at Moville and JMcC indicated that he had received correspondence from Irish Water indicating that this was to be reviewed.

Omeath Upgrade

There was a discussion in relation to whether or not the Omeath Upgrade was scheduled and whether or not there was any updates scheduled for Greenore.

Glenmore Biodigester Plant

PA expressed concern that there did not seem to be a formulated plan for the disposal of digestant. JMcC said that he would raise this with the relevant authorities.

Woodland Scheme

PA indicated that there was now a Northern Ireland Woodland Scheme and that it was worth evaluating.

River Strule Diversion at Omagh

Proposed by Rivers Agency was discussed at length.

DAERA Land Use Management Strategy

This was recommended by the group to the Agency.

Brexit

PA to supply a number of papers to be attached to the minutes as well as the Ulster Angling Federation paper which will be supplied by JMcC.

There were concerns raised in relation to the Brexit aspects of the farming support system and particularly the Agri Environment Schemes.

Lidor Surveys

There was also a discussion on the Lidor Surveys and how these will be undertaken and accessed by interested individuals.

DAERA Committee

There was a discussion in relation to JH's appearance in front of the DAERA Committee as part of the Freshwater Task Force on 22nd September 2016. JMcC said he would attempt to get a transcript from the meeting.

Derelict Waters

RM raised a concern in relation to a list of coaches being sent to Gerry Lavery at Sport NI in relation to the taking over of derelict waters by angling coaches and asked if this matter could be fully explored and reported to the next meeting.

11. Date and Venue of next meeting.

To be confirmed.