The Angling Advisory Group (AAG)

Draft Minutes of Meeting – 16.04.2026

IFI Headquarters, Citywest, Dublin 24 & Remotely via Teams

Attendees

In-person Attendees: Martina Hennessy (DCEE, Chair), Catherine McGinty (DCEE), Tom O'Brien (DCEE), Eamon Kelly (CEO, IFI), Barry Fox (IFI), Lorraine O'Donnell (IFI), Fiona Kelly (IFI), Hazel King (IFI), Martin McEnroe (ACI), Bob Seaward (SSTRAI), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Luke Aston (ICSA), Martin Kearney (NARRA), Paul Byrne (IPS).

Online Attendees: Barry Fulham (DCEE)

Apologies: Fergal Bell (IFPAC)

Introductions

A round of introductions was completed by all attendees.

The Chair welcomed Dr. Eamon Kelly, the new CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), to the Group and he spoke briefly about his priorities for IFI, including engagement with the angling sector.

The Angling Council of Ireland requested a meeting with the CEO, to discuss issues of ongoing concern for the angling sector.

Agenda Item 1 – Adoption of previous Minutes

Draft minutes of the meeting of 19th August 2025 were taken as adopted.

Some changes to the minutes of the meeting on 15th January 2026 were requested. Amendments will be made and minutes recirculated for adoption at next meeting.

It was noted that Actions 1-4 and 6 from the previous meeting had been completed and that Action 5 (re briefing on the Western Lakes Management Plan) would be added to the agenda at a future date.

Action Point:

1. **DCEE to update January 2026 minutes and re-circulate to the Group for adoption at the next meeting.**

Agenda Item 6 – ACI Grant Agreement (Taken early in meeting following request from ACI)

DCEE advised that they had met with the ACI to discuss the new grant agreement. Written suggestions had also been received, and these were under consideration by the Department.

Two 2024 claims were received from EFSA and IFSA and an amount of €5,698.77 was noted and approved as eligible for reimbursement.

FISSTA queried who approved funding at previous meeting and DCEE advised that it was approved collectively by the Group, with FISSTA asking for their objection to this payment be noted in the meeting minutes which it was.

Agenda Item 2 – AAG Terms of Reference (TOR)

DCEE reported that, as agreed at the last meeting, a small sub-group had been set up and had met to review the TOR of the Group. DCEE advised that a note of the sub-group meeting will be circulated to the full Group.

There was a discussion on the Chairing of the Group, with an objection to a fixed DCEE Chair being included in the TOR on the grounds that the previous agreement was for a rotating chair between AAG members. There was also a call from ACI for an independent chairperson to be put in place.

It was noted by DCEE that the work of the Sub-group remained ongoing, and a further meeting would be arranged to discuss the draft TOR, which will include the role of the Chair.

Action Points:

2. **DCEE to circulate note of the sub-group meeting to the AAG**
3. **DCEE to reconvene sub-group to continue its work**
4. **DCEE to provide further update at next meeting**

Agenda Item 3 – Inland Fisheries Ireland Presentation and Q& A on the National Barriers Programme

Hazel King (IFI) provided a detailed presentation to the Group on the work being carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland under the National Barrier Mitigation Programme, a €100m initiative funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to remove or modify man-made barriers—like weirs and culverts—to restore river connectivity.

A Q&A followed the presentation, where items such as applications in River Shannon area, public works contracts and funding opportunities for rivers trusts/angling clubs were discussed.

Action points:

5. **A list of the projects based on the River Shannon, relating to applications under both phase 1 and 2 of the Programme, to be provided to ACI.**
6. **A copy of the IFI presentation on the National Barriers Mitigation Programme to be circulated to the Group.**

Agenda Item 4 – Updates from the Department

Salmon Regulations 2026

DCEE advised that the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme (Amendment) Regulations and associated Bye-Laws were signed by the Minister on 2nd April and came into force on 3rd April. It was noted that the only change from the draft Regulations published for public consultation in February was the inclusion of a tag for harvesting one spring salmon before 1st June.

DCEE confirmed it received 326 submissions to the first public consultation on the draft salmon regulations and 530 submissions to the second, including c. 300 petition-style responses from a transition year project from a school in Kerry.

ACI noted its frustration that their submission did not appear to have been considered in drafting the second draft regulation/consultation. Concerns were also raised in relation to the impact of aquaculture on salmon stocks and the additional investment and measures in this area. The ACI also raised their view that a conflict exists between Minister having responsibility for salmon conservation and promotion of aquaculture.

Salmon management review

DCEE advised that Minister Dooley had written to the Chair of IFI in February 2026, requesting that the current salmon management framework be reviewed and asked them to reflect on whether any refinements or changes should be considered for future fishing seasons, from 2027 onwards. IFI are due to report back to the Minister in early summer.

Control of Fishing for Salmon

DCEE also advised that it was expected that the Commercial Salmon Regulations and associated Bye-Law had been drafted and would be signed by the Minister soon.

Article 55

DCEE advised that new rules for recreational sea angling came into effect across the EU in January under Article 55. Its application in Ireland will commence in line with national legislation, which is currently being drafted by the Department.

A mobile app (RecFishing) has been developed by the EU Commission for reporting catches and is expected to be rolled out in Ireland in the coming months. DCEE advised that the initial phase of implementation will focus on education, guidance and awareness raising to support anglers in understanding and complying with the new measures.

Concerns were raised by AAG members, including reference to European Anglers Alliance's comments on Irelands failure to launch the RecFishing App to date. DCEE noted that teething issues with the App were being reported by certain member states and it was hoped these would be resolved by the time Ireland was onboarded.

The Chair noted that continued engagement with stakeholders was critical to the successful introduction of the Regulation and the App.

Pollack bag-limit

DCEE indicated that a national Byelaw to give effect to the EU Regulation which imposes a daily three-bag limit on pollack would be introduced by the 1st June 2026 was due to be signed shortly.

The AAG noted that the UK were pushing back against the introduction of the regulation and that the French had introduced a five-bag limit for mackerel, giving rise to concerns that this would be introduced at an EU level in the same way as pollack.

ICSA expressed strong concerns around the introduction of this measure, including the scientific evidence used and the lack of engagement/consultation with the sector. They highlighted the negative impact and the economic damage facing coastal communities as a result of this measure, in particular the difficulties faced by the charter boat sector.

Sea Angling

DCEE advised it had met with IFI to discuss the list of issues reported at the last meeting and agreed a process to address these going forward – policy issues would be included as topics for discussion and operational issues would be referred to IFI's Angling Development Officer.

Action point:

7. **IFI's Angling Development Officer to meet with AAG sea angling reps**

JRC Report on Blackwater

The Chair reported to the Group that that the independent JRC Report which examined the State's response to the fish kill incident that occurred on the Munster Blackwater in August 2025 had been published and circulated.

The AAG was advised that many of the recommendations will be progressed in the short term, including those aimed at strengthening how State agencies work together, and that longer-term recommendations, including research to predict high risk locations for fish kills, improving catchment resilience and habitat quality, and enhanced approaches to detection such as continuous real-time monitoring on major rivers would require detailed consideration.

Agenda Item 5 – Updates from Inland Fisheries Ireland

Byelaws 806 & 809

IFI reported that they are currently working through the submissions received during the consultation process, which will feed into the Great Western Lakes Management Plan (WLMP). IFI expect to conclude the process by the end of Summer 2026.

Inter-Agency Fishkill Protocol

IFI noted that the inter-agency group had met 4 times and on the development of the protocol, which was being finalised for submission to the Department.

Socio-economic assessment

IFI advised that a Socio-Economic study on the value of Salmon was out for tender and a contract would be signed soon. There was a discussion on the methodology for the study and on the merits of repeating the 2014 study on recreational angling rather than just focusing on salmon.

NIFF

IFI informed the meeting that a new Terms of Reference is being drafted for the NIFF and that the draft document would be circulated to the relevant bodies for their observations soon. The first meeting is expected to be held in early summer with a new chairperson and membership to be approved by the Minister.

Agenda Item 6 - AOB:

Consultative process on the Western Lakes Management Plan

IPS noted that while a number of consultations had been completed on the Western Lakes Management Plan, they considered that commitments given through AAG meetings had not been fulfilled and this needed to be addressed. IFI indicated that they were unaware of any input provided through this forum and that all formal consultation responses have been considered.

Action point:

2. **Outstanding commitments / action from AAG meetings to be reviewed to identify any actions not already addressed.**

Fishing opportunities

ICSA raised concerns regarding the increases provided for in the 2026 EU TAC Regulation on commercial sea bass limits for trawlers and fixed-net fisheries on the basis of potentially threatening a fragile stock recovery. ICSA also expressed concern about the precedent set

by France in introducing a recreational daily bag limit for catches of mackerel in French waters.

Commercial net fishing

FISSTA raised concerns with net fishing and expressed its view that netting must stop in order to reverse the decline of the wild Atlantic salmon. Anglers feel like they are not being listened to by the Minister.

Date for Next Meeting

The date for the next meeting was agreed as 17th September at 11am, in IFI HQ Citywest.

List of Action Points and current position

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action	Status
16 Apr 2026	1 - Adoption of Minutes	• DCEE to update January 2026 minutes and re-circulate to the Group for adoption at the next meeting.	Complete
16 Apr 2026	2 – AAG Terms of Reference	• DCEE to circulate note of the sub-group meeting • DCEE to reconvene sub-group to continue its work. • DCEE to provide update at the next Angling Advisory Group	In Progress
16 Apr 2026	3 - Inland Fisheries Ireland Presentation and Q&A on the National Barriers Programme	• IFI to provide a list of the projects on the River Shannon under the Barrier Mitigation Programme under both phase 1 and 2 to be provided to ACI. • A copy of the IFI presentation on the National Barriers Mitigation Programme to be circulated to the Group	Complete
16 Apr 2026	4 – Updates from DCEE	• IFI's Angling Development Officer to meet sea angling reps	Ongoing
16 Apr 2026	5 – Update from IFI	• IFI to circulate the new draft Terms of Reference for the NIFF to the relevant bodies for their observations.	
16 Apr 2026	6 – AOB	• DCEE to review all commitments / actions in relation to Western Lakes Management Plan from previous AAG meetings to identify any actions not already addressed.	In progress
15 Jan 2026	3 – Updates from IFI	• IFI briefing on Western Lakes Management Plan to be included on the agenda for a future meeting.	In progress