Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

Minutes of Meeting – 25.09.2023

IFI Headquarters, Citywest, Dublin 24 & Remotely via Zoom

Attendees:

Frank Gallagher (DECC, Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Barry Fulham (DECC), Francis O'Donnell (IFI), Dr Cathal Gallagher (IFI), Declan Cooke (IFI)

Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held 1 June 2023 were agreed and adopted.

Action Point: EFSA requested that D/ECC contact D/AFM to clarify the position regarding the Court of Appeal Judgement in relation to the striking down of a ban on large fishing vessels from trawling inside six nautical miles – this being a matter within the competence of the Sea Fisheries Policy & Management Division of that Department. D/ECC agreed to make the enquiry.

Action Point: IFI agreed to issue a letter to the CCMA expressing concerns conveyed by EFSA regarding the rights of access to beaches by sea anglers.

Agenda Item 2 – National Barriers Mitigation Programme

DECC updated ACCI on its cooperation with D/Housing to progress a Memorandum for Government to request Government approval for the establishment and future funding of a National Barriers Mitigation Programme to be operationalised by IFI .

IFI apprised ACCI of the work underway in establishing and developing the Barriers Mitigation Programme. The importance of addressing hydromorphological issues in the course of this work was highlighted with the ultimate objective of a higher standard of conservation and compliance with the Water Framework Directive.

SSTRAI welcomed the proposed funding for the Barriers Mitigation Programme

Agenda Item 3 – Western Lakes Management Plan

IFI provided a presentation on the Western Lakes Management Plan (WLMP) and updated the Group on feedback received through the public consultation.
ACCI was advised:

- Terms of Reference has been agreed for the WLMP
- The background to the WLMP and steps taken to date regarding environmental assessments and the public consultation phases
- Planned engagement with NPWS regarding appropriate assessment process
- Broad support for the WLMP in public consultation but strongly opposing views also evident
- Water Quality and habitat restoration issues in addition to the fundamental conservation imperative as cornerstones of the WLMP

In reply to queries from ACI, IFI advised that various research mechanisms have been factored in to the development of the WLMP including reports, surveys and stick assessments. IFI further advised that assessing the impact of the plan on fish stocks will involve establishing a baseline and examining the achievement of goals by ongoing monitoring.

IFI apprised ACCI that 2 rounds of public consultation has been undertaken on the Plan and that trout bag limits have proven to be quite contentious in the context of feedback received. IFI has engaged with NPWS regarding the appropriate assessment requirements pertaining to the Plan. CG (IFI) highlighted the multiple-agency involvement and responsibility regarding the work involved in the WLMP.

SSTRAI enquired on the budgetary costs of the Plan to date and IFI advised that it was difficult to estimate the costs at that juncture but that any expenditure has been used judiciously.

IPS set out a view that it was not in favour of transferring fish from one water body to another in terms of any measures that may arise. ACI stated that anything implemented arising from the Plan should be supported by science and evidence-based.

IFI concluded the discussion by informing ACCI that the final Plan would have to be considered by the senior management team in IFI and then presented to the Board of IFI before ultimately being submitted to the Minister for consideration.

Agenda Item 4 – IFI Board Appointments

DECC updated ACCI that the process to appoint a new Board of IFI was fully underway in that two recruitment campaigns launched in July 2023 in relation to:

- (i) 5 direct Ministerial appointments to the Board run fully by PAS/Stateboards and separately
- (ii) 3 appointments made having due regard to the advice of the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on the Environment & Climate Action advertised by PAS but run by the JOC.

IFI indicated that it had a nomination for staff representative on the Board on foot of an election to put forward a nomination for that position.