Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)
Draft Minutes of Meeting – 30.05.2022
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone & Remotely via Teams

Attendees:
Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), David Hamill (IFPAC), Noel Carr (FISSTA), George McCullough (EFSA), Denis Maher (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Francis O'Donnell (IFI), Suzanne Campion (IFI), Dr Cathal Gallagher (IFI), Pauline McNulty (IFI), Declan Cooke (IFI), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair), Rory O'Leary (DHLGH/MARA), Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Mary Breslin (DECC, Co-Secretary).

Apologies:
Donal Kennedy (ICSA), Padraig O'Riordan (IADA), Peter Walsh (IADA), Fergal Bell (IFPAC).

Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of previous meeting

Meeting opened with welcome to all.

The minutes of 3 May 2022 were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes were proposed and seconded.

Matters arising:
No matters arising.

Agenda Item 2 - Revised draft policy paper – International Management of North Atlantic Salmon

DECC confirmed that the issue of by-catch, raised by SSTRAI at the ACCI meeting 3 May 2022, was now included in the Policy Priorities and policy table of the revised draft policy paper. DECC advised that there is a lack of data on by-catch available. DECC suggested that the issue could be raised by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as ACI, SSTRAI and FISSTA at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) and the advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) could be sought.

IFI added that it is no longer compulsory for vessels, fishing in northern waters, to have an observer on board. DECC confirmed circulation of the revised draft policy paper following the meeting.

Action Point:
DECC to circulate revised draft policy paper.

Agenda Item 3 – Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) presentation

Co-Chair (DECC) welcomed Rory O'Leary from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) who gave a presentation that informed how MARA will interact with the new maritime regime. He outlined the work completed to date and next steps.

Co-Chair (ACI) requested that the presentation be circulated to all ACCI members. He also asked how aquaculture could remain outside the remit of MARA when there are aquaculture companies operating unregulated and without licence. DHLGH advised MARA do not set policy, they implement it. Clear policy direction is important for MARA and when MARA are established, DHLGH hopes they will be in a position to advise where improvements can be made.
Co-Chair (ACI) welcomed the development of MARA and requested that when the board is being formed, stakeholders are a part of it. DHLGH advised that there are a number of sections of the legislation that will allow the board to set up advisory committees and MARA could find itself drawing on the expertise of stakeholders via these committees.

Co-Chair (DECC) advised that he understood the concerns around the aquaculture issue, and this has been reflected in DECC's recent correspondence to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). He advised that there is general consensus among government departments that MARA is a good fit for aquaculture matters.

SSTRAI queried if MARA will maintain the role of protection and policing. DHLGH advised that the enforcement role of MARA is very clear in terms of enforcing the conditions of licencing and consents and there will be a role in development permission. SSTRAI welcomed the comments on enforcement and advised that in terms of wind energy and angling it will create massive opportunities for fish habitat and will be welcomed by the majority of the angling community.

FISSTA welcomed receiving a copy of the presentation and reiterated their disappointment at the exclusion of aquaculture. FISSTA advised that they are campaigning to protect the habitat of Wild Atlantic Salmon and stated that DAFM have a serious conflict of interest in this regard.

IFSA advised there are no impact studies on the long-term effect of by-catch from the trawling of estuaries and queried if this would be under MARA's remit. DHLGH advised that this comes under DAFM. IFSA asked if MARA could complete an impact study. DHLGH advised MARA could consider this in the future.

DHLGH thanked ACCI for the invitation to speak.

Agenda Item 4 - Updates

- **Western Lakes Management Plan (WLMP)**
  IFI advised that the final version of the plan was submitted to DECC in February 2022. The tender is now complete, and screening will take place over the next number of weeks. It will go to public consultation at the beginning of July for a period of approximately six weeks.

  FISSTA requested a copy of the WLMP. IFI advised that it will be available to all when it is released for public consultation.

  IFI confirmed to IFPAC that the screening being carried out was a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). IFPAC thanked IFI for their responses to the questions submitted by IPS. IFPAC queried the type of appropriate assessment (AA) being completed on the WLMP and also raised questions on the issues of salmonid species in the WLMP and ongoing research by IFI. Co-Chair (DECC) advised that discussions on the nature of AAs and SEAs should take place bilaterally rather than at ACCI meetings.

  Action Point:
  IPS/IFPAC to contact IFI to arrange a meeting where all issues could be discussed in detail.

Agenda Item 5 – AOB

- **Inshore Fishery Issues**

  DECC received an update from DAFM which advised that the court decision in relation to DAFM's appeal on 18m trawlers within the 6NM limit is still awaited. As soon as a judgement is received, DAFM will be happy to meet with DECC/IFI on the issue of inshore fishing.

  IFSA suggested that ACCI prepare a plan in advance of the judgement. DECC advised once the judgement is given there will be a basis for discussion with DAFM on all trawling within the inshore area. SSTRAI advised fish stocks, that were abundant 8-9 years ago, have diminished in most areas. SSTRAI agreed with IFSA that ACCI should prepare proposals ahead of the appeal decision. IFSA proposed having Cobh as a sustainable fishing estuary. DECC/IFI advised that they welcome further inputs on this.

  ESFA advised that the east coast from Wexford to Dublin is decimated and habitat destruction is a serious concern. There appears to be little monitoring of trawling activity as resources aren't available. DECC confirmed that this is a function regulated by DAFM and will raise the issue during the meeting on inshore fishing.

  A discussion took place on how ACCI could get involved in ongoing considerations on the issues of inshore fishing, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and policy papers via the Marine Strategy Framework.

  DECC advised that an application for funding from the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is being put together and this information is timely. DECC welcomed comments from ACCI to assist with a funding application.

  Action Points:

  1. IFSA to liaise with SSTRAI and DECC on proposal for Cobh as a sustainable fishing estuary.
  2. Meeting to be arranged between IFI, DECC, SSTRAI, IFSA and EFSA to discuss the issue of 18m trawlers currently under appeal.

Finance Sub-group Report

SSTRAI submitted the report which identified a number of areas the sub-group felt would be beneficial to ACCI. SSTRAI referenced the meeting with former Minister Canney when he advised there was €50k available to the group and the report was prepared based on this figure. Attending international events can be expensive and the funds would provide a level playing field in terms of international representation.

FISSTA were unable to attend the Finance sub-group meeting due to the short notice given. He advised FISSTA wanted everything put on hold.

DECC Responses to Finance Sub-group Report

International Competitions: The Public Spending Code prohibits DECC from providing travel and subsistence.

Professional Advice: Care must be exercised in providing funding for legal advice as DECC cannot be on both sides of the argument. SSTRAI advised that ACCI members often find themselves with legal challenges and are at a disadvantage against state agencies. DECC advised that funding could be provided for technical advice, making a business case or creating policy documents. SSTRAI confirmed this is the intention.

NASCO and Affiliation: The Public Spending Code does not facilitate funding for travel and subsistence, however funding the cost of affiliation fees can be explored.

Staff and Admin Support: Sport Ireland (SI) did not rule out providing resources on a professional level to ACI as the National Governing Body (NGB). This is a decision for SI and further discussion will be required. DECC advised that they requested €30k for staff support. SSTRAI advised this would be for part time staff/ administrative support.

Sport Funding for Federation Competitions: The existing funding of €30K is not sufficient and there is a possibility that further funding may be sought through an enhanced sponsorship scheme for IFI. DECC could seek the funding through the Estimates Campaign.

Action Points:

- DECC to forward written responses to Finance sub-group.
- DECC/IFI to consult record of meeting with Minister Canney.
- SSTRAI/ACI to send DECC their note of meeting with Minister Canney.
- DECC to work with IFI on an enhanced sponsorship scheme.

Sea Angling Fishing Competitions

IFSA and EFSA gave an update on the various competitions being held and being offered to Ireland. Assistance is required from IFI and all angling bodies to facilitate hosting of these competitions.

IFSA commented on IFSA's and EFSA's record of achievement as they are unchallenged in the sporting fraternity. EFSA advised that they recently added another 4 gold medals at the European Species Championship held in Iceland.

Tuna Quota

A discussion on a quota for Bluefin Tuna took place and moving from a scientific fishery to a recreational fishery. EFSA advised there is a significant international interest in Ireland hosting European Big Game Championships. Due to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the scientific fisheries, it is not currently possible but, with the support of all organisations, this could be explored. IFI and DECC understands a by-catch quota is needed which is similar to what DAFM would be requesting. Ireland would need a small percentage of this for recreational fishing. There will be a socio-economic value to a recreational fishery in coastal communities.

IPS Queries

IPS asked for an update on two points raised at the meeting on 3 May 2022.

Bye-laws Press Release

IFI advised they published social media posts reminding the public of bye-laws in force. IPS asked if there would be any publications in the national media and queried what was being done to combat the contravention of bye-laws. IFI confirmed they can issue a media release and will meet with the Head of Operations and District Inspectors on these matters.

IFI's Stock Management Plan 2022

IPS asked for an update on the commentary around the plan. IFI reiterated the need to have a meeting to discuss this and other issues raised.

Action Points:

- IFI to carry out a media release in relation to bye-laws.
- IPS and IFI to arrange a date for meeting.

Agenda Item 6 – Date of next meeting

- 25 July 2022 – IFI Headquarters, Citywest, Dublin 24.
- IFSA to join remotely.