**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS SALMON AND INLAND FISHERIES FORUM**

**Note of Proceedings-**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE *SALMON AND INLAND FISHERIES FORUM* NI HELD VIA WEBEX VIDEO LINK ON **WEDNESDAY 30th March 2022**

**Present: Jack Tisdall (JT) (Acting Chair)**

**Robbie Marshall (RM)**

**Albert Keys (AK)**

**Pat Close (PC)**

**Gary Houston (GH)**

**Apologies: Jim Haughey**

**Damian McCann**

**Paul Johnston**

**John McWilliams**

**Maurice Parkinson**

**Seamus Connor**

**Frankie Conlon**

**DAERA Officials in attendance: Alan McCurry (Minutes)**

**Owen Lyttle (OL)**

**David Mann (DM)**

**Trevor Stewart (TS)**

**In Chairman Jim Haughey’s absence JT stood in as chair of the meeting.**

1. **Apologies** – See above
2. **Minutes of previous meeting (8th December 2021) –** No formal objections. Finalised minutes circulated to members on 19/01/2022.
3. **Matters arising from the last meeting (Action Points)**

Seven action points from the last meeting.

**Action Point 1**

***DMc to seek clarification from NIEA regarding the point - given the timescale difference in dates of the HRA being performed and policy changing to include a reduction in commercial licences, should another assessment not have been performed to support the new policy.***

\*\*\*Carried forward to the next meeting\*\*\*

AK & GH raised the issue that this has not met the EU assessment regulations.

OL responded to say collaboration has happened with NIEA. NIEA have stated they are content with actions taken.

GH commented that UAF will be pursuing this matter through the complaints process and Office of Environmental Protection.

***Action Point 2***

***DAERA to consider providing a view on Lough Corrib situation compared to Lough Erne.***

Both action points above completed within a letter issued to the SIFF Chair on 23rd February 2022.

This has to be shared with SIFF members.

***Action Point 3***

***DAERA to issue a copy of draft Lough Erne Fishery Management Plan to SIFF members***

This action point has not yet been completed. DAERA officials have been working on this in recent months. The submission is currently with the minister to be signed off.

These will be published in due course.

**Action Point 4**

***DAERA to seek getting a DfI representative to attend the next SIFF meeting. - To discuss the issue of dredging of Quays in Lough Neagh.***

Action point completed however a representative is not available. Contact details have been passed on to Pat Close (LNFCS)

**Action Point 5**

***Chair to draft a letter regarding the Reservoir Act Consultation and circulated to SIFF members for comment.***

Action point completed. Letter submitted via email to DFI Flooding & Drainage Policy Branch on 21st January 2022.

**Action Point 6**

***DAERA to seek an update on Animal Sentience Bill.***

Action point completed. Updated from NIEA circulated around members on 8th February 2022.

**Action Point 7**

**GH to email a formal request to DAERA regarding UAF Event regarding Lough Erne.**

Action point was completed.

1. **Lough Neagh and Lough Erne Fishery Management Plans - (Update by DAERA)**

OL explained that he has highlighted this to be a significant issue within the cover note of submission to the minister. Needing a separate work stream due to it being an intense piece of work which will need ministerial involvement alongside counterpart within R.O.I.

A conversation began regarding this and the question of a habitats assessment. GH has stated the need for this to happen and has communicated this to DAERA. In response OL has said it is wrong to say DAERA have not considered the habitat within this plan. Some of the actions required in this plan have begun. OL also emphasized this plan is not the end, but the start of improvements planned for Lough Neagh.

Gary has requested the habitat assessment for this new plan.

***Future Action Point 1: HRA to be issued to members – David/Alan***

AK then explained how he has felt insulted by the lack of action taken against the plan for Lough Erne. This included dealing with lack of perch. OL is in agreement with AK but has worked to improve resources in the area of policy development and work on the plans actions. RM stated he was heartened at OL’s statements as he feels the Erne has become a shadow of its former self.

***Future Action Point 2: Arrange with AFBI for potential workshop – David***

A conversation took place between all members regarding the issues facing particular species at the dam with their passage affected by the flow.

1. **Review of Licences and Permits Regime – (Update by DAERA)**

Early draft sent to OL. He responded with many clarifications and queries, this was regarding some of the figures and assumptions being made. This may lead to a re-think of some of the proposals. A broader range of options was advised.

This began a discussion with the members’ views regarding pricing and licence structure. OL discussed the need to review Fisheries Act 1966. Whilst some parts are very good, some parts need reviewed.

PC also discussed the LNCFS’ suggestion to the department of single licence requirement, rather than licences needed to fish individual species commercially.

A discussion started surrounding the spending of licence/permit fees gathered. OL explained that all money recouped plus more is spent in maintenance and promotion of angling within NI.

1. **Review of SIFF – ( Update by DAERA )**

Consultation is complete. Submission is now with the minister for signing off. No response from the minister as of yet. This report will be circulated as soon as it comes back from minister approved.

The report is the SIB report which goes to the minister with a cover submission. It has been suggested by DAERA to look at a refresh and other options. If a different minister comes in a new submission will need to be submitted. DAERA are absolutely neutral in this and report only facts to SIB.

A discussion took place around potential inaccuracies. It was closed by saying that individual submissions could be made regarding this review.

1. **Any other business**

Issue raised by PC about accessing the quays on Lough Neagh.

A map has been developed by PC and colleagues to help identify quays which fall under agreement of maintenance from relevant authorities and identifying dormant quays. Good progress has been made on this. It was also noted that Lough Neagh Partnership have taken an interest in dredging matters on Lough Neagh, this is mostly for tourism access. Primary site being the Blackwater. This issue has been ongoing for many years now. It would be useful to have a DFI rep along to discuss the many issues surrounding this.

MP raised the issue of single farm payment. Feels the need to have this on the agenda for next meeting to discuss SIFF’s input in the process. Also suggested next meeting be held face to face at Bushmills Salmon Station.

***Future Action Point 3: Include Single Farm Payment on next agenda – David/Alan***

***Future Action Point 4: Check availability of Bushmills for next meeting – David/Alan***

AK suggests further meetings are hybrid to ensure people can be at meetings without need to travel.

AK recommended Alan Morrow is invited to next meeting to speak about Single Farm payment.

AK has called for a discussion surrounding the investment in angling. JT has suggested we would benefit from knowing the revenue collected and spend from angling. AK & GH did not feel the money collected matched the investment. OL explained that licence/permit fees are run at net-zero. Meaning it is not a cost recovery mechanism.

GH spoke on behalf of Glens Angling Club expressing their sadness at DAERA’s lack of action on dwindling salmon stocks within their 3 rivers. (Glendun, Dall & Glenarriff). The club have said they were promised habitat works if they ceased their hatchery operations. They have yet to have the promise fulfilled since the hatchery has ceased. They are asking a habitats assessment is carried out on these three rivers and aid given.

***Future Action Point 5 – Investigate the communication regarding the Glens Club worries – David***

PC commented the commercial trout season opening every year results in a backlash to his organisation. He has asked that anglers get off their back. AK has seconded PC’s point and says the same happens with commercial pike fishermen on Lough Erne. GH has stated the UAF iterate to members that commercial operations are legally entitled to do what they are doing.

RM asked PC if a quota is in place for fish taken from Lough Neagh. PC says there is no quota but has recently discussed this. It is not thought this is required now, but they do not know what other organisations are doing.

1. ***(Any matters not addressed within the timeframe for the meeting will be carried over as an Agenda item for the next meeting)***