

Inland Fisheries Ireland Consultation Policy

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Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

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Version Control Table

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Policy Statement

It is the policy of IFI to consult with stakeholders and the general public on matters of inland fisheries policy and service delivery.

1. Why does IFI Consult?

Consultation supports greater transparency, which is an important principle of good governance. It helps to ensure that the operations of IFI are conducted with greater clarity and openness. It recognises that public policy-making can be enhanced through the active involvement and contribution of all stakeholders with an interest in particular policy developments. By ensuring that stakeholders can express their views about a particular proposal, the decision-making process becomes better informed, more rigorous and more accountable.

There are a number of benefits to consultation:

- It assists the decision-making process by ensuring that interested parties can express their views on a policy.
- It helps to gather useful information to inform the evidence base for making regulations, including the identification of alternatives.
- It supports the rationale for a regulatory intervention or shows that the perceived need for that intervention is not confirmed by the facts.
- It helps to inform decisions on strategic planning or investment.
- It strengthens the focus of IFI on the needs of the public.
- It brings IFI closer to the citizen.
- It empowers individuals and communities to strengthen their role in society.
- It contributes to a shared understanding of issues and works towards agreed solutions.
- It can identify the likely pitfalls or possible unintended consequences of a proposal.
- Regulations are made to give effect to policies. Effective consultation helps to better frame regulations, promotes greater understanding of the proposals and better compliance with legislation. In addition, effective consultation guards against the possibility of involving only those who are most vocal or best- resourced to express views on particular policies or regulations. This can be important, for example, when it comes to ensuring that consumer

interests are also taken into account when economic regulations or regulatory decisions are being made.

- The consultation process recognises that there may be a wide range of stakeholders and stakeholder views on any particular issue, stakeholders are not confined to those with a direct financial or other interest. As well as the general public, other stakeholders may include consumer and business groups, trade unions, regional or local groups, the community and voluntary sector, the social partners and bodies with statutory functions in a particular sector.

2. IFI's consultation policy

Our approach to public consultation is guided by the following:

- [Official Languages Act \(and relevant legislation\)](#)
- [Department of Public Service and Reform guidance](#)
- [National Disability Authority Good Practice](#)

2.1 The period for public consultation may vary depending on the issue but can extend to 6 months (best practice indicates a minimum of 6 weeks). During this time, we endeavor to reach as many communities as possible through direct mailing; traditional media; social media and through direct engagements (e.g. public meetings / stakeholder meetings / focus group work).

2.2 A consultation document will be published at the outset of the consultation process. This consultation document will set out the scope of the consultation and areas on which members of the public are being asked to express their views. In some cases, depending on the purpose and scope of the consultation, respondents will be asked to respond to specific headings / questions rather than offering broad scope for responses.

2.3 Consultations will be conducted through the languages of English and Irish (where required under the Official Languages Acts (as amended) and all relevant documentation will be published in both languages (where required under the same legislation). The language used in consultation materials will be – as far as possible – highly accessible. In cases where a public consultation is advertised through 'paid' media or 'owned' media, a percentage of the advertising will be through the Irish language and placed in Irish language media, as set out under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.

2.4 From time-to-time, in order to inform the consultation process, IFI may conduct and/or commission pre-consultation research. This information may be published / be made publicly available during the consultation process and may also be published as part of the [above mentioned] consultation document.

2.5 The methods for each consultation will be set out at the commencement of each process. Methods will vary, depending on the purpose and scope of the consultation, but they could include:

- ✓ Online surveys
- ✓ Professional polling
- ✓ Focus-groups / one-to-one interviews
- ✓ Targeted and appropriate consultation methods which take into account how to reach and engage different audiences
- ✓ Town hall / public meetings both online and in person
- ✓ Sectoral meetings
- ✓ Written submissions made online, by email, or by post

2.6 Feedback will be published to encourage active participation which will detail summary information regarding the outcomes of the process and plans for future engagement if relevant.

2.7 All personal data that Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) may use is collected, processed and held in accordance with the provisions of EU Regulation 2016/679 General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.8 The names of respondents and their submissions will be published on IFI’s website at the end of each consultation process (i.e. at the time the document arising from the consultation is published). Any further information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘Personal data ‘as defined under Article 4 of GDPR) will be redacted prior to publication on the IFI website.

2.9 IFI is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and therefore has to consider any request made to it under that Act. IFI will provide advice as follows: 'If you consider that any part of your submission would be subject to any of the statutory exclusions under that Act please so indicate in your submission, specifying under which exemption you believe the content should be excluded'.

2.10 While each consultation differs in terms of purpose and scope, IFI always endeavors to ensure that each process provides useful and meaningful information and that it is undertaken in a professional, transparent and cost-effective manner.

2.11 IFI endeavors to publish revised policy / output documents from the consultation process within 12 weeks of the closing date of consultation.

2.12 In a crisis situation, for example the emergency introduction of a byelaw, IFI may not have the opportunity to undertake or complete a consultation process as outlined in its approach to public consultations detailed above. Although shorter timelines may also be necessary in these cases, IFI will provide as much information as is readily available on its website with a notice in an appropriate newspaper. It will also consult directly with stakeholders.