



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

BOARD OF INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND

Meeting Report - 29 January 2025

This report provides an outline of agenda items raised at this meeting.

BOARD MEETING – 29 January 2025

NOTE OF: Written Decision Between Meetings #1 2025 – C&AG Audit Certificate

The Head of Finance & Corporate Services requested that the written decision between meetings mechanism is utilised due to the fact that the audit certificate as provided by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) for the Financial Statements 2023 was provided to the executive between meetings, with a deadline for Board approval and submission to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) of one month (being 19 January 2025) for the purposes of presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

On 16 January 2025, the Board Secretary formally recorded that the Board of IFI noted the **Comptroller and Auditor General's Audit Certificate for 2023**.

1. Administration and Monthly Reporting

1.1 Agenda Adoption /Conflicts of Interest Declaration/ Adherence to Confidentiality

The agenda was adopted and no conflicts in respect of matters on the agenda were declared by members. The confidential nature of matters to be raised was agreed.

1.2 Minutes of the meetings of 11 December 2024 and 6 January 2025

Papers distributed: 1.2.1 DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 11 Dec 2024_Private Session_Chair Reviewed; 1.2.2 DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 11 Dec 2024; 1.2.3 DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 6 Jan 2025_Private Session

RESOLUTION: Approval of the draft **minutes of the Board meeting of 11 December 2024** (pending amendment advised); and **6 January 2025**

Matters Arising

The Chair of the Human Resources Sub-Committee (HRSC) suggested an amendment to action 1.8 such that the ELT shall collaborate with the HRSC on 2025 Business Plan commitments regarding reviews of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and culture in IFI. An amendment to the minutes in relation to delivery of Recommendation 11 of the EY Governance Review was also adopted.

1.3 Actions & Resolutions from previous meetings

Paper(s) distributed: 1.3.1 Board Meetings Actns Arising_2024@21 Jan 2025; 1.3.2 Board Meetings Resolutions_2024 @ 11 Dec 2024

These papers were taken as read and noted.

1.4 CEO's Report/Main Board Report

Paper distributed: 1.4.1 Deputy CEO Report January 2025

Presenting: Deputy CEO

This paper was taken as read. The Acting Head of Operations responded to a query on the climate statistics reported in relation to targets for 2024 not being met. In his response he referred to the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel (in compatible vehicles) in progressing the reduction in IFI's fleet carbon emissions. The Deputy CEO briefed members on the highlights of the CEO's Report which comprised; the submission of a draft outline Business Plan for 2025; the development of memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency (SFPA), Coillte and the EPA. Members commended this progress and discussed the various benefits accruing from such arrangements. The DCEO briefed members on preparations for the Staff Day on 5 March. He also referred to the feedback from EY on the strategy workshops with staff around the country and confirmed that the formation of the staff strategy working group was imminent.

The acting Head of Operations responded to queries in respect of the prosecution cases and list of engagements in planning matters during November 2024 cited in the Operational Highlights. The Board commended the success reported. It was also noted that court penalties imposed following judgements

in favour of IFI, were not sufficiently harsh for such environmental crimes and that the new legislation must address this.

2. Strategy and Planning

2.1 Paper on changes required in new legislation - Presentation

Paper distributed: 2.1.1 IFI Process for Development of Secondary Legislation - Jan 2025

Paper was taken as read. A presentation was provided on the inland fisheries legislation review and the status of progress of this work. An outline of authorised officer powers was provided. The Board expressed their gratitude for the presentation agreeing that legislation would be retained on the Board's agenda. The NWRBD Director responded to queries on his presentation. Issues such as water abstraction; fishery ownership; aquaculture; and invasive species were raised.

2.2 Business Plan 2024 - Update

Paper distributed: 2.2.1 IFI Business Plan 2024 - End of Year Reporting - Jan 2025

Paper was taken as read. The DCEO responded to queries in relation to projects which were incomplete at year end, confirming that they would be brought forward into 2025. A discussion ensued on the delay in the implementation of the licensing APP (replacing Bradán). He outlined impediments to progress where the organisation had received two expert opinions on procurement which are at variance with each other. A query regarding delivery under High Level Objective 7 – Innovation was addressed - that the lack of capacity meant that minimal progress was possible during 2024 under this HLO, but that excellent work had been done during 2023. A discussion followed on the merits of such coordinated efforts with wider benefits for staff morale.

The IFI Board noted the **IFI Business Plan 2024 - End of Year Report**.

2.3 Business Plan 2025 pre consultation DRAFT

Paper distributed: 2.3.1 Final Draft IFI Business Plan_2025 (v2)

Paper was taken as read. The DCEO outlined the nature of further consultation on the draft plan. Members commended the format of the plan. Feedback was provided in relation to the further areas for inclusion and consideration of the top 10 risks impacting the successful delivery of the plan. The Chair emphasised the need for the organisation to address its damaged reputation, focusing on the positive impact of IFI's work and thereby supporting/protecting staff. Other areas raised and discussed were: IFI's role in relation to native oysters; the relative absence of research within the plan and its link to objectives considering that it is a critical part of advising the Department; and not highlighting the excellent research innovation (i.e. eDNA). The DCEO responded to queries in relation to the Great Western Lakes; management of invasive species such as Lagarosiphon major; and accessing funding streams to support the work.

The IFI Board noted the **draft IFI Business Plan 2025 and that the final draft will be distributed with the February Board meeting papers for approval** (following further internal consultation).

2.4 Oversight Agreement (OA) & Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) Outturns 2024

Paper distributed: 2.4.1 IFI DECC - PDA Metrics 2023-2025 - Outturns for 2024

Paper was taken as read. S. Campion confirmed that the completed report would be submitted to DECC under the terms of IFI's Oversight Agreement (2023-2025).

The IFI Board noted the **Oversight Agreement (OA) & Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) Outturns 2024**.

2.5 Programme for Government 2025 (PFG25)

Paper distributed: 2.5.1 Programme-for-Government-2025

The Programme for Government 2025 was taken as read and members noted the 5 commitments listed under 'Protecting and Enhancing Inland Fisheries' (page 58). The Chair requested that this item remains on the agenda for the next meeting.

3. Sub-Committee Presentations / Recommendations

3.1 Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)

Paper distributed: 3.1.1 Mins of Audit & Risk Meeting 16 October 2024_APPRVD 9 Dec 2024

Presenting: Chair of ARC

Minutes of the October ARC meeting were taken as read and noted. The ARC Chair the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 24 February.

3.2 Human Resources Sub-Committee (HRSC)

Paper distributed: 3.2.1 Annual Report of the HRSC 2024

Presenting: Chair of HRSC

Paper was taken as read. The HRSC Annual Report for 2024 was presented by the HRSC Chair expressing gratitude to the HRSC members for their input and work on the Sub-Committee.

3.3 Property Sub-Committee (PSC) - Not raised in this meeting.

3.4 Governance Review Steering Group (GRSG)

Papers distributed: 3.4.1 Mins of Gov Review Strng Grp Meeting 11 November 2024_APPRVD_9 Dec 2024; 3.4.2 Gov Review Strng Grp Mtg Mins 9 Dec 2024_APPRVD_13 Jan 2025

Minutes of previous GRSG meetings were taken as read and noted. The Steering Group Chair noted the attendance of T. Barry and S. Neely at their final meeting as members of the Implementation Support Team (IST) in their supporting role to the executive in implementing the recommendations of the EY Governance Review. He added that Steering Group members agreed the work of the group was necessary and to review the Terms of Reference in order to continue a development/monitoring role in respect of organisational governance,

3.5 Corporate Plan (Strategy) Steering Group (CPSG)

Papers distributed: 3.5.1 Mins of Corp Plan (Strategy) Strng Grp Meeting 9 May 2024; 3.5.2 Mins of Corp Plan (Strategy) Strng Grp Meeting 17 June 2024; 3.5.3 Mins of Corp Plan (Strategy) Strng Grp Meeting 9 Sept 2024; 3.5.4 Mins of Corp Plan (Strategy) Strng Grp Meeting 13 Nov 2024

Presenting: Chair of the CPSG

Papers were taken as read and noted. The Chair of the Corporate Plan (Strategy) Steering Group provided a briefing on the EY strategy workshops with staff (December/January), the NIFF (February), the Board (later the same day) and the Staff Strategy Working Group (March) workshops by EY. He stated he anticipates that a draft strategy would be presented to the Board in March.

3.6 Working Group on the Development of an IFI Policy Paper on Salmon (WGIPPS)

Paper distributed: No papers for this item.

Presenting: Chair of the WGIPPS

The Chair of the WGIPPS indicated that it had not been possible to provide a draft Terms of Reference for the January Board meeting pack and that the group would be meeting to consider it before the February Board meeting.

4. Stakeholder Update

4.1 National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF)

Paper distributed: No papers for this item.

Feedback was provided by those who attended the NIFF the meeting of 23 January. It was noted that this was an important stakeholder forum for IFI, particularly in drafting the next organisational strategy.

5. Items for Approval

5.1 Lough Ree Trout Licences 2025 (Commercial Draftnet Fishery 15 February – 31 July 2025)

Paper distributed: 5.1.1 Lough Ree Trout Licences 2025 - Jan 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The DCEO responded to queries from members in relation to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening undertaken on Natura 2000 sites (Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Lough Ree Special Protection Areas (SPA)) in advance of the 2024 season [which concluded

that no further assessment was required] and the proposed scheduling of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) during 2025 to inform the Board's decision in January 2026.

The Board asserted that if it is the competent authority for licence approval, it is therefore the competent authority for the AA and needed to complete a further review of the full assessment from 2024. The Board nominated two members to conduct a review of the assessment the following week in order progress a 'Decision Between Meetings' to finalise a decision by the Board before the commencement of the season on 15 February. A query was raised as to why the collection of catch data had ended in 2018. Options open to the Board in the interests of conservation were discussed.

5.2 Go Fishing Fund Disbursement

Paper distributed: 5.2.1 Go Fishing Fund Recommendation - Jan 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The acting Head of Operations responded to a query in relation to the provision of a rationale/ feedback when a project is rejected for funding. It was noted that there is a high transactional cost on staff in administering such small grants. The Board noted the paper and was satisfied with the presentation.

RESOLUTION: Approval of **the funding of the projects recommended under the Go Fishing Fund** launched in June 2024.

5.3 IFI Policy for Salmon Fisheries with Marginal Harvestable Surpluses

Paper distributed: 5.3.1 IFI Policy for Salmon Fisheries with Marginal Harvestable Surpluses - Jan 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The Acting Head of Operations responded to queries in relation to the proposed policy. Feedback from members comprised; consideration of framing the closure as a positive action (and how this is communicated/potential of project work); consideration of heritage fishing in closed fisheries; the need to define 'marginal'. It was agreed that the executive would revert on this feedback.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **IFI Policy for Salmon Fisheries with Marginal Harvestable Surpluses**.

5.4 Public EV Charging Contract

Paper distributed: 5.4.1 Public EV Charging Contract - Jan 2025

Presenting: Head of Finance & Corporate Services

This paper was taken as read. The Board expressed its satisfaction with the paper provided.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the award of the contract to **Car Charger EV Ltd** over 4 years.

5.5 Purchase of Heavy Towing Vehicles – Contract Award

Papers distributed: 5.5.1 Purchase of Heavy Towing Vehicles - Contract Award - Jan 2025

Presenting: Head of Finance & Corporate Services

This paper was taken as read. The Board expressed its satisfaction with the paper provided.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **award of the contract to Kellys Sales & Service Ltd. to purchase 9 heavy towing vehicles..**

5.6 Establishment of Barrier Mitigation Fund

Paper distributed: 5.6.1 Establishment of a Barrier Mitigation Fund

Presenting: Deputy CEO

This paper was taken as read. The DCEO confirmed that this was a fund for the disbursement of funding to suitable applicants to support the work of the National Barriers Mitigation Programme in Ireland. The Board was satisfied with the paper and the DCEO's verbal report.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **establishment of a Barrier Mitigation Fund (Scheme No.1), with a total fund value up to €6m.**

5.7 Appointment of Contractors to Construct Weir – Portlaw, Co. Waterford

Paper distributed: 5.7.1 Appointment of Contractors Construction of weir - Fish Passage Portlaw

Presenting: Deputy CEO

Paper was taken as read. Board members were satisfied with the paper provided.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the budget estimate in advance of the commencement of the tender process to appoint **contractors to construct fish passes on the Clodiagh River**, Portlaw, Co. Waterford.

5.8 I-REEF Project 2025

Paper distributed: 5.8.1 I-REEF Project 2025

Presenting: Deputy CEO

Paper was taken as read. Board members were satisfied with the paper provided and commented that this was an important step in developing innovative methodologies and promoting knowledge exchange between the academic and cognate agency partners.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **proposal to become an official project partner of I-REEF**.

6. Items for Noting

6.1 Development Projects Progress Report Q4 2024

Paper distributed: 6.1.1 Development Projects Progress Report for Q4 - Jan 2025

This paper was taken as read and noted.

6.2 IFI and Friends of the Earth v. Galway County Council

Paper distributed: 6.2.1 IFI and Friends of the Earth v. Galway County Council

Paper was taken as read. The DCEO provided a brief presentation on the paper. The Board commended the efforts invested, resulting in a positive outcome for the protection of fisheries habitat.

6.3 Bank Mandate - Note

Paper distributed: 6.3.1 Bank Mandate Note Jan 2025

This paper was taken as read and noted.

7. Key Reporting

Not raised in this meeting.

8. Policies

Not raised in this meeting.

9. Governance Plans

Not raised in this meeting.

10. AOB