



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

BOARD OF INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND

Meeting Report - 26 February 2025

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

BOARD MEETING – 26 February 2025

NOTE OF: Written Decision Between Meetings #2 2025

It was agreed by the IFI Board at its meeting on 29 January 2025 to finalise a decision on issuing L. Ree Trout Draughtnet licences utilising the 'Decision between Meetings' mechanism. A series of meetings were convened with nominated Board members, A. Cawley and K. Dubsy and relevant members of the IFI management team since the January Board meeting. These meetings resulted in amendments being made to both the submission paper and AA Screening Report. Papers were distributed for this decision to all Board members.

On 13 February 2025, the Board Secretary formally recorded the resolution: **the Board of IFI approves the issuing of 11 Lough Ree Trout Net Draught Net Fishery Licenses for the 2025 season.**

The Chair sought a resolution in relation to the appointment of the next member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). Suzanne Campion is the next named member on the rotation of the Deputy CEO role.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **performance of functions by Deputy Chief Executive under Section 24(3) of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010.** That due to the continued absence of the Chief Executive, in accordance with Section 24(3) of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, Suzanne Campion, Head of Finance and Corporate Services be appointed to act as deputy Chief Executive for the duration of the absence of the Chief Executive or for six months from 6 March, whichever is earlier, or until such earlier date as the Board may direct.

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 6 January and 29 January 2025

Paper(s) distributed: 1.2.1 DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 29 Jan 2025_Private Session; 1.2.2 DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 29 Jan 2025_Open Session; 1.2.3 Board Meeting Minutes 6 January 2025_Extract for DCEO

RESOLUTION: Approval of the draft **minutes of the Board meeting of 29 January 2025.**

Matters Arising

In response to a query raised regarding checks of wild salmon the Deputy CEO confirmed checks of wild salmon sales of 'fish dealers/ restaurants & guesthouses' are conducted and reported in the Protection Plan statistics.

1.3 Actions & Resolutions from previous meetings

Papers distributed: 1.3.1 Board Meetings Actns Arising_2024@13 Feb 2025; 1.3.2 Board Meetings Resolutions_2025 @13 Feb 2025

These papers were taken as read and noted.

1.4 CEO's Report/Main Board Report

Papers distributed: 1.4.1 Deputy CEO Report February 2025

Presenting: Deputy CEO

Paper was taken as read. The Deputy CEO reported the recent incident in Mayo, involving 3 members of the protection team. He confirmed precautionary actions to be taken; an update to the current SOP and a full review of drysuits. He briefed members on the forthcoming staff day preparations and inclusions. He also briefed members on the National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF) workshop with EY on their input into IFI's next 5-year strategy.

The DCEO updated members on the progress of MOUs which the organisation is developing. He informed the Board that IFI had been invited to become a member of three inter-departmental groups. A discussion ensued on collaboration with MARA on estuarine fisheries management and it was agreed to place this on the March meeting agenda. This discussion expanded to engagement with a wider group of agencies of related focus with a view to a collective approach to stakeholder communication.

The Deputy CEO provided an update on the outcome of the judicial review of the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB) decision. He advised that the decision on the matter has been remitted to ALAB and a decision on the foreshore licence is remitted to the Minister. The Head of Research & Development clarified the license application implications of the judgement. He confirmed that IFI has been provided with four foreshore aquaculture licences for review. The Chair emphasised the importance of communicating the outcome and its consequences to stakeholders.

In light of the next phase of Deputy CEO by the Head of Finance & Corporate Services, the proposed approach to temporarily backfilling of this position was outlined.

RESOLUTION: Following its meeting to consider the matter on 6 January 2025, the **IFI Board rescinds resolution 11, of 11 December 2024 meeting in relation to permit prices**, by unanimous agreement of the members.

2. Strategy and Planning

2.1 Strategic Plan 2026-2030 Update

Papers distributed: 2.1.1 IFI Corporate Plan - Status Update 07 Feb
Paper was taken as read and noted.

2.2 DRAFT Business Plan 2025

Papers distributed: 2.2.1 DRAFT 2025 Business Plan

Presenting: Deputy CEO, B. Fox

Paper was taken as read. The Deputy CEO presented the updated Business Plan for 2025, confirming that feedback from members of the Board and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had been applied. It was agreed to include the risk to the status of fish within the top risks on the plan.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **draft 2025 IFI Business Plan** with the inclusion of risk to fish stocks.

2.3 L. Ree Trout Draft Net Licences

Following the written decision between meetings #2, it was agreed to consider what steps need to be taken to mitigate any possible risks and plan a way forward for the next licence renewal cycle. The Chair requested that it is added to the Board meeting agenda for discussion. The Deputy CEO confirmed that a calendar of decisions was being compiled by the executive. It was agreed that taking decisions between meetings is not ideal, particularly when the decision has significant consequences. The short timeframe with regard to the Lough Ree licence issue meant that members did not have the opportunity to interact on the decision to grant licences. The Board agreed that strategic fisheries management policy is a function of the Board.

3. Sub-Committee Presentations / Recommendations

3.1 Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)

Papers distributed: 3.1.1 DRAFT ARC Workplan 2025; 3.1.2 DRAFT IFI Board Governance Workplan 2025 (WIP); 3.1.3 DRAFT Financial Statements 2024_Gvmnc Sttmnt_Brd Mmbrs Rprt_Sttmnt f Ntrl Cntrl; 3.1.4 DRAFT IFI Governance Assurance Framework - V1; 3.1.5.1 IFI Final Management Letter Audited FS 2023; 3.1.5.2 IFI Final Management Letter Audited FS 2023 – Detail; 3.1.6 Governance and Risk Report Q4 2024; 3.1.7 Protected Disclosures Act 2014_Annual Report 2024; 3.1.8 DRAFT Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2024; 3.1.9.1 ARC Meeting Minutes 16 Oct 2024_APPRVD_9 Dec 2024; 3.1.9.2 ARC Meeting Minutes 9 Dec 2024; 3.1.10 PD9-2023 Final Report by RSM

Presenting: Chair of ARC

Paper were taken as read. The ARC Chair reported from the Committee meeting of 24 February outlining the review undertaken by the Committee of the draft Financial Statements for 2024 and that the ARC

and Board will review the next draft for the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) at the end of March. She noted that the ARC had sought further detail to be added to 4.8 within the Statement on Internal Control. She verified that the ARC was satisfied to recommend the following papers for approval subject to amendments; the draft Financial Statements 2024, the draft ARC Workplan 2025, the Board Governance Workplan 2025 and the draft IFI Governance Assurance Framework, a guide to IFI's governance arrangements and follow-up on recommendation 11.4 'Development of an Assurance Framework' from the EY Review Report.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the following matters:

Draft ARC Workplan 2025
Draft Board Governance Workplan 2025
Draft Financial Statements 2024 for submission to IFI's Parent Department
Draft IFI Governance Assurance Framework

The following documents were noted by the Board:

- IFI Final Management Letter Audited FS 2023
- IFI Governance and Risk Report Q4 2024: The ARC Chair outlined the discussion of the Committee in relation to staffing levels, particularly in Finance. She stated that final reports are due from Evelyn Partners. The 2025 Audit Programme will be discussed in a meeting with Forvis Mazars, IFI's newly appointed Internal Auditors at the next ARC meeting. The RIB Fleet Review 2022 will be presented to the Board for adoption at the March Board meeting.
- IFI Protected Disclosures Report under S.22 of the PD Act 2014 as Amended
- Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2024
- ARC meeting minutes of 16 October and 9 December 2024.

The ARC Chair updated the Board on the advertised position of external member of the ARC, anticipating that a recommendation would be made to the Board in March. The ARC Chair also reported that an update on noteworthy IT systems being implemented was provided in relation to the tendering for the Financial Management/ HR System and the Licence Management System. The Committee was advised that there were no sunk costs lost due to the collapse of the tender for the Licence Management System.

Investigation Report from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)

The Chair requested that the ARC consider this report at its meeting on 24 February and a copy had been provided to the wider Board members in advance of the Board meeting. The letter received by the Chair from the Protected Disclosures Unit of DECC was shared with members on screen. The ARC Chair outlined assurances provided by the Executive at the ARC meeting in relation to strengthened systems and process such that all hire vehicles are not at risk of going into service without being covered by IFI's motor insurance. Board members were informed that a report was requested which would permit an assessment as to whether an internal investigation will be necessary. It was agreed to await the Executive's report to the ARC and their consideration being presented to the Board in March.

3.2 Human Resources Sub-Committee (HRSC)

Paper distributed: 3.2.1 Proposal for a permanent Deputy CEO role FINAL

Presenting: Chair of HRSC

Paper was raised during under the session without the executive and the proposal was approved by the Board.

3.3 Property Sub-Committee (PSC)

Papers distributed: 3.3.1 DRAFT Property Sub-committee workplan 2025; 3.3.2 DRAFT Multi-annual Capital Strategy February 2025-2029_Updated; 3.3.3 Proposed Disposal of Properties not in use February 2025_Updated; 3.3.4 Capital Plan 2024 Yearend Report; 3.3.5 Annual Report 2024 of the Property Sub-Committee; 3.3.6 Property Sub-committee Meeting Minutes 4 December 2024_APPRVD 17 Feb 2025

Presenting: Chair of PSC

Papers were taken as read. The PSC Chair provided a presentation on the papers being recommended for approval by the Committee following its meeting on 17 February 2025.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the following matters:

Draft Property Sub-Committee Workplan 2025
Draft Multi-annual Capital Strategy subject to review to align with new Corporate Strategy
Progression by the executive to dispose of 7 IFI properties

The following documents were discussed and noted by the Board:

- IFI Capital Plan 2024 Yearend Report – in relation to the (2 year should come back to Board)
- Policy around hatcheries – salmon policies role is to look at salmon policy.
- PSC Annual Report 2024
- PSC meeting minutes of 4 December 2024.

3.4 Governance Review Steering Group (GRSG)

Paper distributed: 3.4.1 Gov Review Strng Grp Mtg Mins 13 January 2025_APPRVD_10 Feb 2025

Presenting: Chair of GRSG

Minutes of the GRSG meeting were taken as read and noted. The Steering Group Chair confirmed that the group would continue to meet monthly for the present, monitoring continuing governance implementation. He anticipated that the external review and related activity as referenced in the Programme for Government would be monitored with the EY recommendations.

3.5 Corporate Plan (Strategy) Steering Group (CPSG)

Paper distributed: No papers for this item.

Presenting: Chair of the CPSG

The Chair of the Corporate Plan (Strategy) Steering Group provided a briefing on the progress of the preparation of the strategic plan. He reported that the EY project manager will complete the first draft of the strategy working document for presentation to the Board in March. The Chair requested that a dedicated meeting is convened for the members to focus only on the strategy working document, as it must ultimately be owned by the IFI Board.

3.6 Working Group on the development of an IFI Position Paper on Salmon (WGIPPS)

Paper distributed: 3.6.1 DRAFT Working Group IFI Position Paper on Salmon Terms of Reference V.2

Presenting: Chair of the WGIPPS

The Chair of the WGIPPS provided an outline of the components of the position paper being prepared which include; stock management; data and research; pressures on salmon – freshwater, coastal, open ocean etc. He outlined the benefit of holding a workshop gathering fisheries specialists bringing their expertise to the development of the paper. The WGIPPS Chair anticipated that the paper would be presented to the Board in June. The Board Chair added that he wished to set aside a day for review of this critical body of work in June and that communication of this work to the new Minister would be necessary.

A discussion ensued which comprised; the need for environmental assessments (SEA); consideration of the International context, particularly the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation; the collation of data collected such that the position is supported by science; and consideration of public engagement when a position is arrived at via open days. The Chair emphasised that IFI must establish a coherent view preventing mixed messaging.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the draft **Working Group on the Development of an IFI Position Paper Terms of Reference**

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 EY workshop of 20 February. Due to the fact that the position of Chair of the NIFF is vacant, discussion ensued on possible suitable candidates.

5. Items for Approval

5.1 Proposed Amendment to L. Arrow Bye Law [including Unshin River]

Papers distributed: 5.1.1 Lough Arrow (inc Unshin River) bye-laws amendment - Feb 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Following presentation of the paper discussion ensued on the appropriate assessment (AA) report and whether the Board required sight of it. The Acting Head of Operations confirmed that IFI acts as the Department's agents for the purpose of completing the appropriate assessment, although the Minister is the consenting authority. The Board proposed that a national framework for brown trout (BT) is developed, which would necessitate further research.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **submission to DECC for legislative provision for:** a reduction of the daily angling bag limit from 4 to 2 brown trout to apply to L. Arrow and the Unshin River; an increase in size limit for brown trout from 12 inches to 14 inches for Lough Arrow only; and alignment of the close season for angling on the Unshin River with that of L. Arrow (i.e. 1st Oct to 31st Mar annually).

5.2 Proposed Public Consultation on proposed permanent Bye Law on R. Dodder

Paper distributed: 5.2.1 Proposal to go to Public Consultation - Proposed permanent Bye Law - R. Dodder - February 25

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The acting Head of Operations responded to queries raised. A brief discussion ensued on the evolving accessibility to the River Dodder.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **progression of public consultation on fly-fishing only within the specified waters from June 1st to September 30th**, the use of single barbless hooks only permitted, and mandatory catch and release for all fish.

5.3 Appointment of Consultant and Contractor to Design, Tender and Construct Tinnahinch Weir Refurbishment and Rock Ramp Fish Pass

Papers distributed: 5.3.1 NBMP_01.03.06_001 Tinnahinch Construction_I01

Presenting: Deputy CEO

Paper was taken as read. The DCEO responded to queries, confirming that this barrier was selected under specified criteria. The Chair of the ARC informed members that a review of the governance of the Barriers Mitigation Programme (BMP) is proposed for the 2025 internal audit programme. The Chair stated that the Barriers Mitigation Programme would be placed as a standing item on the Board's agenda. The DCEO assured the Board that the Head of the BMP, Hazel King, reports every second meeting to the ELT. Members were satisfied with the presentation.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **cost of the appointment of Contractors to construct a weir refurbishment and rock ramp fish passage project at Tinnahinch, Co Kilkenny/Co Carlow**. Total scheme budget estimate €950k inclusive of VAT. (IFI contribution €595k inclusive of VAT)

6. Items for Noting

6.1 Development Projects Schedule 2025

Paper distributed: 6.1.1 Development Projects Schedule 2025 - February 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The acting Head of Operations stated that a further tranche of projects was anticipated, the Salmon and Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation and Protection Fund (SSTRCP Fund) is open for applications later in the year. He confirmed that funding is granted in line with the scheme mechanisms and responded to queries in relation to the dispersal of development works around the country. The Deputy CEO informed members that a meeting had taken place with unions and there had been acceptance of the dual purpose of the Fisheries Officer role. The Board acknowledged the comprehensive schedule and the breadth of work it reports. A discussion ensued on resourcing such activities. The Board commended the paper and requested feedback is passed to its author Director, Development Programme.

6.2 National Fisheries Protection Plan 2025

Paper distributed: 6.2.1 National Fisheries Protection Plan 2025 - February 2025

Presenting: Acting Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The Deputy CEO provided a brief presentation on this paper. It was agreed that the National Fisheries Protection Plan is to be placed as a stand-alone item on the Board agenda at a future meeting.

6.3 Update on Collaboration with the Marine Institute

Paper distributed: 6.3.1 National Salmonid Index Catchment and MI facility at Newport

Presenting: Head of Research & Development

Paper was taken as read. Following presentation by the Head of Research & Development on the scientific work on aquaculture completed at that Erriff Index Catchment and the effort in resourcing it. He stated that the scientific work possible in the Erriff is different to that in Newport. The Board noted the original decision that research is sited at the Erriff but acknowledged the premise of the paper and the comparison of both locations. It was confirmed that capital expenditure would be assessed by the Property Sub-Committee. The Board advised that a specific research budget is established to relevant self-directed research.

6.4 Dissolution of the Fish Farm Project Steering Group

Paper distributed: 6.4.1 Fish Farm Project Steering Group - Dissolution February 2025

Paper was taken as read and members were satisfied with requirement.

RESOLUTION: Approval of the **dissolution of the Fish Farm Project Steering Group**

7. Key Reporting

7.4 Heads of Function Statements of Assurance

Paper distributed: 7.4.1 Assurance Statements 2024 - ELT members

This paper was taken as read and noted.

7.5 Delegation of Authority Register - Not raised in this meeting.

Papers distributed: 7.5.1 ARC paper Scheme of delegations update; 7.5.2 Scheme of Delegation V1.2 Draft February 2025 as of 2025 02 13; 7.5.3 Scheme of Delegation V1.2

Papers were taken as read and noted.

8. Policies

Not raised in this meeting.

9. Governance Plans

Not raised in this meeting.

10. AOB

The Board expressed their deep appreciation to Barry Fox as Deputy CEO and to Brian Beckett as Acting Head of Operations for the last 6 months.