



Iascach Intíre Éireann  
Inland Fisheries Ireland

# **BOARD OF INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND**

## **Meeting Report - 27 February 2024**

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

# BOARD MEETING – 27 February 2024

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**NOTE OF: Written Decision Between Meetings #1 2024 – L. Ree Draft Net Licences**

**Supporting Papers:** 0.0 Written Decision Between Meetings – 2024; 1.1 L. Ree Commercial Draft Net Applications – Jan 2024'; 1.2 DET-2024-000095\_AA\_ Screening\_ Determination L. Ree Commercial Draft nets

**RESOLUTION:** Approval to grant licences to eleven valid applications for **L. Ree Commercial Trout Licences** for 2024.

Two members were not in agreement; remaining members confirmed their approval.

## 1. Meeting Administration

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

The agenda was adopted with no conflicts of interest declared. The confidential nature of matters to be raised was agreed.

### **1.2 Apologies**

None.

### **1.3 Meeting Minutes – 31 January 2024**

**Paper(s) distributed:** 1.3.1 DRAFT Meeting Minutes of the IFI Board 31 January 2024

The CEO advised of an amendment to the record, adding reference to the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 under item 2.1, this was accepted by members.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of draft **minutes of the 31 January 2024** Board meeting, with advised amendment applied.

### **1.4 Matters Arising**

There were no matters raised.

### **1.5 Board Meeting Actions Arising & Resolutions – 31 January 2024**

**Paper(s) distributed:** 1.5.1 Board Meeting Actions Arising – 31 January 2024; 1.5.2 Board Meeting Resolutions\_2023 – 2024 @ 31 January 2024;

The actions arising and resolutions from the previous meeting were taken as read and noted.

### **1.6 Correspondence**

**Paper distributed:** 1.6.1 Letter to JC on Environment & Climate Action\_Chair IFI Correspondence was noted.

## 2. CEO's Report

### **2.1 CEO's Report – February 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 2.1.1 CEO's Report February 2024; 2.1.2 CEO's Report Feb 2024 – Appendix 5 – Vehicle Insurance Matter

The Head of Finance and Corporate Services and the Financial Controller joined the meeting in order to provide support to queries raised by members under this item. The papers were taken as read and the CEO was invited to raise issues of particular import to members. Matters raised comprised: the appointment to the Barriers Mitigation Programme Lead position; a proposed MOU with Coillte; an update regarding a fishery lease arrangement; assurance regarding the organisation's policy in relation to firearms; a request from a club for access to IFI property; and financial liability in relation to a road traffic incident.

In respect of a proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Coillte, the CEO responded to queries. The Board expressed its interest in the development of a basis for mutually beneficial efficiencies and critical discussion on habitat protection.

Details were provided of the chronology of events leading to a vehicle hired by IFI not being insured at the time of a road traffic incident and the organisation's efforts with its insurer for cover to be extended. Members were briefed on the organisation's interaction with the Personal Injuries Resolution Board ((PIRB) formerly the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB)) and its legal advisor in relation to assessing the reasonability of the costs of a claim by an injured party. She outlined the financial implications and potentiality of a further claim, both of which must be funded from IFI's own resources. She confirmed that there had been an accrual in the 2023 accounts, but this is not sufficient to cover the cost of the first claim received. It was also confirmed that the organisation tenders for categories of insurance cover on an annual basis.

In respect of the matter regarding access to an IFI operational base, the Board supported the arrangement pending confirmation of indemnification, legal agreement and the assurance that all associated costs are borne by the club.

Following a brief discussion on IFI's Barrier Mitigation Programme, it was agreed that the matter would remain on the Board agenda on an ongoing basis.

### **3. Matters for Consideration / Decision**

#### **3.1 Management Accounts 2023**

**Papers distributed:** 3.0.1 Finance Briefing Note - February 2024; 3.1.1 Management Accts - December 2023

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services and Financial Controller

Papers were taken as read. The ARC Chair reported on the matters reviewed by the Committee at its meeting on 23 February, where it was concluded following an in-depth discussion, to recommend the approval of; the draft 2023 Financial Statements, the draft 2024 Capital Plan and the draft 2024 Pay and Non-pay Budget. The ARC also confirmed that matters raised in the Management Letter for the FS 2022 were reviewed and the executive was tasked with amalgamating actions. The ARC Chair added that the Committee was satisfied with the comprehensive representations of S. Campion and A. Buckley.

The Finance Briefing Note was presented, providing details of high level Cashflow and Budget figures and raised points to consider within the Financial Statements. Other areas raised included; a discussion on IFI's pension arrangements; IFI's depleting reserve fund; and measures monitoring treasury. The ARC Chair recommended that approval is sought from the Minister for an overdraft facility. Members expressed concern in relation to the significant risk this poses and agreed a formal recommendation.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of recommendation that IFI obtains sanction from its parent Department to access an **overdraft facility**

In relation to organisational business plans the Head of Finance & Corporate Services informed members that these were not yet complete for 2024, but assured members that this work would be completed in Q4 for Board approval in 2024 for 2025.

#### **3.2 DRAFT Financial Statement 2023 - DECC**

**Papers distributed:** 3.2.1 DRAFT Financial Statements 2023; 3.2.2 IFI Gov and Int Control Statement Draft 2023\_DECC (In full)

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services, Financial Controller

Papers were taken as read by members and members were satisfied with presentations provided by the executive.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of the **Draft Financial Statements 2023** for submission to DECC

#### **3.3 DRAFT Capital Plan (Property) 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 3.3.1 DRAFT Capital Plan (Property) 2024; CapEx Request-Epworth Hse, Clonmel

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

Papers were taken as read. In response to a query in relation to resolving IFI's carbon commitments, the organisation's budgetary commitment to the purchase of electric vehicles and works on buildings in line with 2030 targets was confirmed. A member of the ARC indicated the absence of a multi-annual strategic

capital plan, which could be progressed with the implementation of an integrated finance system. It was confirmed that a project to implement a new finance system was in planning.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of the **DRAFT Capital Plan 2024**

Members considered an added item additional refurbishment costs on Epworth House, Clonmel, for approval and were satisfied with the paper provided and the assurance regarding the critical nature of the capital works required for this listed IFI building.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of the **capital expenditure at Epworth House, Clonmel**

### **3.4 DRAFT Pay and Non-pay Budget 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 3.4.1 DRAFT Pay and Non-pay Budget 2024

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

Papers were taken as read. The updated format of the organisation's budget forecast to the ARC had been presented to the ARC, and a briefing provided to Board members on the draft budget for 2024. The Board was satisfied with the presentation and feedback from the ARC.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of the **DRAFT Pay & Non-pay Budget 2024.**

### **3.5 Final Management Letter 2022**

**Papers distributed:** 3.5.1 Final Management Letter - IFI Financial Statements 2022

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

Paper was taken as read and noted.

### **3.6 Aquaculture Licencing Appeals Board (ALAB) – Outstanding Legal Costs**

**Papers distributed:** 3.6.1 ALAB Judicial Review - Legal Fees Update

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

This paper was taken as read. An outline of the detail in the paper was presented and it was confirmed that each party had agreed to cover their own costs. Context in relation to the judicial review was provided. A discussion ensued on the varying roles of state agencies and research relied upon to inform decision making with respect to the issue of aquaculture licences. As an output of its debate, the Board recommended the development of an MOU with the Marine Institute (MI). The Board was satisfied with the presentation provided by the executive.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval to discharge the outstanding **amount owed to legal advisers**

### **3.7 Programme Project Manager – Job Description**

**Papers distributed:** 3.7.1 Programme\_Project Manager - Job Description

Paper was withdrawn.

### **3.8 Ernst & Young (EY) Contract Extension**

**Papers distributed:** 3.8.1 EY contract extension

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

Paper was taken as read. A brief outline of services provided by EY was provided.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval to **extend EY contract** within parameters of Regulation 72(1)(b)

### **3.9 Fish Farm Prices – Increase 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 3.9.1 Fish Farm Price increase 2024

**Presenting:** Head of Finance & Corporate Services

This paper was taken as read. The Board was satisfied with the rationale provided by the executive.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval to **increase Fish Farm prices by 5%**

### **3.10 Proposal – Eel Bye Law Renewal**

**Papers distributed:** 3.10.1 Proposal - Renewal of Eels Bye-Law

**Presenting:** Head of Operations

This paper was taken as read. B. Fox joined the meeting. The Head of Operations presented on the requirement to renew the 'Conservation of Eel Fishing Bye-Law No. C.S. 319, 2015', under the Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 with a draft of the proposed Bye-law attached to the paper distributed in the meeting pack. The Head of Operations responded to queries on; the inclusion of an expiry date; the

nature of consultation being undertaken; the IFI/Departmental approval mechanism; environmental assessments required; whether there should be an all-Ireland eel plan; and whether consultation feedback is provided to members. The Board was satisfied with the presentation and rationale provided and recommended that 'and all of its life stages' is put into the Bye-law explanatory notes.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of recommendation by executive to **renew Eels Bye-Law 319, 2015**

### **3.11 Proposal – Public Consultation - Review of Bye-law 806 and 809 2006**

**Papers distributed:** 3.11.1 Proposal - Public Consultation - Review of Bye-law 806 and 809 2006

**Presenting:** Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The Head of Operations provided a high-level outline of the paper distributed. B. Fox outlined the opposing arguments raised by stakeholders. A lengthy discussion ensued on issues raised in terms of: a suitable consultation period; the framing of the bye-law (i.e. including a schedule of fish), the risk of Ireland being in breach of EU regulation; science supporting decision making; and consideration of the protection of angling resources. The Board sought clarity on the material to be issued for consultation, advising of the need for environmental assessment, Habitat Directive considerations, adherence to relevant principles and providing sufficient information including impacts on pristine fisheries.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of recommendation to review both bye-laws under consultation

### **3.12 SMT Business Plan 2023 – Close Out**

**Papers distributed:** 3.12.1 SMT Business Plan 2023 – Close out

Paper was taken as read and noted.

### **3.13 DRAFT National Fisheries Protection Plan 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 3.13.1 National Fisheries Protection Plan – Version 1

**Presenting:** Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read. The Head of Operations presented on the draft plan, outlining the risk base approach; metric reporting frequency and plans to reduce the amount of detail coming to the Board. He clarified a point raised on the number of special 'key risk' programmes to be delivered. B. Fox reported on the training being rolled out for Fisheries Officers to take forward prosecutions in relation to water pollution, seeking to alleviate the Environmental Officers of their extensive workload. He proposed the Habitat Specialisation Unit Lead would make a presentation to members on robust procedures of the unit. The Board requested presentations on the protection function and recommended that a narrative for non-delivery against the protection plan metrics is included in reporting.

**RESOLUTION:** Approval of National Fisheries Protection Plan 2024

## **4. Committees / Forum**

### **4.1 Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) – Verbal Report of Meeting of 23 February 2024**

**Papers distributed:** Not applicable

**Presenting:** ARC Chair

Areas of work to be considered by the Committee were outlined; financial reporting; risk management and risk registers; consideration in due course of the skills required by a co-opted member; placing a review of potential weaknesses in policy identified as a result of a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and the intention to meet with IFI's Internal Auditor at the next meeting. It was agreed that there is a lack of resources in the Finance and Corporate Service Division in the areas of both internal audit and risk oversight.

### **4.2 Governance Review Steering Group (GRSG) – Verbal Report of Meeting of 20 February 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 4.2.1 Gov Review Strrng Grp Mtg Mins12 Feb 2024\_APPRVD\_20 February 2024; 4.2.2 Gov Review Strrng Grp Mtg Actions 20 Feb 2024 - EXTRACT

**Presenting:** GRSG Chair

The Chair informed members of his recent meeting with Department and political representatives, who he indicated were conversant with the output of the EY Governance Review of IFI. He indicated the progress made by the Governance Review Steering Group was shared at the meeting. He informed Board members of the arrangement of monthly meetings.

In relation to progressing the corporate strategy review, a member on the review steering group presented an outline of steps which could be taken with a realistic deadline for a first draft plan by the end of 2024.

## **5. Management Assurance/ Presentations**

### **5.1 Sustainability and Climate Mandate Report - January 2024**

**Papers distributed:** 5.1.1 5.1.1 Climate Action Mandate\_January 2024

**Presenting:** CEO

Paper was taken as read and noted. The Board noted the absence of social/behavioural dimension and how these are being implemented.

### **5.2 Protection Reporting – November / December 2023**

**Papers distributed:** 5.2.1 Monthly Protection Plan Review - Nov 2023; 5.2.2 Monthly Protection Plan Review - Dec 2023

**Presenting:** Head of Operations

Paper was taken as read and noted. The concentration of angling infrastructure activity in a specific catchment was noted.

### **5.3 Health and Safety Reports**

**Papers distributed:** 5.3.1 H&S Monthly report Dec23 & Jan24

Paper was taken as read and noted. A query was responded to in relation to preventative H&S measures in place, systems of control and where this function sits within the organisation.

### **5.4 Fixed Assets Register – High Value**

**Papers distributed:** 5.4.1 Fixed Assets Register (FAR) - High Value Items

Paper was noted.

### **5.5 Performance Delivery Agreement 2023-2025 – DRAFT Metrics 2023**

**Papers distributed:** 5.5.1 Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA\_ 2023-2025 - DRAFT Metrics 2023

Paper was taken as read and noted. The Board was provided with a high-level briefing on the frequency of submission and nature of performance metrics.

## **6. AOB**

### **Resourcing**

A member of the ARC notified members of the need to resource governance roles to support the formation of the roles of Head of Internal Audit and Chief Risk Officer.