

An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications



25 October 2023

Sarah Cremin
Secretariat, Committee of Public Accounts
Houses of the Oireachtas

By email

**Inland Fisheries Ireland – update on work of S.18(5) Appointees and
appointment of new Board**

Dear Ms. Cremin,

I am writing to provide a further update to the Committee on the work of Mr. Tom Barry and Mr. Seamus Neely (“the appointees”) appointed by Minister Ryan under section 18(5) of the Inland Fisheries Act on 14 February to perform the functions of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) following the removal of the Board.

Summary

Since the update provided to the Committee on 25 April, the appointees have continued their primary oversight role in lieu of the Board while also progressing the governance review and investigation of protected disclosures. They have been engaging regularly with the Board Secretary and Senior Executive team in IFI to progress the normal business of the organisation. In addition, following approval by the appointees, IFI submitted its draft Annual Reports and Financial Statements for 2022 on 29 April. The appointees have held four formal Board Meetings on 31 May, 28 June, 26 July, and 13 September. They also held meetings of the IFI Audit and Risk Committee on the same dates. They have held a number of meetings with consultants and legal advisors appointed to support the investigation of protected disclosures received by IFI, and have been engaging regularly with EY who have been appointed (see below) to assist in the delivery of the Governance Review. The appointees also met with my Department in May, July and earlier this month to provide updates on their work at IFI generally.

Progression of Protected Disclosures

RSM Ireland, as the investigation contractor, has progressed the investigation of a protected disclosure received by IFI. At this stage, all interviews have taken place, transcripts will be finalised and shared with relevant party. Upon receipt of feedback, a final report will be completed. Delivery of this report will be dependant on parties involved and the speed at which transcripts are assessed and responses to the investigator received.

Additionally, my Department recently responded to the Committee’s requests for updates on investigations of protected disclosures made to the Department relating to IFI (Your ref: S1431 PAC33).

IFI Governance Review

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The contract having been awarded to EY in early July, work commenced in mid-August. All paperwork requested has been provided and all interviews with IFI staff have been scheduled and completed in September and early October. Meetings with my Department and final close out with the s.18 Appointees are scheduled for mid and late October, respectively. It is anticipated that a draft report will be completed in November.

Board Appointment

A number of separate processes are underway to appoint a new Board in line with the provisions of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010. State Boards, part of the Public Appointments Service, is supporting the process by which appointments are made by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications under Section 12(1)((a), (c), (d), and (e). This process is well-advanced and it is anticipated that the Minister will be in a position to make appointments before end November. The Minister received nomination proposals from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Climate Action on 18 October, in line with the provisions of Section 12(3) of the Inland Fisheries Act.

I trust the foregoing will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Oonagh M. Buckley'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Oonagh Buckley
Secretary General