

# Code of Business Conduct for National and Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums

## Introduction

In compliance with best practice and corporate governance requirements, and in order to ensure the highest standards of probity and accountability, this Code of Conduct sets out the minimum standard required of all members of the National Inshore Fisheries Forum and Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums (“the Forums”). This Code applies in addition to any other rules or procedures in place for Forum members.

## Intent and Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to members of the Forums in their roles both on the Forums and as representatives of the Forums at other consultative structures:

- EMFF Operational Programme Monitoring Committee
- Industry Science Fisheries Research Partnership
- Quota Management Advisory Committee
- SFPA Consultative Committee
- Bord Bia/BIM Market Advisory Group
- Celtic Sea Herring Management Advisory Committee
- Brexit Consultative Committee
- MSP Advisory Group

It is the intention of this document to give clear guidance to all; however, should any member of the Forums require clarity on any particulars they should seek advice from the Forum Secretariat.

## Objectives

The objectives of this Code of Conduct are:

1. To set out an agreed set of ethical principles for members of the Forums.
2. To promote and maintain confidence and trust in the work of the Forums.
3. To prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practices within the Forums.

## General Principles

The members of the Forums shall ensure that the core values of integrity, probity, transparency, accountability and fairness are adhered to within the Forums.

### Integrity

1. Members of the Forums shall disclose outside business or employment interests which they consider may be in conflict or potential conflict with the business of the Forums. Those declaring an interest must take no part in any decision where there is a conflict of interest.
2. Members of the Forums shall not use their position or the reputation or the resources of the Forums (including time) to primarily benefit themselves or others with whom they have family, business or other ties.
3. Members of the Forums shall not use knowledge acquired in the performance of, or as a result of membership of the Forums, to primarily benefit themselves or others with whom they have family, business or other ties.
4. Members of the Forums shall not acquire or review information by improper means.

### Information

1. Members of the Forums shall provide access to information on activities of the Forums in a way that is open and enhances accountability to the general public.
2. Members of the Forums shall protect the confidentiality of all sensitive information, except where disclosure is authorised.
3. Members of the Forums shall observe appropriate prior consultation procedures with third parties when, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest.

### Policy

1. The Forums will endeavour to reach a consensus on key policy issues for inshore fishing communities and to record such policy positions.
2. Policy positions can be agreed in line with the Terms of Reference at Forum meetings or between meetings. The Forum secretariat will bring all policy positions to the attention of the Chair and Vice Chair of the NIFF and the NIFF Secretary.
3. Members of the Forums will have a mandate to represent agreed policy positions where members are delegates on behalf of the Forums.
4. Where a policy position has not been agreed and where an issue is outside of the terms of reference of the Forums, members of Forums will refrain from voting on behalf of the Forums other than in circumstances where the Forums have given a prior mandate to support specific proposals considered beneficial to inshore fishing communities.

5. The RIFF secretaries will email agreed policy positions or support for proposals to members of Forums acting as delegates at other consultative structures at the earliest opportunity and in advance of meetings where the policy or proposal will be under discussion.
6. If a consensus cannot be reached at a Forum meeting, then majority/minority positions may be recorded as the Forum position.

## **Obligations**

1. Members of the Forums shall fulfil all regulatory and statutory obligations to which they are subject.
2. Members of the Forums shall use all reasonable endeavours to attend all meetings of the Forums to which they belong or other consultative structures to which the members have been appointed as delegates. Should any member miss two consecutive meetings the RIFF/NIFF will ask that member for an explanation of their absence and for confirmation as to their interest in remaining on the RIFF/NIFF. If they have difficulties meeting their commitment to the RIFF/NIFF or if the RIFF/NIFF are of the opinion that they are no longer committed a replacement should be sought.
3. The Chair or the Secretariat acting on the Chair's instruction will advise the NIFF when these meetings are taking place and if any substitution regarding the delegates is to take place.
4. Where NIFF is seeking to reach a position in advance of a meeting at which the position is required, members will reply as expediently as possible with the position of their RIFFs and in any event advising on the intended timeframe for their reply.

## **Loyalty**

1. Members of the Forums acknowledge their responsibility to be loyal and fully committed to the Forums whilst acknowledging the duty of all members of the Forums to conform to the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct.

## **Fairness**

1. The Forums will operate fairly and equitably in all its dealings.

## **Responsibility**

1. This Code of Conduct shall be provided to and retained by all members of the Forums.
2. Members of the Forums will seek practical guidance and direction of the secretariat and the Inshore Management Group as required on ethical considerations which may arise.

## **Collective Responsibility**

1. Since the Forums function as a collective unit, individual members of the Forums other than the Chairman or other duly nominated members, should not make representations, issue statements or take any other action on behalf of the Forums without the express authority of the Forums.

- Members of the Forums must not seek to obtain any personal advantage, fees or services by virtue of their status as members of the Forums.

### Behaviour

- All Forum members have the right to work in an environment where each individual is respected and listened to. Inappropriate behaviour, particularly bullying and harassment will not be tolerated and if proven are grounds for dismissal from the Forums. All members will be expected to comply with this policy. Appropriate interventions will be taken against any members who violate this policy. The policy applies to members at meetings, conferences, work-related social events and any form of communication.

### Breaches of the Code of Conduct

- Breaches of the Code of Conduct as above will be investigated through the use of fair procedure and dealt with by the respective Forum. For minor breaches a three-step approach will be adopted. For a first offence a verbal warning will be issued and minuted. For a second breach a written warning will be issued and minuted. Any further breach will result in the dismissal of the individual from the Forum. If the breach is deemed sufficiently serious, particularly with respect to the actions that undermine the operation of the Forum the Forum may escalate the sanctions up to and including summary dismissal. In the case of Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums any disciplinary action may be appealed to the NIFF for final determination. In the case of the National Inshore Fisheries Forum an agreed external dispute resolution provider shall be employed to hear any appeal.

### Review

The application and development of this Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually in the first instance and then every 3 years.

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the Code of Conduct for the National and Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums and agree to abide by its provisions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_