



Afonydd Cymru is a registered charity concerned with the environmental status of our rivers. We are the umbrella trust for Wales's six regional trusts – also all registered charities. Our principal activities include river restoration with the aim of restoring biodiversity and fisheries across Wales and the Marches. We challenge the damaging effects of land use and the current damaging extent of pollution from agriculture. We employ farm advisors who operate a novel system to reduce the effects of farm pollution.

The Covid -19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown has resulted in some of our 48 (approximately) staff being furloughed. Restoration work and investigations have been dramatically scaled back, as have farm visits. One specific issue of the furloughing process is that staff accumulate their full holiday allowance including bank holidays so on return, can be off for a further period of time when most needed. This seems counterintuitive and is very difficult for us with project deadlines etc to complete.

Throughout the period of lockdown we have received no let-up in the reports of pollution and other land use problems such as hedge removal, injudicious ploughing up of old pastures, land drainage and applications for yet more intensive poultry units. All these add to the overall picture of very little concern for the environment by the agricultural industry and those responsible for upholding environmental standards. Covid has produced some discreet opportunities! Some pollution events include those resulting from discharged milk into a watercourse which is illegal and on top of what are now regular agricultural water poisoning events (eg failed slurry stores)

Inland fisheries and their visitors used to account for 'invisible' income for Wales (last estimate £20m pa) with a significant number of visits from outside Wales (Wye and Usk reporting up to 12500 day visits pa pre Covid) This has ceased and visitors are no longer coming to Wales as a direct result of Covid and no doubt in the future as a result of the continued environmental degradation.

Financially the future looks bleak for our trusts as funding for rivers and inland fisheries looks certain to be cut back or cease. However the worst aspect is the prospect that that all environmental controls will be (if they haven't already) abandoned to permit intensive farming expand unhindered and enjoy the freedom to discharge more nutrients, plastic and chemicals into our rivers. Enforcement of current or future (should they ever arrive) regulations, planning controls looks set to remain limited enough to permit this.

Across Wales many of our streams have already been allowed to become agricultural sewers (would be pleased to identify) and these show how in the post Covid period it is likely to become for many more. It will be appreciated that the health of our riverine ecology and water quality is like a blood test for the way our land in Wales is managed. Prepare for more failures and consequential Climate Change damage.

