

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 32
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Cross Hands and District Angling Association

I am writing to you as the Secretary of Cross Hands and District Angling Association which has waters on the River Towy and River Teifi, with regards to the Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny – 2015.

Firstly I would like to say that since the forming of the NRW back in 2013 the angling section has received the least support and has suffered the most cutbacks in its resources than the other functions within the organisation.

Since it took over from the EAW there has been a big loss of experienced personnel who were aware of and fully understood the importance of our river system in order to sustain its most treasured possessions the Sea Trout and Salmon.

The stocks of these fish are declining yearly and conservation measures are being introduced by the NRW with stricter limitations being put on the angling clubs and anglers through catch and release.

Even if angling clubs were forced in to adopting total catch and release, I do not think that this would be the answer because to me, there are not many fish entering the rivers to catch.

What I would like to know is what the NRW are doing about the more important factors that affect sustainability and conservation of our migratory fish, the Sea Trout and Salmon, with regard to their declining stocks.

I have listed below some points which I feel contribute towards the decline and I would be interested to hear how the NRW intend to address them.

- The policing of the rivers are almost as extinct as the dodo as the prescience of NRW bailiffs is none existent.
This leads to illegal netting on our rivers by poachers who are aware that there are no law enforcement offices to catch them.
- This is similar in our estuaries where boats are illegally netting fish destined for our rivers even though they are not supposed to be fishing for them.
- Why have the commercial seine nets and coracles not had any restrictions imposed on them in order to support the conservation programme as it is they who take the larger fish, which are most valuable fish in the reproduction process?
Who is monitoring their catch figures and tagging system?
- Fish eating birds are another threat to the juvenile fish, eating many of these per day. With the numbers of these birds increasing yearly some simpler method of culling them needs to be introduced.

- Intersect ides, sheep dips and farm slurry cause major pollution problems to our rivers killing off invertebrate life and fish.
What steps are being taking to prevent this happening?
- Water quality is important to the survival of the fish as temperature and acidity can affect the invertebrate that the fish feed on so what measures are being taken to control the water coming off the dam.
- The NRW made a decision last year, against the objection of the angling clubs, to stop hatchery stocking after this year, but what is their action plan and timescale for using mitigation payments towards conservation projects that will benefit the river Towy.
- On the river Teifi the NRW have given the go-ahead to abstract water to drive a hydro turbine to produce electricity which all the angling clubs objected to.
Although there are certain conditions that have been stipulated by the NRW, who is going to monitor these?

I am sure that there are many more issues that contribute towards the decline of our Sea Trout and Salmon rivers that I have not listed above, but if nothing is done to stop this decline then our fisheries will face total collapse.

Salmon and Sea Trout fishing brings in much needed revenue for the Welsh rural economy, which without its contribution would see an increase in unemployment and a drop off in tourism.

Finally I hope that the NRW will take note of all the suggestions that the anglers and angling clubs contribute towards this Annual Scrutiny and take positive action towards the conservation of our fisheries.

I am happy for you to display this document publicly.

Pat Kiernan

Secretary

Cross Hands and District Angling Association

