

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 55
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Dolgellau Angling Association

Dolgellau Angling Association wishes to express our concerns and frustration at recent developments within Natural Resources Wales. Whilst appreciating that one of the objectives in the creation of a single body has been to reduce costs we feel that angling is under a very real threat as a result of these proposals.

This is particularly disappointing in view of the progress that we believed we were making in working in co-operation with both Environment Agency Wales and CCW prior to this point. Typical examples of this would include the Mawddach Habitat Improvement Scheme, our participation in brood stock collection, assisting in the stocking out of juvenile fish, habitat survey work in conjunction with Afonydd Cymru and the Water Framework Directive Partnership Project to eradicate invasive species. In all of these we have freely given both our labour and financial backing because of our passion for angling, our concerns for the environment within which it takes place and our desire to hand this on to future generations in a fit and healthy state.

The proposals for the Mawddach Hatchery were sprung upon us. For some time we had been aware that its future was under threat as a result of the proposed development of a new hatchery and salmon centre immediately downstream of Llyn Celyn. **However to find that the Mawddach hatchery was to be ‘mothballed’ at the end of 2013 whilst the new hatchery was unlikely to go ahead despite considerable amount of money that was wasted on surveys and equipment having already being purchased**) came as a real blow, particularly when the following points are considered:

- A decision seemed to have been made about the future of the hatchery before the findings of an internal review of hatcheries which was due at the end of 2013 was known.
- Angling bodies, given that we are major stakeholders in the hatchery, had not been given any adequate notice of the proposal.
- The expertise of the Mawddach Hatchery staff, both of whom had been there since its opening in 1987, could not be passed on to any potential successors and that their knowledge and expertise was therefore lost.
- ‘Mothballing’ the hatchery was likely to result in damage to equipment as a result of lack of proper maintenance and the effects of winter floods as well as the potential risks of vandalism. Surely it would have been better to keep it running until it could be handed on to a successor in a fully operational state.
- There was a desire by DAA and other angling bodies to actively participate in the running of the hatchery, possibly as part of a partnership project, but we do not believe that we were given reasonable time or the interest to formulate a plan involving other catchment areas within North Wales.
- Our biggest concerns also center on the decision by NRW in 2014 to close all hatcheries in Wales and bring to an end third party stocking following the public consultation in which it referred that “they had only received 109

responses” to the consultation from anglers, but this did not show that many angling clubs had sent responses on behalf of their members.

- All our members are extremely concerned with the lack of enforcement officers and the geographical area’s they are expected to cover. Many of our members state they have not had their licenses checked for many years.

In conclusion we strongly believe that the way forward is a partnership between NRW and Angling clubs based on trust and co-operation. We understand that the depletion of the fisheries team will cause real difficulties but we urge you to give real consideration to the points which we have raised in order to secure the future of angling in North Wales, not only for ourselves, but for those who follow in our footsteps

Gavin Jones,

Secretary, Dolgellau Angling Association