

**National Assembly for Wales**  
**Environment and Sustainability Committee**  
**NRW 2015 – 23**  
**Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015**  
**Response from Ron Ward**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the performance of the NRW. My comments are based upon almost fifty years of fishing the river Teifi and I am a member of the Llandysul Angling Association. Although I do not live in the area, I manage to make several trips from Manchester to the river during each season. I am not going to reiterate all the statistics on net versus rod catch, as these figures have already been provided in other submissions, so I will just concentrate on my personal observations.

In the early years, despite the inexperience of youth, these trips were reasonably successful and one could also see (and hear) salmon and sea trout (sewin) regularly leaping, which gave much encouragement during the less productive sessions. However, since those halcyon days I have witnessed a sad decline in the fishing on the Teifi, to the point last year where I hardly saw or heard a fish leap, let alone catch anything – a complete blank, despite the season extension that was granted to the Association. From talking to other anglers, during the normally more productive salmon months of September and October, very few fish were seen or caught and those that were, were mostly red (i.e. stale fish having been in the river some considerable time), despite there being good flows of water to allow fresh fish to run up from the estuary.

What I did see last year was a plethora of canoes and rafts. On one occasion 3 rafts appeared in the pool that I was fishing, and following a shout of “Angler”, a couple of people jumped off their rafts into the river – I gave up and went home in disgust!

Another hazard that the fish have to suffer is an increase in the number of fish-eating birds, such as cormorant and goosanders etc.

The concerns over the drastically reduced numbers of migratory fish, the increase in fish-eating birds and the numbers of canoes and rafts have been going on for years. They are not just my concerns, but that of the majority of anglers and affect not just the Teifi, but all game fishing rivers in Wales. And what have the NRW (or its previous incarnations – EA, NRA etc) done about these concerns – it seems practically nothing!

- The NRW should be acting to severely restrict (or better still eliminate) coastal and estuary netting, which I and most other anglers on the Teifi feel are primarily responsible for the reduction in the numbers of migratory fish.
- If netting is allowed to continue, hopefully on a much smaller scale, it should be limited to a shorter season with less days operating during the season. Also, estuary netting should be banned during periods of low water in the rivers that feed the estuaries.
- Catch limits have been introduced by many clubs, often enforced by carcass tagging, as a voluntary effort to conserve stocks. Why can't the NRW make this mandatory and applicable to nets as well as rods?

- There should be tighter control of the use of certain pesticides in the vicinity of rivers and their feeder streams.
- There should be attempts to control the number of fish eating birds, such as cormorants etc.
- The salmon hatcheries should be re-opened and stocking plans introduced with some urgency.
- The amount of canoeing and rafting should be curbed by limiting it to high water and preferably to the angling closed season. A licencing system for canoes and raft should also be introduced - after all, they are river users, as us anglers and we pay for licences and have seasons, why shouldn't they.

The Teifi is a great asset to the tourist industry of South West Wales, as are other rivers to the areas that surround their catchments. A significant regional income is generated by angling, but if the fish are not conserved, then visiting anglers and their families will not holiday in the area, thus much of the tourist income will be lost.

Yours Sincerely

Ron Ward