

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 60
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Andrew Williams

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for this opportunity to express opinion on Natural Resources Wales actions / in actions. My opinion is based on over 40 years of angling experience on mainly the rivers of South and Mid Wales but also of the wider UK. Also of 25years involvement in outdoor leisure pursuits.

1. The NRW is failing in it's fishery protection role.

Our migratory fish stocks are being decimated by both legal and illegal netting. It has been noticeable that when fish are to be seen 'showing' on the lower River Tywi it has been on Saturday/ Sunday/ Monday the rest of the week the river appearing devoid of fish. As the legal Seine and Coracle nets do not operate over weekends it could be argued that it is only over weekends that fish are able to enter the river system. Restrictions such as shorter seasons and mandatory catch and release are put on anglers. Why are not more restrictions placed on commercial netters as this is just a seasonal income therefore not a full time income for them.

Illegal netting both intentional and unintentional is widespread in coastal and estuarine waters. Bass gill netters severely damage Salmon and Seatrout stocks. NRW and it's predecessor EA decimated an effective and experienced Baliff / fishery protection team who patrolled both the rivers and coastal waters. We had fish in our rivers then.

2. Failure to maintain fishery stocks.

In the guise of 'research' the NRW has closed it's fish hatcheries and ended it's migratory fish restocking programmes. This is nothing but a cost cutting exercise. The finest fisheries in the UK and worldwide are supported by restocking programmes, eg River Tyne and Ranga River, Iceland.

3. Failure to protect/ maintain spawning areas.

Many of our major river systems originate in the Cambrian mountains, eg Rivers Tywi, Teifi, Wye and Severn. Expansive forestry plantations and operations surround the headstreams of these rivers. Also in recent years windfarms are appearing on forestry lands / NRW lands. The construction operations and 1000's of tons of concrete used in their construction are a further threat. These headstreams are vital spawning areas for our fish stocks.

4. Failure to protect landscape / Tourism/ Rural Economy

Windfarms are dominating many of the Mid Wales landscapes. Visitors for leisure pursuits provide an important financial injection to many rural communities. The Mountaineering Council for Scotland found that people avoid areas where windfarms are sited or dominate the views. This confirms what we have found as we avoid 'industrialised' landscapes. Many of the windfarms in Mid Wales are on NRW controlled lands.

I do not consider the NRW fit for purpose. It is not independent enough and too close to government / assembly influence, eg Energy Policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views which I hope will be considered.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Williams