

**National Assembly for Wales**  
**Environment and Sustainability Committee**  
**NRW 2015 – 08**  
**Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015**  
**Response from David Watkins**

I am contributing to this consultation in the hope Welsh Assembly Government and NRW sit up and take notice of what I am about to say...but I fear this is more a token exercise from yourselves and nothing will actually change. In fact, it is only going to get worse.

Our countryside, wildlife and rivers have never been in a more sorry, unfortunate, vulnerable and shambolic state. It is quite frankly embarrassing to suggest we have a department claiming to be managing the beautiful landscape of Wales as we watch:

1. Salmon and sea trout numbers in our rivers continue to decline year on year and are now at critical levels
2. Rivers are abstracted to detrimental levels and then subsequently subjected to farmland and industrial pollution
3. Sea bass numbers in serious decline
4. Most coastal birds in decline
5. Coastal wildlife areas strewn with litter endangering nesting sea bird colonies
6. Marine conservation zones exploited and fished to catastrophic levels both legally and illegally
7. The majority, if not all farmland birds rapidly declining and in some cases disappearing altogether
8. Small mammals such as water voles, field mice and door mice in serious decline
9. Barn Owls, Hen Harriers, Merlin and Goshawk are now endangered
10. Rabbits, hedgehogs, hares, weasels, stouts and pole cats in serious decline
11. Butterflies, dragonflies, moths, bee's, wasps and other insects in serious decline
12. Miles and miles of established hedgerows key to birds and wildlife being pulled down
13. Natural wetlands and wild flower meadows being drained and used for farming and maximum production - down by 90%
14. Every inch of farmland being raped and exploited for production without a second thought for the surrounding environment

15. Wild flowers such as bluebells and rare orchids once found in abundance in Wales now under serious threat

The list goes on and it makes for quite simply horrific reading.

The Welsh rural economy relies heavily on it's surrounding countryside, whether it's for the beautiful scenery, travelling fishermen drawn to the area to fish our once prolific sea trout and salmon rivers or to enjoy coastal fishing, or countryside walks providing the opportunity for birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts to come and enjoy wildlife at it's most natural and best.

So far, NRW are failing spectacularly to competently manage (or even manage at all) our 'Natural Resources'. Should you chose to deny this, I urge you to take another look at the above list and digest what I have written. In fact, excluding the return of the Red Kite and the Otter, I would like to hear of any other 'good news stories' for Welsh wildlife in recent years that might begin to balance out the issues listed above.

To even try and comprehend that WAG have further slashed NRW's funding this year when they are drastically underfunded and undermanned is simply criminal. There is then the subject of the competence of some of the staff and the entire committee. The fault is not entirely at NRW's door, it is at the door of WAG who NO LONGER CARE about the natural Welsh countryside, it's wild animals, fish or birds, it's wildlife, rivers or coastal areas.

I am happy for this document to be displayed publicly.

Yours,

Dai Watkins

Mid Wales

Independent