

**National Assembly for Wales**  
**Environment and Sustainability Committee**  
**NRW 2015 – 56**  
**Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015**  
**Response from William Gareth Davies**

I noticed this response from one Andrew King, Breconshire County Bird Recorder.  
I do not think in the light of what is happening with Bird predation that you should have one side only to judge by.

**Mr Kings comments below.**

1. While I cannot comment on badger control to limit spread of Bovine TB, the issue of licences by NRW to control piscivorous birds on Welsh rivers has been grossly mishandled. Licences have been issued without questioning the inflated claims of damage caused by these birds by inland fishery interests. Prior to 2013 when the Natural Resources Wales took over this work, The Wildlife Team, Welsh Assembly (WA) previously responsible for consideration of applications, carried out this role using sound science. WA organised counts of these species annually along the Wye and other rivers to properly assess whether a licence was justified. Since 2013, NRW have issued licences wholesale, without any evaluation or policing of actual numbers shot, such that Goosanders have declined by over 60% in just two years. NRW needs to assess these licence applications using proper science to gauge population size, rather than wildly exaggerated claims by fishermen (and no doubt NRW Board members!). If in doubt, ask county recording networks. Old licences should be rescinded, with no new licences issued – otherwise, NRW risk total blame for extinction of another breeding species in Wales, and all the adverse media coverage that will accompany it.

**Scrutiny Members.**

2. I would respectfully request that you consider the following.
3. I have read the aforementioned note referring to fish eating birds and felt that I had to respond, fully understanding that the reply will not be admissible for scrutiny committee deliberations referring to NRW operations.
4. Firstly, I would draw your attention to the fact that this Association has employed a specialist company to assess the stock in our fisheries. The results I can forward to yourselves, if required. Their findings show bird predation as an issue causing an imbalance on our fisheries.
5. Secondly, One of our fisheries was drained for remedial work, this is an 8 acre pond. The result of the draining proved what we thought. The pond was denuded of fish. To prevent further depredation we had fish refuges built at a cost of £120K (taking into account block stone given 700 ton) Plus cost of restock @ £30K.
6. Thirdly, there is a programme in effect at present to eradicate foreign species from the country side. Where does that programme place goosanders, a native bird of

Scandinavia occasionally seen in Scotland. Surely this then classes the species the same as Japanese knotweed etc.

7. Granted cormorants used to be sighted occasionally in years gone by, especially on the coast, rarely inland.
8. A licence to cull must be applied for every year, not often granted and strictly controlled. Example the Usk cull last year 2014. A local Cardiff Association being refused a licence this year with some guidance that beggared belief from Natural Resources Wales such as the use of a lazer beam on a pond near an airport as a method of scaring. So contrary to the statement in Paragraph 1 above the issue of licences is not a fact it is something that is closely monitored.

The following is a note issued by Angling Trust after lobbying by Angling Trust in **England** for a relaxation on the culling of Fish Eating Birds.

1. Tuesday 4th February 2014  
Government Gives Go Ahead for,  
New Cormorant and Goosander Management Plan  
We've been campaigning for more than three years ( Angling Trust) for a change to the current bureaucratic and ineffective licensing regime that governs the control of cormorants and goosanders and have now concluded negotiations with the Government on the implementation of new measures, announced last year, to improve the protection of vulnerable fish stocks from predation by cormorants and goosanders. We need a similar approach in Wales.

W G Davies