

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 61
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation



Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation

Secretary: Michael Davies

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Natural Resources Wales Scrutiny 2015

The CFF was formed over forty years ago to represent the interests of angling clubs and fishery owners of Carmarthenshire. At present we represent over two thousand anglers including nine clubs and individual members.

Natural Resources Wales has been in existence for one year and we feel the following issues need to be considered and scrutinised further:

1 The policing of our rivers and estuaries is ineffective mainly due to cuts in personnel. We now have one bailiff when we previously had five on the Towy alone. There is a serious illegal netting problem in Carmarthen Bay which needs to be dealt with by a properly equipped fishery protection enforcement team. NRW seem to be dithering over this issue, we need some positive action now, before it's too late.

2 Cormorants and Gooseanders, able to consume their own body weight in juvenile fish daily have increased considerably on our rivers. There needs to be effective control of these predators, but when clubs apply for a licence to cull, the process is complicated and the application forms not user friendly. England seems to have a less complicated system and this needs to be adopted by NRW.

3 There are still pollution problems affecting our rivers emanating from agricultural, industrial and sewage farm sources, but when these incidents are reported the authorities seem to 'lack teeth' in their response, often the polluter gets away with a warning. There is also a conflict of interest within the NRA organisation itself, regarding the use of the pesticide Cypermethrin and also the planting by the forestry department of conifers, too near the nursery streams, which can be affected by acid rain.

4 The Brienne Dam mitigation stocking agreement on the Towy is an issue that has always had a high priority. This agreement was further confirmed at a meeting held near Llandovery on the 1st March 2013 with representatives from EA, DCWW, CRT, Coracle netsmen and CFF. When it was decided to stock the river with 23,000 0+ Salmon parr (a decision also supported by fishery scientists



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from the EA and APEM) The decision of NRW soon after to end all stocking and to close hatcheries in Wales came as a considerable shock, especially after a consultation period, where over eighty percent of participants were in favour of stocking. We question the rationale and arrogance of this decision which can only have been driven by financial motives over relevant scientific considerations.

5 The pollution of the river Towy with cold water from Llyn Brianne is another important issue yet to be resolved, although we know the W.S. Atkins report had identified the problems and provided the solution as far back as 2010. We urge the Welsh government to investigate the NRW's decision making on this issue, as the interests of clubs and other riparian owners have been damaged. Also the reputation of the Towy is at stake as one of the finest Sea Trout rivers in Europe, which could have major implications for the tourist industry in Wales.

6 Fish catch and release has always been encouraged by the CFF and its members although we would not support total or compulsory catch and release. All clubs and fishery owners impose restriction on the number of fish which can be kept. It is a bone of contention with anglers that the commercial coracle netmen do not contribute towards any conservation measures. We feel that this issue should be further considered by the fishery department, bearing in mind that fish stocks are in decline.

7 At the moment there is a danger of smaller angling clubs becoming bankrupt. If fish stocks continue to decrease local hotels and businesses could also suffer. A healthy river with good stocks of fish can be the 'jewel in the crown' to the tourist industry and especially for providing extra work opportunities in rural areas where employment is often limited. It is estimated that angling is worth over fifty million to the Welsh economy therefore to 'penny pinching' over providing proper funding for the fishery department to maintain, enhance and improve rivers like the Towy must not be tolerated.

8 In conclusion there are many aspects of NRW's current performance which needs to be improved. We are sure that proper funding and staffing would help. We hope that intervention at ministerial level can also help to rectify what is at the moment an organisation which is not fit for purpose.

I am happy for this document to be published.

Michael Davies

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