

P-05-810 Give Welsh Fishing Clubs and Salmon and Seatrout a Chance - Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 27.06.18

Setting the Foundation for Future Fisheries Management (stock Controls) Wales – Collaborative Approach

Petition Originator (Save Salmon & Sea Trout Stocks & Fishing Clubs Wales): Reuben Woodford

In support of evidence supplied to petitions committee

27.06.18

For Consideration: Petitions Committee – Welsh Assembly

Dear Sirs,

In relation to the Fisheries Stock Control Byelaws Wales – we have now born out a period of relative silence, within which, to our frustration, it has represented a period of missed opportunity to shape a workable way forwards. All our efforts seek that next stage – to work constructively with Welsh Government and partners on a way forwards that embeds sustainable management principles and offers a means of optimising both fish stock preservation and angling club resilience for an uncertain future. There exists substantial evidence and widespread professional opinion, that indicates NRW Byelaws cannot contribute to this aim.

NRWs Fisheries Stock Control Byelaws are not a proportionate response to the current pressures our salmonid fisheries face nor are they based upon sound evidence. Above all, NRW have not identified or shown willingness to identify the requisite delivery mechanism for improved salmon stocks and sustained angling clubs. Hand in hand with this process, the angling community have proven themselves as the primary advocates of a system of management for welsh fisheries with sustainable management principles at its core.

In our advisory capacity we remain the primary critics of inadequacies of a current system of fisheries management that is failing to deliver improvements to our river catchments, that are basic requisites to support sustainable fisheries. We remain the primary custodians of environments and ways of life, at risk, partially due to regulatory stagnation.

Additional progress has been instigated in recent months by NRW & Welsh Government in forming working groups on agricultural pollution and fish eating bird impact in Wales and we welcome those developments, however, with a legacy of regulatory inactivity to tackle catchment inhibitors to environments supportive of optimal fish stocks, we are still left desperately wanting and in the hands of a regulatory body ill equipped to deliver the aspired improvements in isolation. It makes no conceivable sense for an organisation crippled by resource deficit and leached aspiration, to alienate its primary partners and yet this is what NRW have ‘chosen to do’ in tacking their dictatorial stance.

Last week, NRW's Principal and Senior Fisheries Advisors attended an Angling Advisory Group meeting jointly organised by the Angling Trust and the Environment Agency in order to discuss ways of increasing the numbers of salmon which are voluntarily released by anglers. Critical, key points emerged as a result of these discussions:

- It was widely accepted that a dictatorial approach does not work.
- Shared conservation goals cannot be achieved by tacking a dictatorial stance.
- Dictatorial measures are often counterproductive, not only stimulating alienation, but widespread antagonism.
- Empowerment, through education and peer group pressure, has proven to nurture a positive culture to deliver results.

Contrary to NRW's statements leading up to this meeting, there is now a substantial discrepancy between NRW's approach in Wales and that of the EA in England. Most crucially, is that "Probably at Risk" rivers in England will not be subjected to mandatory measures.

We must stress, the failure to address the legitimate concerns of anglers in Wales, the rejection of any form of voluntary solution and the relentless pursuit of NRW's "preferred option" of a legislative approach, is the antithesis of what was seen at the meeting as the most desired, productive and sustainable option. To deny Welsh river catchments and angling and conservation interests that approach is to deny our fisheries and communities future health and prosperity and establishment of a shared, progressive and resilient delivery mechanism.

NRW's greatest failure is to disregard the importance of that mechanism and the angling communities role in it. The revised mechanism lies at the heart of that proposed by the angling community, derived from a collective of groups and individuals now seen to be the primary proponents of a system with sustainable management principles ingrained.

At the EA's fisheries meeting of last week, it was pointed out to NRW's Principal Fisheries advisor that his comment of "There will be no further debate" in a recent press release was a shining example of how to further alienate the angling community. The future prosperity of our shared river catchments and salmonid fish stocks lies in the hands of future partnerships. To intentionally undermine those collaborative resources, as NRW continue to do, in the face of widespread criticism, is to deny future management initiatives depth and breadth of ability to take timely action to undertake the thousands of projects that are required across Wales Rivers to establish resilient environments and social synergy with them.

Our petitions, signed by the many, have encapsulated a desire by anglers and wider community members across Wales to defend our environments and pursuits from unnecessary hardship. We all recognise fish stocks are being impacted by a diversity of issues and it is only by collectively sustaining awareness of all of them and generating the capacity to take action to manage their long term impacts that we can derive workable solutions.

We collectively aspire to generate a creatively engineered and progressive way forwards that establishes a sustainable future for fish stocks, fishing clubs and the environments that sustain them. We have as yet been denied that opportunity. This can now only be achieved if

Welsh Government intervene and make a decision that instigates a foundation for improved communication and co-operative working.

Without this stability and catalyst for positive change, there is little river catchment communities would be able to achieve in the absence of community support under a regulatory regime in disharmony with them.

Once again, we who have instigated and signed the petitions and who wish to be an integral part in future fisheries management, ask the Cabinet Secretary to make the decision that sets the foundation for a constructive and co-operative way forwards.

Yours Sincerely,

Reuben Woodford

Originator: Petition to Protect Salmonid Fish Stocks & Angling Clubs in Wales