



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Outcome of the Local Inquiry on Natural Resources Wales' proposed 'All Wales Salmon and Sea Trout Byelaws'</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>16 July 2019</b>
<b>BY</b>	<b>Lesley Griffiths AM – Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs</b>

In August 2018, I announced my decision to refer Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) proposed Wales Rod and Line (Salmon and Sea Trout) Byelaws 2017 and the Wales Net Fishing (Salmon and Sea Trout) Byelaws 2017, to the Planning Inspectorate Wales to conduct a Local Inquiry. This was to allow for independent scrutiny of the proposed Byelaws, for consideration of any evidence in support or objection to them to be presented by any interested parties and to enable me to reach a conclusion on how best to proceed.

The Planning Inspectorate presented me with their final Report on 3 June. I would like to thank them for their diligence in conducting an open, impartial and fair inquiry and for providing me with their recommendations. The Planning Inspectorate's Report is published alongside this Statement.

It is clear to see, from the Report, the depth of feeling and passion on both sides of the debate and to see there is common ground between NRW and objectors that salmon and sea trout stocks in Wales are suffering an ongoing decline. It is, therefore, generally agreed there is a problem. It is also accepted stock levels must not fall to unsafe levels and should be increased as a matter of urgency. The report recognises many anglers already operate voluntary catch and release and, therefore, the Byelaws will not have an impact on them.

Having carefully reflected on all the evidence and arguments put forward, the Planning Inspector considers the proposed Byelaws to be a measured response to declining fish stocks in Wales. Accordingly he found them to be necessary, proportionate and reasonable in view of the decline of salmon and sea trout stocks throughout Wales. His recommendation was to confirm the Byelaws.

After considering the report, recently published stock assessments and discussions with many stakeholders, I have decided to confirm the Byelaws and for these to come into force from 1 January 2020.

In addition, I believe there are lessons to be learnt from this inquiry.

I acknowledge angling is only one of the many interventions which impact on the decline in salmon and sea trout stocks. Other issues, which stakeholders quite rightly raised at the inquiry, also need to be addressed. The effects of agricultural pollution have a significant impact on the mortality of these stocks. I intend to bring into force regulations to tackle agricultural pollution in January 2020, aligning with the introduction of the Byelaws.

Other issues raised at the Local Inquiry were obstructions to migration, water abstraction, robust enforcement activity and piscivorous predation. There is a role here for us all. We are not starting from a blank page on these issues. NRW, as stated in their evidence to the Local Inquiry, take forward a significant amount of work in relation to the protection of vulnerable stocks, including Salmon and Sea Trout. Whilst they report these actions to international bodies such as NASCO, the information should all be in one place and presented in a way which is relevant and specific to Welsh anglers.

I will, therefore, be asking NRW to take the lead on working with stakeholders to bring together all the current work being taken forward by all relevant parties in a *Salmon and Sea Trout Plan of Action*. The Welsh Government will be contributing to this, as I hope will anglers and supporters of angling. I expect the Plan of Action to be finalised before the Byelaws come into force on 1 January 2020 and NRW to make a concerted effort to share the plan with anglers and other interested parties and for it to be updated annually in conjunction with stakeholders with clear actions and timelines.

We must work together to protect these magnificent fish before it becomes too late.