

# Meeting note

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<b>Title of meeting</b>	Wales Fisheries Forum
<b>Date of meeting</b>	19 November 2020
<b>Time of meeting</b>	13:30

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**NRW:**

Dave MacCallum

David Mee

Emma Keenan (Technical Secretariat)

Gary White

Peter Gough

Robert Vaughan

Steve Ormerod (Chair)

**Members:**

Alan Winstone – Afonydd Cymru

Carl Tonner – Angling Cymru

Chris Mills – Afonydd Cymru

**Present:**

Chris White – Campaign for the Protection of Welsh Fisheries

Creighton Harvey – South West Wales & Gower LFG rep

Denise Ashton – Wild Trout Trust

Dylan Roberts – The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

Guy Mawle – Usk LFG rep

Lee Evans – Taff & Valleys LFG rep

Mark Owen – Angling Trust

Mervyn Williams – Dee & Clwyd LFG rep

Mungo Munro – Severn LFG rep

Paul Edwards – Welsh Salmon & Trout Angling Association

Rachel Evans – Countryside Alliance Wales

Richard Garner-Williams – Salmon and Trout Conservation Cymru

Stuart Smith – Wye LFG rep

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Tiggy Pettifer – Atlantic Salmon Trust

Tony Harrington – Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

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**Apologies:** Ruth Jenkins (NRW), Nicola Teague (IFM), Julian Bray (WG), Mark Tilling (WG)

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Item number	Item	Action
<b>Welcome, introductions and apologies</b>		
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Steve Ormerod (SO) opened the meeting, welcomed several new participants and deputies and gave a brief overview of how the meeting would be run so that participants could get the most out of using Skype.</li></ul>	
<b>Admin Matters</b>		
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Actions from last meeting:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>SO reported that he had written to the CEO and Chairman of NRW to express the angst felt in the forum around WQ and agricultural regulations.</li><li>SO advised meeting an evidence review/policy paper, with the Minister, was due for approval 16<sup>th</sup> Dec</li><li>This was then raised at the last NRW Board meeting and issues are receiving attention . Board members are to come forward with actions to take rural and urban issues forward.</li></ul></li><li>NRW will shortly commence sending out progress updates on the Salmon and Sea trout Plan of Action to forum members</li><li>The forum wanted to express their immense gratitude for the work and notable achievements of Stephen Marsh-Smith.</li></ul>	<p>PG to circulate the minutes from the last board meeting and SO's email for EK to send out.</p> <p>Action: PG</p> <p>Action: PG to write to Stephen's widow</p>
<b>New Forum Members</b>		
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mungo Munro – Severn LFG</li></ul> <p>Mungo is the Water Manager for the Upper Tanat Fishing Club and has worked with Severn Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and NRW. He</p>	

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represents the upper reaches of the Severn across the border in England and Wales and has similar concerns as other members on factors including fish-eating birds and farming.

- Stuart Smith – Wye LFG

Stuart is a retired engineer with a background in the automotive sector and has been Chair of the Wye Salmon Association (WSA) for 11 years, where anglers and owners are represented. The WSA aims to encourage angling, offers coaching courses and aims to encourage people back to the river. They also have shared ownership of the Wye LFGs own salmon action plan and are looking forward to hearing how WFF can help to 'make this happen'. The LFG's local concerns are similar to those of others; water quality, pollution and fish-eating birds.

- Guy Mawle (BA, MSc, PhD, FIFM, CEnv) – USK LFG

Representative for the Usk LFG. Lives near Usk, Monmouthshire. Worked for the Environment Agency (EA) and its predecessors as a fisheries scientist, officer, economist and manager for 26 years, mostly at Head Office but previously in Wales. Left in 2011, now a semi-retired fisheries consultant who in the past has worked for NRW, the EA, and NASCO. Previous board member of the Wye & Usk Foundation and the Angling Trust. Member of the Wild Trout Trust and Grayling Society. Shareholder in a River Usk fishery, and a past secretary of Isca AC on the River Usk.

- Lee Evans – Taff & Valleys LFG

Lee is a lifelong angler and Gwent Angling Society Chair as well as sitting on the Usk LFG. He is an ecologist by background doing his degree at Cardiff University and now works in the decentralised energy sector. Main issues of concern for the rivers are agricultural pollution and access.

- Mervyn Williams – Dee & Clwyd LFG

Mervyn is a retired history teacher and started to fish on the Llyn Peninsula 60 years ago. Locally has concerns on the same issues as those across Wales: fish-eating birds, farm pollution and access. He is a Trustee of the Welsh Dee Trust. Notes that lack of angler participation is a new issue, and the

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need to work to bring enthusiasm and participation back. He is also concerned with the lack of angler participation and engagement with NRW.

- Chris Mills – Afonydd Cymru

Chris has worked for all 4 environment agencies in the UK and is now Chair of Afonydd Cymru as well as acting CEO. He is also the President of the Institute of Fisheries Management and a council member of the RSPB and on the RSPB advisory committee.

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## Water Quality of Welsh Rivers

Bob Vaughan (NRW) gave a presentation on agricultural regulations and sustainable farming to support his paper.

### Discussion Points:

- 'There are concerns that the paper, whilst useful, does not describe what immediate effective action is and will be taken to address the Nature Emergency in our rivers. Any changes, post-Brexit, may take up to a decade to be fully implemented, given the need for legislation to pass and then a transition period. Existing powers are not being used effectively reflecting, it was suggested, not only inadequate resources but NRW's culture.
- There is also a concern that voluntary approaches have failed in the past and that NRW has been charged with too many duties in changing attitudes and advice. However, the voluntary approaches referred to are part of a bigger 5-part plan. This uses **Regulation** at its core but then encourages farms to exceed this baseline through market forces developed via an **Assurance scheme** around nutrient management with strong **Standards** set by WG/NRW. To assist this we expect **Financial** sources to understand and support this, and **Innovation** will underpin where new ways of working can deliver better outcomes. Around all of this **Advice and Guidance** will ensure the knowledge both within the industry and for those who influence it (ie food producers, banks etc) supports these steps. This approach has been developed with the entire sector.
- There is also a need to interpret regulations properly and have a consistent approach across Wales. Farmers need to understand what and how

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enforcement will work so that the appropriate advice and understanding is in place.

- Given that the framework will not be in place until 2024 there is work being undertaken now to ensure that measures are in place between now and then. However, full implementation will take much longer.
- It was also reaffirmed that the Incident Communication Centre (ICC) will offer WIRs reference numbers.

Reference was made by several members to 'The Axe Report':

<https://www.salmon-trout.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Final-Axe-Regulatory-Report.pdf>

BV requested (by SS) to publish proposed measures.

EK/PG/DM  
Compile stats on incidents and outcomes

Gary White (NRW) gave a presentation on Incident Response to support his paper.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- Members raised the potential use of volunteers in incident response, however difficulties around training requirements, H&S considerations and legal cover were emphasised.
- Members asked for more detailed statistics on incidents to be made available.

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### **Access to Water Sub-group**

Dave MacCallum (NRW) gave a presentation on the Access to Water Sub-Group. See pdf of presentation. National Access Forum Wales, Access to Water Sub-Group, guiding principles agreed:

- Our approach will be equitable and fair to all vested interests as well as sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally;
- Provide rights to both anglers and canoeists, avoiding conflicting use;
- All users should pay, with funds used to maintain, improve and develop the resource;
- All users being subject to regulation to control use, manage access, and protect the environment;
- Land and riparian owners should receive a financial contribution for the use of their asset;
- Land and riparian owner liability should be minimised.

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#### **Discussion Points:**

- The sub-group was created, following Deputy Ministers statement, with stakeholders coming
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together with the vested interest of demonstrating reasonable progress in the finding a joint, practical solution for increased recreational access to Welsh inland waters.

- The focus of the sub-group is that of angling and paddle-sport, via a consultative approach, seeking pragmatic engagement with land / riparian owners and lease's.
- The 10 sub-group members comprise a balanced and effective representation of Angling, Land and Riparian owners and Paddle-sport, both commercial and recreational as well as Afonydd Cymru and Dwr Cymru.
- CW observed the split demographic of paddle sport, being commercial canoeing operations and recreational canoeists; proposing consideration of a concept "CanoePal", as an adaptation of fishPal, being booking system to manage sustainable numbers and times-of paddle sport usage. DMac thanked CW for previously sending this concept to him and acknowledged its contribution to the sub-group's work
- DMac noted with CW that there are two principal categories of commercial canoe operations: a) professional guided, which are typically well run and b) canoe rental organisations, where client guidance is given but canoes are rented without any river supervision.
- It was noted RGW that there are concerns over impact on the environment from certain forms of access – often at 'honey spot' areas which could have implications for the wider ecology of the river. It was noted that the sub-group does have a focus on the environmental impacts of access.
- DMac noted that there is a lot to be learnt from the work of the late Stephen Marsh-Smith on voluntary access agreements on the Wye and Usk.
- PG/SO There are ecological issues and interests with many sensitive areas, such as breeding areas for fish and birds. This means that an open agreement for access throughout river lengths isn't appropriate.

All the notes I have is that WF Forum members (CM, GM, RGW) thanked Dave MacCallum, for his diligent work and recognised the great effort in bring the parties together effectively.

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## Updates from other fora

Creighton Harvey gave an overview of some of the agricultural pollution cases that he had been following.

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- The three cases he covered were all incidents with slurry pollution. CH noted that there is an overly-long period between offences and appearances in court. There is also a need for consistency in the courts and for district judges to have appropriate certification and experience to handle such cases.

Papers for the Wales Water Management Forum and Wales Lane Management Forum were taken as read.

EK to circulate latest minutes and papers when appropriate

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## Fisheries Update Paper

PG introduce the update paper and invited comments and questions by exception.

- 7.
- Fish-eating bird surveys will take place over winter up to February and there has been a discussion about extending this to target later spring sensitive areas around smolts. The surveys are being undertaken by contractor BTO and their staff.
  - RGW & GM endorsed NRW's action on eel fisheries outlined in the Update Paper

DM & PG to send comms on the FEB survey work.

CW to send a list of river stretches of interest to raise with advisors and contractors for bird surveys.

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## AOB

- 8.
- GM reported 56 documented illegal fishing incidents on the lower Usk since April, reflecting a lack of control. NRW welcomes reports of incidents and are looking at ways to improve things.
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PG reported that photos on Facebook of alleged poaching on the upper Usk had resulted in an investigation that is pending.

- CW reported that there had been a serious incident of river dredging in North Wales where half a kilometre of river had been dredged to bedrock in an attempt to protect eroding riverbanks.

It was reported that the incident occurred during lockdown and NRW officers will meet the farmer responsible to go over the restoration and enforcement action.

- TP (Atlantic Salmon Trust) gave an update on the Moray Firth tracking project:

<https://atlanticsalmontrust.org/moray-firth-tracking-update/>

- RE provided an update on the breast cancer charity 'Casting for Recovery'. This is unfortunately on long term hold at the moment due to Covid-19 but they are looking at ways to get this back off the ground.

<https://www.countryside-alliance.org/charity/casting-for-recovery-uk-ireland>

- There was a request from members that future papers be clearly marked as either for information only, or for discussion and that those for discussion should have clear discussion points outlined at the beginning of the paper to make the purpose clear.

DM to organise a meeting with TP, RE, DM, SS, PG, MO about casting for recovery.

## Approval of Minutes

**Once the minutes have been disseminated to members there will be a 3-week time limit to provide amendments of fact, after this time – and once appropriate corrections have been made – the minutes will be deemed approved.**

Potential discussion points for next meeting:

- Nets and sewin
- Plan of action update
- SoNaRR

Members are asked to send any proposals for future agenda items to the Tech Sec

All – send agenda items for next meeting to EK

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