

Meeting note

Title of meeting: Wales Fisheries Forum

Date of meeting: 20/09/2021

Time of meeting: 10:30

NRW:

Steve Ormerod (Chair)

Peter Gough

Ruth Jenkins

David Mee

Emma Keenan

Members:

Carl Tonner – Angling Cymru

Ceri Thomas – Fishing in Wales/Angling Trust

Present: Chris White – Campaign for the Protection of Welsh Fisheries

Creighton Harvey – South West Wales & Gower LFG rep

Denise Ashton – Wild Trout Trust

Gail Davies-Walsh – Afonydd Cymru

Guy Mawle – Usk LFG Rep

Lee Evans – Taff & Valleys LFG rep

Mark Owen – Angling Trust

Nicola Teague – Institute of Fisheries Management

Paul Edwards – Welsh Salmon & Trout Angling Association

Rachel Evans – Countryside Alliance

Richard Garner-Williams – Salmon and Trout Conservation Cymru

Robert Floyd – Welsh Government

Stuart Smith – Wye LFG rep

Apologies:

Shaun Leonard (Wild Trout Trust), Mungo Munro (Severn LFG rep), Tony Harrington (Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water), Dylan Roberts (The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust), Alan Winstone (Afonydd Cymru), Mervyn Williams (Dee & Clwyd LFG rep)

Item No:	Item
-----------------	-------------

Welcome, introductions

1.
 - 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 Teams.
-

Admin Matters

- There will now be a standing section in Admin Matters for declarations of interest
 - Minutes of each WFF meeting are reviewed and, subject to any substantive correction, are approved by correspondence approximately 1 month after each meeting thereby enabling early circulation to LFGs.
 - Minutes from the April 2021 meeting were approved.
 - SO has continued to push the issues around water quality at NRW Board meetings and there have been three different discussions on over the last 18 months on regulation, land management and water quality which will be revisited in the round of forthcoming board meetings.

Outstanding actions from April 2021

Action: EK to circulate BTO presentation (April 2021) and report once approved

Action: PG/DM to seek advice from Ian Russell to clarify at what life stage juvenile salmon compensatory mortality mechanisms operate to inform the Wild Bird Review.

-
- At the previous meeting there was an action for all members to identify where they could help in the Plan of Action for Salmon and Sea Trout and members were asked again to consider this.

Action: EK to contact National Access Forum Wales for an update statement

- Investigation into the Llynfi pollution incident is still ongoing and members will be updated when information is available
- There was some discussion around beavers and if there is a consultation relating to this subject in the future, we will let WFF members know immediately.

Action: EK to find out when Severn River Basin Plans will be out for consultation/publication and inform WFF Members

[Draft river basin management plans - Environment Agency - Citizen Space \(environment-agency.gov.uk\)](https://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

Salmon & Sea Trout Stocks

- There has been further work on the ICES report by CEFAS, EA and NRW this year particularly in relation to the impact of the pandemic on catches in 2020 and hence stock assessments. The stock assessments have now been published.

[Assessment of Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales in 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Assessment of Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales: Background Report 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

3.

- The 2020 catch statistic report is also available:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/salmonid-and-freshwater-fisheries-statistics-reports-and-supplementary-data-tables>

2020 report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salmonid-and-freshwater-fisheries-statistics-2020>

- Overview all 23 principal salmon stocks in Wales remain classed as either 'At risk' (11 Rheidol, Clwyd, Tawe, Eastern and Western Cleddau, Teifi, Taf, Glaslyn, Taff & Ely, Dwyfawr, Ogmere and Dyfi) or Probably 'At risk' (12 Seiont, Severn, Usk, Mawddach, Nevern, Dwyrdd, Wye, Tywi, Dee, Ogwen, Conwy, Dysynni)
-

River		Risk' status: 2025	Trend	*Egg deficit/surplus on Management Target (%)
Rheidol		At risk	---	-90.7
Clwyd		At risk	---	-86.8
Tawe		At risk	---	-85.8
E&W Cleddau	#	At risk	---	-78.5
Teifi	#	At risk	---	-76.4
Taf	#	At risk	---	-68.3
Glaslyn	#	At risk	---	-67.5
Taff & Ely		At risk	---	-86.8
Dwyfawr		At risk	--	-88.8
Ogmore		At risk	--	-83.8
Dyfi	#	At risk	--	-63.5
Seiont		Prob at risk	--	-76.3
Severn	##	Prob at risk	--	-40.4
Usk		Prob at risk	--	-27.5
Mawddach	#	Prob at risk	--	-9.3
Nevern	#	Prob at risk	-	-61.4
Dwryrd	#	Prob at risk	-	-57.0
Wye		Prob at risk	-	-50.4
Tywi	#	Prob at risk	-	-43.0
Dee		Prob at risk	-	-41.7
Ogwen		Prob at risk	-	-9.4
Conwy	#	Prob at risk	-	11.3
Dysinni	#	Prob at risk	++	-90.2



- The majority of the 33 main sea trout stocks are also classed 'At risk' (16) or 'Probably at risk' (12), however notably 5 stocks are classed as 'Probably not at risk' (Mawddach, Ogwen, Conwy, Artro and Seiont)

River		Risk' status: 2025	Trend	*Egg deficit/surplus on Management Target (%)
Taff & Ely		At risk	---	-95.4
Taf	#	At risk	---	-83.2
Tawe		At risk	---	-80.0
E&W Cleddau	#	At risk	---	-74.2
Neath		At risk	---	-67.0
Afan		At risk	---	-44.6
Ogmore		At risk	---	-43.7
Llyfni		At risk	---	-68.1
Dwyfawr		At risk	---	-60.2
Clwyd		At risk	---	-50.8
Rheidol		At risk	---	-50.8
Ystwyth		At risk	---	-44.0
Usk		At risk	--	-86.6
Dwryd	#	At risk	--	-83.9
Loughor		At risk	--	-78.8
Gwendraeth		At risk	--	-78.3
Glaslyn	#	Prob at risk	---	-32.3
Nevern	#	Prob at risk	---	-27.4
Wye		Prob at risk	--	-43.4
Dyfi	#	Prob at risk	--	-23.3
Dee		Prob at risk	--	-16.5
Gwyrfai		Prob at risk	--	-14.7
Severn	##	Prob at risk	--	-4.4
Dysinni	#	Prob at risk	--	3.1
Tywi	#	Prob at risk	-	-40.8
Teifi	#	Prob at risk	-	-19.0
Rhymney		Prob at risk	+	-93.4
Aeron		Prob at risk	+	-42.8
Mawddach	#	Prob not at risk	--	30.1
Ogwen		Prob not at risk	-	46.2
Conwy	#	Prob not at risk	+	39.4
Artro		Prob not at risk	++	-17.8
Seiont		Prob not at risk	++	91.0



- GM expressed concerns about the stock assessment method as it currently doesn't take into consideration the juvenile element of the stock.
- When the All Wales Bylaws were reviewed the poor juvenile status was taken into consideration. A comprehensive review of the methodology used to assess stocks is also well under way which will take account of all relevant fisheries stock evidence.
- CW asked how much reliance was placed upon angler catches in the estimation of stock levels.
- Catch returns are a statutory responsibility for all licence holders. The provision and shift to online reporting has seen a somewhat better proportion of anglers using it. NRW had a meeting with some members of the CPWF, the notes from which will be circulated to WFF members once they have been agreed. There is a lot of work being done on the methodology and

there will be an update at a future WFF. Particular progress has been made in the modelling of angler exploitation rate against the counted and non-counted rivers in England and Wales which is yet to be finalised. The importance of accurate catch returns was reiterated.

- CW expressed concern that catch effort wasn't representative of catches from 2021 as so few fish were caught. Some fish were caught on shrimp. He also noted that the increased non-angling tourist activity around rivers this year could have negatively affected the catch.
 - There has been an increase in migratory rod licences this year compared to 2020 and the relationship between angler effort and catch is not linear and complex. Provisional net catch for Wales is the lowest on record by some substantial amount this year.
 - GM commented that low catches in turn would result in lower angler effort and vice versa. Additionally, are NRW making the best use of their data collected from fisheries surveys. The Wales analysis commissioned by PG and carried out by Gregory et al. was very interesting and went a long way but didn't look at individual catchments but NRW need to be doing more with the data. Also, of concern was *Salmo trutta* abundance, also in marked decline which has been not been apparent in the WFD analysis.
 - PG agreed, there has been a relatively small increase in abundance in juveniles since the poor results in 2016 that were observed in some places.
 - However, we need to be conscious of shifting baselines and abundance was historically much higher.
 - CH – Commented agricultural impacts are probably underreported as COVID has affected NRW's response to incidents and it takes several years for stocks of fish to recover.
 - GM – commented Soil erosion is also not investigated which impacts the beds of streams particularly in the lower parts of the catchment.
 - PE – what are the impacts from trawling for sand eels in the estuary in terms of salmonid bycatch?
 - NRW have had discussions with Welsh Government on the overall issue of potential bycatch of migratory salmonids in marine fisheries and has been discussed between EA and DEFRA. It may not be an issue in some fisheries however it is difficult to get evidence and data. Trawling for sand eels may also negatively impact sea trout by removing a source of prey. The project on the river Dee has also been looking at the wellbeing of returning sea trout which has also seen some emaciated salmon returning.
-

Fishing in Wales



DoubleClick to open presentation

Ceri Thomas from Angling Trust/Fishing in Wales delivered a presentation Multimedia Promotion of Welsh Angling via 'Fishing in Wales' Brand

Key GOALS: -Encourage visitors and locals to get out and enjoy fishing in Wales

- Inspiring lapsed anglers to pick up a rod again
- Attracting newcomers to angling
- Attracting more visiting anglers from England and other areas of the UK
- Marketing Wales as an attractive fishing holiday destination

4.

- RE offered support, to promote and send information on FiW out the Countryside Alliance newsletter.
- SO - Partly a question about what more we could do with angling and fishing for equality and diversity inclusion. But I wonder if there aren't additional financial support sources available around that agenda that you could be looking into
- RJ – There are potentially some gaps in the demographic that need to be addressed and there may be some specific geographical targeting as well as maintaining promotion.
- MO – Angling trust are in the process of putting together an inclusion strategy which is being funded by Sport England, it is an Angling Trust board commitment to increase diversity and inclusion.
- GDW – welcomed the initiative and was sure there are opportunities for Afonydd Cymru and Fishing in Wales to work together
- PE – we (WSTAA) are looking at targeting older generations that are no longer able to participate in sports like football and rugby who need something to channel their spare time into.
- GM – in licence holders demographic there has been a drop in the number of licence holders between the ages 16-24 and those who no longer apply for licences are less likely to receive angling promotion.
- There is a role for subgroups to get involved in this work with the aim of looking at promotion and funding.
- WFF welcomed the initiative and congratulated Ceri on the success of the project.

ACTION: Consider forming a task and finish group around angling participation to discuss the way forward and opportunities. CT, RE & GDW

Update Paper



WFF Update Paper

DoubleClick to open Update paper

- From the Status of salmon and sea trout stocks - Key priorities are to ensure that the current conservation limit compliance assessment procedures are updated to be fit for use and robust. Any new or alternative approaches to reflect best practice need to be considered, which may include considering alternative biological reference points. A new fishery independent stock assessment methodology will also take into consideration the juvenile component of the stock. Key stakeholders will include WFF and the England Fisheries Group with CEFAS, EA and NRW already being involved. Timescale for completion is 2024. In Wales sea trout management is seen as equally as important and we will be seeking to apply new learning to the management of sea trout stocks. Once this process is complete the decision structure will be reviewed.

[NASCO Guidelines for the Management of Salmon Fisheries](#)

- 5.
- PG briefly discussed a presentation 'National salmon stock assessment and management review 2019 to 2024' previously presented to the England Fisheries Group by the Environment Agency. The presentation is a synopsis of the project to review the salmon stock assessment methodology
 - A salmon stock assessment working group has been established, which includes: The Environment Agency, NRW, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) together with a project programme and delivery schedule. This group and associated sub-groups met regularly throughout 2020.

Work has been progressed all the six main workstreams, namely:

1. Quality assurance of the current assessment process
2. Review of methods for the setting of Conservation Limits
3. Improved adult and juvenile monitoring processes
4. Consideration of statistical compliance procedures
5. Improving the Decision Structure.
6. Improved reporting requirements to keep stakeholders engaged and informed

In addition to the outputs reported previously, this has included on-going work to:

- (i) Develop improved methods to estimate angling exploitation rates for use in deriving Returning Stock Estimates from rod catches linking this to flow and reported rod effort (i.e. for application on the majority of rivers where there is no direct enumeration of adult returns from counters or traps).
-

(ii) Critically review current statistical compliance procedures used to evaluate performance against CLs and consider modifications or alternative approaches

– including by reference to approaches used within neighbouring jurisdictions.

(iii) Examine application of the Decision Structure and identify, address, and implement future development needs.

Progress on these and other aspects of this project will be reported to stakeholder groups during 2022.



EFG MEETING
200521- Taking forwa

- GM commented on the amount of time it takes for the stock assessments to be available and the 2020 stock assessment had been much longer than usual. It was possible to do an initial assessment within weeks of the end of the season, as he had done on the Usk with help from NRW fisheries staff. These had always matched NRW's assessments made months later. It would be more beneficial for prompt management if the turn around on the stock assessment could be faster.
- In addition to the funding mentioned in the Fisheries Update paper, NRW are also working with WG on a further multi-year bid.
- AC wishes to thank everyone for the huge efforts for securing funds finally this year. Multi-year funding will provide significant stability and ensure we can get a delivery programme prioritised.
- [Natural Resources Wales / LIFE Dee River](#)
- Another LIFE project has also been approved for work on four more SAC rivers Teifi, Cleddau, Tywi and Usk. The project is likely to start in late 2021.

Updates from other for a

[WLMF Subgroup Minutes June 21](#)

[WLMF Subgroup Minutes July 21](#)

6.
 - CH gave an overview of the Red Tractor presentation that was given at the June meeting, details of the presentation are linked above.

Action: EK to circulate August minutes when available

- LE asked if someone has been prosecuted can they still receive their Red Tractor accreditation as losing this could be more of a deterrent than prosecution. To which CH replied: yes, but there is a lack of communication between Red Tractor and regulatory bodies. Also, it isn't a requirement that the farm has a certification on its farmgate that it is a Red Tractor member.
-

-
- Recently there has been a move by Red Tractor to uncertified premises which would result in them not having access to the market. However, if these premises are still having to milk whilst not having access to the market there is an issue with the disposal of milk so good communication with regulators is imperative. In addition to this, farms that are not part of the Red Tractor scheme are also more susceptible to changes in market prices. The integrity of the scheme could be improved by an independent industry assessment on the quality of that assessment.
 - Afonydd Cymru are engaged with several organisations, particularly on standards and targets and have been going through a process of reviewing the standards and targets that were being set. A presentation was given to the WLMF today on this work.

EK to circulate WLMF meeting notes once available

- DA asked if NRW had any plans to increase the level of agricultural regulation enforcement in Wales.
- RJ – there are new regulations and although there’s a lot of discussion around the new regulations and currently there is a transitional approach to those regulations. NRW will be working to meet expectations of the public on these new regulations.
- CH – What NRW is lacking is experienced members of staff to conduct farm inspections but unfortunately, due to the high turnover in dairy inspectors, this hasn’t been achieved.
- GM – There is almost no prosecution for agricultural pollution incidents in Wales and enforcement is incredibly low. Of the 26,000 farms in Wales there are only a few hundred inspections at a time agreed with the farmer and despite that there is a huge level of non-compliance. Regulations are being broken across the board by some farmers and this information isn’t available to other regulators nor to the public.
- CH – NRW figures of incidents are incorrect and appear to be much lower than the actual number.
- RE – Casting for Recovery was put on long-term hold due to the pandemic and nature of clients’ requirements to shield. However, it has evolved into the Castaway which supports men and women affected by all types of cancer. The first event was held in Maidenhead recently, but the setup has changed to single day events rather than three days. The events are still free to the user and will go beyond offering it to those who have suffered from breast cancer. We are currently looking for funding to run some Welsh retreats next year.

[Countryside Alliance - Introducing Castaway by The Countryside Alliance Foundation \(countryside-alliance.org\)](https://www.countryside-alliance.org)

Fishing for Schools will be resurrected soon and will be looking for a Welsh speaking instructor.

[Home | Fishing for Schools](#)

AOB

- Suggested agenda items for next meeting:
 - Economic impact of the fishing bylaws on angling in Wales
 - Update on the Llynfi pollution incident (if available)
 - CSOs
- DONM: 13th January 2022

Action – DM to send out feedback to WFF members when available on the Enforcement & Prosecution Policy consultation which closes on 27th September.

7. Action: NRW to consider an annual fisheries report in the future which may include a task and finish group from WFF.

- CH noted there is a judicial review into the agricultural regulations which is due to be heard on the 26th and 27th of October which may be highly significant, and the forum may wish to discuss in the future.
 - Pete Gough will be retiring on the 30th September and the forum would like to thank him for all his work over the years.
 - SO - Pete, if I could speak on behalf of everyone who has come along to this forum over the years, or who has been involved with fisheries matters and the broader angling community, and offer an inordinately large thanks? I see everything that you have done over these years and decades for fisheries, angling river matters in Wales, and propose we should mark and minute our enormous gratitude for everything you've done on behalf of all of us and on behalf of the Community.
-