

Agenda

Title of meeting:	Wales Fisheries Forum
Date of meeting:	31 st January 2023
Time of meeting:	10:30-12:45 to 13:15-15:30
Location:	Teams Meeting Join on your computer, mobile app or room device Click here to join the meeting

Present

NRW:

- Steve Ormerod (Chair)
- Ben Wilson
- David Mee
- Sara Sherratt
- Ruth Jenkins

Members:

- Andy Phillips – Angling Cymru
- Creighton Harvey – Southwest Wales & Gower LFG rep
- Denise Ashton – Wild Trout Trust
- Dylan Roberts – Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Guy Mawle – Usk LFG Rep
- Lee Evans – Taff and Valleys LFG rep
- Paul Edwards – Welsh Salmon and Trout Conservation
- Robert Floyd – Welsh Government
- Tony Harrington – Dŵr Cymru/ Welsh Water

- John Ellis – Canal & River Trust
- Stuart Smith – Wye LFG rep
- Chris Mills – Institute of Fisheries Management
- Davina Ceri-Evans – Welsh Game Fair Manager
- Creighton Harvey – Gower and West Wales LFG
- Nigel Davies – Ceredigion LFG

Guest speakers:

- Margot Mear – Head of Portfolio Management Dŵr Cymru/ Welsh Water
- Dr Nigel Milner – APEM
- Dr Carlos Garcia de Leaniz - Swansea University
- Caroline Hawkins – NRW

Apologies

- Mervyn Williams - Dee & Clwyd LFG rep
- Rachel Evans – Countryside Alliance
- Michael Evans - NRW
- Gail Davies-Walsh – Afonydd Cymru
- Mark Owen – Angling Trust

1. Welcome, introductions – Steve Ormerod

- Steve Ormerod opened the meeting and covered any matters arising

Welcomed new members

- Sara Sherratt has taken over the secretariat role for WFF
- Nigel Davies joins the WFF from Ceredigion LFG

2. Admin Matters

- The notes from the previous meeting are now formally approved.
- **Comments** brought forward by Andy Phillips regarding stillwater trout and coarse fisheries and their inclusion in the Fish eating bird review process and outcomes. To be included in AOB at the end of the meeting.

- **Comments** have been taken onboard from the last meeting towards the corporate plan regarding the reallocation of resources to better prioritise monitoring and enforcement etc.
- **Action** from previous meeting. Water access issues, WG priority is currently to designate bathing waters on some inland waters for recreation. BW liaised with NRW water team and with WG Water policy to highlight need to accommodate needs of fisheries should any of these designated sites include fisheries Designation process will begin in the next financial year in line with NRW's list of priorities. Updates on this will be in upcoming meetings. (Action complete)
- **Action** from previous meeting on DM to update on warm water fisheries protocol. Discussions taken place with NRW and EA through the E&W Sea Trout and Salmon Group to provide consistent guidance, which will be brought forward into the 2023. (Ongoing Action)
- **Action** on NRW to notify WFF & LFG members on rod licenses duties advertisement pending Ministerial approval. Action complete.
- **Action** on BW to follow meetings and proposals coming out of Woodland creation Wales / Afonydd Cymru – access or promote riparian woodland creation scheme and provide updates to WFF. Action complete

3. Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water Tony Harrington and Margot Mear

National Environment programme delivery of fisheries outcomes

- DCWW discussed their ambitions for the coming years ahead in relation to how they measure their environmental impact by improving their WFD assessments.
- TH discussed how the costs of larger investment programmes have been supported by price rises. This is due to the costs of getting engineers to build & upgrade infrastructure / financing the programme and affordable level of interest. AMP 8 will be the largest package yet addressing environmental and social challenges.
- **Action** Circulate presentation to members from DCWW
- **Action** on BW to check on potential cross boarder rivers issues. Severn and Trent assets in Wales the EA and English water companies whether their cross border rivers approaches are the same as DCWW are taking same approach with their assets in England.

Ongoing Action: WFF members welcome DCWW to continue discussions and engagement with WFF with regard to the next AMP phases and their implications for fisheries.

4. Small Salmon Populations - Nigel Milner and Carlos Garcia de Leaniz

Using demographic parameters and measures of genetic variation to identify and respond to critically low levels of Atlantic salmon recruitment in Wales

To discuss the strategic approach and advice led by Ben

- Presentation by NM and CG on an Evidence report commissioned by NRW to assist in better identifying and responding to critically low levels of salmon recruitment in Wales. Comments by group:
- BW led the discussion following NM and CG. BW commented on the paper being a valuable tool to gain additional data to create a framework for addressing key issues, such as extinction risk and how to prioritise action around that.
- Comments following the paper include DA suggesting a strong comms message following the paper's release to draw attention to the risks faced by salmon populations in Wales. CM also commented on the importance of moving salmon from an exploitable resource to a conservation species.
- NM responded to question from CM, stating it could be possible to increase the resilience of populations within rivers by having a wider spatial range (i.e. increased habitat connectivity) and age representation across rivers.
- SO commented on there still being hope with populations not being below population size in genetic terms and degree of genetic recovery due to salmon interacting in meta populations.
- SO asks NM & CG for their current understandings of the effects of successive climatic events impacting salmon populations. NM responds by saying models suggest it would be highly damaging for salmon, with long lasting effects. It doesn't detract from their potential to recover.
- GW comments on spawners are critically low (less than 1000) on the UK. Breeders are around 100, being critical levels. Questions presented by others on stocking. Currently NRW doesn't allow enhancement or mitigation stocking but current levels are so small poses risk of losing some populations. Some rivers in Scotland appear to have seen success with stocking as part of a recovery plan. CG replied saying that habitat improvement is key area to address as salmon will not thrive, even after stocking, if the habitats remain at poor quality.
- **Action** on BW to share evidence report as PDF for salmon and sea trout with WFF members when available.
- **Action** on BW to provide comms message when report is published to the public. This could be used to instigate an awareness campaign.
- **Action** on BW and DM to discuss the potential to link findings into future review of salmon and sea trout plan of action.

Action on NRW to discuss how best to promote and highlight risk of stock extinction: NRW sits down with comms to highlight the main takeaways from evidence report to produce a response e.g. recent study highlights potential extinction of salmon in Wales – important evidence to help us manage salmon stocks by highlighting the real risk of salmon extinction in 25 years.

5. Corporate Plan

Update on consultation Caroline Hawkins

- CH outlined the ambitions of the corporate plan and what the overall aims are, being: the recovery of nature, resilience of nature to climate change and the prevention of harmful pollution.
- **Comment** from BW that NRW will be firming up on the measures targets & insuring fisheries duties are captured in there. Issues talked about in WFF climate/ species/ pollution captured within there as well. The next meeting is the 6th of June at the Senedd.
- **Action** on CH to keep members updated when it launches.

Ongoing Action for CH to bring the aims into fruition for the steps and outlining what needs to happen within the next couple weeks before finalisation for the corporate plan.

6. Fishing Wales - Ceri Thomas Angling Trust

To inform members on progress and objectives for 2023

- Presentation by CT on Fishing in Wales website and promotional activities, funded by NRW. This has been attracting interest from angling tourism. AT also hope to use the platform to promote the increase in diversity and inclusion within the angling community; Improve promotion of events & raise awareness of invasives and warm weather events.
- Discussion on what's being done about Salmon angling and how AT don't actively promote Wales as a salmon angling destination and lesser degree Sea trout (they normally aim for fish with high abundance).
- Discussion with WFF members on measuring the goals being achieved by AT's website campaigns? CT referred to their survey outputs from last Feb which shows website was effective in getting people to avoid fishing during hot weather periods.
- **Ongoing Action** need by AT for the need for licences to be highlighted more. This to be done with regular reminders at key times of the year on the fishing Wales website.

7. Updates from other Fora

WLMF: Subgroup on agricultural pollution – Creighton Harvey

Water Forum – Steve Ormerod

- **Action** on BW & DM notes for WFF & WLMF on NRW website are out of date and need updating.

8. Sustainability of Sea Trout stocks and heritage values of net fishing activities – David Mee

Dave Mee (NRW) presented proposals for how the remaining net fisheries licenced by NRW to catch sea trout might be regulated differently to ensure vulnerable stocks are protected whilst maintaining the heritage value of these fisheries. NRW will be engaging directly with net licensees to seek their view on how best to protect stocks, prior to making firm proposal for a formal consultation later in the year.

9. Update paper

Paper taken as read, but we invite comments Ben Wilson to run through key items

- Discussion between WFF members on the fines varying from anglers and farmers etc differ so the cost of killing a fish differs between perpetrators.
- Highlights were enforcement & regulation report but no specific action

10. GAME FAIR, FFAIR GÊM CYMRU

9-10 SEPTEMBER 2023, THE VAYNOL ESTATE, BANGOR, GWYNEDD

- DCE highlighted the opportunities to engage with the wider angling community through the Welsh Game Fair held on the Vaynol Estate.
- DCE requested suggestions from WFF on where it may be possible to secure additional funding from angling participation schemes or funding bodies.
- SO commented on that having NRW attend in the future would be a good opportunity for NRW to engage with people in its constituency and listen to any concerns from the people themselves directly.
- Suggestion from WFF member on how they could potentially bring in qualified fishing coaches to run a learn to fish workshop, due to the proximity to the lake on the estate. This would be a good way of drawing in new participation from younger and more diverse backgrounds.

- **Action** on BW & DM organise NRW members to attend this public event and for fisheries to attend more outreach events.
- **Action** to BW and DM to set objectives and intended outcomes of attending the Game Fair, so that resources aren't being wasted.

11. AOB

Members Updates. Angling Trust - Salmon Charter

- BW noted the official release of the Salmon Charter by the Angling Trust, being their manifesto going forward. MO was in London launching the Charter. BW also mentioned that the AT would be considering a Welsh launch for the Salmon charter.
- GM mentioned that there has been an fisheries related incident on the bottom of the USK. Members of the public have been trying to ring through to the helpline to report the incident, but the helpline is down.
- SO came back to fish eating bird conversation started earlier in the meeting by AP. The discussion evolved around the concern for predation by fish eating birds on coarse fish. AP shared concerns raised by himself and other members from Angling Cymru that coarse fish were not getting their space in the forum, with Salmonids being the key areas of discussion and afforded the higher conservation status, with regards to predation.
- BW discussed recruitment to a new position who will be implementing recommendations from the fish eating birds AG.
- Comments from BW were that the fish-eating bird review recognised that predation was not only a matter for Salmonids but a wider fisheries challenge which is being considered from a socio economic standpoint. It doesn't downplay the ability for coarse fisheries to apply and be granted licenses.
- **Action** on CT to circulate the copy of the Salmon Charter to WFF members and update if the AT are going to have a Welsh board.
- **Action** on BW and DM to investigate the situation and report back to WFF members what has happened to the helpline and if it is back up and running.
- **Action** on BW to bring this discussion back to the forum in a later meeting: new position on fish eating birds.

12. Agenda items forthcoming meetings

Stock Assessment Review, Sustainable Sea trout stocks, Plan of Action/NASCO Implementation Plan, Enforcement, Angling participation.

- DM still working with CEFAS and the EA on the stock assessment review currently.
- DM discussed that the ICES and NASCO reporting round starts in January where catch statistics will be analysed, including the process itself and new assessments produced.
- TH from WW will bring forward a worked-up PR 24 proposal for the summer meeting.
- DA mentioned beavers and currently there are no immediate actions in relation to beavers. Some investigatory work is being done by NRW currently. Potentially for discussion further down the line in coming meetings. Afonydd Cymru put out a statement at the beginning of January concerning Beavers and resources can be found on their website.

Meeting dates for 2023/24

- Board meeting dates Feb 6th, 2024
- **Action** on BW / DM propose some Dates

Joint site meeting with Water Forum May 2023

- **Action** on BW & DM to confirm possible site meet with Welsh forum 17th / 18th May (South Wales)
- **Action** on BW & DM Hybrid meeting – decide on location based on availability of hybrid facilities

Session end