

18 December 2013

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Sustainable inland fisheries for Wales – an agenda for change</b>
<b>Paper Reference:</b>	<b>Paper NRW B O 55.13</b>
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<b>Purpose of Paper:</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	To discuss and endorse Natural Resources Wales' approach and next steps required to move towards more sustainable inland fisheries for Wales as described in the agenda for change.
<b>Decision Required:</b>	The Board to promote the importance of and to demonstrate the organisational commitment to the agenda for change.

<b>Impact:</b> To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	<p><b>Impact on the Environment:</b> Fish require good water quality and availability and are a key indicator of ecological performance and environmental quality.</p> <p><b>Impact on the Economy:</b> Wales' fisheries have an important role in providing jobs and income in commercial and recreational fishing, fisheries management and tourism.</p> <p><b>Impact on Community:</b> Fish can play an important role in engaging people in their environment, education and providing opportunities for recreation and associated health benefits.</p> <p><b>Impact on Knowledge:</b> We need a strong evidence base to inform our advice to Welsh Government on fisheries policy, to inform Natural Resources Wales' decision making on fisheries management and to inform discussions with partners and co-deliverers.</p>
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## **Issue**

1. This paper sets out Natural Resources Wales' approach and next steps for seeking a common understanding and agreement of the actions required to move towards more sustainable inland fisheries for Wales as described in the agenda for change (Annex 1). The paper provides a summary of short term priority actions identified to date (Annex 2). The Board's feedback and endorsement of the approach is required.

## **Summary**

2. Natural Resources Wales is responsible for regulation of inland fisheries in Wales (including salmon, sea trout, eel, smelt and lamprey out to 6 nautical miles) and has a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to "maintain, improve and develop fisheries". We currently achieve this through implementation of legislation and an externally funded programme of work based on actions agreed with Welsh Government.

3. Although much has already been achieved there are challenges, now and in the future, to maintaining sustainable fisheries that current evidence, approaches and resources cannot adequately address. The clear message from our work and from stakeholders is that we will need to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners, some new to us, to develop the way forward and deliver the actions on the ground. Some of the actions will be different to our historic approaches. We must be clear that the actions we develop with partners are aligned to the principles of sustainable development and an ecosystem approach from the outset and that climate change adaptation principles are embedded into our action plan. The approach that we are taking to achieve this is presented in the agenda for change.

## **Background**

4. In the past, lead organisations have written fisheries strategies, focussing on single issues or species. These strategies often failed to deliver all their outcomes as they were not developed and agreed with those who had the opportunity or responsibility to manage the wider ecosystems that support our fisheries. The outcomes for sustainable fisheries can only be achieved through the actions of a wide range of internal and external stakeholders not just those traditionally with a fisheries interest.

5. Our new approach is to seek the views, ideas and evidence for change, through conversations with our partners and co-deliverers and to co-produce action plans that cover all the pressures on fisheries. We will identify existing programmes and groups where we can integrate the actions for change to deliver for inland fisheries as well as for other outcomes e.g. Water Framework Directive 'Challenges and Choices' consultation.

6. It is appropriate that we identify the successes, challenges and specific issues and concerns relevant to our inland fisheries so we can influence the development of a more integrated approach by us and others to the sustainable management of natural resources to deliver for inland fisheries alongside other outcomes.

7. We have held discussions on the key issues and opportunities at a series of internal and external workshops in Wales. We have distilled the messages from these conversations to develop an initial aim and outcomes and to identify the issues, opportunities and headline ideas for change to deliver these outcomes. We are calling this an agenda for change.

### **Next Steps**

8. Natural Resources Wales is implementing a programme of actions with partners and stakeholders to provide the evidence to inform advice to Welsh Government on the development of inland fisheries policy and to inform Natural Resources Wales' approach to natural resources management. The programme will continue to develop as opportunities to implement the ideas for change are identified through the conversations with our partners and co-deliverers.

9. The establishment of Natural Resources Wales provides the opportunity to consider our role and focus in fisheries management and the promotion of angling and how we can work better with partners in these areas.

10. There are also opportunities through management of our estate, our own plans, programmes and projects and through our regulatory role to develop new approaches, demonstrate best practice and implement an ecosystems approach, including to sustainable inland fisheries management in Wales.

11. Key actions to note:

### **Natural Resources Wales' Hatchery Review.**

This review will help determine whether Natural Resources Wales should keep its current fish hatchery operations and assets. There are two elements that inform any decision as to whether Natural Resources Wales should maintain capacity in this area of work: 1) the rationale and justification for rearing and stocking of Salmon into Welsh rivers. 2) the rationale and justification for this activity to be undertaken by Natural Resources Wales, using our own facilities and staff. This needs to link closely with and will be informed by the stocking Task & Finish group work. The review will produce a short report with relevant information on each of the issues. The report will make some initial recommendations. There would then follow a period of more detailed assessment and consultation before any recommendations are taken forward.

**To develop a framework for inland fisheries stakeholder engagement in Wales.**

Natural Resources Wales will work with Welsh Government to advise them on an effective framework for engagement with stakeholders with an interest in and responsibility for delivering sustainable fisheries outcomes.

**To review the rod licence as a source of funding for fisheries management in Wales.**

Natural Resources Wales will work with the Environment Agency, Welsh Government and stakeholders, to review the current rod licensing arrangements in Wales. The review will consider the relevance of the rod licence in Wales and the importance of the revenue raised for managing sustainable fisheries. It will advise Welsh Government policy in relation to the future of the rod licence in Wales.

**Risks**

**12. In-adequate internal and external resources available to facilitate any further conversations, support task and finish groups and provide the evidence to agree the issues and actions.**

13. We have a work programme with an assessment of resource requirements from across the Operations and Knowledge, Strategy and Planning directorates.

14. To make best use of resources and skills of Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government, partners and stakeholders we will identify existing programmes and groups where these conversations can take place.

**15. Failure to achieve a common understanding and agreement on the aim, outcomes, issues and actions.**

16. We will seek the help of colleagues and partners, with skills in facilitation and co-production to support the conversations.

17. We will seek the support of the Board to promote the importance of and to demonstrate the organisational commitment to the agenda for change.

**Financial Implications**

18. There are no significant financial implications to implement agenda for change.

19. The work programme will need to consider how we secure adequate future funding to deliver the outcomes. Fisheries income comes from a number of sources: Grant in Aid, Water Resources, Flood Risk Management, Welsh Government, rod licences and EU funding. These have been and will continue to come under pressure.

## **Communications**

20. An engagement workstream will be part of the work programme. We will engage with a broader cross-section of internal and external groups than traditionally associated with fisheries management, to demonstrate the value of and identify new and effective approaches for sustainable fisheries management.

## **Equality impact assessment (EqIA)**

21. The agenda for change will seek to extend the social and economic benefits of sustainable inland fisheries to a wider cross-section of people and communities in Wales.

## **Index of Annex**

- A. Sustainable inland fisheries for Wales– an agenda for change
- B. A programme to develop the ideas for change - short term priority actions