

## **NRW Public Board Meeting – 19 July 2023**

### **Questions from the public**

#### **Kim Waters, Welsh Rivers Union**

**Question 1 - Given Dwr Cymru fall from 4\* to 2\*. Does NRW have a view on its own failure in this regulated business in not stopping that DCWW failure earlier**

The EPA for water companies does not cover all the aspects of water company regulation, the EPA serves as a basis for NRW to increase or decrease its regulatory action based on ongoing performance. In light of Dwr Cymru, and much of the industry dropping standards over the last 24 months we are currently reviewing our regulatory service plans to ensure we are carrying out the necessary inspections/audits of water company activity to ensure the company is achieving higher standards.

Where appropriate this may lead to higher enforcement activity, or greater scrutiny of the company via audit. It should be noted that previous poor performance resulted in NRW intervention and an increase in Water Company performance to 4\* in 2020.

#### **Kim Waters, Welsh Rivers Union**

**Question 2 - The Taf catchment ( a non-SAC catchment) is on its knees. A complete collapse in salmonoid biodiversity. Intensive dairy being the issue and becoming even more intensive. Is the catchment officially abandoned or is there any plan to restore. If so what or where is the plan?**

With considerable attention being focussed on our SAC rivers such as the Tywi, it's understandable that some of our other rivers may appear forgotten. However, the Taf is certainly included in NRW's routine monitoring programmes, and it is by no means abandoned in this regard.

We are aware of environmental impacts upon the Taf and its tributaries through this monitoring. In this way we can establish how the catchment is faring in terms of fish populations, with surveys undertaken routinely at a number of sites. Similarly, water quality monitoring is carried out to provide further evidence. Such monitoring forms part of the Water Framework Directive requirements to address problems in all our river catchments.

We understand that intensive agriculture is affecting the catchment and have several walkovers planned on the Taf which may result in work being carried out in the near future.

In relation to the salmonid fishery, there are wider issues affecting salmon survival and recruitment, but it is the land use and water quality issues in specific parts of the

catchment that are chronic and impacting on any recovery of salmonid populations. However, it's important to note that the salmon population demise is also far wider than the local issues identified, and declines are being observed across the North Atlantic.

To provide some details about fisheries monitoring on the Taf, the juvenile salmonid numbers increased in 2022. The adult rod catch does not show the same trend however, nor the egg deposition trendline but that is calculated currently on rod catch, so you would expect some mirroring between adults and eggs.

Work is ongoing to include juvenile data in egg deposition calculations. On adult catches, less declared angling effort is going in to catching salmon and sea trout so this may go some way in explain rod catch declines. This should not detract from 2 important aspects, one being pressures within the catchment, predominantly agricultural over a decade or more. The other factor is the marine survival of salmonids which has affected most of Wales and England over the last 10 years or more.

### **Moira Williams**

**At a Save the Teifi meeting last week, Dŵr Cymru told us that they couldn't give any information regarding pollution to the seaward side of Cardigan as they were awaiting figures from NRW regarding estuary/maritime pollution levels. When might these figures be available?**

Since the publication of the 'Compliance Assessment of Welsh River SACs against Phosphorus Targets' report NRW has sought legal advice in respect of our Marine Protected Areas. Following receipt of that advice we are reviewing the data on marine water quality within our SACs. We expect to provide further information later this year

### **Emma Wiik**

**I also have a Q about the Teifi - what is NRW's role in the treatment wetlands planned in the catchment with Dwr Cymru? Are these being constructed on a trial/experimental basis or an implementation basis?**

NRW has recently released its Policy with regard to Constructed Wetlands. We have agreed to take forward two proposals from Dwr Cymru at Tremeirchion Sewage Treatment Works and at Pont-y-Felin Storm Overflow as trial sites.

The intention is to use the learning and evidence from both sites, along with wider evidence of the efficacy of wetlands to inform the overall viability of Wetlands for sewage treatment in Wales. It is expected both trials will run for 2 years.

At present we have no active trials in the Teifi catchment. Ceredigion County Council is planning the implementation of constructed wetlands on the Teifi in partnership with DCWW. NRW are not involved in this work currently, please contact Ceredigion County Council for further information.