

# LLANDYSUL ANGLING ASSOCIATION Ltd.

**PRESIDENT:**

Dr. D. Roberts,

**CHAIRMAN:**

Dr. Ian Thomas,

**HON. SECRETARY:**

Tonlas Evans,

29 August 2009

Virginia Hawkins  
Clerk to the Sustainability Committee  
Welsh Assembly Government,  
Cardiff Bay.  
Cardiff.  
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Hawkins,

## **Inquiry into Access to Inland Water in Wales**

The following is the submission to the inquiry into Access to Inland Water in Wales on behalf of Llandysul Angling Association Ltd..

I am the honorary secretary of the association.

### **Our Association.**

This club was formed in 1949. The primary aim was to preserve the rights of anglers to fish their local river as all the signs were that available water was being bought by business syndicates. It was formed as an angling club but now exists as a limited company – Llandysul Angling Association.

We have about 500 members and we have various grades of membership i.e. Full, OAP's, Student, Junior and Disabled.

We are proud of our record in encouraging young people to learn and enjoy angling. We organise regular sessions – weekly – during the summer where youngsters are taught the basics of angling as well as river craft and basic entomology. We also run weekly fly tying (dressing) courses through the winter months for youngsters. We also encourage and guide them in a scientific "Fly monitoring" long term exercise.

We manage about 32 miles of the middle river Teifi, of which we own about 28 miles. These stretch from Llanfairclydogau (north of Lampeter) to Newcastle Emlyn. My predecessors were very prudent and built up good financial reserves so that when any desirable water was offered for sale it could be considered for purchase without financial constraints. The total historical cost of these purchases' was £698,000 and they are probably valued now at between £2m and £3m pounds.

We bought most through our long term relationships with owners but we have also bought at auction.

### **Legal Rights**

We are happy that our legal rights regarding angling are well defined, but not those regarding canoeing. Our understanding is that we have purchased or leased the right to fish in the stretches of water under our control, accompanied by a negotiated right of access and a parking area if possible.

We would like changes to our legal rights. We would like to see the situation regarding canoeing and rafting on our water clarified as the current situation is not working for anybody at present. It would appear that we are currently powerless to prevent canoeists and rafters from using our waters at will. As we are the property owners, and having paid handsomely for the privilege we feel that our rights are being abused and we are seeking workable legal redress.

We are not aware of any legislation that exists in other countries that could be used in Wales.

### **Voluntary Agreements.**

We do have experience of voluntary agreements for access to our water as we granted Llandysul Paddlers a 25 year lease on one of our stretches of river. This situation was fine for a few years, but since the Paddlers have developed higher aspirations they have not stuck to their agreement and seem to think that they have already gained the freedom of the river which they are currently seeking.

We would like to see changes to such agreements as we would like to regain control of our property and ensure that any future agreements are legally robust and enforceable.

We are not aware of voluntary arrangements in other Countries which could be useful here as these agreements do not seem to work anywhere else. As the campaign is for open access to all Welsh waters the discussion has moved beyond this point – the Welsh Canoe Union is advising its members not to enter into any more agreements because they are attempting to achieve a greater outcome.

### **Key Issues:**

We have paid for our right to fish and wish to be able to continue to do so without interference.

As property owners, we do not have adequate legal protection with regard to trespass over our property.

We have the current delicate ecological state of the river to deal with and are endeavouring to do so via our rivers trust. We are the people who genuinely have the welfare of the river at heart and are undertaking educational, surveillance and habitat restoration work which will go a long way towards satisfying the European Water Framework Directive.

There is potential for environmental damage via canoeing e.g. gyrodactylus and possible spread of other parasites as well as direct effects on existing wildlife. The exponential increase in the volume of canoeing and rafting traffic is not conducive to encouraging riparian and aquatic wildlife.

The Teifi Valley is an SSSI and SAC and the river is currently classified as “at risk” by the Environment Agency.

There is potential for a reduction in membership of Llandysul A.A. and in the economic benefits for the rural Welsh economy from reduced angling tourism.

Canoeing is already illegal under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, Part 1, section 2, sub section 4 and part 2, section 12, sub section 3.

Does the farming community know that they could soon be the recipients of a whole new group of uninvited guests?

Canoeists are blissfully unaware of the current ecological problems impinging on the Teifi and are making no positive contribution to the welfare of the river. They may be causing some damage to a precarious environment.

Fishermen are largely adapting a no-kill policy on the river and are metamorphosing into conservationists rather than blood sport enthusiasts.

The go anywhere, pay nothing mentality has not benefited the rural community in any discernable way so far, rule by rent-a-mob is not acceptable.

Should the canoeists be successful in their bid for open access then anglers would expect at least the same, we would not continue to pay our license fees, the angling club structure could well fall apart, we would pursue huge compensation claims for the loss of our amenity and the situation could well degenerate to one of total anarchy on our rivers and a system that has served the countryside well for donkey's years will have been destroyed for ever.

We are financially independent and don't see why our canoeing colleagues should receive such huge largesse at the taxpayer's expense. If an equivalent amount of money were given to Rivers Trusts, we could really set about some, serious conservation work and at least someone would be attempting to invest in the sustainability of our environment rather than continuing its exploitation to the point of exhaustion.

Carmarthen County Council has sponsored Llandysul Paddlers to the tune of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Teifi Rivers Trust currently has enough to carry out seven thousand pounds worth of work on one tributary this year.

It is anglers who fight campaigns on the river's behalf when necessary such as the recent cypermethrin battle which we hope has arrested a great deal of damage to the Teifi catchment. These episodes consume a great deal of time and effort, all from volunteers, and I do not think the canoeists even knew it was going on, and they are blissfully unaware of most environmental concerns, issues and initiatives on the Teifi.

Angling clubs are well established organisations with a long history of trouble-free sport. We are accessible to anyone, we carry I.D cards and we police ourselves. We also work in partnership with other organisations such as CCW and the Environment Agency on many projects which benefit both the environment and community and wish to continue to be able to do so.

Game fishing in Wales is legendary and very much a part of Welsh Heritage. We are currently being asked to promote it and sell it as never before for the benefit of the National economy while its quality declines. If we are to be overrun with canoes then this will become impossible.

Our canoeists claim to be great benefactors to the local economy, but they provide their own accommodation- for which they charge. They have their own shop for clothing and equipment and I gather that they are soon going to open their own café. It would appear to me that, rather than supporting local enterprises, they are in direct competition with other local providers and are seeking to channel most of the economic benefits back their own way. Bearing in mind that some of the more vocal elements within the canoeing community are reliant on the sport for their livelihoods, then maybe the real agenda is starting to emerge.

Angling is currently worth approximately £130 million to the rural Welsh economy. (Environment Agency figures). It is also the largest participant sport in the UK, with 6 million active fishermen nationwide. Canoeing is worth far less, both in economic terms and potential votes for politicians.

### **Solutions:**

We wish to regain control of our own property.

That canoeists and rafters are not given open access to all Welsh waterways.

Canoeists should organise themselves in a similar way to anglers, being licensed, affiliated to a club, identifiable and consequently responsible for their actions.

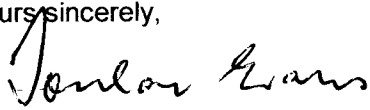
They can canoe outside the fishing season from 18<sup>th</sup> October until 1<sup>st</sup> April the following year on an open-access basis as long as they avoid environmentally sensitive areas such as head waters and tributaries.

They then have to negotiate with land owners and fishing owners for canoeing during the fishing season with instant redress for transgression. Their complaint will be that this is not enough to satisfy

their demands but we do not see that it is the business of Llandysul, or any other angling club to sustain the activities of other people who are nothing but a nuisance to us. How canoeists procure their canoeing is a problem for them, not us.

Other possible solutions have been considered but are not acceptable to us at present.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tonlas Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Tonlas Evans  
Hon, Sec,  
Llandysul Angling Association Ltd..