

Questions for the access to inland waterways inquiry

What is your interest in the issue of access to inland waterways

- Recreational user: [Walker](#)
- User for waterborne recreation: [Canoeing](#)

Are you a member of an organisation related to your use of water?

Yes : [British Canoe Union](#)

Which stretches of water do you use?

[Wye, Usk, Teifi, Twyi, Tryweryn](#)

Other lakes and rivers if I was allowed. I would like to paddle the Dee, but put off by reports of abusive behaviour and car vandalism against canoeists.

Legal rights

- Are you happy that your legal rights are clear and well defined? [No](#)
- Can you briefly outline your understanding of your legal rights over the stretch of water/s that you own/use/manage. [I understand I require permission to cross any land to access a waterway, or use of public land. I understand that landowners have riparian rights to exploit the river along their property for fishing. I do not believe that allows them to control the navigation of a river – the law is unclear on this point as there is a lack of definitive legislation.](#)
- Would you like to see any changes to your legal rights? [Yes – I believe inland waterways are a national asset, and it is in the nation's interest that access to inland waterways becomes available to all.](#)
- If yes, what changes would you like to see? [Ideally I would like to see free right of access to all members of the public regardless of what activity they were – provided that this right were granted with responsibilities for safeguarding the environment, protecting livestock etc.](#)
- Are you aware of any legislation that exists in other countries that could be used in Wales? [Yes. Almost every other country I know permits this access with the embarrassing exceptions of England and Wales. Notably Scotland has enacted just such rights with the 2003 Scottish Land Reform Act. This appears to work extremely well, and makes Scotland a destination of choice for canoeists and outdoor enthusiasts. Additionally I know I can paddle in France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Finland, USA, Canada without problems.](#)

Voluntary agreements

- Do you have any experience of voluntary agreements for access to the stretch of water/s you own/use/manage : [Yes](#)
- If yes, please briefly outline the agreements that exist and your experience of how they operate. : [The Wye Usk Foundation provides a moderately successful agreement on those rivers. However it limits canoe access to just 5 months of the year \(Mid October to Mid March\), whilst fishermen enjoy access for 9 months. Notably it prevents canoe access during Spring and Summer – except during periods where the rivers are experiencing Spate conditions. This may appear reasonable, but as I have to travel some distance to these rivers, I need to plan my visit. I cannot reasonably predict Spate, so the reality for me is that the river is inaccessible between Mid March and Mid October. It would be nice sometimes to paddle when it is warm!](#)
- Would you like to see any changes to the voluntary agreements? [Yes.](#)
- If yes, what changes would you like to see? [Voluntary agreements are flawed because they are negotiated by special interest groups who pursue their own interests and ignore wider considerations of equity and fairness. In the specific case quoted – the Wye Usk Foundation negotiates from a position of power as it negotiates with the assumption that it controls access. It is under no pressure to provide an equitable agreement. The Wye Usk voluntary agreement is only between anglers and canoeists and excludes all other recreational users.](#)
- Are you aware of any voluntary arrangements in other countries that could be used in Wales? [No – as far as I am aware all other countries have legal right of access and do not need them.](#)

Please can you briefly outline what you think are the key issues for recreational access to inland water in Wales and how you would like to see them addressed.

1. [What is unique about Welsh salmon fishing that it cannot co-exist with other water users, where in most other countries this is not seen as a problem?](#)

2. Inland waterways including rivers and lakes are key national assets. Is it appropriate that they are accessible only to a select few – or should they like the Welsh mountains be accessible to all?
3. Is it in fact appropriate that angling clubs buy up whole stretches of river and thus controlling these assets
3. As popularity of outdoor adventure sports continues to grow, how will the current (few) agreements cope? More and more visitors will wish to access rivers during summer holiday periods, which they are currently prohibited from doing. The future is likely to become even more problematic.
4. Wherever canoeists and anglers are forced to co-exist such as on public navigations, canals, tidal rivers, they do so without issue. Neither side finds their activity impossible, Why should this not be possible on ALL inland waterways?