

Virginia Hawkins
Sustainability Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

September 7th 2009

Ref: Inquiry into access to inland water in Wales.

Dear Madam,

I am writing in response to the consultation above. My interest in this matter is as a land and fishery owner on the River Wye. My land extends to both sides of the river, where it forms the border with England. There are already a large number of issues which have complicated land and fishery management due to devolution. My river frontage extends to approximately three miles and includes a bridge carrying the main A466 Wye Valley road.

I am a member of the Wye Salmon Fishery Owners Association, the ACA and the Atlantic Salmon Trust. I own and manage the Bigsweir Estate Salmon Fishery.

I understand that there is a legal right of navigation on this part of the Wye which allows passage along the river, but there are no mooring or landing rights. My biggest problem is canoe or small boat users coming onto my land without permission to land or launch their craft. This is usually done by people on foot or in vehicles with no regard for gates or fences.

As a fishery owner, I look after and maintain large stretches of the riverbank and the access to the riverbank as well as maintaining fishing cribs and removing trees and branches which obstruct fishing. I also collect huge quantities of litter which floats down the river.

The river here is regularly affected by the tide which on certain days can be very high. There is a general lack of knowledge and preparation by those canoeists coming to the lower reaches of the river. We have had many incidents involving Police and Rescue services and been extremely lucky not to have had a fatality.

As a fisherman I have to buy a Salmon licence as well as spending considerable sums trying to improve and protect my fishing which forms an important part of Estate income. Canoeists on the other hand seem to contribute nothing to the river. I think all craft should be licensed and identified and users made aware of the safety aspects and codes of conduct of river use. This could be done by the Environment Agency.

Yours faithfully
Charles Hopkinson

