

9th September 2009

Dear Virginia Hawkins, Clerk to the Sustainability Committee,

Draft questions for the access to inland waterways inquiry

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

Land owner - small landowner

Recreational user:

Fishing

User for waterborne recreation (e.g. canoeing, rowing etc)

Other(please specify)

Are you a member of an organisation related to your use of water? No

If yes, which organisation/s?

Which stretch/es of water do you own/use/manage?

2 Small streams

Legal rights

Are you happy that your legal rights are clear and well defined? Yes

Can you briefly outline your understanding of your legal rights over the stretch of water/s that you own/use/manage: Legal ownership of stream banks and ownership of half stream beds with neighbours.

Would you like to see any changes to your legal rights? No

If yes, what changes would you like to see?

Are you aware of any legislation that exist in other countries that could be used in Wales? No.

Voluntary agreements

Do you have any experience of voluntary agreements for access to the stretch of water/s you own/use/manage No

If yes, please briefly outline the agreements that exist and your experience of how they operate.

Would you like to see any changes to the voluntary agreements? Yes, if they can be managed to deliver access more effectively and satisfy demand.

Are you aware of any voluntary arrangements in other countries that could be used in Wales? No.

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. There are stretches of waterways with no access along the banks. How would access be achieved, and would new rights of way have to be created across private land to reach inland water? In Wales many streams run through narrow valleys, woodlands, gardens, farmland, and through property both commercial and private. The model in Scotland is not appropriate in Wales, the terrain is different except in mountainous areas and there are fewer completely wild areas of low population. Some streams are very small and shallow, would all of these be included? The potential for environmental damage is greatest where inland water is shallow and narrow. Clearing away obstacles such as overhanging branches and natural debris from streams in order to facilitate canoeing etc could have a detrimental environmental effect. I think it is only practical to include certain stretches of rivers that have obvious value for recreational activities. These could have points of access and be managed accordingly both for environmental and safety reasons. People can be unaware of some of the dangers of using waterways. River swimming for example could be dangerous for unsupervised children. Some areas of water are also polluted.

Although canoeists are very keen to extend access, and there should be some negotiated extension of access in certain areas, it is necessary to take into account the differing interests and rights which exist, and not create legislation which mostly benefits one group at the expense of others.

Yours sincerely,

Kathy Lewis

Mrs Kathy Lewis