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Tel: 01267 275 660.

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Dolauel,
Llanddarog,
Barmarthen,
Carms SA32 8NU.

Dear Sir,

Canoe/Watercraft Petition ~ non tidal water.

On the 11th March, 2009, I wrote to you as Chairman of the Barmarthen & District Angling Club, and representing 550 anglers (now increased to 600), but on this occasion I am writing in my personal capacity.

Inland waterways in Wales are used by thousands of anglers, who are also actively engaged in the management and conservation of rivers and lakes, and contribute a substantial amount to the EA by licence fees alone.

The evidence presented to the Petition Committee in support of free access for canoeists, and other users to all Welsh rivers and waterways was totally and completely misleading. It indirectly referred to the fact that only a small minority of Welsh anglers fish on rivers, and relied heavily on the example of open access in Scotland, without mentioning that in Scotland there is no rod licence, and a totally different legislative environment.

In 2007, approximately 71,000 rod licences were sold in Wales, and these licences would cover fishing for salmon, sea trout, brown and rainbow trout, grayling and coarse fish, and it should also be noted that the under 12's do not require a licence, and with the combination of the rod licence fee, and club membership fee, the angler does contribute substantially locally, and to the Government, and of course the angler is the guardian of the water, a tradition which has been upheld for hundreds of years.

As an angler I am fully aware of the reduction in fish stocks of salmon and sea trout, and every endeavour is being made to conserve fish stocks, and it is in our interest that the rivers run clean, and are free from disease, and unblighted, and the welfare of animals, flora and fauna is indicative of anglers caring for the rivers, and the environment.

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Angling is worth many millions to the Welsh rural economy. The economic survey in 2000, put the value of angling at £75 million, and since then the Welsh Assembly Government has measured an additional £36 million income, generated in part at least by the "Fishing Wales" initiative. These are large sums of money supporting livelihoods across rural Wales, and should not be put at risk.

I have also recently read "Fishing Wales" [www.fishing.visitwales.com], which describes Wales as the premiere destination for game, coarse and sea fishing, and designates the River Towy as the finest "serkin" river in Europe, and is renowned for the production of large fish. It was also stated in an Angling Magazine that surveys have shown that inland and sea fishing activity accrued a total spend on angling of £148.4 million per year in Wales, and that this has triggered a new project - "Wild Fishing Wales" - which will be funded to the tune of £2.6 million.

Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones will launch the project, aimed at boosting the rural economy of Wales through angling tourism, by helping to increase this trend, by assisting fisheries, clubs and river trusts to invest in improving access to fishing, as well as funding training courses for angling guides, and promoting fishing sites in Wales, but of course this will be futile upon any interference by the multicoloured carbon fibre and plastic brigade.

In an article in "Trout and Salmon" [September 2009], even the head gillie of the Lydon Castle Estate on the River Spey [Scotland], expressed concern about the canoes. He recently witnessed 28 canoes making use of the river in one group, which caused unlimited and incalculable disturbance, agitation and annoyance.

I also understand that the project to be launched by the Minister aims to improve habitat and access to more than 71 Km of river, and 10 still water fisheries, and Dr. Ben Wilson, the Fisheries Project Manager, EAW has made the comment, that as the 5 year project develops, it is hoped to promote the fisheries, to make it easier for visiting and local anglers to fish them.

What has also angered the angling fraternity are the

comments made by Griff Rhys Jones in the programme RIVERS and "that he has met a lot of fishermen, and decided that we should disturb as many as possible" but I agree with the reply of Sir Ian Botram that "his stupid remarks are pretty irresponsible" but if this attitude epitomises the views of the canoeists, then the angler has a just cause to be concerned, and the major problems with canoe trespass still exists, since the canoeists launch wherever and whenever they please without consideration to other parties.

The latest estimates indicate that fishing brings in £150 million [with 1500 jobs] to the local economy. If any factor or influence is introduced, which would put any part of this income or livelihood in jeopardy, then the tourist trade, and especially the farming community, who have already diversified to cater for tourists, including fishermen will suffer further hardship.

Please convey my views to the appropriate Committee.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully

Erwig Davies