

2 September 2009

Dear Sir,

Welsh Canoeing Association – Access to Inland Water Petition

I should be grateful if Welsh Assembly Sustainability Committee would take the following views into consideration when undertaking their enquiry into the petition recently submitted by the Welsh Canoeing Association.

I am a keen angler and a member of four game fishing clubs that are based in North Wales. The rivers I fish on a regular basis are the Dee, Clwyd, Elwy, Alyn, Conwy and Cledwen. The clubs have agreed fishing rights with the relevant riparian owners and this includes access to and from the river. I accept that canoeing clubs, or individual canoeists, are at liberty to enter into similar agreements with a riparian owner if they wish to use a river. The law as it stands is quite clear on this issue and I see no reason to change it.

My principal objections to allowing paddlers completely free and unfettered access are:

- Significant damage could be caused to spawning salmon and sea trout, and their redds. This is the reason that there is a closed season for fishing and any fish caught outside this period that have reached sexual maturity, or are recovering from spawning, must be returned unharmed.
- Anglers fishing on Welsh rivers pay an annual licence of £68 to fish for migratory fish and the main target species is sea trout. These are notoriously wary fish and if disturbed it is often many hours before they can be caught. Sea trout fishing generates significant revenue for the local economy and this could be in jeopardy if fish have been scared by the action of canoeists and are therefore uncatchable.
- Riparian owners should maintain the right to receive income from their asset through permitting any lawful activity. This could be through fishing clubs, fishing

syndicates, outdoor pursuits groups or canoeing organisations. Many riparian owners undertake work to maintain their section of river and access to it, as do numerous fishing clubs/syndicates. To permit canoeists free and unfettered access to all rivers would make it almost impossible to manage the asset effectively and remove a valuable source of income from landowners. As previously stated, canoeists are welcome to negotiate sole or shared access rights with riparian owners, so why should any river user expect to be given preferential treatment?

On a personal note, although my primary residence is in England I have a second home in Wales and I spend approximately six weeks a year there with my family. I also travel to Wales a minimum of one day a week throughout the fishing season and spend money in the local economy in so doing. In addition, the membership fees I pay to Welsh fishing clubs goes into the local economy through payments to riparian owners or procuring fishing related services. If canoeists are given free and unfettered access to Welsh rivers and this has a negative impact on my fishing, I will have to reconsider the time I spend in Wales. For information, the cost of fishing in northern England is comparable to that of fishing in Wales and it would be no further for me to travel for a days fishing. I would have to consider the merits of maintaining a second home in Wales if I were not getting the use from it.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Hughes BSc, IEng, FIHIE, MIHT