

Denbigh and Clwyd Angling Club

Y Fron,  
Abbey Road,  
Rhuddlan,  
Denbighshire,

Ms Virginia Hawkins,  
Sustainability Committee,  
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA.

Ref. Sustainability Committee's inquiry into access to inland water in Wales.

Dear Ms Hawkins,

I am the Chairman of the Denbigh and Clwyd Angling Club and, as such, represent the views of the Committee and of 200 fishing members. We have approximately 46kms (26 miles) of fishing available to us, in and around the Vale of Clwyd, most of which is on the River Clwyd.

We have concerns over the possibility of unrestricted access to our rivers for a variety of reasons, some of which I shall list below. I will not elaborate on each point for the sake of brevity, detailed arguments can be debated at a later date and in a more suitable forum than a letter or e-mail can provide!

Angling directly and indirectly creates many millions of pounds of revenue for Wales, exact figures are available from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Environment Agency Wales (EAW). Although anglers do not want to stand in the way of 'progress' we feel that anything which may harm the status quo must be scrutinised very carefully and from all points of view. Some points to consider are:-

\* The Salmon is an endangered species and deserves our help in maintaining stocks. The Eel and Sea Trout (Sewin) too require careful monitoring and support.

\* The River Clwyd has recently moved from the 'Probably at Risk' to 'Probably not at Risk' category for Salmon due to the intervention of our anglers. (Contact Andy Schofield at EAW for confirmation and details)

\* The River Clwyd has recently been granted a two-week

extension to the Season (all fish caught will be returned to the River) purely as an attempt to gather scientific data about Salmon stocks and we hope this will be repeated and further extended in the future. (Again, contact Andy Schofield at EAW, for details.)

- \* We are actively involved in a range of schemes to improve habitat for all indigenous wildlife.

- \* Agriculture and Horticulture. A major contributor to our economy and the improvement and restoration of ecosystems. Unrestricted access will mean other users of the river will need access across farmland. Have riparian owners been consulted and have equitable arrangements been agreed with them?

- \* Climate change resulting in rising sea levels, flooding and the erosion of river banks etc. Draught and other extreme conditions are becoming more prevalent. All make the Salmon's complex life-cycle more perilous.

- \* 'Natural' diseases of trees etc. which reduces cover for fish and contributes to bank erosion.

- \* Water-abstraction may be an area which would need a radical rethink.

- \* Pollution from a variety of sources.

- \* The spread of disease e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease.

- \* Roads and Highways. Increased traffic, often with trailers etc. would have to be catered for, parking arrangements in narrow lanes would have to be made available, have the local authorities been consulted? Illegal parking in inappropriate locations would cause obvious and untenable problems for a rural community. Presumably boats etc. would have to be dragged across farmland causing distress to livestock and damage to crops and disturbance to nesting birds and other creatures?

Our partners, the Environment Agency Wales have an impossible task. They are charged with the responsibility of being the guardians of our most valuable resource, the natural environment. Whilst also having to cope with dwindling resources ie personnel due to financial restrictions and the ever-more onerous requirements of legislation, Health and Safety and a widening of their responsibilities to unprecedented levels and so on.

Access to rivers in Wales would have to be regulated adding yet another layer of bureaucracy and - worse- a consequent, probable reduction in people 'on the ground' trying to cope with the

further demands of their expertise and time.

Loss of value. This Club, like many others, owns and rents pieces of river. As anglers we are, probably, the most licensed and regulated members of society trying to exercise our right to take part in a natural, healthy and eco-friendly hobby. We pay dearly for this right and if others have free access to our paid-for resource we would expect compensation as individuals and as clubs and indeed, as landowners.

Poaching, you will - no doubt- have read the response to this enquiry from the Campaign for the Protection of Welsh Fisheries.([www.cpwf.co.uk](http://www.cpwf.co.uk)) Their Response is far more detailed and comprehensive on the issue of poaching than this one, however, as a Club we fully support their objections to the Enquiry and acknowledge, as you must, that free, unregulated, access to rivers will a) make poaching much easier and b) open-up areas, previously inaccessible to poachers.

Poachers are an inventive group using a range of equipment, materials, technology and chemicals hitherto unimaginable! All methods employed by the poacher cause unnecessary pain and distress to these wonderful wild creatures, resulting in a slow and agonising death regardless of size of fish or time of year (spawning etc.) and to other animals who all form part of the delicate balance of a river system.

In conclusion, I would like to return to my statement about the endangered species - the Salmon. Their life-cycle is the stuff of fiction in reality, it is complex and the chances of survival are - naturally- slim. Their spawning takes place in the rivers of their birth assuming that conditions are favourable (these conditions too are highly variable and complex), we humans are a higher order of animal, surely it is our duty to give them a fair start in life! It is, therefore, imperative that a holistic view and resultant policy be the outcome of your enquiry and that our views and objections be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Colin Blythin, Chairman - Denbigh and Clwyd Angling Club