

**National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 - 07
Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Steffan Jones**

I am writing to you as an angler, committee member on Llandysul Angling Association on the River Teifi, owner of sea-trout.co.uk and also the author of the recent report on the demise of the sea trout on the River Teifi, which was recently raised in the WG by Elin Jones.

It is difficult to know where to start, especially with this being an annual scrutiny, as most matters have been slowly evolving and degrading over the last few years. In brief our rivers have never been so poorly managed and this is getting worse not better on an annual basis. Those that are in a position to not only maintain but improve our natural resources are quite simply incompetent and certainly falling short of the mark. Big questions needs to be raised before it is too late, as many of our fisheries are facing a total state of collapse with zero intervention.

Rod and line fishery; the current rules in place are totally archaic and are not fit for the current climate. They have not moved with the times and NRW know this - why else would they be pushing angling clubs etc. to impose stricter limitations? But why should they? This is the role of NRW. However, we as angling clubs want to look after our rivers and, as a result, have imposed regulations well beyond that called for by NRW. I have plenty of examples of this as needed. Our rivers are so lightly policed that it has become farcical; most cannot recall when they last saw an enforcement officer. As a result, not only are our rivers largely not policed they are also not having the decline in stocks addressed - so where is the future? And, perhaps more importantly; where is NRW? Lots of talking, meetings, papers, emails etc. but nothing that actually addresses and helps our rivers and future. Again, I have a lot of research to highlight the current situation on the above stock levels etc. and what is taking place on the Teifi.

The net fishery; Our stocks are in a total state of collapse, yet the net fishery on the Teifi (the most heavily netted river in Wales) is allowed to continue unabated. They have zero quotas in place, they are rarely policed, and actively target the most valuable of all fish when undertaking this archaic practice. What do the NRW do? Absolutely nothing. They try to force the hand of the angling community, but will not tackle the nets. Please see my hugely detailed report attached on this. As an aside, and simple questions to ask; the net fishery starts fishing and kills fish on the River Towy from the 1st of March, yet anglers are not allowed to start fishing from the 1st of April. Then, anglers are not allowed to kill a salmon before the 16th June, but nets are from the 1st of June. How does any of that make sense with the byelaws put in place on anglers are supposed to protect stocks, when the nets can still exploit the stocks?

Fish eating birds; the damage these birds do to our fisheries should not be taken lightly. Since their foothold back in the seventies their numbers have increased to an alarming level. Their control is a lot easier in England, but NRW have not reflected on this and we are facing another attack on our fisheries as a result. Each bird will take 40-50 small fish per day for our rivers, and with 5+ birds often seeing working a small section of water it does not take a genius to work out the ramifications. Most of these birds are overwintering birds and are not indigenous. Again, I have research to support this. What do the NRW do, knowing full well the risk? Nothing. There is so much red tape surrounding the application process for controlling such birds that makes it all unapproachable.

Cypermethrin; The EAW celebrated a huge success in banning the sale and use of cypermethrin – a lethal sheep dip that kills invertebrate life, and, therefore, the fish as a result. However, they then collaborate with the Forestry Commission within NRW where the Forestry Commission still actively utilise cypermethrin to spray onto saplings. How does that make sense? Under the same banner you have one party celebrating the ban then another still utilising it freely and readily?! If that does not highlight the turmoil and how disjointed the NRW are then I'm not sure what will. Quite simply the whole organisation is a shambles.

Best wishes / pob hwyl,

Steffan Jones