

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 14
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Eifion R Morgan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I write as an owner and angler on the river Towy in a stretch of water between Llandovery and Llangadog. My comments refer to my knowing the river for nearly 70 years.

1. Until recently the river provided excellent sport and well known for the quality of fishing, notably for sewin (sea trout).
2. The upper Towy attracted a substantial number of tourists during the summer and early autumn, benefiting many businesses in the area.
3. The last 15-20 years have seen a disastrous change in the fish population. Previously, during the summer months and when the weather was calm and the sun overhead, pools were observed to be “full” of fish. I am not exaggerating when I could report seeing well over 100 fish in our pools. The fish were lined up by size from the top of the pools. These were largely sewin varying in estimated size from over one pound to the large ones being 8-10 lbs.
4. Fishing during the evening or after a flood was very productive and fish could be caught regularly. This was my introduction to fishing.
5. It is of great regret to me that I can't pass on my love of fishing to my grandchildren. They have accompanied me many times recently having received/purchased first class equipment but rarely caught fish of any size. I need not tell you that after several years of not catching/touching or seeing a fish in the river, they have given up. (I have a pair of my grandsons waders in the garage – used only once).
6. Observation of the same pools (above) shows them to be devoid of fish. It is unusual to see a single fish in these same pools and the number of fish caught is minimal (single figures). This last year no fish were seen moving up river.
7. During this time, when the relevant bodies were made aware of our concerns, nothing was done that had any effect on the fish number.
8. The situation is bleak and one can only conclude that the NRW has no interest in anglers.
9. Anglers have followed recommendations in “catch and return” procedures but what effect this has had is doubtful when fish are netted at sea, in the estuaries and illegally from the coast. It's little wonder that any of them make it into our rivers.

10. The NRW is now apparently curtailing any restocking programme. If this is to conserve the river's natural breeding population it is not working and as the population diminishes it is likely to have less success.
11. I understand that the Towy fish population is not indigenous anyway – fish from abroad being introduced during the inter-war years.
12. If the NRW does not intend to stock the river I can see very little future for the Towy fish population.
13. Can I draw your attention to the situation in Iceland as reported in April 2015 edition of the "Trout and Salmon" under the heading "A saga of success". I ask the Assembly members interested in fishing to read it. Sufficient to say that in 1988 the rod catch of salmon on the Ranga river was 53 in total. In 1990 it produced 1622. Twenty years later the Ranga River produced rod catch in excess of 14,000 (14,135). WHY? The river was stocked with fish at the smolt stage.
14. If this is acceptable in Iceland a country that has protected its fish stocks at sea, why isn't it acceptable to us?
15. Using the current fish stocks and rearing their progeny surely cannot change the genetic make-up- of the fish population substantially. Anyway evolution teaches us that the "gene pool" is always evolving. Will the NRW evolve ?

Eifion R Morgan.
31 March 2015.