

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 15
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from Lawrence Birkin

Only through the pages of an internet 'chat room' have I become aware of this Annual Consultation which in itself could be considered rather damning of NRW's ability to communicate.

My primary concern is with the decline in migratory fish stocks in our rivers, a situation which surely could be improved with better management of the natural environment on which they depend; this, one would assume, is a primary function of National Resources Wales?

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. Whereas with the previous system, when each of the of independent agencies for Rivers, Forestry and Agriculture were able to regulate the often detrimental actions and practices of the others, we now have an autonomous regime who would appear to consider themselves answerable to no-one.

One example of this is the ability of a landowner to obtain 'permissions' to replant an area of upland recently clear-felled with conifers; an area which not only directly effects the headwaters of a river of national importance but also undermines the efforts of one of the UK's leading conservation organisations, riparian owners downstream and ultimately wastes tax payers money.

As an estate manager with 40 years experience in forestry I can tell you that today there is absolutely no argument for commercial softwood plantations in the UK and, in days gone by, the 'Rivers Authority' would have objected to a 'Forestry Authority' plan such as this.

On a personal note; it worries me that in 45 years of fishing the rivers of Wales I have neither seen a bailiff nor been asked to produce my rod licence.