



Meeting note

Title of Meeting: Wales Fisheries Forum - inaugural meeting

Date of Meeting: 31st October 2018 **Time:** 10.30 **Venue:** Ty Cambria

Present: Afonydd Cymru: Stephen Marsh-Smith (SMS), Alan Winstone (AW)
 Angling Cymru: Carl Tonner (CT),
 Welsh Salmon & Trout Conservation Cymru: Richard Garner-Williams (RGW)
 Welsh Salmon & Trout Angling Association: Paul Edwards (PE)
 Angling Trust & Fish Legal: Mark Lloyd (ML),
 Wild Trout Trust: Denise Ashton (DA), deputising for Shaun Leonard,
 Institute of Fisheries Management: Nicola Teague (NT),
 Campaign for Protection of Welsh Fisheries: Chris White (CW),
 Countryside Alliance Wales: Rachel Evans (RE)
 Welsh Government: Jeremy Frost (JF), Johnathan Luke Davies (JLD)
 NRW: Ruth Jenkins (RJ), Peter Gough (PG), David Mee(DM), Ben Wilson (BW), Martyn Gough (MG) - part, Ida Tavner (IT).

Apologies: Atlantic Salmon Trust (Mark Bilsby); Wild Trout Trust (Shaun Leonard)

Item No:	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
	Ruth Jenkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the back ground to setting up the forum, how it will link to other stakeholder fora which NRW has initiated. RJ further stated that she is acting as chair of this inaugural meeting and it is the intention that a NRW Board member will chair the meetings in future. RJ asked for comments on the agenda and for items under AOBs: PG – NASCO implementation plan and International Year of the Salmon ML – Canoeing	

DA – Agriculture pollution issues and update on Hatcheries

RJ invited all members of the forum to introduce themselves and the organisations they represent and state what they would like to see from the meetings.

2. Draft ToR for the group and membership

Term of Reference:

RJ introduced the draft ToR for the group and asked for comments. A discussion followed around how the group would like the forum to work and the various issues which were felt to be key for the forum to address.

All members to provide any further comments on draft ToR via email to PG by 30th November.

Some members advocated adopting a mission statement for the group, e.g. achieving sustainable fish stocks and an emphasis on collaborative working.

Brief discussion on how the forum and ToR linked to NRW's Area Statements (AS) and how members of the forum would be able to contribute to AS and the timescales for doing so. RE and ML indicated that their organisations have not yet been engaged in the Area Statement process.

NRW will consider and make statement on this by 30th November.

Key issues which needs to be incorporated into revised ToR were:

NRW to re-draft ToR paper and present prior to next meeting.

- The Forum should be more focussed on action rather than process and an action plan should be developed and adopted by the forum.
- The role of the Forum members should not be restricted to representing their own organisations but to facilitate wider communication.
- The Forum should also encompass fisheries conservation fish species, not be confined to angling species.

Membership:

Discussion on how the forum linked with the nine existing Local Fisheries Groups (LFGs).

PG stated that it was not the intention that this forum replaced LFGs but should complement it, and LFGs were to carry on dealing primarily with 'Local' operational matters, while the vision for WFF was more strategic.

NRW has contacted all LFGs to initiate debate on membership but has so far received no requests to join the Forum. It was noted that inviting representation from all nine LFGs may make the Forum too large to operate effectively. Also, not all LFGs have independents chairs.

It was agreed that the LFGs would be asked to consider matters around the Forum at their next meetings.

Potential for wildlife group membership was raised however it was concluded that this was already within the remit of rivers trusts.

It was observed that the group currently has no representation from commercial Stillwater fisheries and the tackle trade. ML suggested that as these are represented through AT he could cover these issues; however, the Forum could consider extending an invitation to the Airflo Wales representative Gareth Jones.

PG stated that EA and Defra have places on the Forum and will be invited to attend the next meeting.

NRW to table debate at the next opportunity with LFGs.

Further observations required from Forum members by 30th November.

3. **NRWs Fisheries Strategy: Sustainable Inland Fisheries in Wales; an agenda for change.**

There was a short discussion of this strategy, adopted by NRW in 2013, and how documents such as this should be communicated to better engage people with the strategy.

A key theme discussed was that strategies such as these are often too high level, don't get to grips with actions and delivery 'on the ground' and people don't engage with them because there is nothing to disagree with (too much 'motherhood and apple pie!'). It was agreed that the Forum should contribute to development of a new action plan which will be formulated and adopted in due course. PG indicated that drafting was underway and will be available for the next Forum.

The strategy should recognise that some objectives cannot be delivered successfully in isolation but depend on other strategic aims being delivered. These dependencies and synergies needs to be recognised in a fisheries strategy and accompanying action plans.

CW observed that some other strategies have conflicting aims, such as the push for development of hydropower. He expressed concern that some hydropower installations (e.g. Maes Elwy in North Wales) incorporate poor fish passage solutions, that licence conditions are not enforced, and that insufficient inspections and compliance checks are carried out.

NRW to provide note on issues at Maes Elwy and invite Gideon Carpenter Senior Policy Advisor Hydropower to present at future meeting.

NRW stated that compliance checks and enforcement actions are being undertaken, and that due to the change in government subsidies for hydro power generation the number of application has peaked.

NRW to produce update on hydropower compliance checks, time scales for/and enforcement action for a future meeting.

NRW see this forum as key to producing an updated version of the fisheries strategy in the longer term and would welcome views from the group. The updated strategy should align with the timescale of NRW's corporate plan and business plan to be used both internally within NRW, and externally e.g. to guide NRW's Area Statements.

NRW to produce an updated draft version of strategy incorporating concerns for the group for discussion at next meeting.

4. **Salmon and sea trout fisheries update.**

PG updated the group on the forthcoming Local Inquiry on the proposed new rod and net fishing byelaws. The Planning Inspectorate Wales has now appointed Mr Declan Beggan, and the hearing has been set for 15th January 2019 in Newtown, Powys. The Inspector has allowed 3 weeks for the hearing, and it is anticipated there will be a period of 3 months for reporting after which the matter will then return to Welsh Government for determination of NRW's byelaws application.

This timeline means that no decision will be made before the National 'Spring' Salmon Byelaws expire on 31st December. NRW is considering options to address additional risk to salmon. It had been hoped that an announcement could be made at the Forum today. It is NRW's intention that the way forward will be announced first to this Forum and the LFGs.

NRW to notify the Forum of the way forward for migratory salmonid fishing in 2019.

DA said that this was a major problem and presented a significant risk to fisheries. ML agreed but said that any solution that was found should not involve any additional regulations being imposed on anglers than were currently in force.

5. **Fisheries Enforcement**

BW presented an update on fisheries enforcement and resources in Wales. NRW would welcome a communique of support from the group.

NRW to email copy of the presentation to all members by 30th November.

PG to draft note for circulation and approval by group.

Discussion around the use of volunteers for enforcement and the approach taken in England with the AT. Volunteer and temporary bailiffs have been used in Wales in the past and NRW is now looking to see how the partnership between EA and AT is working out in England.

NRW to observe progress in England and keep the Forum updated.

Concern was expressed about the reduction in enforcement staffing levels.

6. Updates and papers on current work

River Restoration Plans.

PG summarised the paper. NRW is currently working on an overall initiative for river restoration, including all relevant areas of work. NRW would invite other organisations delivering river restoration to do the same.

The current round of Fisheries Habitat Restoration Plans is being delivered by NRW's contractor Afonydd Cymru. Work is currently underway on the rivers Teifi, Tywi, Clwyd and Mawddach.

Members to provide recommendations and justification for further catchments by 30th November.

The forum members were invited to propose rivers for consideration for the second tranche of prioritised catchments for consideration.

Piscivorous birds:

The current process with the external advisory group process was summarised in the paper.

Concerns were expressed that the application forms are so complex that it puts people off. There is also a perception that insufficient numbers of birds will be permitted to be controlled to make the process worthwhile. An application for the Tawe was refused. NRW does offer help in completing applications.

Members are asked to forward any issues with bird licence applications to DM by 30th November.

Licence sales:

The paper indicates that sales in Wales to the end of September 2018 are down by about 16% compared with

the same period in 2017. This equates to 7,300 fewer licences issued and a reduction in income of £150,000.

Coarse, trout and eel licences have declined by 16% (-13% in England) and migratory salmonid licences by 21% (-9% in England).

The paper prompted a discussion on angling participation and coaching and what can be done to address the decline in licence sales.

Promotion of fisheries.

RJ stated that it was important to link angling participation to angling promotion.

The Forum noted that these issues are linked, and that habitat and stock improvement are needed to underpin any promotion and support an increase in participation. Addressing them together, as was done under the Sustainable Fishing Wales project was important.

Discussion around the need to ensure that fish stocks are healthy before promoting angling, and that emphasis should be on other forms of angling with game fishing being promoted only where appropriate. ML said that there was no reason why fishing for migratory and other game fish should be excluded from promotional activities.

RJ explained that work is on-going on promoting angling and that NRW have been talking to both Sport Wales (SW) and Visit Wales (VW). SW has been tasked by WG to do more for wellbeing and recreation in line with the new legislation, rather than just focus on competitive sports. VW will shortly update their website to promote angling tourism. ML said that a barrier to funding was the fragmentation of angling organisations in Wales and the lack of a viable delivery partner. He also suggested that the current approach was far too fragmented and needed to be co-ordinated as part of an integrated strategy. It was suggested that a bid might be submitted to the Year of Discovery fund.

NRW will produce a draft paper on promotion of angling, setting out work being done with SportWales and VisitWales, and what other initiatives could be delivered, prior to next meeting.

RJ – NRW will look at an 'invest to save' bid for new resources to promote angling.

Economic Evaluation of fishing in Welsh rivers:

PG introduced the paper commissioned from Dr Guy Mawle. –

: A review of the economic value of angling in Welsh rivers.

The report summarises two key metrics for valuation: Gross Value Added (GVA), as a proxy for household income (estimated for Welsh river fisheries to be £20M annually with a further £18M on still waters), and Full-Time Equivalent jobs maintained (estimated at 700 FTEs in Wales) as a measure of employment. This facilitates comparison with other activities including water sports.

7.

Future business items

The purpose of this item was to discuss and agree matters to be brought to future meetings of the Forum.

It was agreed that canoeing and agriculture pollution, issues brought up under AOBs, would be discussed at the next meeting.

NRW to invite agriculture lead to next meeting.

8.

Comms from this meeting

Agreed by all that minutes will be published on the NRW website after all members have had an opportunity to review the draft. This will avoid delay in waiting for the next meeting for formal approval.

NRW to circulate meeting notes and publish on its website by 7th December.

It was agreed by all that publicising the work of the forum was important.

NRW will prep a press release on this inaugural meeting by 7th December.

9.

AOBs

CW stated that he knew of three anglers in North Wales who had caught over 40 salmon this year on trout licences – he expressed some concern that these would not be included in catch returns.

CW to confirm details to DM by 30th November.

It was observed by CW that, imposition of mandatory catch and release isn't the main issue in North Wales; the bigger problem is the proposed ban on bait fishing.

PG informed the group that NASCO's new 5-yearly Implementation Plan will be delivered on behalf of Defra by EA and NRW. NRW would value comments from Forum members and will circulate a draft in the next few weeks for comment.

NRW to circulate draft and request comments by 30th November.

PG informed the group that 2019 is 'International Year of the Salmon' and the Pacific Salmon Commission and NASCO will manage this to raise awareness of threats and risks to salmon internationally. A website has been set up where any initiatives to preserve salmon can be logged. NRW wishes to encourage NGO members of the Forum to agree to use of their logos on the England & Wales part of the website (prepared and hosted by Cefas) to indicate support and engagement, capturing future actions.

PG to send link to IYS website – DONE

URGENT - Forum NGO members are asked to approve use of their organisation logos ASAP (by 12th November).

RE mentioned that next year is also 'Year of Discovery' so there may be options for partnerships or joint initiatives.

NT mentioned the upcoming IFM event in Cardiff, comprising the AGM and the annual Buckland Foundation Lecture: 'The History of Salmon Management', presented by Dr Ron Campbell, senior biologist with the Tweed Foundation.

This will be held at Cardiff University (Sir Martin Evans building), on Thursday 15th November commencing at 19:30.

For details please contact Nicola.

10. Arrangement for next meeting

Discussion earlier in the meeting around locations for following meetings, with a consensus that a mid-Wales venue suited most people.

DONM to be 14th March 2019, venue to confirmed.

NRW to book venue.

Appendix 1

Table of Actions:

No.	Action	By	Deadline	Status
1	All members to provide any further comments on draft ToR via email to PG.	All	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
2	NRW will consider and make statement on this.	NRW	30 th Nov. 2018	Completed
3	NRW to re-draft ToR paper and present prior to next meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
4	NRW to table debate at the next opportunity with LFGs.	NRW	Nov/Dec 2018	Open
5	Further observations required from Forum members.	All	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
6	NRW to provide note on issues at Maes Elwy and invite Gideon Carpenter Senior Policy Advisor Hydropower to present at future meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
7	NRW to produce update on hydropower compliance checks, time scales for/and enforcement action for a future meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
8	NRW to produce an updated draft version of strategy incorporating concerns for the group for discussion at next meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
9	NRW to notify the Forum of the way forward for migratory salmonid fishing in 2019.	NRW	ASAP	Open
10	NRW to email copy of the presentation to all members.	NRW	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
11	PG to draft note for circulation and approval by group.	NRW	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
12	NRW to observe progress in England and keep the Forum updated.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
13	Members to provide recommendations and justification for further catchments.	All	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
14	Members are asked to forward any issues with bird licence applications to DM for investigation.	All	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
15	NRW will produce a draft paper on promotion of angling, setting out work being done with SportWales and VisitWales, and what other initiatives could be delivered.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
16	NRW to invite agriculture lead to next meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open
17	NRW to circulate meeting notes and publish on its website.	NRW	7 th December 2018	Completed
18	NRW will prep a press release on this inaugural meeting.	NRW	7 th December 2018	Completed

19	CW to confirm details to DM by 30th November.	Chris White	30 th Nov. 2018	Open
20	PG to send link to IYS website	Pete Gough	ASAP	Completed
21	Forum NGO members are asked to approve use of their organisation logos.	All	12 th Nov. 2018	Completed
22	NRW to book venue for next meeting.	NRW	21 st Feb. 2019	Open