

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/ Your ref
Ein cyf/ Our ref MB/CS/5320/14

Paul Davies AM

Paul.Davies@Wales.gov.uk

8 December 2014

Dear Paul,

During Oral Assembly Questions on 26 November you asked a question in relation to the outcome for sea trout (Sewin) stocks in the Eastern Cleddau following the release of water from Llys y fran. I undertook to update you on this matter.

In relation to the release of water from Llys y fran reservoir, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) inform my officials that they ordered this release following well below average rainfall over August and September, and because less than 2% of the normal September rainfall had fallen in Carmarthenshire. NRW undertook the Habitats Regulations Assessments and also consulted fisheries interests at the time before the release started on Monday 6 October. As the rain arrived at the same time, and river levels returned to normal it was decided to curtail the release on Friday 10 October. This proactive approach by NRW to undertake action to preserve sea trout stocks is welcomed.

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on some of the work undertaken regarding the broader issue of the trend in sea trout stocks for the whole of Wales.

The Welsh Government along with partners has funded a £1.8m "The Celtic Sea Trout Project". This project will help NRW develop biological reference points for sea trout to enable better management of stocks and the valuable fisheries they support.

To protect the genetic integrity of wild stocks from 2015 NRW will no longer consent stocking of sea trout, it is expected this will help the long term outcome for sea trout in Wales.

A byelaw banning the sale of rod-caught salmon and sea trout in England and Wales was introduced in 2009. A carcass tags byelaw also came into effect in England and Wales in 2009, requiring all net-caught salmon and sea trout to be individually tagged with a carcass tag after capture and for the details of all fish caught to be recorded in an annual logbook. These measures were designed to reduce the sale of illegally caught fish and to improve net catch estimates in compliance with international obligations to reduce the levels of illegal and unreported catch. Active surveillance, inspection (e.g. of catering premises) and

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.Carl.Sargeant@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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information gathering activities have shown these measures to be effective. In addition, my officials will continue to be in active contact with NRW with specific suggestions about improving enforcement matters.

NRW has engaged with stakeholders, in expressing the need to restrict exploitation in accordance with stock assessments. The decision structure currently utilised provides that on rivers identified to be "at risk" of failing to meet conservation limits, zero exploitation should be sought. Consequently, NRW is implementing a policy of requesting that anglers achieve voluntary catch and release rates in excess of 90% over a period of 3 years. If this requirement is not met, NRW may pursue the introduction of further mandatory catch and release byelaws. I understand that NRW recently held a Local Fishery Group (LFG) meeting, combining the Gower and West Wales LFGs, to reiterate this key message. My officials are assured that net fisheries will also be approached by NRW in the coming months with consistent messages that highlight concerns about stock assessments and the possible need to seek further exploitation controls where required.

As a result NRW has seen voluntary Catch & Release rate for rod caught sea trout increase to 76% (approximately 9,000 individual fish) in Wales in 2013, the highest ever reported.

Also, method restrictions or "take limits" are implemented by many angling clubs and WG is fully supportive of voluntary efforts made by anglers to contribute to the survivability of released fish. Anglers are encouraged to consider the use of single hooks, barbless hooks and any other appropriate measure. My officials are encouraging the third sector to continue to assist NRW in spreading these messages.

The NRW review of the Wales Net Limitation Order (NLO) starting in 2015, and expected to be completed in 2017, will consider the status of individual sea trout stocks. NRW will consider the need for new byelaws where appropriate (rods and nets)

NRW use risk based and intelligence led approach to target enforcement resource at high risk areas including in estuaries. In addition, byelaws are in place in many rivers, estuaries and coastlines across Wales to protect fish stocks so they can remain sustainable for the future.

I trust this information is of some help.

Yours sincerely



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