

**Workshops: Negotiating Voluntary Access Agreements for Welsh Inland Waters  
26<sup>th</sup> February 2011, Brecon & Corwen**

**Facilitator's Feedback Overview**

- The debate around riparian access has become very polarised and is in danger of failing to recognise the complexity of the issue. There are many different types of user and ownership types from within both the fishing and canoeing interests but there are also other interests.
- In broad terms there is an issue of landownership, access and egress as well as movement along rivers.
- There is some common ground between the different groups especially around environmental quality, education and information provision which could provide early opportunities for collaborative working.
- There is agreement that 'one size does not fit all' and that local situations need to find their own solutions. However, things can be learnt from one another and the process of discussion starting with stakeholder mapping and analysis is useful.
- Specifically involved in the two workshops were those from the fishing and canoeing communities (though numbers from canoeing were very low), as well as a range of organisations.
- At national level a significant issue is that those involved in fishing are licensed and pay, and that those involved in canoeing generally do not on the majority of sites.
- The stakeholder analysis showed, however, that there are a broad range of different types of people and groups fishing with different arrangements, as likewise there are different types and range of canoeists. It is important that discussions towards developing any sort of agreements recognise and take account of this and come up with solutions that encompass the breadth of needs and issues.
- Good existing and past examples were given of positive arrangements and there were some ideas for the future. There was a general agreement (from many, not all) that the discussions are worth progressing.

**Facilitator's suggested next steps:**

Following the meetings there were a number of emerging suggestions for next steps which broadly included:

- Discussions with WAG around clarification of the legal context and the role for licensing and numbering of river-using craft.
- A national workshop with a much broader range of riparian users to discuss agreements in more detail and define a number of possible pilot activity trials.
- Based on the ideas generated at the national workshop, putting out a 'call' to riparian owners and managers interested in running a trial for their area with support from a SPLASH grant.
- Future engagement between the stakeholder groups should look to build on the common ground, identifying the early opportunities for establishing a more collaborative approach. Access Agreements will then follow as and when required.
- From this the development of learning over what works for Wales.

It was suggested that a number of SPLASH grant applications could be used to help fund these actions. As a first step towards this the facilitators suggest that a working group is developed to help create a framework for these actions and to submit SPLASH applications. Resources for Change are happy to continue to support this process if funding is available.