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Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



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Thank you for your correspondence of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 concerning access to inland water, in response to correspondence from your constituent Mr Gary Davies of the Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting members of the Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association; it was good to see at first hand their achievements in developing the Top Pond site in Merthyr and to hear of their progress throughout the years. I have also met with representatives of the Welsh Salmon and Trout and the Tawe and Tributaries Angling Associations to discuss their concerns. It is clear that there is a good deal of support for our current approach for access to water, which is for improved recreational access on a responsible basis, secured through local voluntary access agreements.

Through our agencies CCW and Environment Agency {Wales}, we are taking forward many of the recommendations of the Sustainability Committee's Inquiry into Access to Water. Their recommendations reflected the need for discussions between different user groups to take place in order to draw up local access agreements. The assumption that this approach requires Canoe Wales, as the national governing body for paddle sport in Wales, to broker or sign formal agreements is not correct. However, I have welcomed a statement from Canoe Wales in 2011 clarifying that they do not oppose the voluntary approach, and that Canoe Wales are able to advise local paddle sport clubs to negotiate access locally.

Clearly this is a step forward in favour of new access agreements, but as you point out informal paddle sport users may not be members of an organisation which represents their interests. In such circumstances riparian owners could consider drawing up and publicising terms of access for those who wish to responsibly enjoy recreation on the inland waters under their control, without the need for a signed document. Such arrangements would provide clarity for when and where access is permitted and reduce the potential for conflict. Having recently met with various Welsh Angling Associations I plan to meet with Canoe Wales representatives in the near future, which will provide an opportunity for further constructive dialogue.



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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy Minister for  
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