

**NOTE OF THE ROUND TABLE SUB-GROUP MEETING ON ACCESS AGREEMENTS
MONDAY 15 MARCH 2010**

Attendees:

Gethyn Thomas	Wales Salmon and Trout Angling Association
Graeme Harris	Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee
Stephen Marsh-Smith	Wye and Usk Foundation
Rob Owen	Countryside Council for Wales
Andy Schofield	Environment Agency
Matt Strickland*	Environment Agency
Dave Liddy*	FCW
Catrin Dellar	WAG

Apologies:

Gerry Quarrell	WAG
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The Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed as:

“To look at ways to promote local access agreements on the significant rivers of Wales and to report progress to the Minister’s Round Table”.

Stephen Marsh-Smith gave a presentation on the Wye and Usk arrangements.

To note:

- written agreements not proposed because it may deter land owners;
- agreements to apply out of the fishing season would be most effective because it would not offend anglers and this is usually the optimum time to canoeing and kayaking;
- agreements should include the establishment of water gauges with webcams;
- agreements to facilitate access over land to rivers can be more difficult to arrange than access on rivers (i.e. navigation) – parking and other facilities are an added complication; and
- Damage to fisheries is unlikely once the eggs have been laid.

It was agreed that it would be very difficult to establish a fee based system because of administrative and enforcement implications, however, it was acknowledged that some form of fiscal gain through the use of waterside facilities would be possible in many cases.

Another suggestion was to allow the Environment Agency to use their byelaw powers under Schedule 25 of the Water Resources Act 1991 to enforce against acts contrary to access agreements. This needs more investigation as it’s not clear if the provisions allow for this.

The types of availability of river access were discussed:

1. Elevated dam releases could be utilised by canoeists and kayakers but this would need to be discussed further with Welsh Water. Tryweryn and Elan rivers are examples where this happens.
2. Access on larger rivers – e.g. the Towy, Teifi and Dee rivers.
3. Smaller rivers which are more susceptible to rainfall events – e.g. the River Gwyfrai.
4. Inland water in the ownership of local authorities – e.g. Caephilly, Neath Port-Talbot, Pembrokeshire and the Brecon Beacon National Park Authority.

Rivers identified for investigation:

The Cleddau Estuary (eastern and western)

River Cefni

River Teifi

River Dee

River Conwy

River Tywi (Towy)

River Usk

River Wye

River Severn

River Seiont

River Glaslyn

River Mawddach

River Neath

River Taff

Rob Owen suggested creating a Framework to look at certain rivers and to establish what the issues are on each one and how these issues may be resolved.

AP – RO to work with AS on creating a framework.

Group suggested that money be made available to help with the core funding of river trusts which are very well placed to help secure additional access opportunities. Group thought it would be useful if WAG initiated contact with river trusts regardless of the funding issue.

AP – CD to write to RTs.

The Group also thought it would be beneficial for WAG to initiate contact with local canoe interests – rather than only communicating with Canoe Wales. There is a need to understand the demand for use – what they want at what time of the year, etc. These interests could include university groups and education centres.

AP – CD to look into setting up a meeting and to discuss with MS.

Next meeting: Early May (before next Round Table).

AP – CD to circulate dates and arrange with Gethyn Thomas to meet at Pump Saint (Coach House).