

North Wales Fisheries Byelaws

Second LFAG consultation November 2010

In July 2010 we consulted the Local Fishery Advisory Groups (LFAG) on proposed changes to fishing byelaws in North Wales. The main aims were to:

- Protect migratory fish stocks, particularly salmon
- Increase angling and the revenue it generates
- Simplify angling regulations

The intention was to provide more fishing time whilst at the same time ensure that more fish survive to spawn and strengthen stocks. The purpose of this note is to provide some revised options following the feedback we received.

Feedback on previous proposals (July 2010)

The bulk of the feedback was verbal and can be summarised as follows:

Proposed change	Summary of response
1. Change in the start of the season to 1 st April	Majority in favour with 1 objection (Glaslyn)
2. Bait fishing to end 1 week earlier	No consensus, some rivers in Gwynedd were concerned about loss.
3. Catch and release from 1 st October (linked to no.4 below).	Overall Dee & Clwyd LFG supportive Strong opposition in Gwynedd
4. Season extension to 15 th November.	Limited interest in Gwynedd due to the link with 3 above.

In general terms the Dee and Clwyd LFAG were supportive of the package of measures while the Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy LFAG were not. Additional feedback in the Gwynedd fishery surgeries showed there was support for **bag limits combined with carcass tagging**.

Introduction of Mandatory Catch and Release

The introduction of mandatory catch and release on 'at risk' rivers Mawddach, Dwyfawr and Dysynni was also covered in the byelaw paper.

The Mawddach anglers expressed concern about the way we model the health of salmon stocks and how this may have been influenced by a reduction in angling activity. Our fisheries scientists carried out additional assessments of the Mawddach data and concluded that the change in angling effort was so great that the previous output of the model was not valid.

We have now improved our modelling process and our assessment of the Mawddach's salmon stocks will now change from 'at risk' to 'probably at risk'. The improvement in the modelling process may have implications for the status of other catchments in the future.

We will not introduce mandatory catch and release for salmon on the Mawddach in 2011 although the stock is still vulnerable. Mandatory catch and release will not be introduced on the Dwyfawr and Dysynni because the annual total rod catch is small and the angling intensity low.

Other issues raised in the consultation

- The majority believe that for a variety of reasons salmon and sea trout stocks are under pressure. However, there are very diverse views on how exploitation controls should be applied.
- The current byelaws are complex and need simplifying although geographical differences should be reflected in any byelaw changes.
- Some clubs already have significant voluntary controls whilst others have little or none and acknowledge that some of their members kill large numbers of fish.
- Angling with worm can lead to unintentional loss of deeply hooked fish but worming is very popular on some of the short rocky rivers in Gwynedd.
- Catches are under reported in some catchments; this may lead to the unnecessary introduction of mandatory catch and release in the future.
- Anglers feel that licenced netting should be limited if their activities are to be restricted. Agency catch returns and surveillance have shown that licenced nets take small numbers of salmon and sea trout in North Wales.
- The long term health of stocks and the fisheries/clubs they support can only be assured by co-operation between interested parties with a combination of meaningful exploitation controls at 2 levels:
 - **Byelaws** with a limited number of additional controls.
 - **Fishery/club rules** that protect the long term health of their assets.

Byelaws

We are now proposing a new set of byelaws with limited harmonisation and additional controls. For the purposes of the byelaws North Wales will split into 5 groupings with common features:

1. Dee
2. Clwyd
3. Gwynedd (excluding Lleyne) and Conwy
4. Anglesey
5. Lleyne

For 1,2 & 3 we are presenting 3 options but for 4 and 5 where exploitation is low we are proposing no changes. We would like the LFAG's to consider these options against the aims above and let us know which they favour. The view of the LFAG will be assessed by a show of hands and written / email responses, particularly for those members who are unable to attend, by **Friday 12th November**.

1. Dee – proposed byelaw changes

Option 1.1 No change

Option 1.2 Aligned restrictions and reduced exploitation

Salmon			
Open season	Method	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 31 st Oct (*Catch and release)	Fly only*	1 st Apr – 31 st May	Loss - 1 month fly only
	Fly and spin*	1 st Jun – 15 th Jun	No change
	All methods	16 th Jun – 15 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	16 th Sep – 30 th Sep	Loss – 2 weeks bait
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Option to take fish removed
	Fly and spin* (Main river)	18 th Oct – 31 st Oct	Gain – 2 weeks fly / spin
Sea trout			
Open season	Method	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 17 th Oct	Fly only	1 st Apr – 31 st May	Loss – 10 days fly
	Fly and spin	1 st Jun – 15 th Jun	Loss – 2 weeks bait 'start'
	All methods	16 th Jun – 15 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	16 th Sep – 30 th Sep	Loss – 2 weeks bait 'end'
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Option to take fish removed

The bulk of the fishing period remains unchanged. It provides additional protection for fish from the use of bait (Salmon 2 weeks, sea trout 4 weeks) although anglers would still have 12 weeks to bait fish. Anglers would get 2 weeks of catch and release at the end of the season in return for 2 additional weeks of releasing fish from 1st October.

Option 1.3 Aligned restrictions with a minimal reduction in exploitation

Sea trout (Salmon remain the same as option 2)			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 17 th Oct	Fly only	1 st Apr – 31 st May	Loss - 10 days fly
	All methods	1 st Jun – 30 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Option to take fish removed

This allows more bait fishing for sea trout anglers. The down side to this scenario is that the use of some baits not only makes it difficult to release sea trout alive but some salmon may be caught/damaged.

Dee

Options summary – the level of benefit against the aims:

	Protects stocks?	Increases angling?	Simplifies byelaws?
Option 1.1	None	None	None
Option 1.2	High	High	High
Option 1.3	Medium	High	Medium

2. Clwyd – proposed byelaw changes

Option 2.1 No change

Option 2.2 Aligned restrictions across both catchments and species:

Salmon			
Open season	Method	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 31 st Oct (*Catch and release)	Fly and spin*	1 st Apr – 15 th Jun	Loss - 10 days fly / spin
	All methods	16 th Jun – 15 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	16 th Sep – 30 th Sep	Loss – 2 weeks bait
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Gain – 2 weeks spin Option to take fish removed
	Fly and spin* (Main river)	18 th Oct – 31 st Oct	Gain – 2 weeks fly / spin
Sea trout			
Open season	Method	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 17 th Oct	Fly and spin	1 st Apr – 15 th Jun	Loss - 10 days fly/spin Loss – 2 weeks bait 'start'
	All methods	16 th Jun – 15 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	16 th Sep – 30 th Sep	Loss – 2 weeks bait 'end'
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Gain – 2 weeks spin Option to take fish removed

The bulk of the fishing period remains unchanged. It provides additional protection for fish from the use of bait (Salmon 2 weeks, sea trout 4 weeks) although anglers would still have 12 weeks to bait fish. Anglers would get an additional 2 weeks to spin in return for limiting bait fishing. A further 2 weeks of catch and release at the end of the season would be offered in return for releasing fish from 1st October.

Option 2.3 Align the periods of restrictions across both catchments:

Sea trout (Salmon remain the same as option 2)			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 17 th Oct	Fly and spin	1 st Apr – 31 st May	Loss - 10 days fly/spin
	All methods	1 st Jun – 15 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	16 th Sep – 30 th Sep	Loss – 2 weeks bait 'end'(both)
	Fly and spin*	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Gain – 2 weeks spin (Clwyd) Option to take fish removed

This allows more bait fishing for sea trout anglers. The down side to this scenario is that the use of some baits not only makes it difficult to release sea trout alive but some salmon may be caught/damaged.

2. Clwyd

Options summary – the level of benefit against the aims:

	Protects stocks?	Increases angling?	Simplifies byelaws?
Option 2.1	None	None	None
Option 2.2	High	High	High
Option 2.3	Medium	High	Medium

3. Gwynedd (excluding Llyn and Anglesey) and Conwy - proposed byelaw changes:

Option 3.1 No change

Option 3.2 Aligned seasons with 1 week reduction in the use of bait:

Salmon			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 31 st Oct (*Catch and release)	Fly and spin*	1 st Apr – 15 th Jun	Loss - 10 days fly / spin (all)
	All methods	16 th Jun – 30 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Loss – 1 week bait (all)
	Fly and spin* (Main river)	18 th Oct – 31 st Oct	Gain – 2 weeks fly / spin (Dysynni, Artro, Mawddach, Glaslyn, Llyfni, Gwyrfai)
Sea trout			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st Apr – 17 th Oct	Fly and spin	1 st Apr – 14 th Apr	Loss - 10 days fly / spin (all* ²)
	All methods	15 th Apr – 30 th Sep	No change
	Fly and spin	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	Loss – 1 week bait (all)
* ² Glaslyn season start would remain at 20 th of March as upstream of tidal doors provide abundant mended sea trout early in the season.			

This would provide a uniform start and end dates (except Glaslyn) and give both salmon and sea trout 1 week additional protection from bait fishing. Currently there are 5 rivers in this grouping where byelaws allow angling for salmon up to 31st October, this scenario will add 6 more.

Option 3.3 Aligned seasons with no reduction in the use of bait:

Salmon			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st April – 31 st Oct (* Catch and release)	Fly and spin*	1 st Apr – 15 th Jun	Loss - 10 days fly / spin (all)
	All methods	16 th Jun – 7 th Oct	No change
	Fly and spin	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	No change
	Fly and spin* (Main river)	18 th Oct – 31 st Oct	Gain – 2 weeks fly / spin (Dysynni, Artro, Mawddach, Glaslyn, Llyfni, Gwyrfai)
Sea trout			
Open season	Restrictions	Period of use	Impact on angling
1 st April – 17 th Oct	Fly and spin	1 st Apr – 14 th April	Loss - 10 days fly/spin (all* ²)
	All methods	15 th Apr – 7 th Oct	No change
	Fly and spin	1 st Oct – 17 th Oct	No change
* ² Glaslyn season start would remain at 20 th of March as tidal doors provide abundant mended sea trout early in the season.			

This would increase exploitation of salmon (because a small number of the fish caught in the extension would die) in catchments that will now receive an extension. Therefore, it would be difficult for us to proceed with this option without considerable local restrictions implemented by clubs and fisheries.

3. Gwynedd (excluding Llyn and Anglesey) and Conwy

Options summary – the level of benefit against the aims:

	Benefits stocks?	Benefits angling?	Simplifies byelaws?
Option 3.1	None	None	None
Option 3.2	Medium	Medium	Medium
Option 3.3	Negative	Medium	Medium

Bag limits - Gwynedd (excluding Lleyne and Anglesey) and Conwy

The byelaws presented in this paper are based on the feedback from our previous LFAG consultation. In the case of the Dee and Clwyd the revisions presented here include clear give and take.

In Gwynedd the membership believed that additional byelaws that restricted exploitation would not be acceptable. Therefore, without increased local controls the long term health of these stocks is vulnerable.

In the initial consultation it was clear that some clubs already have significant voluntary controls. However, others had almost no controls and candidly admitted that some of their members were killing in excess of 20 salmon each year.

In the Gwynedd and Conwy surgeries, where we discussed this in more detail, there was support for bag limits although the suggested cap varied from 2 to 12 salmon.

In the North West of England the Agency does support association run carcass tagging schemes in conjunction with bag limit byelaws (2 salmon). The scheme had limited success because some clubs did not implement the carcass tagging system.

If we were to introduce bag limits in Gwynedd and Conwy as a byelaw we would struggle to resource the administration. The option we favour is a collaboration with the clubs in this area. We would provide the tags and the clubs give out the non-transferable tags with their 'tickets'. The use of tags would need to be written into club rules. The tag would be applied immediately after capture. Those found with fish that were not tagged could be disciplined by their club which might mean expulsion.

To make this a worthwhile exercise we believe that the bag limit should be **2 salmon** per season but appreciate that this may be very challenging in some clubs that currently have no limit. Therefore we propose that we introduce a new byelaw such that all the seasons in this area are extended to 31st October on the condition that all clubs / fisheries implement a tagging system as follows:

2011 – minimum 6 salmon limit

2012 – minimum 4 salmon limit

2013 – minimum 2 salmon limit

In 2014 we will review the results. In catchments where tagging and bag limits have not been implemented by **all** fisheries within the above timescales we will introduce mandatory catch and release 1st October in 2014 (the end of the season will remain at the 31st October).

Other measures to increase release rates

We are also looking at further initiatives to increase release rates across Wales including promotion through the media and river bank signage.