



Protecting the habitat of the Ogmore since 1891

16 September 2009

Ms Virginia Hawkins
Clerk to the Sustainability Committee
Welsh Assembly
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Hawkins

As membership secretary of the Ogmore Angling Association (OAA) representing almost 500 members, I write to lodge an objection to the petition submitted to the Welsh Assembly by the Welsh Canoeing Association which, seeks to pass a law allowing unfettered and unrestricted access at all times of the year for canoeing purposes, to the waters owned and managed by the OAA.

May I point out, that of our 500 hundred or so members, almost all are Welsh voters and all of whom are outraged at this proposal and consider it to be unlawful trespass violating their legal rights.

The OAA has been in existence for over a hundred years, since first having acquired the fishing rights to our waters from the then Earl of Dunraven in 1891. In the main, the Ogmore River, together with the majority of its tributaries are wholly owned and managed by the association including the river bed, the title deeds for which, can be viewed at the "Land Registry for Wales", Crown Way, Cardiff.

The rivers Ogmore, Garw, Llynfi and Ewenny are at best but a few metres across and in the main totally unsuitable for canoeing. At low water, which is most of the time, they can be forded with ease and are not the white water torrents and rapids sought after by canoeists.

No navigation rights exist for anyone on our waters which are owned and managed by the OAA. Our members see "wholesale" canoeing as being dangerous, particularly when mingled with angling. I say dangerous for very different reasons to that of merely navigating a river in a canoe. Consider and picture if you will the lone angler quietly and fervently concentrating his or her patience in anticipation whilst casting a 'fly' or 'spinning' lure, oblivious to all things around. Whereupon, a canoe appears as if from nowhere, likely then to be hit by the anglers 'fly' or 'treble hooked' spinning lure flying through the air! Of course, this is not to mention the anger and outrage of the angler at the appearance of this most unwelcome and uninvited visitor.

Anglers come from all over the country to fish OAA waters and are able to buy day or weekly tickets to fish. Indeed, some who have fished our rivers have come from far and away from other countries.

2

It is interesting to note the fishing accolades that were bestowed upon the Ogmore, Garw, Llynfi and Ewenny rivers as far back as 1834 by the renowned author of that time "George Agar Hansard" in his book "Trout and

Patron: Mrs M McLaggan
Chairman: Mr A Curnock
Hon Secretary: Mr W Griffiths
Treasurer: Mr N West
Membership Sec: Mr G Stoneham



Consulting with:





Protecting the habitat of the Ogmore since 1891

Salmon fishing in Wales” and to quote just one paragraph “the Ogmore has always been distinguished for its Salmon and there are few rivers in Wales more productive of this fish” unquote.

Historically, canoeists have shown little regard for the environment, trampling over and destroying just about everything in their quest to get access to waterways for their canoes. Wading through spawning beds and trampling wild and rare plants and destroying barb wire fences, nothing stands in their way. Of late canoeists have been illegally navigating our waters and on one occasion the police were called. Are such canoeists to be rewarded for such flagrant abuse of the law during this consultation exercise? By contrast, our members meet on the first Sunday of every month for river cleanups and the Association is responsible for operating a regular fish stocking program at great cost. Our members also assist the Environment Agency in monitoring migratory fish caught of both Salmon and Sea Trout (Sewin), by submitting catch returns for analysis each year.

Recently our Association successfully hatched over 50,000 eggs taken from wild fish of Salmon and Sewin caught on our waters which were then fertilised. Later, the fry having been brought on were then reintroduced to the rivers where their parent adult fish were first caught. Our Association also operates a catch and release only policy when fishing for Grayling, thereby preserving these superb fish. Canoeists show no such inclination for the care and preservation of the abundant wildlife and associated habitat that abound our waterways. This is in complete contrast to that of the angler, who spends a great deal of money following the world’s most patronised sport and who also injects large sums of money into the Environment Agency in Wales by virtue of the legal requirement to purchase a Rod License. According to the Environment Agency, anglers spend in the region of £150million, heavily influencing the Welsh economy. Be in no doubt, this substantial income will be jeopardised if this proposal is passed. Canoeists have no such imposition such as that of licensing in any form placed upon them and therefore, contribute nothing to the Welsh economy and certainly nothing to Nature Conservation!

My Association is neither deaf nor intransigent to the wants and needs of the canoeist fraternity in our area and in fact have a river access agreement with our local canoe club. We are also working in conjunction with this local canoe club to secure grant funding for a slalom course on the river Ogmore. This local negotiation approach has proved successful and is at present acceptable to both parties. It is to be favoured in place of unpopular and unpoliceable legislation. Our Association sees no reason at all why our local canoe clubs cannot be supported by us locally, on a managed basis. However, that said, we remain convinced from a Health and Safety point of view if nothing else, that canoeing is more suited to the larger rivers of Wales and England, Scotland and Ireland and not to the smaller rivers of Wales such as the Ogmore, Garw, Llynfi and Ewenny.

For the above reasons and others I have not mentioned, I trust this objection is upheld and the petitioned proposals submitted by the Welsh Canoe Association, denied.

Yours Sincerely

Gerwyn Stoneham
Membership Secretary

Patron: Mrs M McLaggan
Chairman: Mr A Curnock
Hon Secretary: Mr W Griffiths
Treasurer: Mr N West
Membership Sec: Mr G Stoneham



Consulting with: