

# THE UNITED USK FISHERMENS ASSOCIATION

**Chairman** – Nicholas S Brabner

**Vice-Chairman** - Sir Richard Hanbury Tenison KCVO

c/o Gliffaes Country House Hotel  
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Mr. Mick Bates AM. Chairman – Sustainability Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales,  
Cardiff Bay,  
Cardiff,  
CF99 1NA.

Dear Sir,

Sustainability Committee – Inquiry into access to the inland Waterways in  
Wales.

## **Questions for the access to inland waterways inquiry What is your interest in the issue of access to inland waterways?**

I am a landowner, a recreational fisherman for the last 61 years, a riparian owner for 36 years and the Chairman of the United Usk Fisherman's Association for the past 17 years. As a member of the committee of the UUFA for the past 36 years, I have been actively interested in the health of the Usk and its tributaries as a game fishery. During that time I was involved in the successful challenge against the Newport Barrage, the successful buyout of the Usk Driftnets with the Wye Foundation, and the annual quota buy of the Goldcliff putcher rank for five years (also with WF) and the highly successful creation of the largest rivers trust in the UK: the Wye & Usk Foundation, from which you have received a separate letter. I am a trustee of the Wye & Usk Foundation and therefore endorse its charitable objectives. All of which has contributed a great deal to the enhancement of the River Usk and its capital value as a sought after destination for salmon, sea trout and wild brown trout fishing.

## **Are you a member of an organisation related to your use of water?**

I am a member of the United Usk Fishermen's Association and a trustee of the Wye & Usk Foundation. In addition I am a member of Fish Legal, the Salmon and Trout Association, the CLA and I am Chairman of the Usk Local Fisheries Group for the EAW. *I am a committee member of the steering group that set up the Exemplar and subsequent voluntary access agreement on Wye and Usk*

## **Which stretch/es of water do you own/use/manage?**

### **Legal rights**

I own the Gliffaes Country House Hotel, which owns water on the Usk consisting of one mile at Gliffaes, which is left bank water and of which the river bed is owned to the half way point to 4yds above high water which includes a right of access to that holding and the Llandetty fishery which is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile both banks. Llandetty was bought as a right to fish and includes access to support that right.

I understand the legal rights and their value.

The rights give us the right to fish and maintain the fishery, within the EAW law.

I would not wish to see the legal rights in any way diluted which would affect the ecology of the river as a fishery and the diminution of its value.

I am aware of many different types of legislation in other countries but private ownership seems to deliver the most consistent investment in the future of our rivers. Many countries have legislation that is entirely consistent with sparse population and a low density of fishing.

*I have allowed my land to be used as one of the crucial Access Points in the Wye and Usk agreement and receive no payment for this.*

### **Voluntary agreements**

Yes, since the agreement made with the Welsh Canoe Association in 1984 for which I was partially responsible as a committee member of the UUFA and which covered the closed fishing season from Sennybridge to the tidal waters of the Usk. Written permission had to be sought and was never denied. It was free. There was also a clause which allowed canoeing during periods of very high water during the fishing season. The latter was not easy to define because we did not have the web cams delivering instant water heights as we do today via the Wye & Usk Foundation website.

In 2006 the Welsh Canoe Association (now Canoe Wales) chose not to renew our agreement. We realised that there were many who wished to continue to have free

access to some of the most exciting and picturesque waters in the UK. The upper Wye was in the same position and we therefore contributed to the Wye & Usk Foundation in the formation of a steering group which brought together canoeists, riparian owners, the CCW and EAW to form an agreement which was essentially the same but modernised and enhanced to give canoeists permission to paddle at specified times and specified heights of water. It specifies access and egress points which are signed and clearly advertise the conditions canoeists accept in the use of the facility. Dr Stephen Marsh-Smith has detailed the agreement in WUF's submission to your enquiry, and which is also available as a part of the WUF website. [www.wyeuskfoundation.org](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org)

In the operation of the latest agreement, at Gliffaes I have not experienced any problems during the fishing season which are all too commonly reported on the river below Crickhowell which has no agreement yet. In the closed fishing season period when canoeing is active on the upper Usk I have spoken to many canoeists from London, the Midlands and other parts of Wales and they applaud the agreement with all the information that goes with it.

One aspect we would like to see improvement is a lighter touch by the Brecon Beacons National Park in gaining planning permission for points of access and egress. A more welcoming approach is needed.

I believe we do not need changes to our voluntary agreement as yet and when we do they will evolve.

I am not aware of any voluntary agreements in other countries that would be suitable for our circumstances.

**Please can you briefly outline what you think are the key issues for recreational access to inland water in Wales and how you would like to see them addressed.**

Any agreement has to respect the status quo and the economic benefit of the status quo. I have fished for a long time but in addition I am active in many other sports such as tennis, squash, shooting, sailing and golf. My point is that I personally wish to support any sport which does not interfere with another. In the case of canoeing I am only too delighted to provide facilities 'out of season' for canoeists to follow their exciting sport at a time when the water conditions are at their best for them. This has proved to be the case on the stretch between Sennybridge and Crickhowell.

Nick Brabner

Chairman UUFA

Trustee of Wye & Usk Foundation

Riparian Owner