### National Access Forum Wales Access to Water Sub-Group meeting 29 April 2020

#### Attendance

Chair: Dave MacCallum (NRW), Sarah Smith (WG), Steve Rayner (WATO), Chris Mills (Angling Trust), Bernard Griffiths (FUW) Charles de Winton (CLBA), Stephen Marsh-Smith (Afonydd Cymru), Andy Phillips (Angling Cymru), Phil Stone (Canoe Wales)

#### The focus of the meeting was to agree a general consultative process for a river evaluation that can then be applied to individual rivers.

All members agreed that a pilot approach is required to develop the consultative process; targeting a river that has the potential to offer broad demographic recreational use.

Initial information should be gathered and where possible shown on a map:

* Identify a river, determine environmental status, biosecurity considerations, water levels information / data
* Identify all consultees e.g. Land owners, riparian owners and lease’s
* Identify existing and potential users / organisations of the watercourse
* Identify areas of protection, access/egress points, facilities etc.
* The consultative engagement process needs to engage with and seek cooperation.  Need to explain and share what we are seeking to achieve.

Consultations with land and riparian owners, sporting rights lease’s and existing clubs / users. This needs to incentivise cooperation and clearly communicate the intentions. Share WG policy intent and Ministers wish. Must be credible A2WSG member or nominated person / organisation engaging with each stakeholder.

Fishing rights are paid for and provide a source of income for land / riparian owners. Consideration of equitable sharing needs to address financial considerations for land owners including discussions regarding a potential Rural Payment for Access to Water as well as reasonable car parking / river access schemes. The latter was noted to only benefit landowners with access / egress points.

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Land owner liability consideration is vital. The CRoW reduced liability model was recognised with additional benefit seen by the public and professional liability insurance provided by commercial paddle sport operators and the 3rd party insurance that is a component of Canoe Wales membership. It was recognised that not all canoeists were members of Canoe Wales.

Regulation and enforcement were seen as important considerations. It was noted that this is an opportunity to improve the current situation. It was agreed that a variety of web hosted time slot booking options could be employed to limit use to sustainable levels; being recognised that historically on some river sections local shops were used to sell ‘river passes’. This type of regulation / control was agreed to be helpful and would be further explored in the future.

Members had early discussions about introducing a River License that all users would be required to have. This would provide a financial contribution to the upkeep of the rivers as well as being both equitable and sustainable. Considerations included:

* + - * A requirement that as part of the river license, users would have to have an appropriate operator’s accreditation (e.g. AALA licence), Canoe Wales membership or purchase a temporary licence. This would ensure paddlers 3rd party insurance and help alleviate landowners’ fears.
			* Clear boat identification / individual ID required.
			* Vested interest in all river users policing as well as potential official enforcement.
			* Sanctions of misuse could include the removal of membership as well as legal enforcement options akin to those of current fishing regulations.
			* Temporary licenses for visitor’s tourists or non-Canoe Wales members at a day or weekly rate, to include 3rd party insurance cover.
			* A requirement of a license would require a bye-law. (subsequently it is found that a boat license bye-law could be created under *Schedule 25(1) of the Water Resources Act 1991).*

It was agreed that the fair season paddling opportunities required broadening and that reservoirs can provide options for paddlers and families and alleviating the recreational and environmental pressures on rivers.  It was advised that Seven Trent Water allow paddling on the Clywedog however Dwr Cymru have a general ban with some exceptions e.g. the Brecon Beacons Reservoir Passport Scheme for organised groups.  It was recognised that it would be beneficial to invite Dwr Cymru to attend a future sub-group meeting.  Members agreed increasing access to reservoirs should be considered and included in the report to the Deputy Minister for Housing & Local Government.

Members will disseminate information about the meetings to their respective members with the intent of both informing and engaging them within this process once minutes are agreed. It was also suggested that the Fishing Forums should be kept informed as a part of good communication and transparency.

The next meeting will consider the components of equity, selection of a pilot river and the application of our process.

**Members of the Access to Water Sub-Group are working co-operatively together to find a pragmatic solution for Wales.**

Future practicalities were identified, including; signage, expenditure, good paths to access/egress points, facilities and communication.