 WALES/CYMRU

Press release

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**UKIP Wales Leader Neil Hamilton stands up for Anglers in Wales**Today in the National Assembly for Wales, UKIP Wales Leader, Neil Hamilton, stood up for anglers. In the face of “draconian” proposals by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), fishermen throughout Wales face a 10 year ban on taking their catch home.

In a 2016 assessment of the salmon population, it was found that 21 out of 23 rivers in Wales are failing to reach fish stock targets. NRW appear to be blaming anglers for the depletion of stocks and recommends the 10 year mandatory catch and release policy. This, coupled with further proposals on the method of fishing, could sound the death knell for angling in Wales.

The UKIP Wales Leader addressed a number of reasons for the depletion of fish stocks and attacked the NRW’s proposals. He joined with anglers, calling for the abandonment of the mandatory catch and release proposal which would damage an industry worth £150m to the Welsh economy.

Mr Hamilton argued that sewage pollution, poorly located hydroelectric projects, slurry spills and the predation of salmon and sea trout by fish-eating birds are responsible for the decline in fish stocks. UKIP believes NRW’s proposals should reflect this, rather than punishing fishermen, and, as a consequence, dissuading visiting anglers who make a valuable contribution to Wales’ tourism industry.

**Neil Hamilton commented:**
**“Rather than picking on anglers, the NRW should take a look at increased levels of river pollution and hydroelectric projects which have killed stocks and disrupted migration patterns. Taking home one’s catch is an integral part of the enjoyment of the sport of angling. Most anglers voluntarily release their catch, so the proposals would have little effect on fish stocks and would severely threaten the future of angling. NRW must avoid top heavy regulation and, instead, formulate a coherent strategy with anglers – the custodians of Wales’ rivers.”**

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