

PRESS RELEASE

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NATURAL RESOURCES WALES MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY TO SAVE WYE AND ALL WELSH SALMON AT NO COST TO THEM

The only organisation dedicated to saving Wye salmon from extinction is urging Natural Resources Wales to immediately reopen its salmon hatchery whilst some fish are still in the system and will raise all the necessary money to fund this.

The Wye Salmon Association's (WSA) plan involves re-opening salmon rearing and releasing at NRW's hatchery at Abercynig using the latest, approved, future proofing techniques. They plan to fund the cost with a crowd funding appeal to ensure it does not impact on Welsh Assembly budgets.

“Wye salmon numbers are at an all-time low and if NRW does not act immediately it will be too late. They have admitted that, unless something is done, salmon are likely to become extinct within a decade. Sadly, their solution to the problem is more of the same and to undertake more research, which won't help in the slightest,” says WSA chairman Stuart Smith.

NRW stopped all salmon fry releases into the Wye in 2015 and, since then, the already low number of fish has collapsed. The 2023 number of salmon caught was the lowest on record – ever. Until the 1970s, the Wye was one of Europe's most productive salmon rivers.

“NRW claims to follow recommendations from the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) which, until two years ago, did not approve of traditional hatcheries. That has all changed since the global collapse of Atlantic salmon populations. NASCO now approve and encourage future proofing policies and advanced hatchery techniques when serving rivers where there is a risk of total collapse

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in salmon numbers. Despite this, NRW continues to refuse to discuss it with us,” says Smith.

Future proofing is a conservation aquaculture technique that, for the Wye, involves four key elements: kelt reconditioning (a kelt is an adult salmon that has spawned and is returning to the sea); cryogenics to freeze male salmon milt (semen) for future potential use; smolt enhancement (the stage in a salmon life cycle when they are getting ready to go out to sea) and gene banking (catch up of pre-spawning adults to hold as captive broodstocks). Using only Wye salmon in these processes guarantees the genetic integrity of fish produced and released into the river.

“This is a plan using approved and proven technology. It won’t cost NRW or the Welsh Assembly a penny. If they refuse to undertake it they must immediately come up with an alternative solution or for ever be known as the government that killed of Wye and all Welsh salmon,” argues Smith.

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For more information contact Graham Paskett at grahampaskett@paskett.co.uk or call 07860 737 225. Graham runs a family-owned salmon beat on the Wye and does not charge for this work. 2022 was the 60th anniversary of ownership and their first ever zero salmon catch.