

WYE SALMON ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND / BIOGRAPHY / PROFILE

Primary Representatives / Steering Team:

Lawrence Birkett – Membership Officer
Peter Chilton – IT and Social Media
Chris Enstone – Citizen Science & GMROR Coordinator
Gordon Green – Science Officer
Justin Goodbody – Events Coordinator
Graham Paskett – Press Officer
Stuart R Smith - Chair
Paul T Vernon – Strategy & Policy / Vice Chair
Ros Williams – Finance Officer

Head Office:

Wye Salmon Association
Penyhil
Felindre
Aberhonddu
Powys
LD3 0SU
Wales

Website:
<https://www.wyesalmon.com>

Email:
enquiries@wesalmon.com

Telephone:
Int 44 (0) 7789 133263

Social Media:
FaceBook – Wye Salmon Association
Twitter “X” - @WyeSalmon

Background to establishment of Wye Salmon Association (WSA):

Atlantic salmon catches in the river Wye collapsed in the early 1990s. Declines in populations generally attributed to factors in their marine life phase. Survival rates considered to have declined generally from 25% to 3%. Since 1996 through such bodies as Environment Agency Wales (EA-W, now Natural Resource Wales, NRW)

and Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) much effort had been applied to reverse this trend by improving in river habitat.

After 15 years with no significant signs of improvement a group of anglers, owners and gillies formed Wye Salmon Association, see below link to WSA Constitution, with the primary objectives of improving and sustaining the salmon population and engaging the angling fraternity in that task

Wye Salmon Association, wished to see the river returned to its former historic reputation as England & Wales premier salmon river, believing additional actions and significant change was necessary for salmon stocks to recover.

Strategic Goals:

Our Strategic Goal....

- Is to drive the necessary actions, urgently needed, to stop the decline of Atlantic Salmon in both the main River Wye and its sub catchments.
- Wye Salmon Association aims to provide its supporters and all angling interests with a voice in this process and to encourage game angling as a pastime to all.
- From the above WSA will develop a science lead approach to ensuring Atlantic Salmon reach and exceed sustainable conservation levels via water quality, habitat improvement and recognised positive population improvement techniques. In doing this it will work, in a constructive manner, with all appropriate stakeholders, including local, national and international regulators and advisory bodies.

Information on the number of members, decision-making process, and funding:

- Established in 2009
- Membership of circa 450+
 - Anglers, riparian owners, tenants, clubs, syndicates & gillies, non-anglers. Primarily salmon anglers
- Unincorporated Association - see link to WSA Constitution

[Constitution-of-Wye-Salmon-Association-29-05-25.pdf](#)

- Decision making via Steering Team and member surveys.
- Funding via annual subscriptions and donations when projects identified.

Brief history and a description of our activities:

- Establish Wye Salmon Association as entity, initially developed around casting clinics and river craft skills courses.
- Went on to explore, develop and deliver opportunities for schools educational angling and river ecology courses.
- Set up 'Get More Rods on River' (GMROR) scheme offering members free fishing to encourage anglers back to the river.
- Gained membership of Wye Local Fisheries Group (WLFG), the Natural Resource Wales (NRW) communications body for the Wye catchment.

2010.... established pilot 'Semi Natural Rearing' (SNR) pond scheme. Conducted research and trials by NRW and Environment Agency (EA) staff in conjunction with Exeter University confirming DNA testing methods for stock monitoring.

2012.... demonstrated producing 'natural' smolts with increased body mass, 25% greater than hatchery produced, and exceptional survival rated - 7x greater than in river production. Continued to develop SNR project with selection and development of 5 ponds. Production of SNR ponds rose to 49,000 in **2013/14** and 37,600 in **2014/15**. Following an NRW policy decision - project cancelled.

2013.... WSA conceived the concept of re-gravelling parts of the Wye's upper catchment as a "loss of habitat" mitigation measure during a WLFG SAP review. Funding was subsequently sought for project on River Elan by Wye and Usk Foundation (WUF) via Welsh Government (NRW) and the work carried out by WUF.

2014.... joined Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) which was formed in 2014 to bring together organisations, initiatives and organisations who have a shared interest in the catchment. It facilitates collaborative working to deliver improvements across several key themes. The partnership has a diverse membership with representatives from rivers trusts, wildlife trusts, governmental organisations, private forestry, farming unions, water companies, conservation trusts and local companies as well as interested individuals.

2016..... worked with Bangor University to outline a project to investigate the distribution of spawning activity of different salmon run groups using genetic methods. Project remains unfunded.

2017..... began 5 year project to continuously monitor water temperatures in spawning streams. Deployed 'tiny tag' data recorders during spawning season at 25 sites. Data used in research thesis by Cardiff University phd student part funded by NRW.

2018..... severe algal blooms began to affect the river Wye upstream to the river Ithon confluence. Blooms having significant ecological impact, shading out

important aquatic plants that provide habitat for fish and invertebrates. WSA researched potential monitoring methods with Cardiff University.

2019..... developed a bold and urgent action plan, WSA Salmon Action Plan – A Bold and Imaginative Plan, using work from the River Skjerne in Denmark as exemplar. The objective of conservation and understanding fishery exploitable levels of salmon numbers. Encouraged shared interests of stakeholders (agencies, river trusts, owners and anglers). Proposal submitted to NRW via WLFG who were in the process of developing their own.

2020..... launch first Citizens Science Water Quality project to monitor phosphate levels across the Wye catchment. Advice on our approach, methods and data logging from Cardiff University. Grew relationship with bodies including River-Action-UK, Save the Wye, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).

In addition, WSA commissioned a report 'Protecting the genetic diversity of Atlantic Salmon, an insurance policy against continued stock declines', submitted for discussion to NRW fisheries team.

2021.....Citizens Science team grown to 48 volunteers monitoring 87 sites with 5,000+ records.

2022.....published Citizen Science reports leveraging the Citizen Science data gathered by our volunteers. River Llynfi and Garren Brook sub catchments reports published & submitted to regulatory authorities (NRW / EA).

WSA champion relationship between organisations sampling on the Wye to form the 'Wye Alliance', an alliance comprising as it was at that time – Friends of the Upper Wye, River Dore Citizen Science Group, CPRE – Herefordshire, Friends of the Lower Wye and WSA, all committed to providing a united approach to the statutory authorities regarding water quality and habitat improvement across the River Wye catchment.

Note: The Wye Alliance comprises today Friends of the Wye (FOTW) combining Friends of the Upper Wye and Friends of the Lower Wye, CPRE – Herefordshire and WSA, the Dore Citizen Science Group having fully joined WSA.

2023..... joined the Wye Nutrient Management Board (NMB) which is sponsored and managed by Herefordshire District Council. The cross-border role of the NMB is three-fold: to influence decisions and actions that have an impact, directly or indirectly, on the catchment, to advise decision makers on their proposals, plans and decisions/actions, and to challenge decision makers on their proposals, plans and decisions/actions.

The NMB works with other organisations or groups as necessary to support this aim including, but not limited to, the Caba, the Herefordshire Cabinet Commission and any task force that may be appointed by either government.

2024.....WSA supported Swansea University to assist in their annual programme focusing on Shad, Salmon and Sea Trout over three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), the Tywi, Wye and Usk, using acoustic tagging and tracking techniques, genetics and stable isotope analysis, alongside more traditional methods (angler logbooks, scale collection and reading) to understand current levels of marine and freshwater survival, and to identify factors causing mortality which can be addressed. WSA were engaged to aid with the capture and tagging of shad, salmon, and sea trout smolts and sea trout adults on the River Wye whose members aid with provision of locations and resource to collect catch and effort data, biological and scale sampling; and to help with in-river tracking of fish. Marine tracking will use an existing array of some 100 acoustic receivers already deployed in the Bristol Channel, including using array 'hotspots' to understand the importance of the Severn Estuary and Carmarthen Bay Marine Protected Areas, and connectivity between them and the river SAC's.

WSA having been invited to join the Angling Trust's Salmon and Sea Trout Advisory Group and having presented its credentials in October WSA was formally accepted as a member. WSA is working to support and engage with the group to identify the urgent need to protect the UK's Atlantic salmon populations.

2025.....WSA recognised by North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), established in 1984, as an accredited Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) – WSA is looking to significantly and positively participate, engage and support NASCO's initiatives.....

[WSA papers, reports and public releases produced on the conservation, management or science of wild Atlantic salmon;](#)

- [SNR Pilot Scheme.pdf](#) - June 2012
- [SNR Project Report.pdf](#) - October 2016
- [WSA Salmon Action Plan. A bold and imaginative plan....](#) - December 2019
- [Protecting the genetic diversity of Atlantic Salmon in Wales.pdf](#) - July 2020
- [A Study of Poultry Farming and its Impact on Water Quality in the Wye.pdf](#) – March 2021
- [River Llynfi Sub Catchment: Water quality and Citizens Science 1.pdf](#) - March 2022
- [Garren Brook Soil Sampling. To better understand the phosphorus concentration within the catchment soils](#) - July 2022
- [Garren Brook sub Catchment: Water quality and Citizens Science](#) - November 2022
- [Wye Catchment Soil Phosphorus and repeated application.pdf](#) - August 2023

- [Upper Garren Brook RP Sources. Understand the origins of elevated reactive phosphorus concentrations identified by earlier WSA](#) - September 2023
- [Wye E.coli Sampling.pdf](#) - January 2023
- [Catchment Overview Version 2 - River Llynfi 2023.pdf](#) August 2023
- [Garren Turbidity 23-24.pdf](#) July 2024
- [Mineral loads on the Garren and Lower Wye.pdf](#) March 2024
- [Winter flows at Belmont \(2024\): shows the major shift in winter flood patterns between 1980 and 2000](#) October 2024
- [Rainfall retention on the Wye catchment above Belmont \(2024\)](#) December 2024
- [Tech note - Worm 23-24.pdf](#) December 2024

Data collected and supplied for such reports as:

- Diagnosing and mitigating the adverse effects of extreme climate on salmonid spawning. A Cardiff University paper. WSA collected 5 years data
- Submission of citizen science data, now over 20,000 records to EA & NRW WyeViz databases – live link to [Wye Viz](#)
 - Submission of same data in conjunction with other Citizen Science bodies (Friends of the River Wye – FORW and CPRE-H and WSA) who form an alliance, see above, to create an online dashboard, ‘WyeViz’ collating and reporting data as open source.

Current levels of engagement and representative activities:

Attending / Representative / Memberships.....

- Wye Local Fisheries Group
- Welsh Fisheries Forum
- Wye Catchment Partnership
- Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board – voting member since 2023
- Angling Trust
- Angling Trust - Salmon and Sea Trout Advisory Group
- Stirling University – Conservation Aquaculture Workshop
- Atlantic Salmon Trust /Missing Salmon Alliance – Launch Conference
- Atlantic Salmon Trust /Missing Salmon Alliance – 2025 January Conference
- Yorkshire Dales Salmon Group Symposium
- NASCO – accredited NGO

Wye Salmon Association
10th April 2025