

Rod licence sales update (October 2018)

Background

NRW has specific powers relating to the licensing of angling in Wales in Section 25 of the Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (SAFFA) and which include provisions for operating a licensing system and setting duties.

Income from rod licence is treated by Government as a 'hypothecated tax' and must be spent on the activity from which it was raised.

Licence income is mainly spent on enforcement of fisheries legislation, checking rod and net licences, fisheries improvements, monitoring, research, providing advice and liaising with a wide range of stakeholders including running eight Local Fisheries Groups across Wales.

Rod licence sales

The rod licence sales and administration service in Wales is managed on our behalf by the Environment Agency (EA) under a formal agreement. All income raised from sales in Wales is forwarded by the EA to NRW (minus standard administration charges, approximately £85,000 in 2017/18).

Licence sales have been declining in recent years in Wales from 57,000 licences in 2012 to 47,000 in 2017, a reduction of 17%. Over the same period, income reduced by £36,000 or 3% (increased duties in 2017 helped maintain income levels although direct comparisons with previous years are problematic because of the introduction of new products such as a 365-day licence, a free junior licence and a three-rod licence and possible changing purchasing habits by anglers).

The free junior licence introduced in 2017 is considered to have been a success with a 40% increase in junior licences issued in Wales in 2017 (+1,000 licences) compared with the previous year.

2018/19 sales to date

More worryingly, licence sales have continued to decline this year although the reasons behind this are complex and may be related to poor weather, sporting events such as the World Cup, concerns about new byelaws, as well as changing purchasing habits. The latter is being investigated by the EA via market research with a representative group of anglers.

Overall sales in Wales to the end of September 2018 are down 16% compared with the same period in 2017. This equates to 7,300 fewer licences issued and a reduction in income of £150,000.

Coarse & Trout licences have declined by 16% (-13% in England) and migratory salmonid licences by 21% (-9% in England).

What next?

EA will further investigate changing purchasing habits following the introduction of new products in 2017 to seek to determine how this may affect sales between years. NRW and EA will consult in 2019 on new duties and possible new products in 2019 with a view to introducing these in April 2020 subject to WG and Defra approval.

The shortfall in income to NRW in 2018, compared to budgeting estimates, will be managed internally. Working with partners, there may be scope to increase rod licence marketing activities as well as the promotion of angling and fisheries in Wales in the future subject to availability of resources. A partnership group including NRW, WG and stakeholders such as Angling Cymru and Sport Wales has now been set up to investigate the options.

Number of licences sold in Wales (2013-2017)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Trout & coarse	50,079	49,759	48,883	49,080	47,734	41,321
Salmon & sea trout	6,795	6,317	5,749	5,660	5,514	5,386
Total	56,874	56,076	54,632	54,740	53,248	46,707

Income from sales of rod licences in Wales (2013-2017)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Trout & coarse	£817,078	£792,075	£773,258	£780,443	£760,165	£835,505
Salmon & sea trout	£348,331	£324,487	£299,740	£292,383	£282,355	£293,468
Total	£1,165,409	£1,116,562	£1,072,998	£1,072,826	£1,042,520	£1,128,973

Junior licence sales in Wales (2012-2017)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (free)
Trout & coarse	4084	3472	2,950	2,635	2,244	2,814
Salmon & sea trout	654	533	378	340	308	738
Total	4,738	4,005	3,328	2,975	2,552	3,552