

## Rod catches of Usk salmon and stock status in 2025

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### Summary:

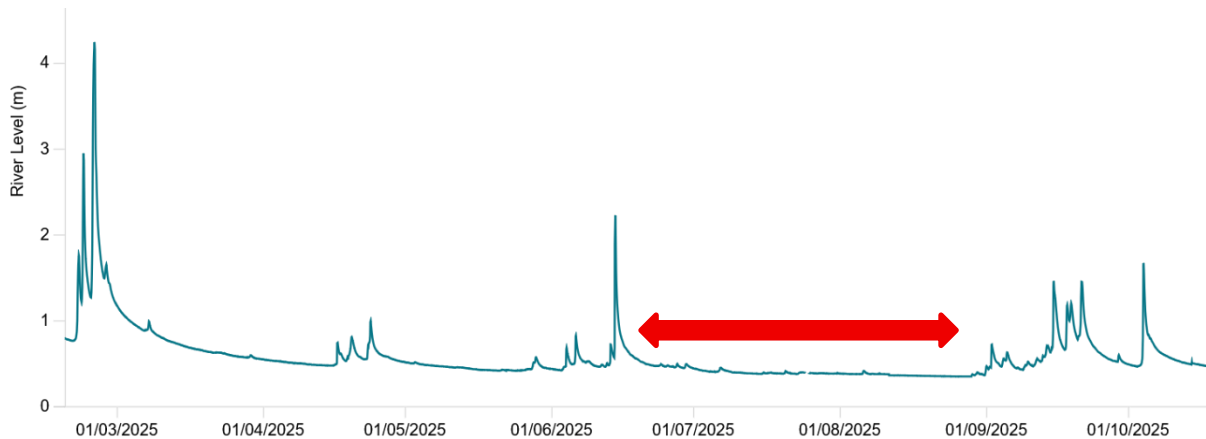
- Overall, conditions for salmon migration and angling were poor, reflecting the high water temperatures and generally low flows in both spring and summer.
- Many fisheries closed during the hottest weather in June, July and August to avoid mortalities after catch-and-release.
- Rod catches were the worst on record. The declared rod catch for the whole river, when available next year from rod licence catch returns to NRW, is predicted to be between 29 and 48 salmon. The minimum actual rod catch was 45.
- Most salmon were caught in September and October and in the 8 to 14lbs size class. The proportion of smaller salmon in the catch was low again, reflecting the continued paucity of grilse.
- The total run of salmon into the Usk this year may only be about 900 salmon.
- Fishing effort has fallen dramatically but this is not in itself the reason for poor catches. The primary cause is the low chance of catching a salmon.
- Since 2008, the value of the salmon fishing rights on the Usk may have fallen by about £7 million to about £1 million due to sustained low catches.
- Adult stock status for Usk salmon will remain 'At Risk'. Average abundance of salmon fry at NRW's annual monitoring sites has been low since 2016.
- Much of the wider ecology of the Usk is degraded and deteriorating.
- With fewer people fishing, the viability of some angling clubs and fisheries is threatened.
- Without major improvements in salmon survival over its life cycle, recovery seems highly improbable.



**Only nine years ago:** a 13 pounder caught on Isca AC's tidal beat in May 2016 when catches were still respectable (*Photo: Simon Toms*). For more of the quality of fishing in 2016 and 2007 when the declared catch exceeded 700 annually, go to: <https://iscaanglingclub.com/salmon-fishing-river-usk/>

## 1. River conditions:

**In summary:** Salmon would have been unable to migrate into and up the river for much of late spring and most of the summer due to low flows and especially high water temperatures. Many may have failed to enter at all. Despite this, there were opportunities for salmon migration and angling, notably early June and at the back end of the season.



River level in metres recorded at NRW's Chainbridge gauge upstream of Usk town. The red arrow shows the period from 19 June, when the daily average water temperature first exceeded 20°C at NRW's nearby Trostrey gauging station, to 21 August when it dropped back below 18°C. The maximum daily average reached 23.8°C on 12 July. (Data from NRW)

**March/April:** After a 4m flood at the end of February the river dropped steadily and was just over 1m on the Chainbridge gauge at the start of the fishing season on 3 March. It continued dropping, reaching 0.48m before three successive spates rising to 0.98m on 23 April. Given the otherwise low flows these spates were timely to help smolts migrate down river and to sea. They also gave any early adults an opportunity to migrate into and up the river.

**May/June/July/August:** May was, again, one of the warmest on record in Wales and mostly dry; not good conditions for salmon migration or angling. The average water temperature recorded by NRW at its Trostrey gauge exceeded 16°C, if not 17°C, from 13<sup>th</sup> May. Rain lifted the level from 0.42 to 0.57m on 28<sup>th</sup> May. This was followed by a couple of small spates on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June before a major spate of 2.22m on 14 June. Combined with a drop in water temperature, these gave salmon an opportunity to enter and move above the tidal reaches. However, this spate was quickly followed by a period of even higher water temperatures that lasted 63 days, as shown above, when most fisheries closed on the lower river to avoid potential mortalities after catch-and-release. The exceptionally hot dry summer not only put a stop to salmon angling but water temperatures approached critical levels for salmon survival. Four dead adult salmon were reported, all downstream of Abergavenny, at Chainbridge, Pant-y-goitre, Llanbadoc and Newbridge. While the edges of the river were lined with algae, the water remained fairly clear and the bed of the river was comparatively clean, in contrast to 2022. This may reflect the benefits of spates in late April and

early June, as well as new restrictions on the abstraction to the canal at Brecon and releases of water from Usk reservoir to support abstraction.

23 August: a dead salmon lying in a mat of algae at the river's edge at Llanbadoc, Usk, probably a victim of stressful conditions. (photo: Rob Kerby).



Historically, the canal has exacerbated low river flows. In July 2022, the canal was taking almost a third of the river flow at Brecon. The new NRW licence, finally in force, requires the canal to be supported by releases of water to the river from Usk reservoir at lower river flows. Such releases, at the request of the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT) to Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), commenced on 4 April and continued for most of the summer, with occasional breaks when flows rose naturally. DCWW further increased releases from Usk reservoir from 21 July to 26 August to enable its own abstraction from the river at Usk.

For most of the second half of August the gauge height at Chainbridge was about 0.35m, its lowest was 0.348m on 28 August. It was similar or lower in other recent drought years i.e. 2018 and 2022. In 2003, it was even lower at 0.296m.

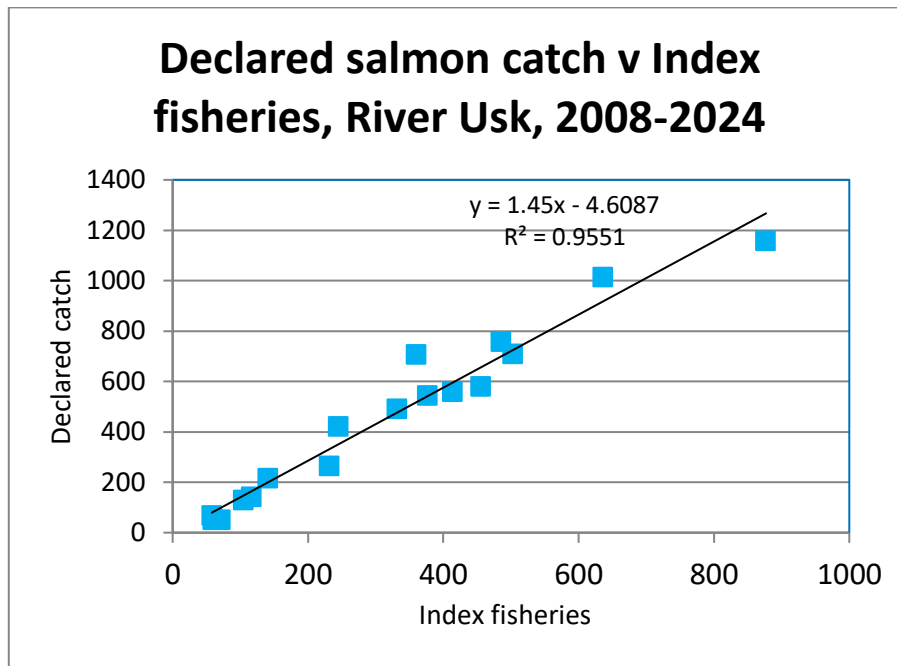
### **September/October:**

Flows rose gradually at the beginning of September. The height exceeded 0.6m on the Chainbridge gauge for twelve days from 13 to 25 September with two substantial spates of 1.45m that cleaned the river of algae. Water temperatures fell to about 13°C, so conditions were good for salmon migration and angling. There was a slightly larger spate of 1.7m on 4 October after which flows fell away. The gauge was at 0.47m on 17 October, the last day of the season.

## **2. Rod catch of Usk salmon**

2.1 **Seasonal totals:** Catches were provided for 'Index fisheries' in the middle and lower reaches, i.e. Upper Llangybi; Lower Llangybi (from David Addams-Williams); Monkswood (from Helen Harrison); Llanover (from Ross Murray); Merthyr Tydfil AA's fisheries (from Liam Walsh); the Usk Town Water (John Davies) and Isca AC's three fisheries (from Andrew Beattie). Together these totalled 40, even lower than the 60 last year, when the Usk recorded its lowest ever rod catch.

2.2 Salmon licence holders are required to make individual catch returns to NRW by the end of December. Not all do, but these 'declared' catches are used by NRW, with some adjustment, to assess stock status. There is a strong correlation between the catches at Index fisheries and the declared catch.

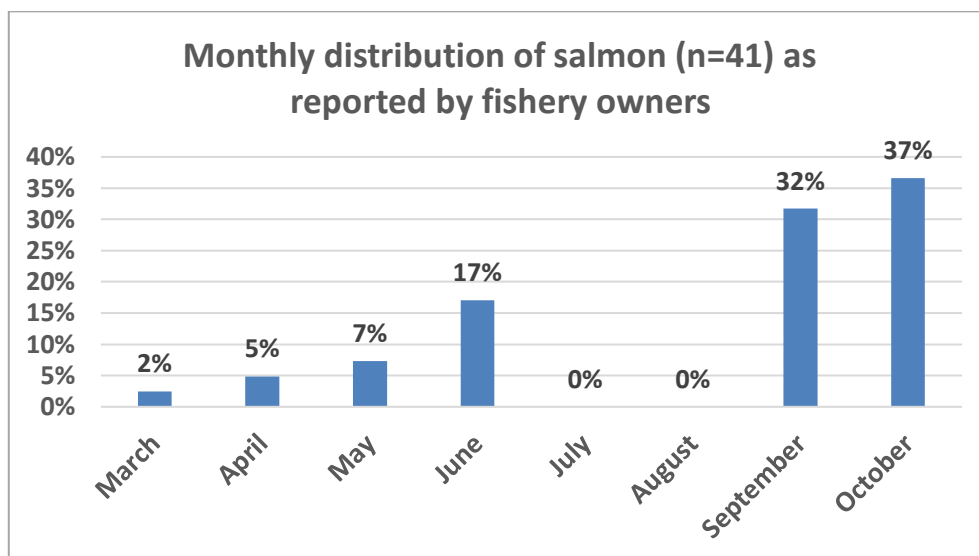


	Salmon catch Index fisheries	Declared Usk catch	Index catch as a Proportion of Declared Usk catch
2008	877	1157	76%
2009	332	491	68%
2010	456	580	79%
2011	360	707	51%
2012	636	1014	63%
2013	377	543	69%
2014	245	421	58%
2015	414	559	74%
2016	503	709	71%
2017	486	756	64%
2018	105	129	81%
2019	141	216	69%
2020	232	263	88%
2021	117	140	84%
2022	71	51	139%
2023	60	51	118%
2024	58	66	88%
2025	40	<b>Predicted range: 29 to 48</b>	Range 2020 to 2024: 84% to 139%

2.3 The catch recorded at the Index fisheries from 2020 to 2024 has been between 84 and 139 percent of the catch declared by anglers to NRW. The catch at the Index fisheries in 2025 can therefore be used to estimate the catch that will be declared to NRW this winter and reported next year. For the 2025 season, **the declared rod catch is predicted to be between 29 and 48 salmon**. This would be the lowest on record since 1871. The lowest to date was 51 salmon in both 2022 and 2023. The last seven years' catches have all been low, though 2020 was reduced by low fishing effort due to Covid restrictions.

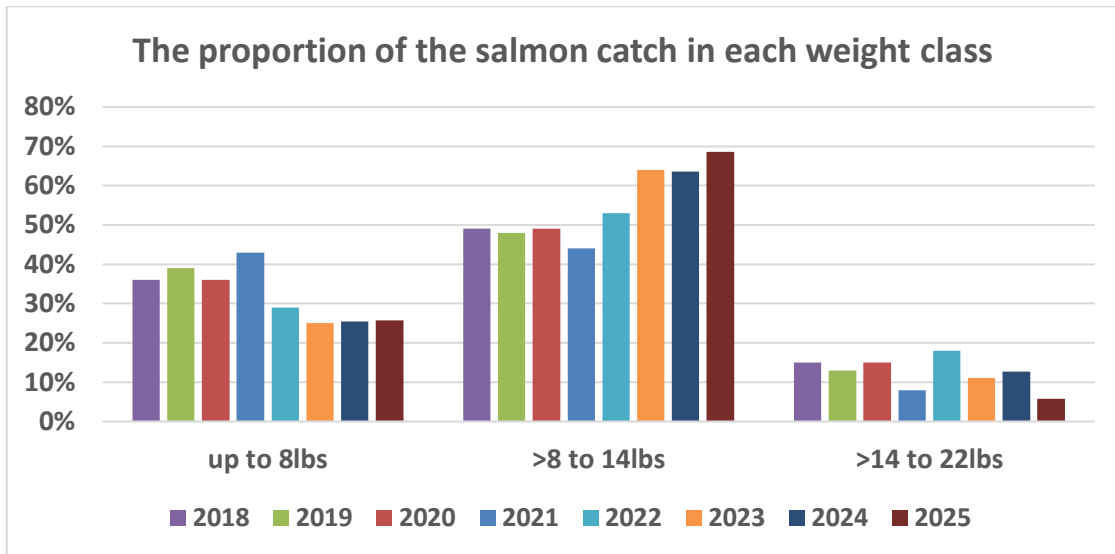
2.4 Partial or complete catches in 2025 have been supplied for some other Usk fisheries: Crown Fishery (Mike Cowburn), Gwent Anglers (Rob Kerby), Chainbridge (Barry Paraskeva), Gwent A.S. (Lee Evans), Glanusk (Harry Legge-Bourke), Brecon A.S. (Ian Williams), Crickhowell & District AS, and the Ithon Fishery (Mark McCloy). Together with the total for the Index fisheries, these give a **minimum actual rod catch of 45 for the whole river in 2025**.

2.5 **Distribution of catch through the 2025 season:** The first salmon was a magnificent 21-pounder caught on 18 March by Simon Powell from Isca AC's Newbridge beat on an Ally's Shrimp. Encouraging as it was, it proved to be something of a false dawn. Only two were caught in April, though one, taken above Crickhowell, had presumably travelled upriver on the three successive spates. With the low flows in May, catches remained poor. Had fish been abundant one would have expected them to be caught in the tidal reaches but high water temperatures, averaging over 16°C or higher from 13 May, probably discouraged fish from entering the river. A few were caught in the first two weeks of June with higher flows and a brief drop in water temperature. However, most salmon fisheries closed due to high water temperatures for the rest of June, July and much of August. It was only when flows rose and temperatures fell in September and October that some salmon were caught. Even then fishing pressure remained light, perhaps reflecting poor catches, largely of coloured fish. Although most of the rod catch was taken in the autumn, numbers were small so there was no indication from anglers' catches of a large late run.

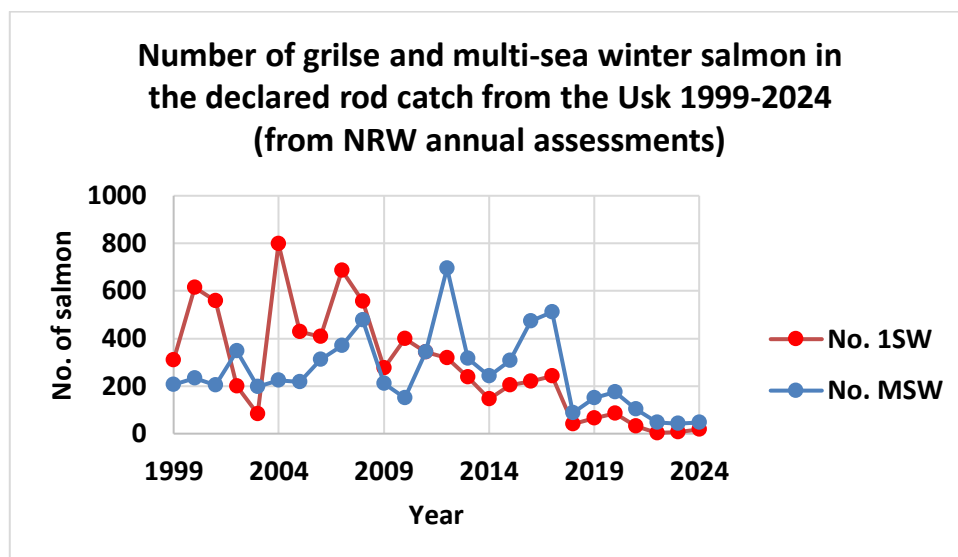


2.6 **The size of salmon caught:** The 35 salmon for which weights were reported had an average of 9.8 lbs, slightly down on last year's average of 10.1 lbs. As for the previous seven years, most

salmon were in the 8 to 14lbs size class presumably mostly 2-sea-winter salmon. The proportion of smaller salmon in the catch was low again, reflecting in part the paucity of grilse. Only two salmon, 6 percent of those caught, exceeded 14 lbs, the largest being Simon Powell's 21 lbs fish caught in March on the Isca AC water.

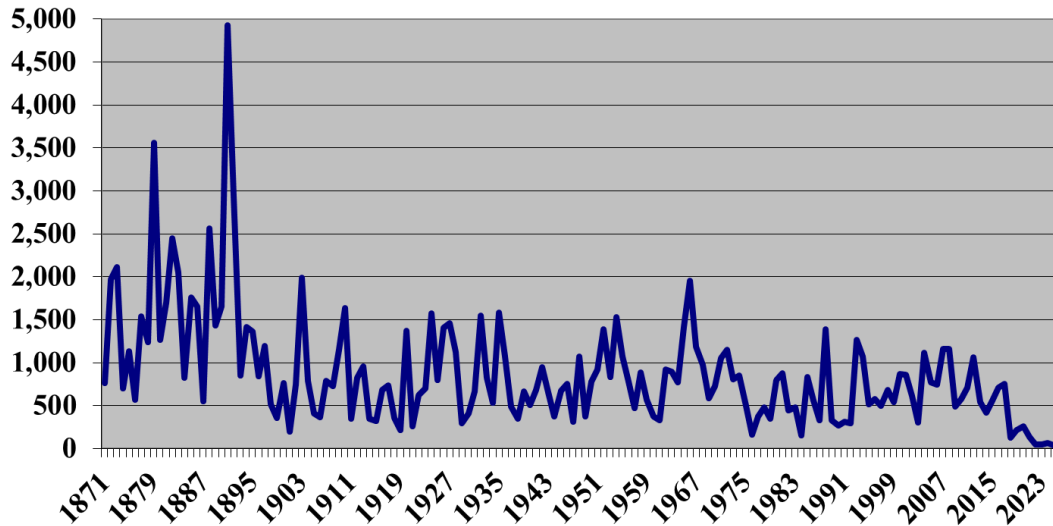


2.7 Grilse, which spend only one winter at sea, dominated the declared rod catch in the early part of this century with a peak of 798 in 2004. As shown below, the number caught has since declined to a handful. In contrast, the catch of larger, multi-sea-winter salmon had been increasing before the drop in catches from 2018.



2.8 A decline in salmon abundance, especially grilse, is not confined to the Usk and reflects changes in the marine environment linked to climate. Such declines have occurred before and have been followed by a period of increased abundance and size of multi-sea-winter salmon, associated with fluctuations in the ocean climate.

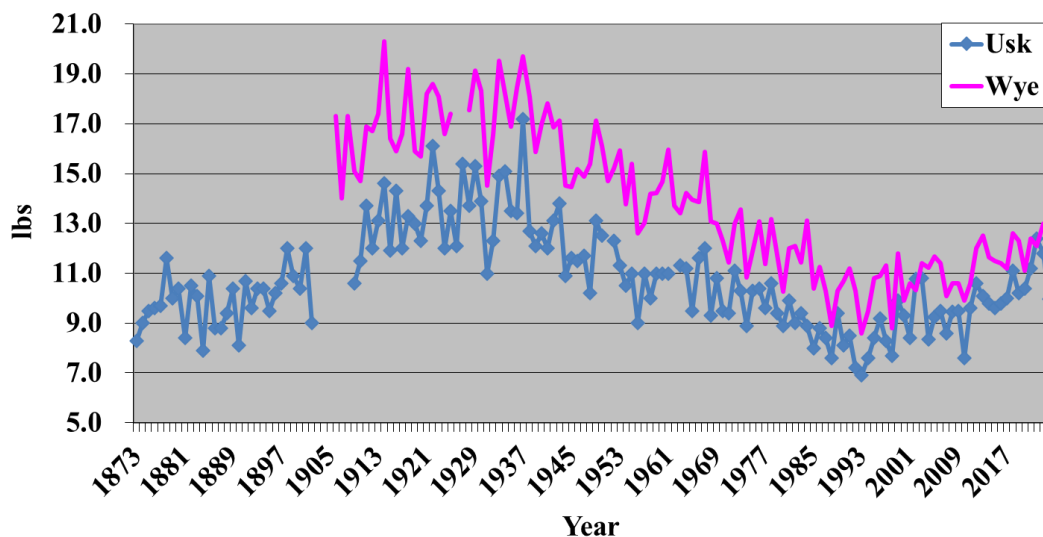
## River Usk : Salmon rod catch, 1871-2025



The declared rod catch for the Usk was measured in the thousands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and exceeded a thousand several times early this century before the recent collapse. It is now a few dozen. An estimated declared catch of 39 is used for 2025.

2.9 These changes are reflected in the average weight of rod-caught salmon, see below. The last period of low salmon abundance, both grilse and multi-sea-winter, was at the start of the last century. Runs were subsequently dominated by large, early-run salmon in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937, the average weight of rod-caught salmon from the Usk was over 17lbs. Whether historical cycles will be repeated seems uncertain given the impact of man-made climate change on the North Atlantic.

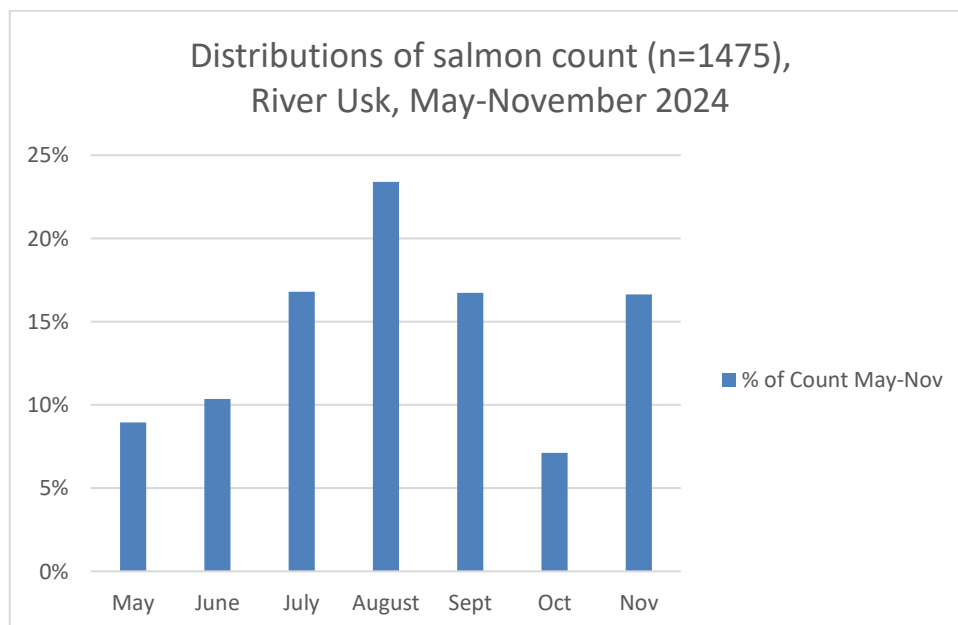
## Average weight: Usk & Wye rod-caught salmon 1873-2024



2.10 The recent upturn in average weight and, prior to 2018, the abundance of multi-sea-winter salmon in the Usk follow measures introduced in the 1990s to reduce the number of multi-sea-winter salmon killed in rod and net fisheries.

2.11 **Run-timing:** As in recent years, there seemed to be few fresh salmon, if any, caught in the second half of the season although a couple of ‘silver’ fish were seen in September. Presumably most salmon destined for the Usk now arrive at the river mouth in late spring and early summer. There were good flows and lower temperatures at the beginning of June, especially the 2m spate on the 14th which gave them a limited chance to run well up river. However, the subsequent rapid rise in temperature and drop in flow curtailed opportunities for migration. Some of those delayed in the Severn Estuary probably migrated during September and October when conditions improved.

2.12 In 2024, provisional data (Richard Davies, pers. comm.) from NRW’s new fish counter, situated just below Usk, indicate that perhaps 300 salmon migrated past it after the end of the fishing season, about 20 percent of the total count from May to November. Whether these fish were entering from the sea or just running from the lower river is not known. However, this tends to confirm that, given suitable conditions, most Usk salmon enter the river within the fishing season.



### 3.0 Adult stock status

3.1 The level and trend in estimated egg deposition over the last ten years is used by NRW to assess the current and future status of the salmon stock. As for the previous three years, NRW assessed the Usk as ‘At Risk’ of failing its management objective in 2024 with a similar assessment predicted for 2029. Every other principal salmon river in Wales and most in England are also ‘At Risk’. For more detail see page 73 in:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68b818863f3e5483efdba927/SalmonReport-2024-summary.pdf>

3.2 In past years, NRW has used the predicted rod catch (from 2.2 above) and the weights of salmon caught at Index fisheries to make an initial assessment of the adult stock. Given the poor catch in 2025 and downward trend in recent years, it is evident without these detailed calculations that the Usk salmon stock will again be classed as 'At Risk' in 2025 and be projected to remain so in 2030.

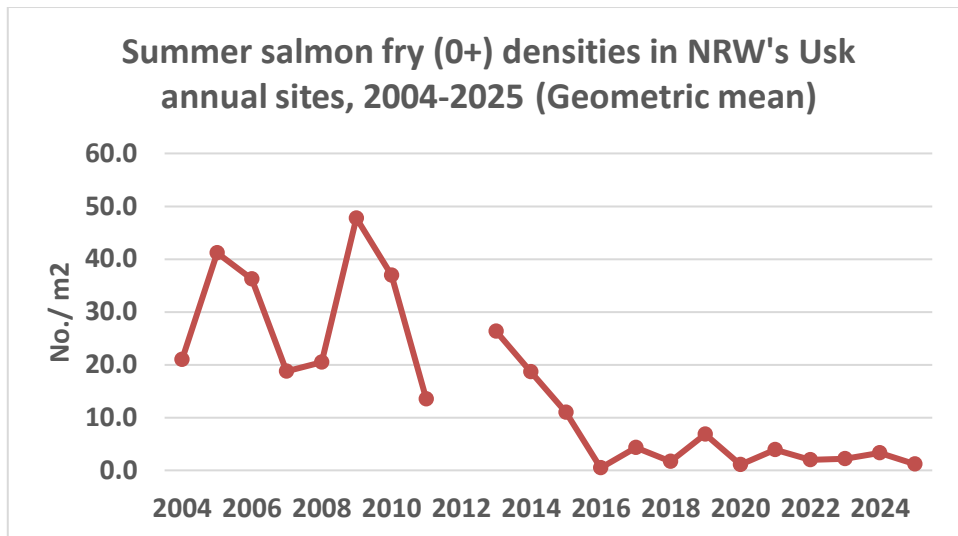
3.3 NRW has been developing a fish counter on the lower river just below Usk which records the movements of fish over 60 cm (~5lbs), presumed to be salmon, though analysis of fish movements is not straightforward. NRW (Richard Davies, pers. comm.) has provisionally estimated, recognising several potential sources of error, that 1475 salmon ran past the counter in 2024 from May to November. The minimum rod catch for the Usk in 2024 was 75, indicating an exploitation rate in 2024 of about 5 percent.

3.4 The minimum actual rod catch in 2025 was only 45 salmon. If the exploitation rate was 5 percent, as in 2024, this suggests a run into the Usk this year of around 900 salmon. From comments made by some fishery owners, it is likely than fishing effort fell in 2025, even when conditions were suitable, so the exploitation rate may well have been lower than 5 percent, and the run greater. It will be useful to see what the count is for NRW's fish counter for 2025 when the data have been analysed.

#### **4.0 Juvenile stock status**

4.1 NRW has 13 electrofishing sites on the catchment upstream of Crickhowell that it has surveyed annually in the summer since the 1980s. These annual surveys show that, for the last ten years, average densities have been persistently low in these sites, and are now a small fraction of those before 2016.

4.2 Although they were selected to be important for salmon historically, these sites are not necessarily representative of the catchment. All are on the lower part of tributaries except one that is at the very top of the main river. Neither do the tributaries produce all the juvenile salmon in the Usk. The tributary sites were selected because of the sampling method used. The main river, even down to the tidal reaches, is, or should also be, an important, perhaps more important, nursery area.



Data from NRW, except 2020 when, due to Covid, the sites were fished by the Wye & Usk Foundation.  
No survey in 2012.

4.3 The 13 sites fished every year by NRW were picked historically to monitor juvenile salmon. However, this year no fry were found in 8 of these sites, including those on the top of the main river Usk, the Hydfer, Bran and Ysgir, as well as those which have been persistently poor in recent years on the Honddu, Rhian Goll, Grwyne Fechan and Grwyne Fawr.

4.4 The results of more extensive electrofishing this year by NRW and also by the Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) are still being analysed and should shed further light on the distribution of juvenile salmon in the catchment. WUF's results suggest that high flows following Storm Bert, 23/24 November 2024, may have damaged salmon spawning in the upper catchment (Simon Evans, pers. comm.). The main river Usk reached 5.3m on the Chainbridge gauge on 24 November, one of the highest floods in recent years though not as high as in February 2020. The gauge exceeded 4m on three other occasions last winter.

## 5.0 Survival of the smolt run in-river



5.1 NRW radio-tagged smolts above Brecon again this year to look at their survival as they migrated down river. Initial analysis indicates that survival to sea was at least 54 percent (Oliver Brown, NRW, pers. comm., including photo of smolt). This is more than double the 22 percent in 2022, when flows were very low, but probably less than in 2021 when there was a major spate in May and almost 70

percent made it to sea. The three spates at the end of April this year undoubtedly helped smolt survival. The new restrictions on abstraction to the Monmouth & Brecon canal requiring increased releases from Usk reservoir may also have helped, to a degree.

5.2 In 2022, NRW found a very high loss rate of smolts around Brecon weir which enables the abstraction to the canal. This year, NRW studied smolt behaviour at the weir more closely. They

found that, despite the new restrictions on abstraction to the canal, under low flows some smolts were delayed by up to a month, moving to and fro across the upstream face of the weir. Not all survived to migrate further downstream.

5.3 This summer, NRW's 4Rivers 4Life project constructed a new downstream fish pass for smolts on Brecon weir just upstream of the abstraction point. <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/news-and-blogs/news/4r4l-brecon-weir-work-starts-next-month/?lang=en>

NRW intends to repeat its smolt tracking next year to see how effective the pass is at reducing delay and mortality. If as successful as hoped, it could significantly increase the proportion of smolts reaching the sea in dry years and hence the number returning as adults.



The smolt pass has been installed in the face of the weir to improve the hydraulics and flow velocities for fish passing the weir. The design includes a u-shaped notch, a bell mouth pass entrance, and an approach ramp.

(Photo: Dana Thomas, NRW)

5.4 Efforts were again made this year to reduce the impact of bird predation on smolt survival. NRW does not undertake any bird control itself but licences others. The Wye & Usk Foundation was the licensee for FEB control on the Usk again in 2025, working with the Usk Fishing Association. Three individuals organised controlled shooting on upper, middle and lower sections of the river. The number of birds allowed to be shot, as part of this scaring campaign, is small. This year's licence for the Usk, based on a local count in January, allowed a total of 15 goosanders and no cormorants to be shot across the catchment and only to 23 March. This is before the main smolt run, which limits its effectiveness.

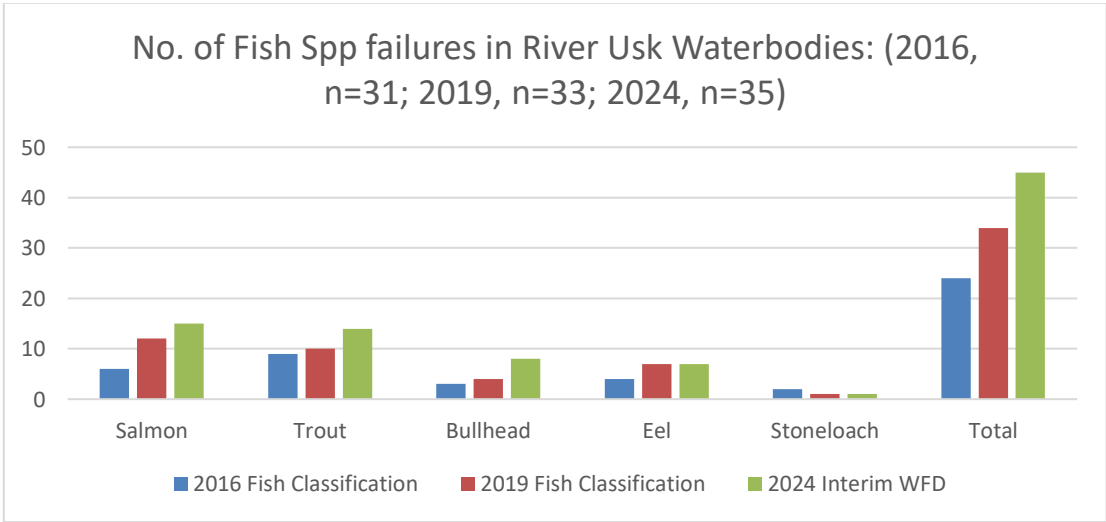


Other methods have been tried to scare birds. One is a fluorescent ‘Scaryman’ dummy that periodically inflates, provided by NRW. During the smolt run in 2025, this was placed by the fishery owner at a site where both cormorants and goosanders congregated. Monitoring showed that it deterred these birds from using this location.

**6.0 The state of the riverine environment**

6.1 It is not just the salmon stock that is in trouble. Much of the river Usk’s ecology is degraded, including all the protected features of the river for which it is designated a Special Area of Conservation. One feature, water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* spp.), important habitat for juvenile salmon, has been lost from most of the main river. The degradation of the Usk is described in a report published in 2021: <https://afonyddcymru.org/a-dying-river-the-state-of-the-river-usk/>

6.2 NRW’s 2021 assessment in relation to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations found that 65 percent of the water bodies in the Usk catchment failed to reach even ‘Good Ecological Status’. NRW’s latest 2024 assessment indicates some improvement with 58 percent failing to reach ‘Good’. Whilst initially encouraging, this is due mainly to some apparent improvement in the phosphate levels recorded in some of the tributaries. However, degraded ‘Fish’ populations remain the main reason for failure to achieve ‘Good Ecological Status’ and the situation for ‘Fish’ has worsened. This is despite fish not be monitored in every water body. The number of failures for individual fish species increased markedly in recent assessments as shown below. As can be seen, it is not only the status of salmon that has declined.



6.3 The standard used by NRW for 'Good' can be quite a low bar for some aspects of the ecology. For example, in the 2024 assessment, NRW classed the status of Macrophytes in the main river downstream of Abergavenny as High. That is despite the extensive loss of water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* spp.) that NRW's monitoring failed to detect. An example of where some limited water crowfoot remains is shown below.



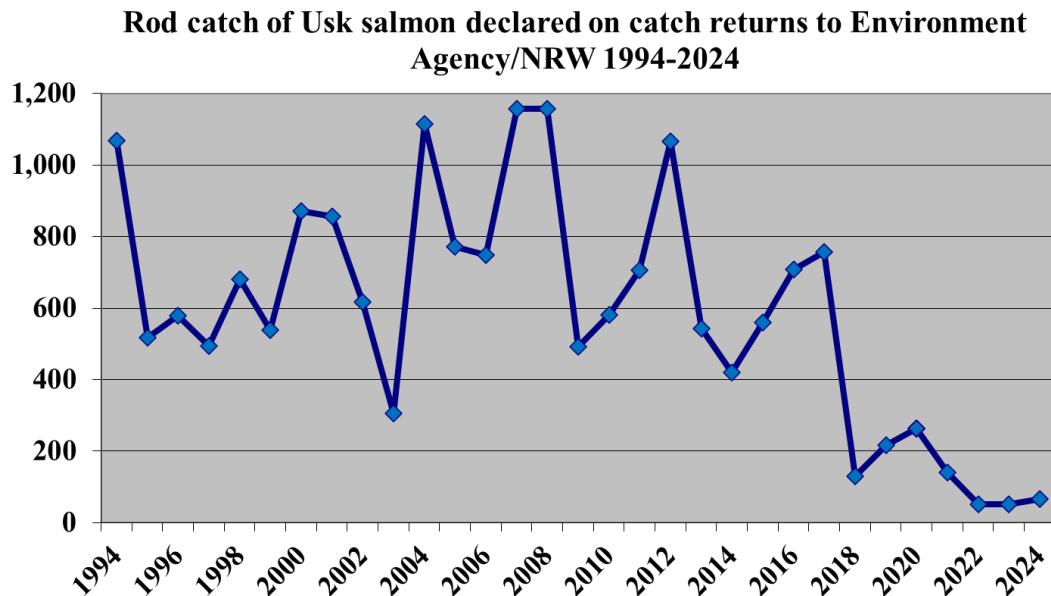
**As it was** (date uncertain): extensive water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* spp.) beds above Usk town bridge as pictured on the cover of a DCWW/ NRW report, 'Phosphorus Source Apportionment Summary. Updating the River Usk model'.



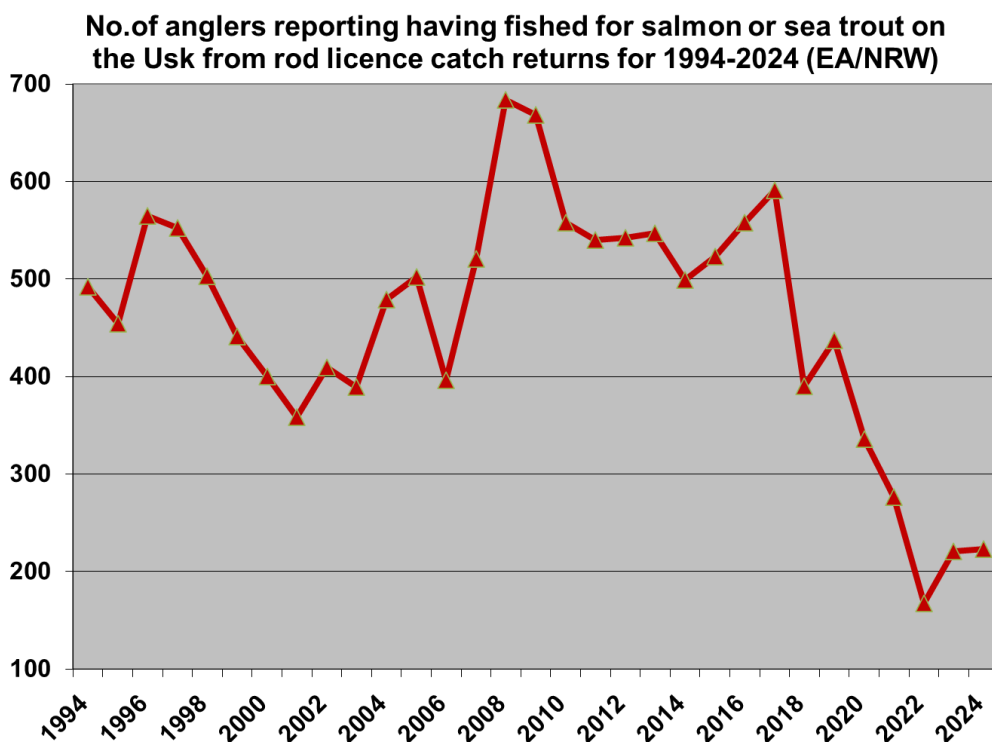
**As it is** (8 August 2025): Despite some recent slight recovery, only a few water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* spp.) plants can be seen and these close to the river's edge. Those out of the main flow are coated with algae.

## 7.0 The decline in fishing effort:

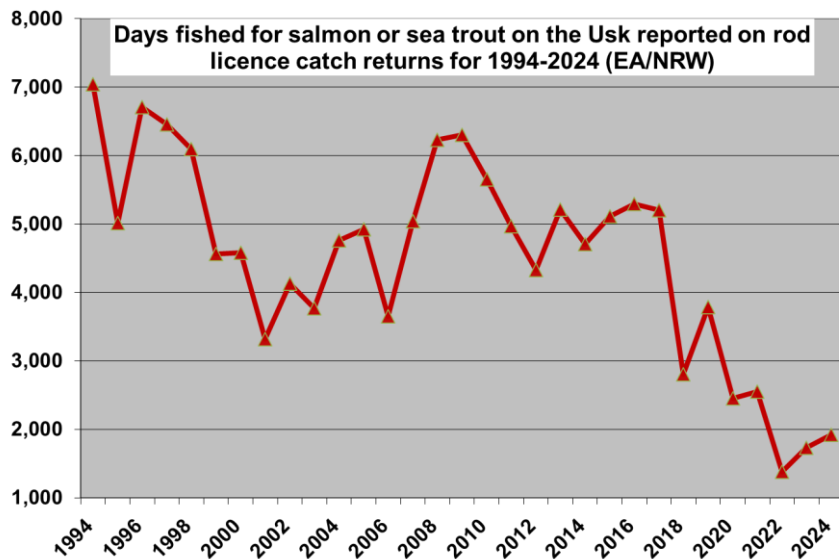
7.1 The rod catch declared on anglers' catch returns to the Environment Agency and NRW fell by 96 percent from 1157 in 2008 to 66 in 2024. It is expected to be even lower in 2025.



7.2 One reason for this fall is a decline in fishing effort with both fewer anglers fishing and fewer days fished. Rod licence holders are asked which rivers they fished and for how many days when making their annual catch return to the EA and NRW. The number of anglers reporting that they had fished for salmon (or sea trout) on the Usk fell by 68 percent over the same period, from 684 to 223.

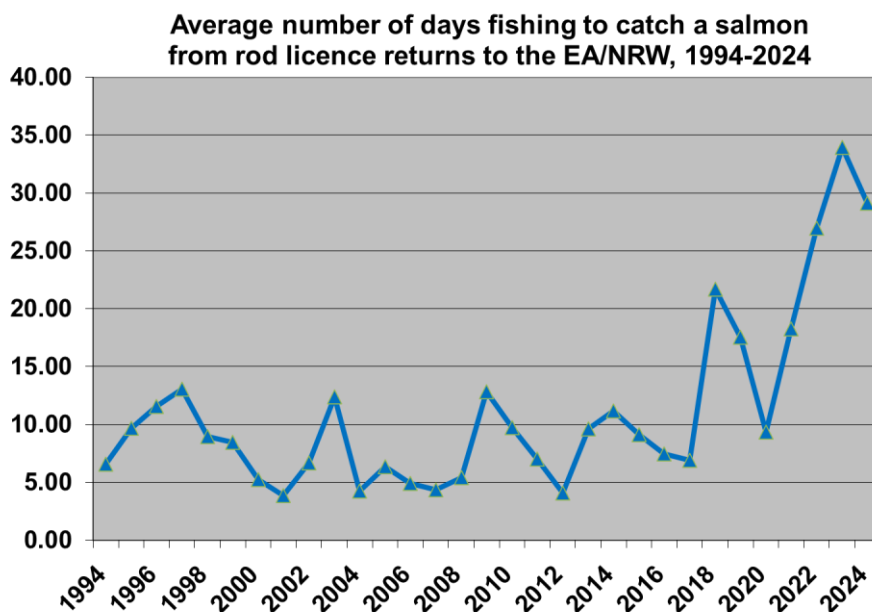


The number of days fished for salmon on the Usk fell by 72 percent, from 6234 in 2008 to 1923 in 2024. It is likely to be lower in 2025, given the hot, dry spring and summer as in 2022.

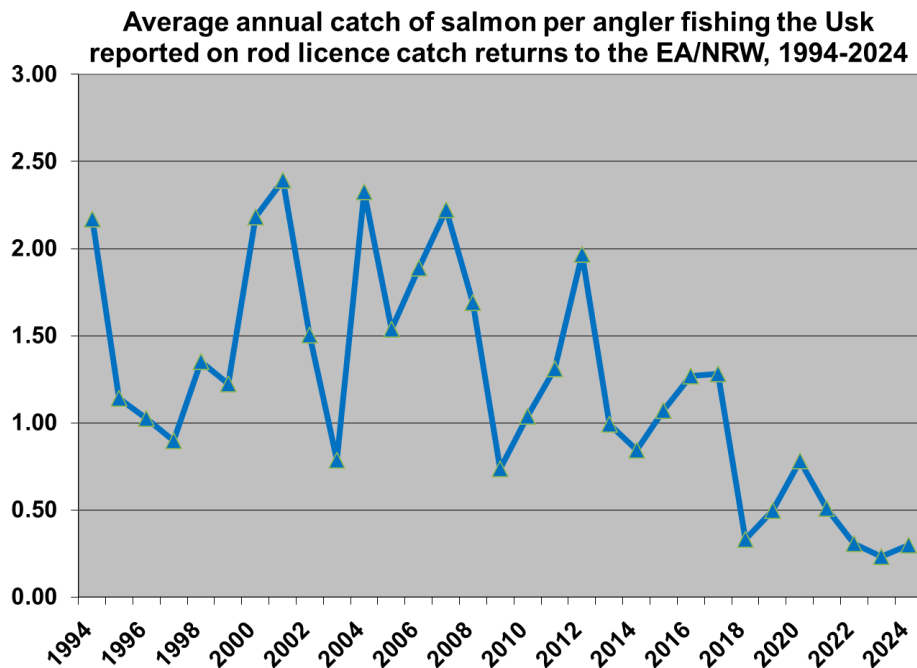


7.3 Although it is a legal requirement, not all anglers make a catch return to the EA/NRW. It is believed that those failing to catch a fish are less likely to make a return. The catches and fishing effort declared to the EA/NRW will therefore, to some extent, be underestimates.

7.4 **The chances of catching a salmon:** The fall in catch, and probably the fall in fishing effort, is due mainly to an increase in the effort required to catch a salmon. The catch per day reported in 2008 was 0.18 salmon which by 2024 had fallen by 84 percent to 0.03. Another way of expressing the chances of catching a salmon is by averaging the number of days fished to catch one salmon across all those fishing the Usk. This increased six-fold from about 5 days in 2008 to 29 days in 2024.



7.5 On average, anglers reported catching more than two salmon each in the 2008 season. By 2024, that average had dropped to 0.3 salmon per angler and is likely to have fallen in 2025.



7.6 Catches are not distributed evenly. Most of the salmon are now caught by very few anglers, generally those fishing the more productive beats downstream of Usk. The chances of catching a salmon from the Usk would seem to have become vanishingly small for many anglers. It is not surprising that some have stopped fishing the river for salmon. With fewer people fishing, the viability of some angling clubs and individual salmon fisheries is now in doubt.

7.7 **The loss in value of salmon fishing rights on the Usk:** The average annual catch is probably the key determinant of the salmon fishing rights with each fish contributing about £8,000. If one assumes a simple linear relationship, the value of salmon fishing rights on the Usk may have fallen by about £7 million since 2008. Indeed, it is likely that many fisheries in the middle and upper river are now valued primarily as wild brown trout fisheries.

7.8 The value of fishing rights is only one facet of the value of salmon angling on the Usk. For a wider discussion, see:

<https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/686544/economic-value-angling-wales-report.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131800996923730000>

In the past, Usk salmon were a valuable commercial resource, even in the river. A recreational fishery developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both types of fishing provided food and employment. It is likely that the main value of salmon now lies in its conservation as a species in Wales and the cultural values associated both with it and the fishery.



A life-size glass mosaic celebrating a 68<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>lbs Usk salmon was unveiled in October in Usk by Jean Williams of Sweets Fishing Tackle. The largest salmon ever caught in Wales, the salmon was taken in a coracle net near Usk in June 1782. Meirion Howells, a councillor, raised the funds for a local artist, Stephanie Roberts, to make the mosaic working with primary school children. A life-size painting of the fish, made at the time of capture, was the centrepiece of the recent 'Big Fish Exhibition' about local rivers mounted by Monmouth County Council at Abergavenny and Chepstow Museums.

## 8.0 Prospects for the future

8.1 As noted in 2.8 above, this is not the first time that rod catches have collapsed on the Usk. There was a collapse of similar proportions at the start of the twentieth century though not to such a consistently low level. With the salmon rod catch at an all-time low, the future for salmon in the Usk must be in doubt. It is not clear how long the Usk will have a viable salmon population. Commercial fisheries have closed and the rod fishery, now catch-and-release, is in its death throes. The record low abundance of salmon is North Atlantic wide. The Atlantic salmon in British rivers is now classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Endangered'. Its status in the Usk looks more precarious than in most rivers.

8.2 **Why have salmon declined?** A low survival rate of salmon at sea, linked to climate change, is clearly one key reason. The latest NRW/EA/Cefas report (see link in 3.1) says:

'Evidence from monitored rivers around the North Atlantic indicates that the survival of salmon during the marine phase of their life cycle has declined markedly in recent decades.'

The 2025 scientific report of the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS),

<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28777226>, notes in S.2.4.1.1 that:

‘In 2023 and 2024, record-shattering sea surface temperature anomalies were observed in the North Atlantic .... The warming trend was greatest in the sub-arctic regions of the Atlantic and the Barents Sea.’

8.3 The ICES Working Group recommends focussing action on rivers: ‘While direct management interventions to mitigate the impacts of ocean warming are limited, management actions to improve survival in, and production from, the freshwater phase of the life cycle are key to species and stock resilience.’

Management action is therefore needed in home waters. Aside from the impacts at sea of climate change and potential illegal fishing, NRW has identified three key ‘major’ and ‘developing’ stressors on salmon in Wales:

- Agricultural pollution
- Land use – Rural/ Riparian
- Climate change – impacts in freshwater.

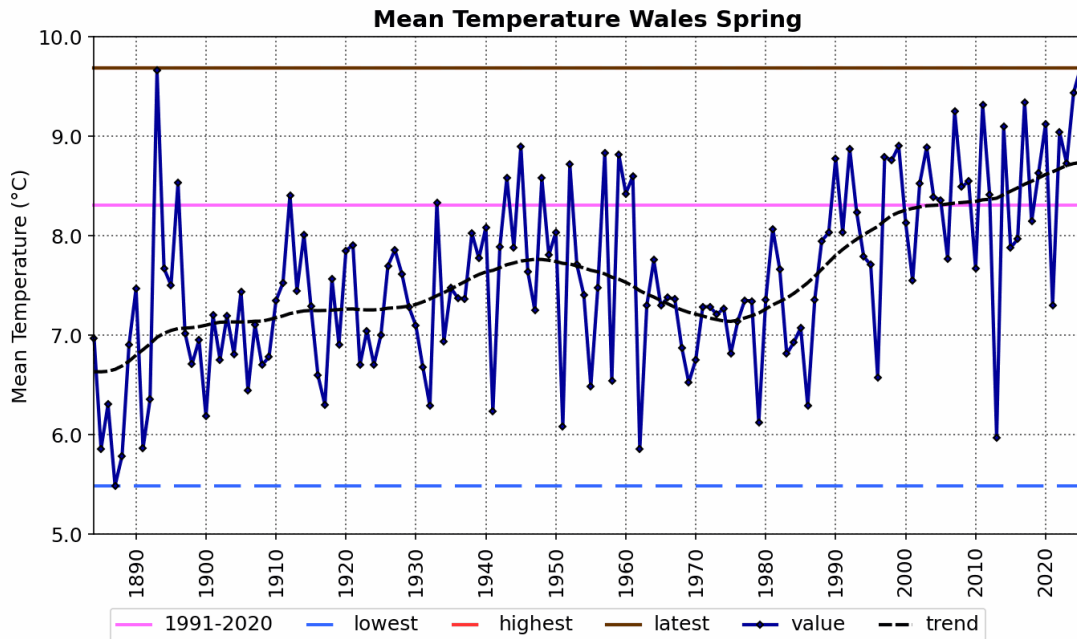
[https://nasco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CNL2533\\_Assessment-of-the-Stressors-Impacting-Atlantic-Salmon-Stocks-in-UK-Wales.pdf](https://nasco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CNL2533_Assessment-of-the-Stressors-Impacting-Atlantic-Salmon-Stocks-in-UK-Wales.pdf)

This is not to suggest that other stressors are insignificant or that all the problems have been identified. For example, it has still not been identified why, despite good numbers of adult salmon in 2016 and 2017, the subsequent abundance of fry was so poor. Of course, now one problem is a shortage of adult salmon.

8.4 It is far from clear that effective action can or will be taken to address the known stressors at the scale and pace that is required. For example, see Afonydd Cymru’s assessment of progress to address agricultural pollution in Wales: <https://afonyddcymru.org/agricultural-pollution-progress/>

More positively, the Wye & Usk Foundation has had projects (CastCo, Soil1 and 2) aimed at initiating changes in land use in the upper catchment. Modelling suggests that, if widely applied, the techniques used would reduce peak flood flows and sediment from soil erosion, whilst raising base flows and potentially improving the temperature regime. However, widespread and sustained adoption of such changes would be required.

8.5 Even if the reductions in pollution and extremes of flow and temperature in the river can be achieved, the sustained upward trends in temperature at all seasons and winter rainfall reported by the Met Office for Wales are not encouraging. For example, 2025 had the highest mean spring temperature on record.



Temperature, rainfall and sunshine are shown for Wales for different months and seasons at: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-temperature-rainfall-and-sunshine-time-series>

It should be noted that these trends are for Wales as a whole. The southeast tends to be warmer and drier than other parts of Wales.

8.6 The existence of the Usk’s salmon stock is threatened. Without major improvements in survival over its life cycle, significant and sustained recovery seems highly improbable.

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Any opinions expressed and residual errors (I hope none) are mine.