

the point that they were not needed. Of 68 people talking about access agreements, 51 were in favour and canoeists were accused of failing to engage in these. Of 18 responses about licences, 14 wanted licensing of non motorized craft or of commercial operators.

The overwhelming majority of responses, 5,143, were on templates prepared by the Cyclists Touring Club, Countryside Alliance, National Farmers Union and Farmers Union of Wales. The CTC called for an equivalent of the Scottish Land Reform Act. The CA opposed anything like the Scottish act, wanted no more access and wanted to be able to close public footpaths. The Welsh farmers took the same line and the NFU also opposed any further access.

New Welsh protection areas

North Anglesey Marine, West Wales Marine and Bristol Channel Approaches have all been designated as additional Special Areas of Conservation for harbour porpoises. North Cardigan Bay has been declared a Special Protection Area because it has wintering red throated divers and Skokholm and Skomer have the same designation as preening areas.

Natural Resources Wales have built a gravel spawning area for salmon as an alternative to the fish hatcheries on the Tryweryn. This has resulted in new patterns in when the Topsy is and is not available. The Chipper grill may be removed completely in the future.

Still no marine plan area details

The MMO are continuing to hold consultations on their marine plans without revealing what will be involved for users, notably the management measures which may be imposed on us. Without knowing these, it is impossible to comment. The groups setting up MCZs were disbanded before users were given a chance to comment on what they were proposing other than saying that the Reference Areas would be even more controversial than the MCZs. Garry Dando of the MMO told ISKA 'In terms of management measures, it is (other than in exceptional circumstances) not until an MCZ is designated that we begin our assessment of what management is required, at which point we will consult widely on possible measures.' It is not clear whether this consultation will be on options people would like to see in place or on what is actually intended once it has been announced.

Record fines for Thames Water

Thames Water have been fined £20,000,000 for sewage pollution incidents from Arborfield, Aylesbury, Didcot, Henley, Little Marlow and Littlemore sewage treatment works. This follows fines of £1,400,000 for pollution incidents in 2016 at Princes Risborough and Tring sewage treatment works. The Didcot incident relates to the Moor Ditch, our nearest water at our Appleford address. I suspect my journey along it one winter's day may have been the first and only descent it has seen.

River control to be transferred?

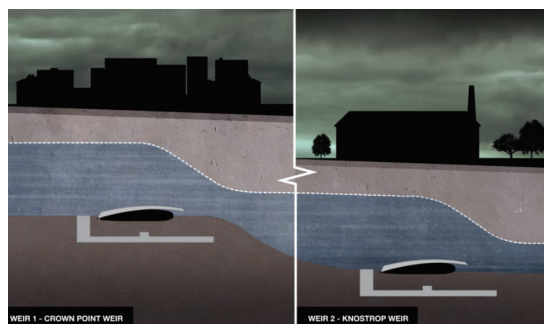
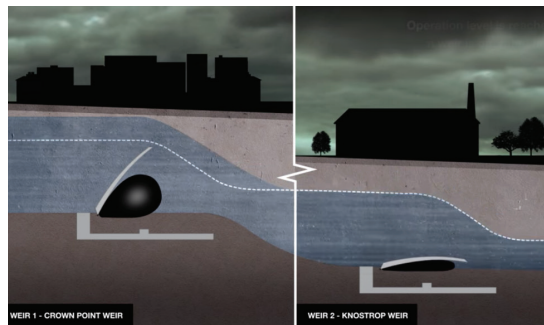
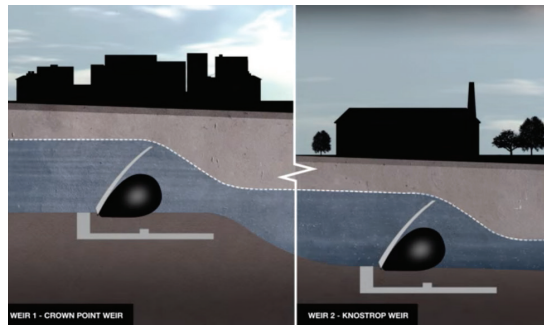
The EA are considering changing the designation of some rivers from 'main river' to 'ordinary watercourse' where there is local support. This could involve the transfer of management and assets to other authorities. With the EA's track record, it might be suspected that they have angling interests in mind.



A typical Tyne weir

Tyne weirs to be removed?

SEPA are to work on the River Tyne which flows into the North Sea near Dunbar. It has a number of disused weirs, which are to be addressed so that salmon and sea trout can reach the headwaters to the southeast of Edinburgh.



Sloping 3m high weirs on the River Aire in Leeds have been replaced with rising hinged metal plates, lifted by neoprene bags. A cartoon film online shows how they are intended to work but it seems likely there will be holding stoppers here. The EA like them because fish and eels can get past whereas the sloping weirs were more of a challenge.

Severn to be opened to more fish

The River Severn has received £20,000,000 in funding to open it up to more fish, including 250km more of breeding areas. Weirs will be removed and seven new fish passes installed. A press release on this from the EA and Natural England was mostly about fish but did suggest it would also benefit walkers and cyclists.

Scottish beavers to be protected

Beavers, which have become established on Tayside and in Knapdale, are to become a protected species. Although they became extinct in the 16th century they have been reintroduced with Scottish Government approval. However, for them to be released by anyone else will be a criminal offence with prison sentences up to two years. They are to be managed to control the damage they are doing to farms and other property but their formation of new ponds and wetlands is considered to justify the problems.



Seen on the Wilts & Berks Canal near Swindon.

Keith Price

INCIDENT FILE

Moray Firth loss

A helicopter and fixed wing search was undertaken for a missing sea kayak paddler at the beginning of February. Although he was a very active 35 year old in various outdoor sports, he was new to kayaks. He was undertaking a weekend trip from Portsoy, where he is reported to have asked locals about where was a good place to go paddling. If that was his actual request, rather than the best place to launch, it should have rung alarm bells. His kayak was found near Wick, 80km away across the Moray Firth.