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**Don't give in to hydropower pressure, IFM urges regulators**

Fisheries experts from across the scientific community have come together to urge environmental regulators not to give in to pressure on run-of-river hydropower which uses the flow of water over weirs to create energy.

The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) is worried that Government targets on renewable energy and lobbying from the hydropower industry will put environmental regulators under pressure to approve hydropower applications wholesale.

The experts are concerned that fish populations will be massively impacted if hydropower schemes are approved without appropriate environmental assessments.

“We run the risk of our fish populations being sold down the river in the drive to create energy,” said Dr Peter Spillett, President of the IFM. “This is often referred to as “green”, but in reality it can damage riverine habitats and hinder fish migration.”

“We are not against hydropower, but any schemes approved must each be assessed by the relevant regulators to check they are not going to impact adversely on the river or prevent it from reaching good ecological status or potential.\*”

The IFM has produced a position statement on hydropower putting forward the case for effective regulation of run of the river hydropower, which has the support of .the Salmon and Trout Association, the Angling Trust, the Atlantic Salmon Trust, the Association of Rivers Trusts and the Wild Trout Trust.

Peter continues “We accept that hydropower should be considered as part of the UK's future energy mix, but don't want to take one step forward for the environment – in terms of low CO2 energy – while taking two steps back because of the loss of species and valuable habitat. It has to be recognised that the possible energy that could be generated from this in England and Wales , if all possible opportunities were exploited, is actually less than 1% of the electricity demand.”

Paul Knight, CEO of the Salmon & Trout Association, said, “high quality fisheries are the natural litmus test to the health of the aquatic environment. It is madness to encourage these piecemeal applications for hydropower schemes which, collectively, will only ever produce minute quantities of energy, but yet have the potential to impact severely on our fish species and habitats. Hydropower must be part of integrated catchment management schemes, not treated as some sort of erroneous holy grail by Government and a small minority of people and businesses with vested interests.”

Mark Lloyd, chief executive of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal said: "Most species of fish move up and down rivers during their lives and there is a great deal of work to be done on British rivers to remove obstacles to fish migration in any case, without thousands of new obstacles being constructed with in-built devices which can slice up fish and reduce the flow in considerable stretches of river. Angling Trust will oppose applications which have inadequate protection for fish and Fish Legal will seek compensation on behalf of our member clubs and riparian owners if possible."

Ivor Llewelyn, deputy director of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, said: "We welcome this clear statement from the IFM. We support the development of renewable energy - climate change poses major threats to salmon and sea trout - but this must not be at the expense of the aquatic ecosystem. As a conservation body the Trust wants to see hydropower developed on a sustainable and strategic basis, and the IFM position paper shows how this can be done."

Alistair Maltby of the Association of Rivers Trusts said: "Working in partnership with Government and its Agencies, the Rivers Trust Movement is spending millions of pounds restoring river ecosystems and their important wildlife ecology. This work will contribute to Britain meeting its obligations under the EU Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive and Bio-diversity targets. Widespread hydropower developments represent a serious threat to our river's natural ability to provide important ecosystem services that have a value far exceeding small-scale electricity generation. We believe that all developments must undergo a rigorous assessment of the wider catchment impact against the strategic significance of the electricity produced, including the cumulative effect of proposed schemes on a national basis. The Rivers Trusts are concerned that current hydropower proposals may cause the death of our rivers by a thousand cuts, leaving a damaging legacy for future generations."

\* The Water Framework Directive requires that all rivers aim to achieve "good" ecological status or "good ecological potential" by 2015. This status is assessed by checking on the habitat and species present, along with water quality.

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Notes for Editors:

The **Institute of Fisheries Management** (IFM) is an international organisation of people sharing a common interest in the modern management of recreational and commercial fisheries, dedicated to sustainable fisheries management.

Created in 1969 in the UK, the IFM is dedicated to the advancement of sustainable fisheries management in all its forms. It is a non-profit making organisation controlled by the membership and governed by an elected council. Members are drawn from professional fisheries managers, regulatory and research bodies, fishing and angling organisations, water companies, fish farms and private individuals whose interests in fisheries are represented at many levels within government and conservation bodies.

The Institute, in partnership with a number of other UK institutes and societies concerned with the environment, is one of the Constituent Bodies of the Society for the Environment. The Society now has a Royal Charter and is empowered to award the qualification of Chartered Environmentalist.