



Dear David Bartlett and Environment Agency Fisheries Team,

I am writing to give Westcountry Rivers Trust's support for the Environment Agency's position on improving passage for migratory fish over the Old Walls abstraction on the West Webburn. The Atlantic salmon is a species that is precipitously close to local extinction within the River Dart, as has been strongly evidenced by recent studies (*The State of Dart Salmon and Likely Reasons for Decline* – Stantec, 2025; *River Dart Management Plan* – Westcountry Rivers Trust (produced for the Duchy of Cornwall), 2026), by electrofishing surveys (EA), Counter Data (Dart Renewables) and by negligible salmon rod catch returns in recent years. At this time, the need to improve the survival of this endangered population calls for the most urgent of responses.

With particular relevance to the Old Walls structure, we are concerned that the current abstraction conditions allow for extremely low levels of water to be released through the depleted reach, such that habitat availability for juvenile fish is reduced, increasing the risk of fish kill and stranding events. In addition, the structure is likely to be causing substantial delays and reducing successful movement of migratory fish, further compounded by the impacts of low flows through the depleted reach and competing attraction flows from the leat. The absence of adequate screening to the leat at present poses a risk of entrainment and mortality of smolts, which the population can ill afford given the current status of salmon in the Dart.

We are fully supportive of the proposals brought forward by the Environment Agency to address these concerns, through more appropriately managing abstraction volume and screening of the leat. In addition, we would be supportive of the installation of more effective fish-passage solutions at the site, which we understand have been proposed and designed, but not constructed, for over a decade. Given the original permitted purpose of the abstraction — to generate a small amount of domestic power — far more effective solutions now exist (rooftop solar and small wind turbines) that would meet this requirement without undue impact on an endangered and protected species.

We look forward to hearing more about developments at the site. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything we can do to support improvements to fisheries conservation within the Dart.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr Osmond", written over a light blue rectangular background.

Dr Daniel Osmond

Senior Fisheries Scientist, Westcountry Rivers Trust

Westcountry Rivers Trust

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