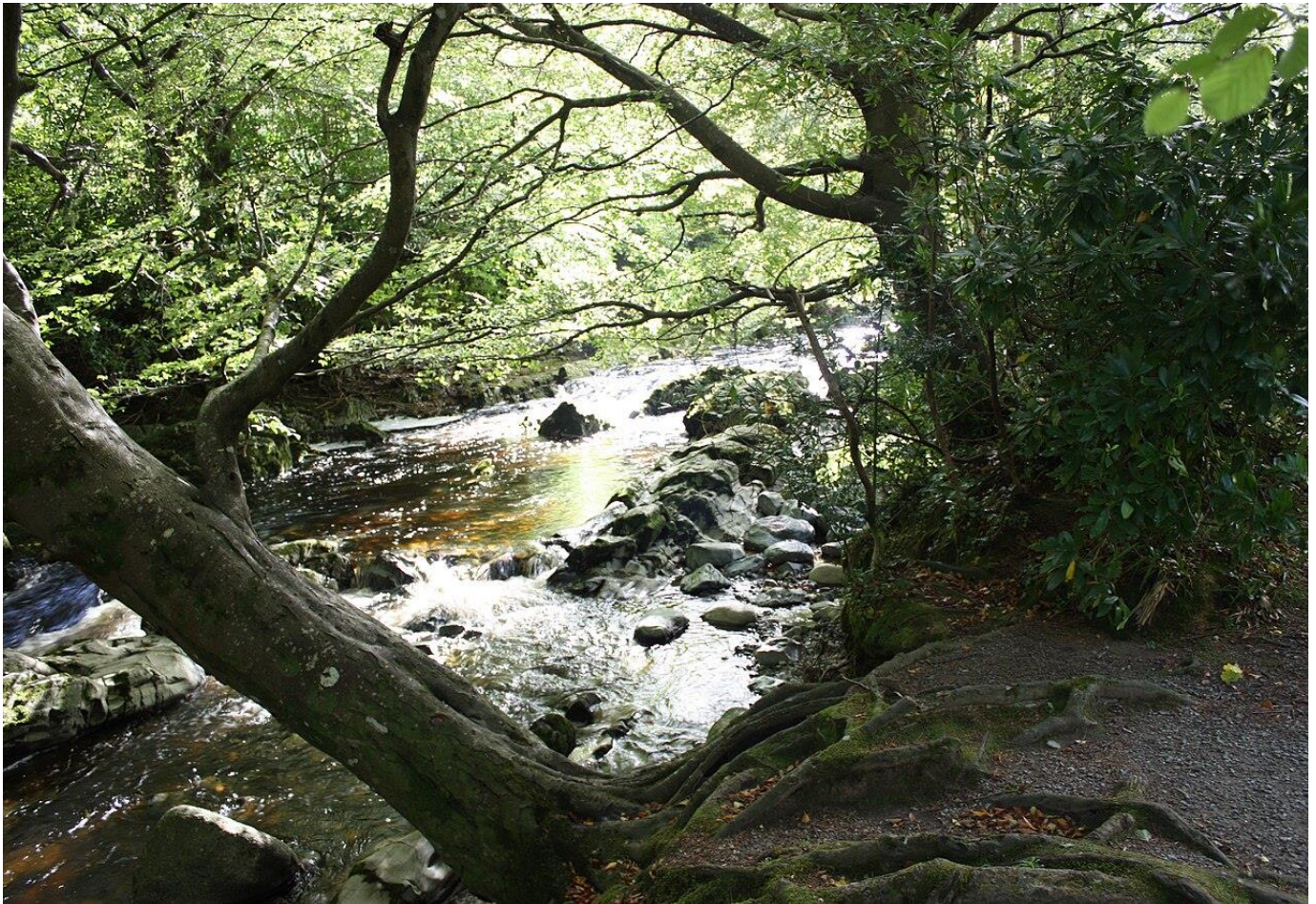




Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn  
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'  
**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**



# DAERA Inland Fisheries 2023 Annual Report

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Inland Fisheries Responsibilities

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible, under the provisions of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, for the salmon and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland. In accordance with the Fisheries Act, DAERA has powers for the supervision and protection of fisheries and for fostering the establishment and development of fisheries.

It provides advice and guidance on matters relating to the conservation, protection, development and promotion of salmon and inland fisheries (excluding the Loughs Agency areas of Foyle and Carlingford) to angling clubs, fishery owners, and a range of other water users and interested parties.



## 1.2 Public Angling Estate

DAERA also has the power under the Fisheries Act to acquire and improve

facilities for angling for local and visiting anglers. The Inland Fisheries Branch within DAERA is responsible for the management and development of Northern Ireland's Public Angling Estate (PAE) which currently has a variety of lakes, rivers and game and coarse fisheries, where it owns or leases the fishing rights for those waters.

An annual programme of work is in place to maintain and develop facilities for anglers at these sites. There are some waters in the PAE where DAERA has management agreements in place with angling clubs or community groups to manage the fishery on their behalf.

## 1.3 Background

Inland Fisheries Branch is one of 14 branches within Marine and Fisheries Division (MFD) which is part of DAERA's Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group



(EMFG). The Division is responsible for managing the sustainable use of the marine environment and the promotion, protection, enhancement and sustainable use of all fish stocks, inland and at sea (including aquaculture and fish health).

The work of the Marine and Fisheries Division and the Inland Fisheries Branch contributes to the delivery of the

Department's purpose of sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone' and its four key Strategic Priorities (below), thereby, improving the lives of the people living in Northern Ireland.



### Economic Growth

To enhance our food, forestry, fishery and farming sectors using efficient and environmentally sustainable models which support economic growth.



### Natural Environment

To protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all.



### Rural Communities

To champion thriving rural communities that contribute to prosperity and wellbeing.



### Exemplar Organisation

To be an exemplar, people focused organisation, committed to making a difference for the people we serve.

# 2. LEGISLATION

## 2.1. Legislation

Under the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, DAERA is charged with the establishment, development, supervision and protection of fisheries within its jurisdiction (the Loughs Agency has regulatory authority in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments). Within DAERA, Inland Fisheries Branch is responsible for discharging those functions relating to inland fisheries. There are also several pieces of subordinate legislation which further regulate activity on such fisheries.

The principal sets are the Fisheries Regulations (N.I.) 2014 which regulate angling and commercial activity and the Eel Fishing Regulations (N.I.) 2010 which set out requirements for commercial eel fishing (currently restricted to Lough Neagh). DAERA also manages (directly or in-directly) 89 publicly available fisheries which are governed through the Public Angling Estate (PAE) Regulations (N.I.) 2005.

Fishery Management Plans were formally adopted for Lough Neagh and Lough Erne in March 2022. These require some amendment of fisheries legislation to be fully applicable- for example the increase in mesh sizes or changes to closed periods. An amendment of the current regulations is under development and will also include consequential updates of other regulations including change of use designations. This will be proposed in 2024/25.

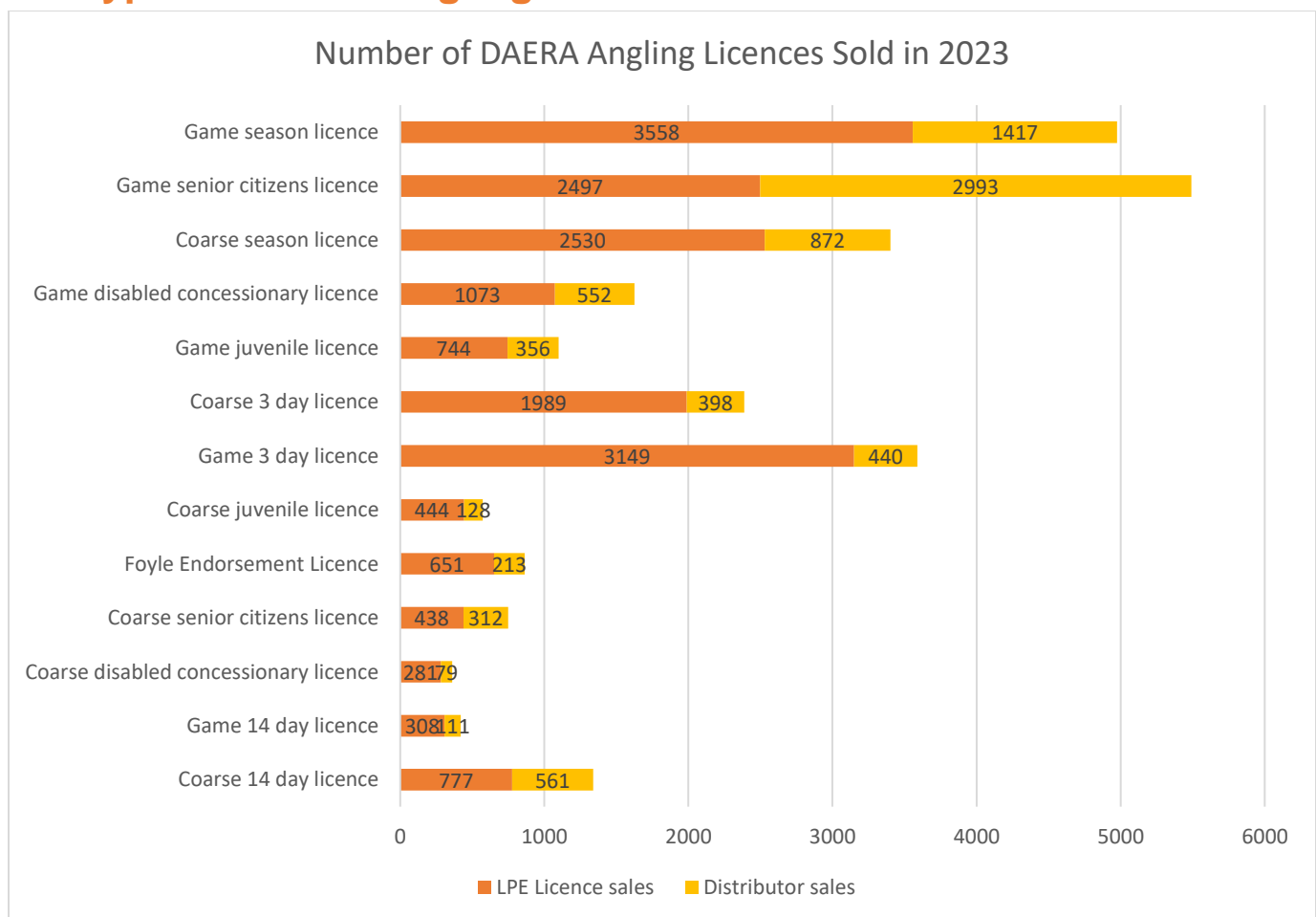
# 3. LICENCE & PERMITS

To fish legally in Northern Ireland you need (i) a rod licence and (ii) a permit or day ticket. The rod licence is for the fishing rod and the game or coarse fish you're allowed to catch. A permit or day ticket gives you the right to fish in a particular fishery.

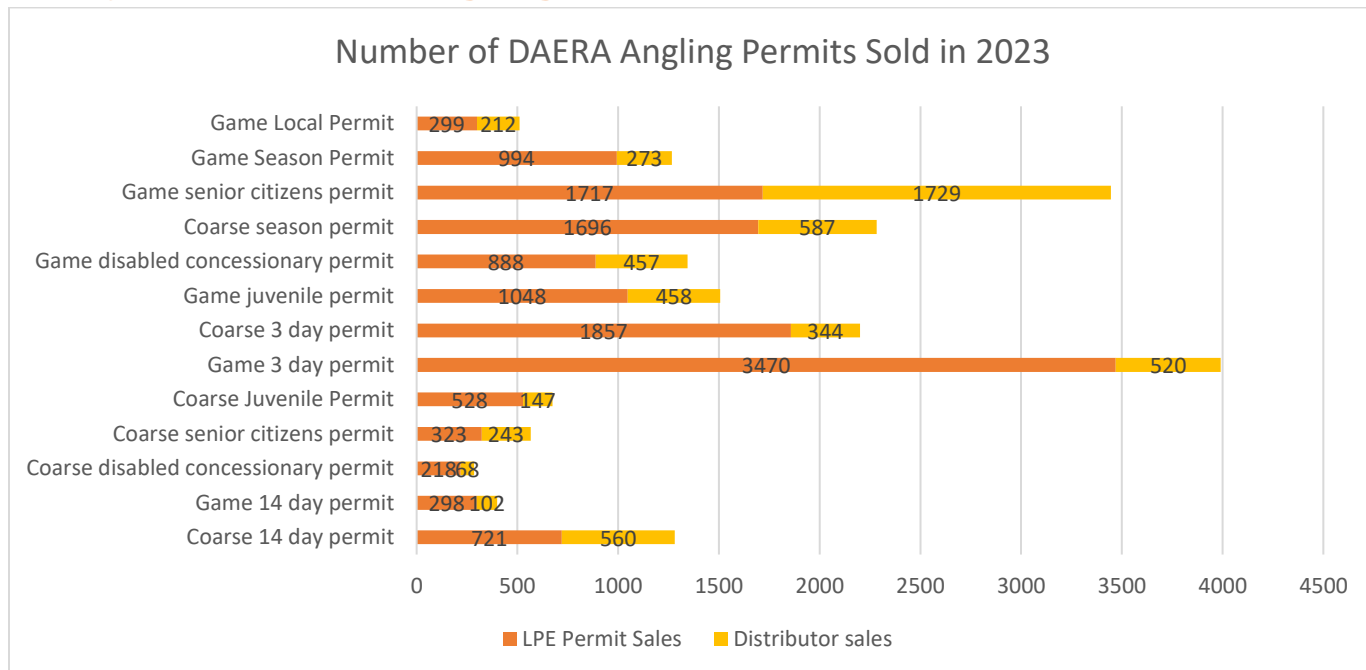
## 3.1 Number of DAERA angling licences and permits sold for 2020 to 2023.

|              | 2020          | 2021          | 2022          | 2023          |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Licences     | 28,169        | 27,752        | 26,298        | 26,871        |
| Permits      | 20,566        | 20,019        | 19,751        | 19,757        |
| Bush Tickets | 952           | 857           | 899           | 1,102         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>49,687</b> | <b>48,628</b> | <b>46,948</b> | <b>47,730</b> |

## 3.2 Type of DAERA angling licences sold 2023.



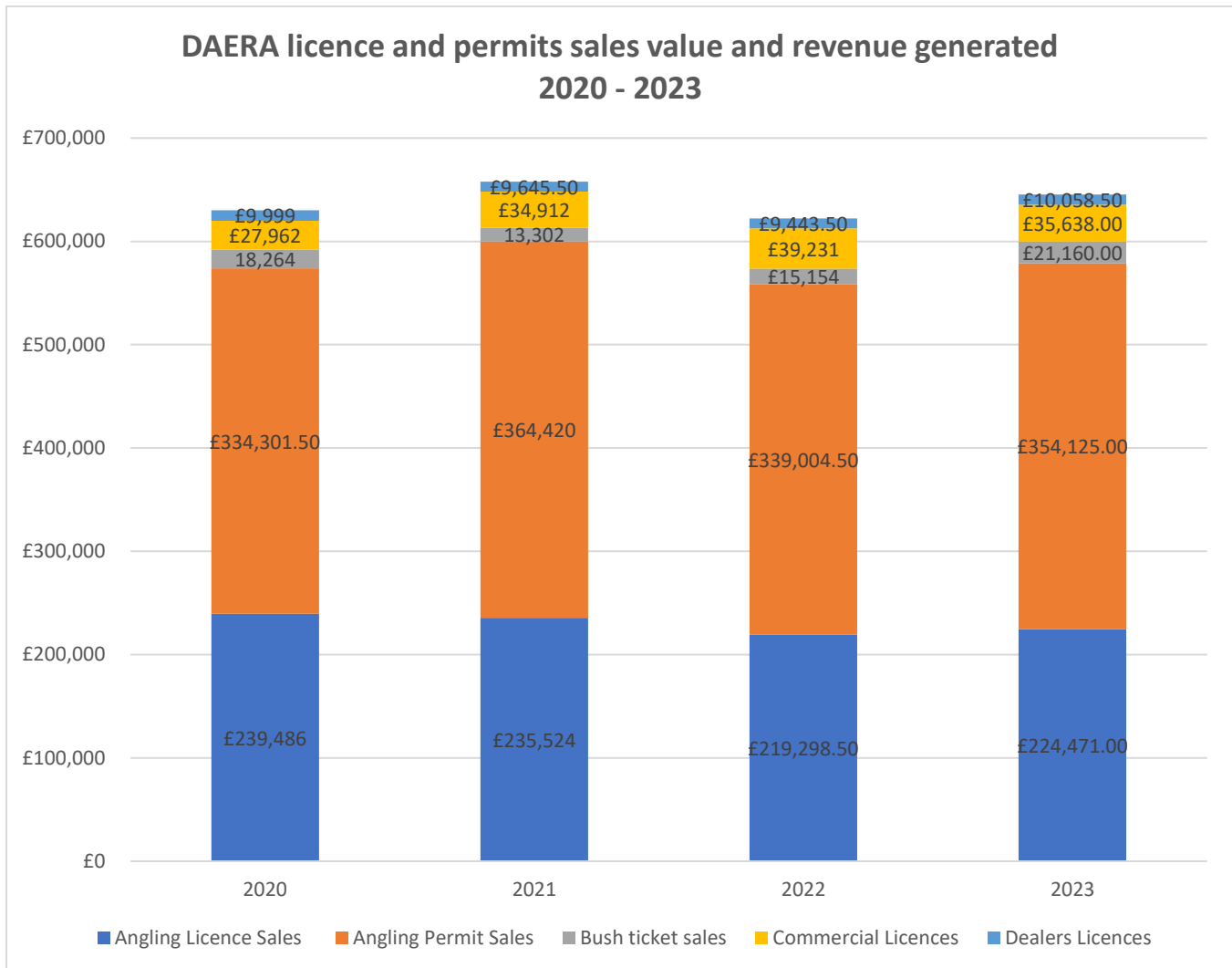
### 3.3 Type of DAERA angling permits sold 2023.



### 3.4 Table – Total of DAERA licence and permits sold in 2023.

|                              | Licence       | Permit        | Day Ticket   | Total         |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Game Juvenile</b>         | 1,100         | 1506          | -            | <b>2,606</b>  |
| <b>Game Season</b>           | 4,975         | 1,267         | -            | <b>6,242</b>  |
| <b>Game Senior Citizen</b>   | 5,490         | 3,446         | -            | <b>8,936</b>  |
| <b>Game Disabled</b>         | 1,625         | 1,345         | -            | <b>2,970</b>  |
| <b>Game 3 day</b>            | 3,589         | 3,990         | -            | <b>7,579</b>  |
| <b>Game 14 day</b>           | 419           | 400           | -            | <b>819</b>    |
| <b>Sub Total</b>             | <b>17,198</b> | <b>11,954</b> |              | <b>29,152</b> |
| <b>Coarse Juvenile</b>       | 572           | 675           | -            | <b>1,247</b>  |
| <b>Coarse Season</b>         | 3,402         | 2,283         | -            | <b>5,685</b>  |
| <b>Coarse Senior Citizen</b> | 750           | 566           | -            | <b>1,316</b>  |
| <b>Coarse Disabled</b>       | 360           | 286           | -            | <b>646</b>    |
| <b>Coarse 3 day</b>          | 2,387         | 2,201         | -            | <b>4,588</b>  |
| <b>Coarse 14 day</b>         | 1,338         | 1,281         | -            | <b>2,619</b>  |
| <b>Sub Total</b>             | <b>8,809</b>  | <b>7,292</b>  |              | <b>16,101</b> |
| <b>Bush Tickets</b>          | -             | -             | 1,102        | <b>1,102</b>  |
| <b>Local Area Permit</b>     | -             | 511           | -            | <b>511</b>    |
| <b>Endorsements</b>          | 864           | -             | -            | <b>864</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>26,871</b> | <b>19,757</b> | <b>1,102</b> | <b>47,730</b> |

### 3.5 DAERA licence and permits sales value and revenue generated.



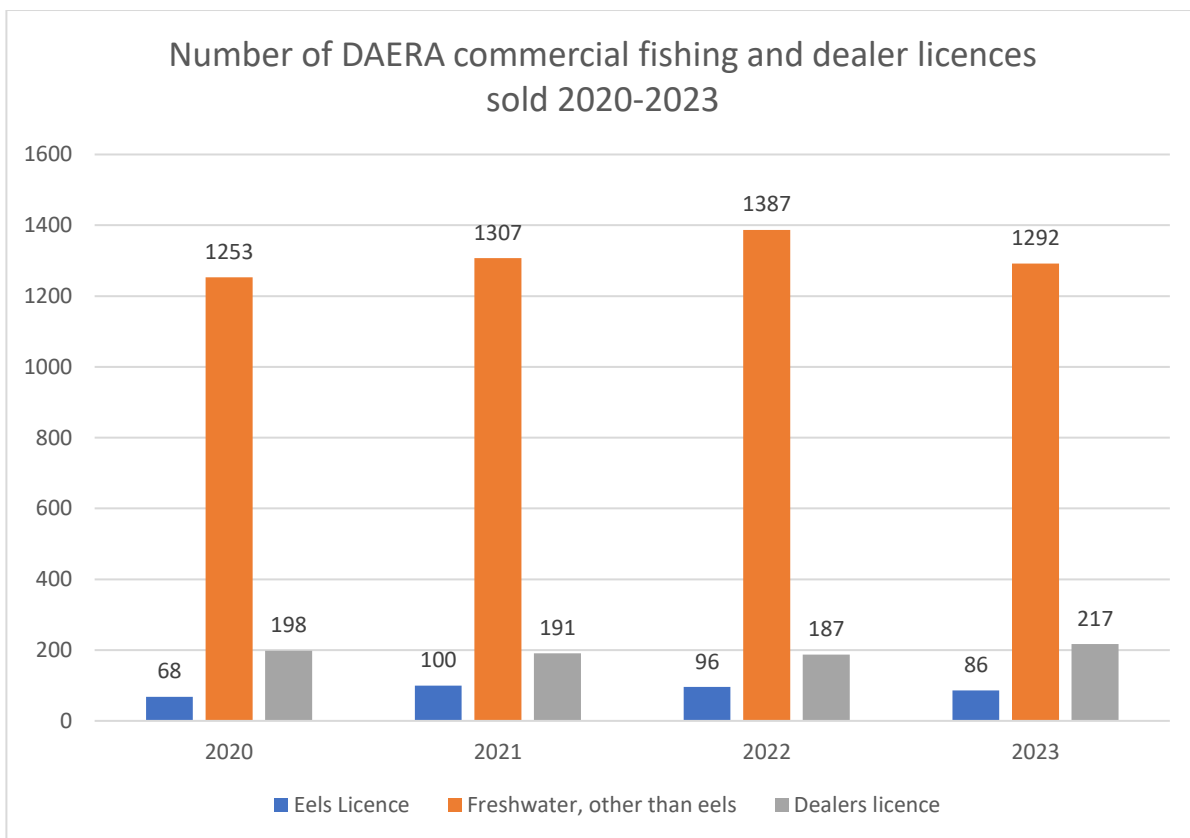
| Year                                      | 2020               | 2021               | 2022               | 2023               |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Angling licence sales                     | £239,486.00        | £235,524.00        | £219,298.50        | £224,471.00        |
| Angling permit sales                      | £343,444.00        | £364,420.00        | £339,004.50        | £354,125.00        |
| Bush tickets sales                        | £18,264.00         | £13,302.00         | £15,154.00         | £21,160.00         |
| <b>Angling Sales Total</b>                | <b>£601,194.00</b> | <b>£613,246.00</b> | <b>£573,457.00</b> | <b>£599,756.00</b> |
| Minus 20% VAT on permits and Bush tickets | £72,341.60         | £75,544.40         | £70,831.70         | £75,057.00         |
| <b>Angling Revenue Total</b>              | <b>£528,852.40</b> | <b>£537,701.60</b> | <b>£502,625.30</b> | <b>£524,699.00</b> |
| Commercial fishing licence revenue        | £32,746.00         | £37,647.00         | £39,231.00         | £35,638.00         |
| Dealers licence revenue                   | £9,999.00          | £9,645.50          | £9,443.50          | £10,058.50         |
| <b>Commercial Total</b>                   | <b>£42,745.00</b>  | <b>£47,292.50</b>  | <b>£48,674.50</b>  | <b>£45,696.50</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                        | <b>£571,597.40</b> | <b>£584,994.10</b> | <b>£551,299.80</b> | <b>£570,395.50</b> |



### 3.6. Commercial fishing and dealer licences.

DAERA issues commercial fishing licences for eel, salmon and other freshwater species fishing:

- To assist conservation efforts, legislation was introduced in 2014 that prohibits commercial netting of salmon. There have been no licences issued for coastal salmon nets since 2013.
- The number of eel licences issued in 2023 is 86.
- The number of freshwater commercial licences issued in 2023 is 1,292.
- Dealer licences, needed to sell freshwater fish and wild salmon to the public, are issued by DAERA in the DAERA jurisdiction. A dealer licence covers all vendors from fish vans to large supermarkets. In 2023, 217 dealer licences were issued.



# 4. ENFORCEMENT

## 4. Protection and enforcement

Since 2022 enforcement data is now collected on a calendar year to coincide with licence and permit sales.

### 4.1 Enforcement

**Table 4.1. Enforcement activity on DAERA and private waters 2019/20 to 2023**

|                                | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022  | 2023  |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| <b>DAERA PAE waters</b>        |         |         |         |       |       |
| Rod Licences checked           | 2,504   | 2,170   | 2,410   | 2,297 | 2,116 |
| DAERA permits checked          | 2,417   | 2,138   | 2,404   | 2,291 | 2,097 |
| Detections of illegal activity | 152     | 127     | 122     | 118   | 77    |
| <b>Private waters</b>          |         |         |         |       |       |
| Rod licences checked           | 1,141   | 1,172   | 1,028   | 1,285 | 999   |
| Detections of illegal activity | 49      | 89      | 59      | 46    | 25    |
| <b>All waters</b>              |         |         |         |       |       |
| Boat patrols                   | 179     | 200     | 261     | 228   | 125   |
| Coastal shore patrols          | 7       | 37      | 52      | 80    | 50    |
| Illegal fishing nets seized    | 185     | 78      | 13      | 2     | 1     |

- Enforcement activity is both proactive and reactive; regular patrols are conducted to monitor commercial fishermen and anglers to ensure compliance with the 1966 Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulations.
- DAERA enforcement officers work on both DAERA PAE waters and private waters in the DAERA jurisdiction.
- In 2023, there were 2,116 rod licences checked in DAERA PAE waters and 999 licences checked on private waters.

## 4. Protection and enforcement

### 4.2 Inspections

**Table 4.2. Number of inspections 2019/20 to 2023**

|                                     | 2019/20    | 2020/21    | 2021/22    | 2022       | 2023       |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Number of inspections</b>        |            |            |            |            |            |
| Commercial fish dealers inspections | 40         | 36         | 37         | 38         | 24         |
| Water abstraction site inspections  | 183        | 130        | 147        | 89         | 91         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>223</b> | <b>166</b> | <b>184</b> | <b>127</b> | <b>115</b> |

- Regular inspections are carried out at commercial dealers to ensure that all freshwater fish being sold have been caught legally.

## 4. Protection and enforcement

### 4.3 Prosecutions and enforcement action 2019/20 to 2023

|                        | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|
| Convictions            | 16      | 17      | 4       | 17   | 3    |
| Warning letters issued | 35      | 19      | 12      | 39   | 17   |
| Advice letter given    | 173     | 168     | 117     | 163  | 48   |

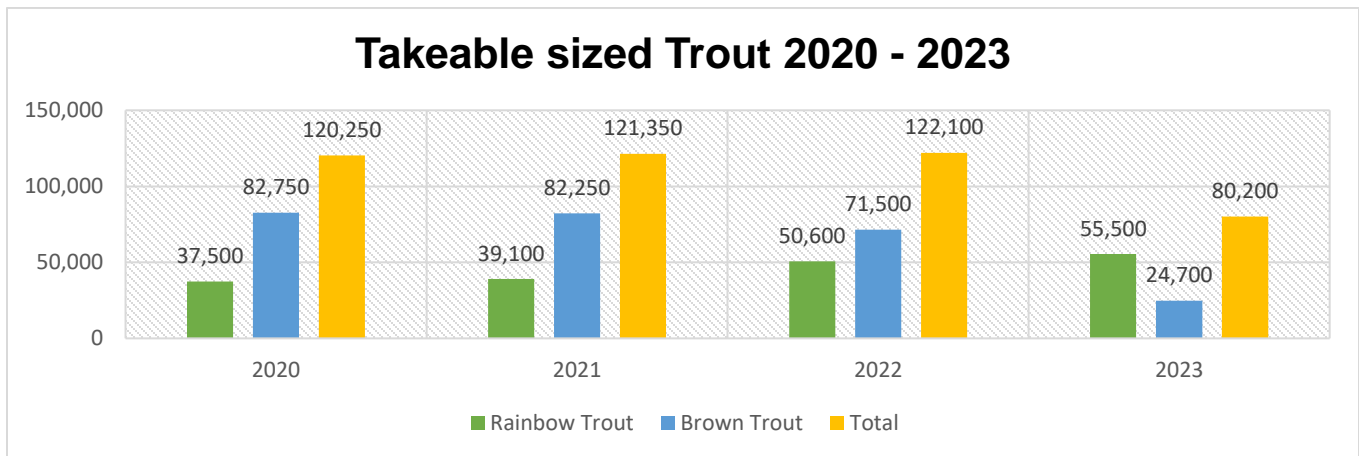
- Where appropriate, DAERA prepares cases for prosecution for consideration by the Public Prosecution Service NI.
- DAERA may deal with less serious breaches of legislation by means of (i) advisement and (ii) warning letters.

# 5. DAERA FISH FARMS AND HATCHERY

## 5.1 Movanager Fish Farm: takeable sized trout

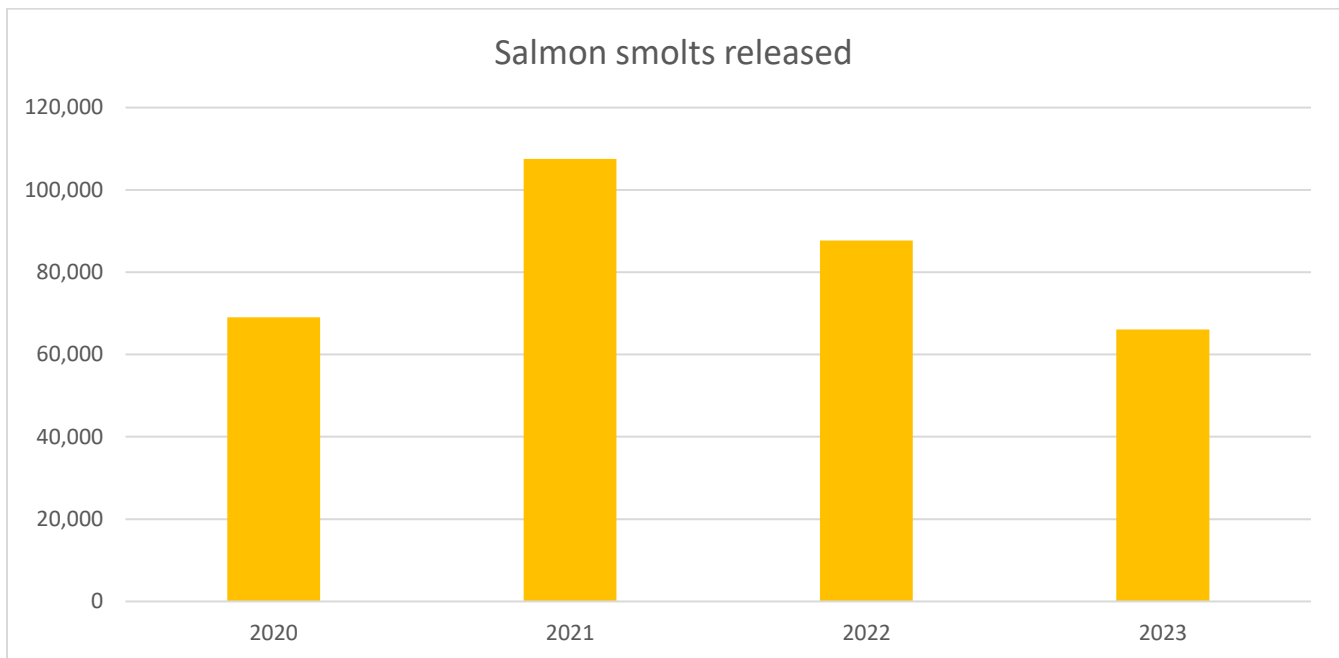
### Number of takeable sized trout stocked from Movanager Fish Farm 2020 – 2023

Note: Zebra mussels were discovered at the Department’s Movanager fish farm in June 2023. Consequently, the Department took a precautionary approach and suspended movements of live fish from Movanager fish farm for stocking to other fisheries for the remainder of 2023 to ensure compliance with the 1985 Wildlife Order. It is important to note that purchasing a permit does not guarantee any level of stocking within the PAE; it only provides the anglers with permission to fish in those waters. The Department continues to consider scientific advice and treatment options to inform the way forward.



| Takeable sized Trout |                    | 2020    | 2021    | 2022    | 2023   |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| DAERA PAE Waters     | Brown Trout        | 82,750  | 82,250  | 71,500  | 55,500 |
|                      | Rainbow Trout      | 37,500  | 39,100  | 50,600  | 24,700 |
|                      | Total (PAE Waters) | 120,250 | 121,350 | 122,100 | 80,200 |

## 5.2 Number of salmon smolts released from Bushmills Hatchery 2020 to 2023



| Year                   | 2020   | 2021    | 2022   | 2023   |
|------------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| Salmon smolts released | 69,031 | 107,505 | 87,701 | 66,104 |

- The Bushmills Hatchery also releases reared salmon smolts into the River Bush as part of the long-term salmon monitoring programme.
- The number of salmon smolts released in the River Bush in 2023 was 66,104.

