



Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

Present: Zoe Henderson (NRW Board Member & WLMF Chairperson)
Hedd Pugh (NFU Cymru)
Bernard Griffiths (FUW Land Use Policy Officer)
Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)
Tim Kirk (Confor),
Bob Vaughan (Sustainable Land Farming & Forest Manager, NRW)
Martyn Evans (Head of South West Wales Operations, NRW)
Brian Pawson (Senior Agriculture Advisor, NRW)
Geraint Weber (Water Strategy Advisor, NRW)
Meinir Wigley (Marketing & Events Manager, NRW)

In attendance: Ian Roderick (Schumacher Institute)

Apologies: Tudur Parry (FUW), Rhianne Jones (CLA Policy Officer), Nia Lloyd (YFC-Cymru), Howard Davies (NRW Board Member), Ruth Jenkins (Head of Natural Resources Planning, NRW), Peter Garson (Head of Operational Services South, NRW), Chris Blake (NRW Board Member), Russell De'Ath (Senior Advisor Natural Resource Management, NRW), Catherine Love (Director of Customer Care, External Relations and Communications, NRW), Ceri Davies (NRW Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting).

Date of Meeting &

Location: 11th October 2018 – Welsh Government Offices, Aberystwyth.

Secretariat: Helen Haider (WLMF Agri-pollution Co-ordinator, NRW)

1. Introductions & Apologies

Zoe Henderson opened the meeting by expressing her great sadness at the sudden loss of Martin Bishop. Prior to losing his life in a flying accident, Martin was the Confor national manager for Wales and a valued member of the WLMF.

Ian Roderick was welcomed to the meeting as an observer. Geraint Weber explained that the Schumacher Institute had been commissioned to assist the WLMF sub-group with carrying out some further analysis on the root causes of agricultural pollution. Prior to the

next meeting of the sub-group (which takes place on the afternoon on 11th October) it was thought it would be useful for Ian to gain a greater understanding of how the full WLMF operates.

2. Minutes of previous meeting on 27th March 2018 & Matters Arising

The minutes from the previous meeting on 11th November 2017 were confirmed as a true record. Due to the limited time available, the remaining actions will be followed up via correspondence.

3. WLMF Terms of Reference (ToR) & Membership

Details of the revised ToR had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Dennis Matheson (TFA) explained that he had been in communication with the Countryside Alliance who have expressed an interest in joining the WLMF. Further discussion then took place on this proposal with members suggesting that one way to engage with CA would be to invite them to speak at a future WLMF meeting. The majority of those present felt that the WLMF organisations should represent those owning and managing land as their main activity (as described in the current Terms of Reference) rather than expanding to include other organisations where the members are primarily countryside users, even though some of them may also own or manage land. NRW are currently working on a new Stakeholder Strategy to ensure all stakeholders have appropriate contact with NRW.

AP1 – Explain to the Countryside Alliance that their participation in the WLMF is not covered by the Terms of Reference, but that a representative will be invited to speak at a future WLMF meeting (Zoe Henderson & Brian Pawson)

AP2 – NRW to identify a clear line of contact for the Countryside Alliance (Bob Vaughan)

AP3 – Arrange for the draft WLMF agendas and confirmed minutes to be published on the NRW website in future (Meinir Wigley & Brian Pawson)

AP4 – Ensure that other relevant stakeholders are aware that the WLMF minutes will be available on the NRW website in future (Brian Pawson & Meinir Wigley)

AP5 – Amend the WLMF Terms of Reference to reflect that the WLMF minutes will in future be shared and made available via the NRW website (Brian Pawson)

Some discussion took place regarding the need for more clarity when sending WLMF/WLMF sub-group correspondence to Welsh Government and others. WLMF sub-group letters have previously been sent on NRW letter-headed paper which has caused some confusion amongst recipients. It was agreed that because the WLMF is a NRW-led forum, there is no need to create a separate WLMF logo. By contrast, the WLMF sub-group is owned by the stakeholders involved – and there may be advantages in developing a suitable logo as part of signalling this to others.

AP6 – The NRW logo will continue to be used on all WLMF papers, but a different logo could be used on any letters sent by the WLMF sub-group (Brian Pawson & Meinir Wigley)

4(a). NRW Update: Organisational Design (OD)

Martyn Evans provided an update on OD which covers structures across NRW with the aim of improving integration across the organisation. There will be a strong focus on place-based delivery, working with stakeholders and shortening of reporting lines. The process is designed to ensure NRW can deliver its obligations under the Environment Act/ Well-being of Future Generations Act with a structure resilient to any future changes in funding. Reorganisation will knit together NRW's wide remit whilst creating a strong customer focus.

In future there will be three NRW directorates: Evidence Policy and Permitting (EPP), Operational Delivery and Enabling Services with a rough balance in staff between the directorates.

There will be 6 "Heads of Place" supported by six terrestrial direct delivery teams. These will each cover internal work on national assets (NNR, Welsh Government Woodland Estate, Flood Management) as well as external work with stakeholders, public access etc. Each direct delivery team will comprise 3 Natural Resource Management (NRM) teams each with 12-13 staff and a team leader (c40 staff in total). There will also be one, all-Wales marine team.

The NRW staff consultation on Organisational Design closed at the end of September with the feedback now being analysed prior to the Board meeting in October. Implementation of the new structures is planned to take place from 1/4/2019 onwards.

AP7: Circulate new NRW staff structures to WLMF members when available. (Brian Pawson)

AP8: Details of the new NRW organisational structures to feature as an agenda item at the next meeting. WLMF members require named points of contact at both central and local levels within NRW. (Brian Pawson)

The importance of customers being directed via the customer care number to the correct person within NRW was highlighted during the discussion.

4b) NRW Update: Topical Issues

4(b)(i) NRW Customer Survey:

Meinir Wigley explained that the customer survey highlighted that NRW's response over the phone was better than when dealing with email or written correspondence. It is recognised that other NRW services need improvement (e.g. the website). A staff member is now in place to take part in customer testing. NRW needs to improve the way that complaints are dealt with, especially when letters are sent to multiple people within NRW. A new project has been created to deal with this.

All staff within NRW need to understand how to deal with customers. The focus must be on getting the basics right, so that issues can be dealt with the first time around. The NRW customer strategy was signed off at the last NRW board meeting.

AP9 - Provide a further update regarding the outcomes of the NRW Customer Survey (Catherine Love).

4(b)(ii) Water Update

Geraint Weber explained that NRW is establishing a new Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF). The two River basin liaison panels are being combined into a new structure comprising one strategic group. The intention is that the first meeting of the new WWMF will take place before the end of the year. NRW will circulate invitations to all relevant organisations which are likely to include the water companies, environmental NGOs, Rivers Trust, National Trust, Coal Authority, Environment Agency, FUW, NFU Cymru and Welsh Government. There will be some cross-over between the WWMF and the WLMF to ensure land and water are dealt with an integrated way. In the case of the WLMF sub-group and the WWMF there will be overlapping memberships and it was confirmed that NRW would ensure that issues of interest to both groups would be dealt with on a “once only” basis as far as possible.

NRW are currently undertaking the second cycle of River Basin Management Planning (RMBP) and the 3rd cycle will run from 2021-27. NRW are now starting to engage with stakeholders for the 3rd cycle. The “Working Together” consultation sets out how NRW will work with stakeholders and the consultation period closes on 22nd December 2018.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) classification was previously updated on an annual basis for all waterbodies, but such updates will now take place every three years. The freshwater data has just been processed with saltwater data is to follow. The final classification for all waterbodies can be viewed on the Water Watch Wales website. There is some indication of an improvement in the status of some waterbodies and the underlying data is being reviewed to understand why these improvements have occurred.

AP10 – Provide link to NRW’s consultation on the development of the 3rd cycle of River Basin Management Plans (Brian Pawson & Geraint Weber)

AP11 – Provide link to the outcome of the Interim WFD classification on Waterwatch Wales (Brian Pawson & Geraint Weber)

Some discussion took place regarding the erroneous nature of some of the phosphate data and how this might impact upon the WFD classification. Geraint Weber confirmed that the unreliable phosphate data has been excluded from the classification and old data has been used in the 2019 classification. By the 2021 classification the problems in relation to the phosphate data will not be of concern as there will be three years of new data to assist in determining the classification.

In relation to sensitive areas under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD) and Nitrates Directive, NRW are also planning to carry out further reviews in 2019.

Discussion took place regarding the development of different approaches in different parts of the UK with regards to environmental legislation, permitting requirements etc. The information provided for customers on the NRW website needs to be very clear in terms of legislation and the processes that apply in Wales. The NRW website is being updated over the next 18 months so as to guide customers to the correct information. It was confirmed that the new Defra rules for farming and water do not apply in Wales.

4(b)(iii) NRW Shooting Review

The shooting review covered all land managed by NRW but primarily the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE). It was based upon the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) and Wellbeing Goals. The number of sites where shooting takes place on NRW managed land is very small and the recommendations were endorsed by the NRW board in July 2018. In particular, it was resolved that the leasing of rights for pheasant shooting, wildfowling and other pursuits involving firearms would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

NRW subsequently received a letter from the Minister for Environment, stating that the Welsh Government does not support the use of the WGWE for pheasant shooting, the breeding of gamebirds, or birds being kept in holding pens. This prompted further consideration of the decision taken at the NRW Board meeting in July 2018 bearing in mind the position of the Welsh Government as landowner and where the Board agreed to implement the Welsh Government policy position.

During the NRW Board meeting in September 2018 the Board considered how it would implement the Welsh Government policy position. It was agreed that NRW would stop leasing the rights to shoot pheasants on the WGWE from March 2019 (when the current leases expire). No extensions will be offered to existing leases.

NRW have subsequently received large numbers of letters requesting a further review.

AP12 – Provide link to NRW statement on Shooting Review (Brian Pawson)

4(b)(iv) Beavers

Brian Pawson summarised previous discussions on this topic, recognising that beavers can impact on agriculture and forestry, but noting the positives in relation to biodiversity and other benefits to the environment.

It was confirmed that anyone wishing to introduce beavers must apply for a license. An application to release beavers was received in Carmarthenshire in December 2010, but this has now been withdrawn. There is evidence that beavers are present in the catchment of the Wye and NRW is now working with WG, Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts to arrange survey work during the winter of 2018/19. Plans for the proposed survey are still under development.

All issues to do with the possible transmission of disease from beavers to other species are being dealt with by the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO)

AP13 – Share any further information on how the beaver population on the River Wye may have become established (Brian Pawson & Liz Halliwell)

Discussion then turned to the development of the “Summit to Sea” project in the Cambrian Mountains north of Aberystwyth. This has attracted funding from the Endangered Landscapes Programme for the restoration of both ecosystems and the local economy. Some concerns were raised at the leadership of the project by Rewilding Britain. It was suggested that land would be abandoned as a result, but the involvement of other project partners such as the Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts and NRW (amongst others) suggests

otherwise. NRW considers that the emphasis is on continuing to learn from whole landscape scale projects to test the evidence, knowledge and collaboration required to deliver sustainable land management and provide support for rural Wales.

AP14 – Circulate additional information on the Summit to Sea Project (Brian Pawson)

4(b)(v) Intensive Farming

In 2017 NRW issued revised guidance under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) for the assessment of ammonia and nitrogen emissions from intensive farms (pigs and poultry). This guidance is now being amended following feedback from stakeholders. Some new evidence also needs to be included. Stakeholders will be invited to an information event when the revised guidance is ready to be published. There will then be a 12-week transition period before any changes must be implemented.

Public Health Wales are setting up a working group to facilitate closer working in relation to the public health impacts of intensive farming. Other members include WG, Local Authorities and NRW. The WLMF sub-group on agricultural pollution are also running a project (via specialist staff in NRW) to gather evidence on the environmental implications of extending the scope of the EPR regulations to include larger dairy units (Recommendation 4.7 in the WLMF sub-group Interim Report). A project specification is being drafted and will be circulated to the WLMF sub-group for comment.

AP 15 – Seek further information on when NRW's revised guidance on the assessment of emissions from intensive farms will be published (Brian Pawson & Alison Soper)

AP 16 – Check whether the Farming Unions will be invited to join the working group on Intensive Farming which has been convened by Public Health Wales (Brian Pawson & Alison Soper)

4(b)(vi) Area Statements

Since the last update in March 2018, NRW have continued to work internally on building the evidence base at local level. Seven area statements are to be produced; 6 of which will be terrestrial and 1 marine. NRW are using the Natural Resource Policy (NRP) priorities as the basis for developing each Area Statement. Key themes or challenges are now being identified, some of which are common to all parts of Wales whilst others are specific to certain localities.

One of the challenges around the work on Area Statements is how to get the most out of participatory approaches. A range of approaches are likely to be necessary depending on the kinds of issues that need to be tackled. An in-depth session with the WLMF early in 2019 would enable further exploration of the emerging themes from each of the Areas as well as how best to engage with each of the WLMF organisations.

By way of example, Martyn Evans outlined the emerging themes within the South Wales Area Statement and their relationship with the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Strategy. Whilst NRW must deliver against its remit, it also needs to consider the wider context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. For example, NRW manages c.60% of the land in Neath Port Talbot where the difference in life expectancy between deprived and non-deprived areas is currently 7.4 years. There is a clear opportunity for the Public Service

Board to contribute to the public good agenda, with the location of such provision being driven by Area Statements. Further discussion centred on the extent to which action by land managers could realistically be expected to contribute to the nature of the problems facing people living in the most deprived parts of Wales. Nevertheless, it was agreed that Area Statements will provide a means by which land managers can identify the kinds of public goods they may be able to provide in future.

AP17 – Arrange ½ day workshop on Area Statements as part of the next full WLMF meeting in February 2019 (Brian Pawson & Russell De’Ath)

5. Feedback from the WLMF sub-group on Agricultural Pollution

Zoe Henderson outlined the extent of work now taking place across all five of the workstreams identified in the Interim Report from the WLMF sub-group:

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/685890/interim-report-from-wlmf-subgroup-on-agricultural-pollution-final.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=13175088315000000>

All members of the sub-group have displayed considerable commitment in working together on tackling agricultural pollution. A formal acknowledgement letter has been received from the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs in response to the Interim Report.

Farming Connect have delivered an awareness programme based on nine Sustainable Farming events which were attended by around 2000 farmers. These are being followed by a series on-farm targeted events which are taking place across 28 waterbodies previously identified as being most at risk from agricultural pollution. Raising the awareness of pollution issues may lead to a rise in the reported numbers of pollution incidents.

Wales Environment Link (WEL) have requested a place on the WLMF sub-group and recently wrote to both Zoe Henderson and Clare Pillman, the CEO of NRW. Dr Stephen Marsh-Smith (Afonydd Cymru) and Arfon Williams (RSPB) attended the last sub-group meeting on behalf of WEL and provided short presentations. The messages within these were strongly aligned with the goals of the sub-group. As a result, sub-group members have resolved that WEL should be invited to contribute those relating to the regulatory workstream¹.

A voluntary, farmer-led initiative is being developed by NFU Cymru with support from NRW. Interviews for the post of a project co-ordinator took place recently and a suitable candidate has been identified.

Some concerns were raised that some organisations still do not know about the work that the sub-group is doing, particularly in relation to the Farming Connect work programme. It was noted that Welsh Government/Farming Connect are doing some additional work to engage with agricultural consultants so that they are aware of the criteria applicable to the new Sustainable Production Grant (SPG) and can advise farmers accordingly.

¹ During the subsequent WLMF sub-group meeting on the afternoon of 11th October it was resolved that WEL should be invited to attend future meetings of the WLMF Sub-group. The principal WEL representative is Dr Stephen Marsh-Smith (Afonydd Cymru) with Arfon Williams (RSPB Cymru) deputising as appropriate.

Bob Vaughan and Zoe Henderson recently attended the DCWW Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (IEAP) to outline the work of the WLMF sub-group.

6. Brexit and our Land

Bob Vaughan explained that work is ongoing within NRW to ensure that the organisation is ready for day 1 after the UK's departure from the EU. Additional resources are being sought from Welsh Government (WG) so that NRW can provide more support during the transition process, but the outcome of this bid is still awaited. In the meantime, NRW is continuing to work with WG to identify both the opportunities and difficulties likely to arise post-Brexit.

The Welsh Government consultation on the future support programme for land managers (Brexit and our Land) was issued in July with a closing date of 30th October 2018. Seminars and workshops have taken place across NRW to ensure staff from across the organisation can contribute to the consultation response. In particular, NRW is keen to see greater integration between the Economic Resilience and Public Good Schemes. Following the end of the consultation it is anticipated that NRW will be asked to provide further assistance to WG, especially in relation to the work on regulation. A number of eNGOs have also been asked to consider whether they would be able to arrange for staff to be seconded into WG. There was some discussion on whether WLMF organisations could be asked to do the same.

All four of the UK administrations are now consulting on the nature of future support for land managers. A number of underlying themes are common to all of these consultations including how best to identify the extent of the public goods being provided by large number of land managers. There are likely to be significant advantages in continuing to exchange information with other administrations across the UK.

AP18 – Circulate NRW's draft response to the WG consultation on Brexit & Our Land (Bob Vaughan)

7. Woodland Update

7a. Role & Purpose of Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE)

This document was launched at the Royal Welsh Show and identified how NRW can best manage the WGWE in future. The document is available on the NRW website.

AP19 – Circulate link to document on the Role and Purpose of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (Brian Pawson)

AP20 – WLMF members to contact Bob Vaughan or Michelle Van Velzen with any further comments on the Role & Purpose of the WGWE document

7b. NRW Woodland Creation Programme

This programme represents NRW's response to the WG woodland planting target (66,000 ha of new woodland by 2030 at a rate of 2-4000ha pa) which derives in turn from the decarbonisation agenda. Funding is available to assist land managers in creating new woodlands, but the requirement that such plantings can never be returned to any other land use has proved to be a significant constraint on many land managers. Another constraint is the need to conserve existing sites with high value for biodiversity. The Glastir Woodland

Creation Scheme provides a useful starting point, although further work is needed to refine the existing constraints map. NRW also has a role in creating new woodland. Funding available from the creation of new windfarms on the WGWE can be utilised to purchase new land suitable for tree planting

Some discussion took place on whether NRW was re-planting quickly enough after felling. It was confirmed that NRW is continuing to operate within the agreed envelope of a maximum of 4-5% bare land across the entire WGWE at any one time.

Tim Kirk made the point that there can be tree health benefits from not re-planting too quickly e.g. control of spruce bark beetle. Also, farmers can derive an income from planting trees, with sales from thinning and the final crop contributing significantly to cash flow. The WG planting target could be met by creating 3ha of new woodland on each of the 22,000 farms in Wales. Ensuring that a certain % of land was planted up could be one of the qualification criteria for future land management support payments.

Other WLMF members queried whether tree could be treated more like a conventional crop in future e.g. with no requirement to replant after the final felling. It was confirmed that NRW is talking to WG about this issue. There is also no incentive for tenant farmers to plant trees as they remain the property of the landlord.

It was confirmed that the PLANT! Scheme (planting a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales) will be used to help local communities commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ending of WWI/ the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Forestry Commission. Area Statements can also play a role in helping to guide the location of new plantings.

8. AOB

No further issues were raised under this item.