



Title of Meeting: Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF)

Date & Venue of Meeting: 5th December 2018, 10.00 – 15.30 Aberystwyth – University
Conference Centre

Attendance

NAME	ORGANISATION
Ruth Jenkins CHAIR	NRW
Sian Williams	NRW
Natalie Hall	NRW
Ceri Jones	NRW
Helen Millband	NRW
John Clark	NRW
Emyr Williams	Snowdonia National Park Authority (representing the 3 National Parks)
James Dowling	Welsh Government (Water Branch)
Dai Harris	Welsh Government (Land, Nature and Forestry Branch)
Kristian James	Public Health Wales
Tony Harrington	Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Liz Franks	Hafren Dyfrdwy
John McNeil	United Utilities
Rachel Lewis-Davies	NFU
Bernard Griffiths	WFU
Dennis Matheson	TFA Cymru
Carl Banton	Coal Authority
Stephen Marsh-Smith	Afonydd Cymru for WEL

Steve Rayner	Representative for Outdoor Alliance (Wales) (canoe Wales)
Bob Gilchrist	CCW

Apologies: Jean-Francois Dulong (WLGA), Frank Jones (Afonydd Cymru for WEL), D J Gent (EA)

1. Welcome, introductions

Ruth Jenkins welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF). Recognition was given to the work and membership of the former River Basin District Liaison Panels. RJ summarised changes at NRW including roles of the Head of Business (HoB), explaining the counterpart Head of Service (HoS) role and what this means for land and water. Operational teams are being organised around places. There are several stakeholder forums across this structure with links into different sectors and organisations, including WWMF. Of relevance to this group will be the interlinks with the Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) and the Wales Fisheries Forum (WFF). RJ confirmed that a NRW Board member could be asked to Chair the WWMF in future.

2. Purpose and direction for the WWMF

Presentation given by Natalie Hall on the Legislative context and purpose of WWMF. An overview of the freshwater and marine aspects of SoNaRR were given and how the management of water is not yet sustainable. This poses risks for supply, water quality, flood risk, droughts, risks to fisheries and recreation activities both in and off the water.

Welsh Government (WG) Ministers have taken account of SoNaRR when developing the Natural Resources Policy. We want to include the role of nature-based solutions for managing flood risk and water management in Wales through maximising collaboration to deliver better results at the local scale.

Summary of key discussion points:

S M-S asked how much we have increased our wetlands in Wales. An observation from England was made on the decrease in water body status with phytobenthos monitoring and the recent Rivers Trust Conference in Bristol.

TH raised the lack of join up between land use policy and water in WG, and the need for more integration at the regulatory level, otherwise it would be impossible for partners to work together and deliver the aspirations for water and or land use alike. A request was made for the Forum to look at the legislative angle and influence WG on this to ensure that any future land use policy was well aligned with that for water – e.g. to better enable and incentivise effective controls of diffuse pollution. The group recognised that there is an opportunity here to do this with water almost being totally devolved.

ACTION 1: CJ to include a task looking at the legislative angle and how the group may influence WG on this

EW commented that we need high level outcomes for the sustainable management of water and that currently it is not clear what the purpose of the group is. TH agreed that environmental outcomes should be used to monitor the progress of this Forum and would rather that we use the term 'driving change' or delivering change, not just identifying opportunities. S M-S added that it is important that WWMF is not seen as a talking shop. R L-D also raised concerns that competing groups may be an issue

Some members raised concerns over losing an important forum that was dealing with issues at the more local level would be disappointing, notably the former Dee Liaison Panel, especially as WWMF may be too high level so won't be able to deal with the more technical issues.

Questions were raised over the cross-border management of the RBMPs. CJ advised that the Environment Agency (EA) have been invited to the meetings and will be attending, NRW will continue to work with the EA for cross border RBMPs.

Comments were raised on the AMP7 NEP, and this potentially being changed from asset specific drivers to a catchment approach to respect the requirements of both the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Environment (Wales) Acts. It was suggested that any such change would need to be agreed at this Forum and with Welsh Government. This would also require Ofwat input as it could lead to a significant change in the way water company investment is targeted in Wales from that in England. This would be a challenge for Ofwat, which if they were unable to accommodate might require a Welsh Ofwat to be created to deal with this. It was noted that Ofwat are included in the invitation list for this Forum, and that their views should be sought on how best to accommodate this type of investment – where outcomes are much harder to measure and quantify.

If we adopt the same model as the Water Health Partnership, then we would need to create several sub-groups under the WWMF in order to handle all the water management functions.

Frequency & venue

Agreed to meet in Feb/March to review the role of the forum.

ACTION 2: CJ to set up meeting dates and develop papers based on discussions at this first meeting

- **Terms of Reference and proposed membership**

The draft ToR were circulated in advance of the meeting. All agreed we need to consider the WLMF and WFF to help develop the ToR and to ensure the groups can link across. Water is a broad work area and the group will need to have a clear focus if it's to be an effective Forum.

CJ shared early feedback from the WFD Working Together consultation which asks a question about the WWMF. This suggests that WWMF should cover all sectors, the remit should be outcome focused, with a broad representation including the marine environment, engage with strategic planning via casework and consider the full draft Wales National Development Framework and associated assessments.

S M-S asked if NRW had considered one Forum, three topics – Land, Fisheries and Water and send the appropriate people to each one. It was suggested that this would look more joined up from outside of NRW. RJ added that NRW reflected on this and decided we were maybe not quite ready, but this can be achieved in different ways. Maybe we can hold this as a future vision.

TH questioned frequency of meetings and if 2 meetings /year can we drive forward change. NH also added that we want to move away from small groups working on water company planning and encourage broader join up. All agreed that there would be a benefit in having discrete T&F groups or meetings that focus on specific issues to support the WWMF. Relevant attendees for these would be agreed through the Forum.

BG asked how the ToR would influence investment decisions, given the role of Ofwat, and that Welsh Government have for water. It was noted that better long term plans for investment were required e.g. to take surface water out of sewers and that this could be in conflict with the 'least cost to serve' approach currently taken by Ofwat. Water companies are compared by least cost and performance, and need to work with Welsh Government and others to enable better long term planning and investment decision making by Regulators – so as to facilitate investment that protects the interests of future generations.

ACTION 3: All to reflect on ToR and come back with comments to CJ. A revised ToR and membership will be agreed at the next meeting

The Water Health Partnership was used a good example for governance, with sub groups which have a clear remit and report back to the main partnership. TH agreed this works well. WWMF needs to have a structure with governance systems to get conduit to policy makers and WG to effect change. Feeding issues to and from the right groups/ people.

CJ wanted to gauge views from the group on membership and if we have got the balance rights. The following suggestions were put forward:

- Amenities – can this be covered by the Wales Local Government Association.
- Need to have representation from the marine shell fisheries on the Wales Marine and Coastal Group
- We may want to use a similar format to the WG Water Forum, which has standing members and 'observers'.
- We may wish to be agile and determine membership on a needs basis.

- Do we want to invite academics, to foster those links. This may depend upon the chair of the Forum.
- Other gaps raised were - renewable energy, biosecurity and invasives, education and best practice dissemination, rural/urban split – NPAs work with OFGEN, bid for environmental improvements in national parks, land management scenario for water.

ACTION 4: CJ to follow up suggestions and firm up formal membership including ‘observers’. All to agree at next meeting

- **Forward look and action plan**

Summary of other topics that the Forum could/should address were captured and will be documented as the Forward Look to be reviewed at the next meeting.

ACTION 5: CJ to set out an initial work plan/ topic list for the Forum to be reviewed at the next meeting.

3. Environment Act & Water

John Clark gave a presentation on the Environment Act, Area Statement and SoNaRR II programme. The emerging themes provide a discussion platform and were shared for South West area. JC set out some of the challenges and ongoing discussion, in particular how the Area Statements support priority catchments for management.

ACTION 6: JC to share the emerging themes summary (from all the AS) with the Forum members. NRW needs to ensure we provide a clear root in for WWMF to promote and help with this work

Questions were asked in relation to the Wales Wellbeing Plans and making the links into/ and with these, it was suggested that it would be worth taking an overview of the Wellbeing Plans to look at the priorities and how these have been developed including the evidence being used.

ACTION 7: JC to make link with Wellbeing Plans

JC then discussed the approaches for engagement Wales wide themes are being developed.

TH made reference to the level of engagement for WFD and questioned how the AS work will overcome this. AS engagement is much broader than WFD and will consider communities. Subsequently NRW's approach to engagement for AS is a new approach, we will be scrutinised on how this is done, evidencing conversations and undertaking gap analysis. RJ added that it is important how NRW presents this work.

EW asked how seriously PSBs are considering these issues, if members of the PSBs will consider the environment. South West – Wellbeing Plans (WP) were the first to be produced and set out priorities. We need to look at how AS link with WP and the service plans, which may not be fully embedded until the next round of WPs. PSBs cover a wide sector, not just environmental aspects, there is real scope to make a difference here, we could use these processes, public engagement and community level engagement to help take AS forward. JC explained that it is being included in the programme and that it provides a good opportunity to bring this work together in one place now.

ACTION 8: JC to confirm what evidence we can share in relation to the evidence base and summary of themes for Wales. Also share the approach to engagement and provide a steer on how the WWMF can support this work including supporting the language/ approach for the different sectors

TH asked if the AS will also set out costed solutions as well as key challenges. TH offered to share DCWWs approach to whole life cost investment planning if that would be useful.

ACTION 9: JC to clarify question relating to solutions and cost

Some potential gaps in the approach were raised, notably the Business and Industry sector and manufacturing plastics.

4. Water Update

Ceri Jones provided an overview of Paper 2. For future meetings, members will be asked to flag in advance any topics, within this paper, which require more detailed discussions.

- **Water Framework Directive**

WFD Classification was briefly discussed and there was a request that further detail is discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION 10: CJ to include a session on WFD Classification at the next meeting

CJ summarised the responses to date on the Working Together consultation and asked the Forum for support for Challenges and Choices, in particular the consultation questions. The Forum requested more information on context and direction of C&C including an understanding of WG ambition. TH asked what we are aiming for as this influences the questions and the approach. It was agreed that the Forum will comment on the C&C consultation design.

ACTION 11: CJ to circulate draft Challenges and Choices document to members for comment and suggestions

- **Proposed Dee LIFE Project**

The recent LIFE bid was summarised. Request from SR to consider other water users within this programme in addition to fisheries and requested to be involved.

ACTION 12: HM to ensure SR is included in this project

- **Water Resources Management - multi sector planning**

WG are procuring a desk study which can be brought to the Forum in the future and discuss the way forward. A Paper will be shared in February if not too soon.

ACTION 13: JD to share paper on WG desk study in relation to other water users

UK Environment Act will be out by February which includes the UK approach to water planning. There's a lot of ongoing discussions around water transfer – NH will discuss with WG about whether discuss at this forum or elsewhere such as the WG Water Forum.

- **Prolonged dry weather 2018**

NFU and NFU Cymru published a short paper with feedback on the long hot dry summer. DCWW had a number of regulatory hurdles to act more agile to be able to share effluent and help some communities. There will be a WG review which the Forum would be interested in receiving feedback. The Water Health Partnership have also been involved and can link into this work, in particular for private water supplies.

ACTION 14: JD and CJ to share outputs of the review and include in future Forum for involvement as required

S M-S asked what the definition of prolonged dry weather is. This includes dry **and** hot with fire risk key here as well.

- **New Authorisations**

NRW and WG raised awareness of changes and are both encouraging applications for the new authorisations, anticipating 300, but only a few have been received to date. The Forum were asked to support this through their sectors and contacts. The window opened 1 Jan 18, and closes Dec 2019.

ACTION 15: NH to follow up. NFU offered to put comms out on this, maybe a short article. If NRW can share implications for the farming community explaining why this helps everyone to apply now and not to wait until December 2019

ACTION 16: NH to check if applicants that are applying are on a public register – DCWW would be interested as this would help water company planning

5. Update from members and other Forums
Wales Land Management Forum

Suggestion that the Wales Agri-pollution sub group should also report to WWMF as well as WLMF. We may need to amend the ToR of the other Forums to enable shared ownership of sub- groups.

ACTION 17: CJ to follow up with WLMF and WFF leads in NRW to make those links

Plastics sub group suggested.

ACTION 18: CJ to look at options for a plastics sub group and make links to WLMF, WFF and any other groups such as marine.

Wales Fisheries Forum

The first meeting was in October, the remit is freshwater only. S M-S is a member. Difficult conversations over the by-laws in Wales, but a productive meeting and focus on taking action.

Wales Marine Advisory and Action Group (WMAAG)

Flooding and hydrological cycle will be covered by this Forum to enable NRW to discuss these issues with stakeholders.

There are water resources regional groups, that we need to have awareness of.

General -

The Forum stressed the importance to be careful that the remit of this group does not expand to the point where it loses focus. We need to understand what all the other groups are tackling to enable us to report back to WG so there's a clear understanding of which priorities are being tackled where and by whom.

ACTION 19: JC to map out the existing groups and fora that already meet at the local, regional and national level in relation to water so that we can understand the governance for these existing groups and how we can expect our own Forum to influence and work along side these – and so avoid duplication.

ACTION 20: JD to share the review of the progress against the WG Water Strategy

6. AOB

AOB was covered under the other items.

Meeting ended at 14:55pm