



Title of Meeting: **Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Agri-Pollution Sub Group**

Date of Meeting: **Monday 23rd
September 2019**

Time: 10.00 Venue: Welsh Government Offices
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
Aberystwyth
SY23 3UR

Present: Zoe Henderson, NRW Chair
Creighton Harvey (Carmarthenshire Fishermen's' Federation)
Marc Williams (NRW)
Andrew Chambers (WG)
Spencer Conlon (WG)
Ceri Davies (FUW)
Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru)
Sara Jenkins (Menter a Busnes)
Lorna Davis (NFU Cymru)
Stephen Marsh Smith (WEL)
Matt Lowe (NRW)
Liz Franks (Hafren Dyfrdwy)

Skype: Sophie Straiton (DCWW)

**Item Item
No:**

1. 1) Welcome & Apologies (Chair)

1a Apologies
Apologies noted from
Bob Vaughan (NRW)
Geri Mills (NRW)
Sarah Hetherington
Nichola Salter (NRW)
James Ruggeri (HCC)
Bernard Griffiths (FUW)
Steven Bradley (DCWW)
Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)

1b Introductions - Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1c Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest made in relation to agenda items tabled.

2. Minutes from meeting on 12th August & outstanding action points

Minutes confirmed subject to the following amendment:
Arfon Williams, WEL removing RSPB.

Action Log

The Group noted the updates to the actions circulated, the following amendments were noted during the meeting:

April AP25: Sarah Hethington, NRW is leading on the action, Matt Lowe confirmed that the new Dairy Officers will undertake BASIS training.

May AP1: Kevin Thomas confirmed that the training content is currently being finalised with a meeting on 30th September to hopefully complete. Pilot is being arranged for end of October at Gelli Aur, the date, when confirmed, will be circulated.

May AP11: Marc Williams confirmed that data now received and will be forwarding to statistician.

May AP30: Sara Jenkins confirmed information circulated.

July AP4: Innovation to be discussed at October 2019 meeting.

August AP4: Regulation sub-group meeting to be organised by Welsh Government before end of October 2019.

August AP12: Discharged, briefing circulated.

3. WLMF Agri Sub-Group Priorities – discussion on the priorities raised at the May 2019 Meeting.

The Chair opened the session by confirming the priorities which had been identified by the group in May 2019 which were:

- 1) Increasing knowledge by farmers regarding water pollution (discussed in June)
- 2) Engaging with hard to reach farmers (discussed in June)
- 3) Innovation (for October discussion)
- 4) How public goods, new agricultural regulations and earned recognition integrate (for September discussion)
- 5) Improving access to grants, having an enabling planning system, securing legislative compliance and operating procedures

providers/advisors (all of these items received the same number of votes) (for September discussion)

The Chair confirmed that Bob Vaughan, NRW would lead discussion around item 3, innovation at the next Sub-Group Meeting.

The Chair opened the discussion by asking members if they felt that the priorities identified in May were reflective of the actions which the group looked to progress. Following discussion, the Group confirmed that these were still appropriate priorities, focusing on reducing agricultural pollution across Wales.

The Group discussed the ongoing engagement with Farmers with Lorna Davis confirming that over 500 farmers had attended events during the summer. Noting that those farmers who had not attended were difficult to reach however these farmers may be engaged via different routes. Also, there are farmers that are hard to reach digitally with no mobile phone signal or internet to access all the information.

Stephen Marsh Smith explained that they had achieved wider farmer engagement by cold calling and providing trusted independent advice. The Wye and Usk Foundation has delivered over £5 million grant funding in Herefordshire, providing advice and encouraging farmers to share good news stories.

The Group noted a need for a trusted relationship to be established between the farmer and advisor whilst also ensuring that the advice is good advice.

Lorna Davis explained that she had met with SEPA who have a trusted relationship with NFU Scotland and the farmers, providing approved and accredited farm advise. With any subsequent complaints reviewed.

Action Point Sept 01: The Chair asked Lorna to share detailed feedback on the learnings of the SEPA/NFU engagement with the Group.

The Chair concluded that the Forum and the Sub Group would benefit from communications which are more aligned to different communication approaches. Highlighting a need for a structured communication plan to be developed by the Technical Support Officer when recruited.

Action Point Sept 02: A need for a more structured communication plan to reach different people in different ways (Zoe Henderson/Meinir Wigley, NRW)

4. Draft Progress Report – next steps

Marc Williams confirmed that the production of the draft progress report was on hold pending the recruitment of full time resource to support the Forum.

Referring to the draft report which was a lengthy document, it was intended that this was to be streamlined before future presentation.

NFU Cymru highlighted that the main action is to deliver as many recommendations within the Interim Report as possible and not to spend too much time on the report.

5. Agricultural Regulation Update – timelines and next steps

Andrew Chambers confirmed that responses had been received on the Regulatory Impact Assessment along with supplementary evidence being submitted and a meeting arranged with ADAS the following Thursday. Following the ADAS meeting Welsh Government would provide more information to the Sub Group. Another meeting will be organised in late October to discuss issues, determine transitional periods and draft guidance to help deal with the new regulations.

Action Point Sept 03: Andrew Chambers to organise a meeting of the Regulation Task and Finish Group for the end of October.

6. Voluntary approach to Nutrient Management Update – what's next and ongoing timelines into 2020

Lorna Davis confirmed that the project had attended 8 county agricultural shows across Wales during the summer months meeting over 500 farmers. Next steps would be to collate the feedback/responses into a report to deliver the aim of the project. The Group noted that a strong theme of the feedback from farmers was a desire to understand more about water quality and obtain water quality sampling kits.

Lorna confirmed that she had held a meeting with Sarah Hetherington and Bob Vaughan the previous week to discuss proposals for a citizen science project opening up opportunities to share water quality testing kits and providing access to scientists in order to advise on results and next steps.

Lorna will now be working on developing the Water Standard after meeting with Sophie Straiton last week to discuss the structure. Lorna will be presenting to the water quality steering group to agree the scope to bring together the body of evidence and learning from the 12 months of the project.

It was confirmed that Bob Vaughan and Sarah Hetherington (NRW Project owners) were considering the requirement for a separate meeting to review evidence gathered by the project.

Action Point Sept 04: NRW Project Owners to consider in detail the required outcomes from the report being collated by Lorna (Bob Vaughan/Sarah Hetherington, NRW)

The Chair stressed that 5 core work themes had been agreed in the Interim Report with a major push on the voluntary approach, but this was not in place of regulation.

Lorna Davis confirmed that farmers do not have the freedom or ability at present to inform the regulatory floor but the report from the project provides this method for farmers now.

There was a discussion with the group on the new regulations and the regulatory floor, which the Chair wanted to make clear that this group have never said we ever intended to replace the regulations with the voluntary approach.

The Chair concluded a need to consider the next steps for the project to retain momentum and retain relationships with farmers.

7. Dairy Project Update

Matt Lowe provided an update from the project confirming that the focus for the Dairy Officer team is now on producing reports following the farm visits on a timely basis. Initially the project had focused on completing visits with reports taking a few months to reach the farmer. The current delivery target is for all reports to be with the farmer within 4 weeks of the visit, this allows for a 2-week QA review of the report ahead of its release to the farmer.

Data from the visits will also be input to the NRW database within 2 weeks of the visit.

The project currently has 6 Dairy officer posts with recruitment of a further 6 officers to conclude in the next 4 weeks. Training for the new officers will be completed with Farming Connect.

The Dairy officers will attend the Welsh Dairy Show on 29th October in Carmarthen.

Matt reviewed the outstanding actions relating to the data gathered by the project. NRW are currently waiting a statistician to review the data ahead of release to the Group.

The Group noted disappointment with the delay in releasing the data and highlighted that the actions related back to the April 2019 meeting.

The Chair asked Matt Lowe to note that the delay in reporting back to farmers following the visit was causing anxiety and every effort should be made to ensure that reports are timely with sufficient time allowed for any corrective actions.

8. Outline of NRW work on impacts of ammonia pollution

Simon Bareham joined the meeting and gave an overview of the paper which had been circulated to the Group ahead of the meeting. This outlined the work NRW have undertaken on the impacts of ammonia pollution.

Methane and Nitrous Oxide are included when looking at air quality. At a UK level there are a number of reports that link the two.

Ammonia is exceeding levels and spreading slurry is one of the biggest causes. Therefore, targeting the primary source is key. Spread plate spreading can contribute 70% plus Ammonia into the air and using appropriate methods such as trailing shoe and injection to maximise nutrient input to the soil and reducing aerial pollution.

There was a discussion on the expansion of poultry and pig waste that is being used in Anaerobic Digestion plants in Northern Ireland, producing four times the amount of waste that they can cope with.

A Technical Advice Notice (TAN) is currently being developed by another group and they are now translating this into a more structural approach. They will be producing a framework which will feed into the local development planning process. There have been issues with the planning on small scale poultry units which sometimes has the biggest impact on ammonia emissions. The proposal is for the TAN to be produced next year.

The ask of the Sub Group is to review and highlight the range of issues, revise the guidance, and to get as much input from the group as they develop the work. There will be an opportunity for the group to input into the revised screening guidance which will be meeting next January.

NRW planned to publish the Ammonia Action Plan in mid-2019 but has been put on hold to understand the role NRW and other partners will play to structure the plan.

NFU noted that consultation had consisted of an invitation to one meeting held during Royal Welsh Show Week.

Action Point Sept 05: The Group requested copies of the documents referred to within the 2015 Powys Pilot Study document.

A question was raised whether we should have a complete moratorium on the agricultural planning until the whole issue has been resolved. Welsh Government have said that this was not appropriate at this time.

NFU Cymru mentioned that colleagues in Northern Ireland are informing us that the scenario that they are facing now is not preventing new development its preventing development of infrastructure which would solve many of the existing problems. Farmers who want to renew their slurry storage so that they can manage their environmental risk are being actively prevented from doing so due to the planning restrictions.

Action Point Sept 06: Simon Bareham to circulate details of the lichen app to the group.

The Chair concluded the discussion and found it is important for the group to continue to work closely and update the group with information in order for us to input to the process.

9. SoNaRR

Marc Williams and Nichola Taylor outlined the purpose of the SoNaRR 2 report confirming the deadlines for production.

The Group were asked to be involved and comment on the following ecosystems in SoNaRR 2, using documents circulated to the group prior to the meeting:

- Enclosed Farmland
- Land Use and Soils
- Woodlands

A list of evidence gaps on Enclosed Farmland was presented to the group where they suggested a range of evidence from various companies, organisations and schemes to potentially fill those gaps.

Action Point Sept 07: Sara Jenkins to share evidence/case studies from Farming Connect with the Group.

The draft emerging issues for SoNaRR 2 in Enclosed Farmland were presented to the group and comments were captured to make changes to the document.

There was enough time to go through the Land Use & Soils and Woodland chapters with the Group but the documents will be circulated for comment along with any evidence to fill the gaps highlighted.

Action Point Sept 08: Share the presentation made by Marc Williams with the Group and the other Ecosystem documents with comments from the group to be submitted to the following email address - sonarr@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.

10 Farming Connect Agri-Pollution Delivery Programme – update on recent events

Sara Jenkins, Menter a Busnes confirmed that they now have 10,500 businesses and just over 21,000 individuals signed up.

The Advisory service continues to be very popular providing confidential and independent advice. With a list of businesses who wish to access technical advice mainly for nutrient management planning, Sara confirmed that to access the service farmers must attend a future farming event and have a verified business plan. Further events are being arranged to enable farmers to attend and gain access to the technical advice.

Grassland and Infrastructure Clinics will be continuing, confirming information had been shared with the Group previously.

Case studies are currently being prepared on infrastructure working with Nichola Salter NRW, these will be distributed to the industry via social media and you tube videos.

18 Demonstration sites have been appointed across Wales which were launched at the RWAS 2019. Technical officers are currently discussing what projects will be delivered by those farms. Technical Officers are being actively encouraged to reducing agricultural pollution or infrastructure projects on some of the demonstration sites. More information will be provided to the Group once projects have been approved.

A series of sustainable farming roadshows had just finished, attendance at which was a prerequisite to apply for a sustainable production grant. It was confirmed to the Group that Farming Connect do not administer the sustainable production grant, Welsh Government Grant. Attendance at a sustainable farming road show is a part of the prerequisites for the grant.

Lantra update, the training application window is open for the safe application of slurry, this will remain open until 1st November. The pilot has not yet run, following this the previous 7 applicants from the first round of applications will be applying again.

A list of Contractors has been created from local knowledge, information will be cascaded to those Contractors who will be eligible to apply for 80% funding towards the course.

Targeted Water Body events – all bar 1 water body event has been arranged with 4 events to be held this week. The only catchment left is a small catchment in Carmarthenshire for 2 farms, the approach for this catchment to be discussed further.

Action Point Sept 09 – Sara to circulate attendance numbers with the Group.

All development officers have attended an RB209 training, which is prerequisite training to help understand nutrient management.

An Innovation and diversification event will be held on the RWAS showground with just short of 500 people registered to attend.

Action Point Sept 10 – Marc Williams to collate information on catchment projects being undertaken this year to create a new map.

The Chair noted the success of the sustained delivery which has been ongoing for a number of years with much success.

11 Arrangements for future sub-group meetings

The Group noted the draft dates for meeting 2020 which will be shared via outlook calendar appointments.

12 Update on relevant diary activities

No activities noted.

13 AoB

No other business raised.
