



Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

Minutes

Title of meeting: Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Date of Meeting: 1st March 2021

Present:

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Bob Vaughan, NRW

Marc Williams, NRW

Sarah Hetherington, NRW

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru

Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru

Anthony Geddes, Confor

Tim Kirk, Confor

Sian Thomas, Wales YFC

Marc Williams, NRW

John Browne, NRW

Bernard Griffiths, FUW

Huwel Manley, NRW

Additional Attendees Present:

Jan Sherry, PONT (Item 4 only)

Emma Douglas, PONT (Item 4 only)

Nichola Taylor, NRW (Item 6 only)

Russell De'Ath, NRW (Item 6 only)

Spencer Conlon, WG

Secretariat(s):

Bronwen Martin, NRW

Apologies:

Ceri Davies, NRW

Martyn Evans, NRW

Ruth Jenkins, NRW

Steve Ormerod, NRW

Mark Alexander, WG

Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

1. The Chair welcomed all to the Microsoft Teams meeting noting apologies.
2. The Chair welcomed Bronwen Martin to the WLMF as the new Secretariat for the WLMF. Bronwen briefly introduced herself.
3. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.
4. The group were reminded that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of capturing the minutes and the digital file will be deleted once the meeting minutes have been compiled.

Item 2 Minutes from the last meeting and any matters arising

5. The Group reviewed the minutes from the December 2020 meeting and approved as a true record.
6. Bronwen Martin, NRW shared her screen and the group reviewed the Action Log. The following comments were made:
 - May AP03: NRW to provide an update on the long-term management plan (John Browne, NRW).
 - John Browne, NRW provided a written update at the time which has been adopted as 'business as usual' and is due to be reviewed after 5 years. Increased interest has been received from Tilhill Forestry and Woodland Trust. Welsh Government are also very keen on Woodland Management and

has a section on woodland creation targets and management of existing woodland in the Agricultural White Paper. Having some sort of grant system and support for long term planning is looking positive.

- Tim Kirk, Confor raised that 'unmanaged woodland' in Wales is a commonly quoted item and yet nothing gets done about it. We really need to understand what is 'unmanaged' and where is the mechanism that identifies the necessary actions. Bob Vaughan, NRW welcomes having a conversation with Tim Kirk to work out what can be done.

AP March 01: Marc Williams, NRW to recirculate the information regarding the long-term Forest Management Plan

AP March 02: Bob Vaughan, NRW and Tim Kirk, Confor to discuss 'unmanaged woodland' and see what can be done

- May AP05: Martyn Evans to set up a meeting to discuss Area Statements with the AS Leads and Confor.
 - Anthony Geddes, Confor said that a discussion has started with some actions raised but this has not progressed. They are looking into developing a forestry resource for Area Statement teams to engage with and draw upon, initially in Mid Wales.

AP March 03: Huwel Manley, NRW to connect Anthony Geddes, Confor with the Mid Wales Area Statement team to help develop this and trial forestry resource.

- September AP04: Bob Vaughan to discuss the timescales with James Owen and to organise a workshop to coordinate ideas and evidence.
 - Bob Vaughan, NRW said that Ruth Jenkins, NRW now sits on the project group looking at the programme and has asked if James Owen wants to come to the group. Resource challenges has prevented setting any dates for a workshop. This item is still outstanding, but progress is being made.
- December AP01: Rachel Lewis-Davies to invite Dr Ceris Jones to a future WLMF meeting.
 - This is an ongoing action point, with the possibility of Dr Ceris Jones attending the June 2021 meeting. Bronwen Martin, NRW will liaise with Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru regarding the June WLMF meeting.
- December AP04: Share information on NRW positions regarding future scheme developments to the members.
 - Bob Vaughan, NRW said this action point refers to the positions that were being developed to feed into Welsh Government as part of the development of the Agricultural White Paper and the Sustainable Farming Scheme. A 'one voice' approach has been adopted where a lot of internal discussions have been had to build up information. This has not yet been taken forward but Bob Vaughan, NRW will start moving this and will share what we have.

- December AP06: NRW to provide NFU Cymru with a short briefing on larch tree notices to be circulated to their membership.
 - John Browne gave a short update regarding action by Chris Jones and Andy Wright and said that information around larch has been issued since 2010. A possible update in farming press was also discussed.

AP March 04: Marc Williams, NRW to find out further information on larch tree notices and send to Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru to circulate to their members.

- December AP07: Add sustainable drainage to the agenda for the next meeting.
 - Bronwen Martin, NRW asked members if they had any suggestions regarding a possible expert to join the next meeting to discuss sustainable drainage (SuDS). Anthony Geddes mentioned that he has a connection he can share and also said that this topic remains pertinent for both forestry and farming. Huwel Manley suggested bringing in an NRW engineer to discuss. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru mentioned that from a farming perspective it is specifically SuDS legislation and how it is applied in a farming and rural context and that Welsh Government had committed to review SuDS legislation within two years of its introduction but the latest position is unknown. Huwel Manley mentioned that NRW are also experiencing the same issue on the Woodland Estate. In terms of the legislation there are a few trains of thought, one possible advantage of going through the process does potentially exempt a farm for surface water flooding should a neighbouring property be inadvertently impacted, a new farms building / cow tracks during a storm event. NRW are also aware that Local Authorities have a different approach to implementation and timelines.
 - Anthony Geddes, Confor mentioned that he is still awaiting a little more detail from Andrew Sherlock (Water Management and Directives Manager in Welsh Government) but the headlines include:
 - WLGA Consultation Group run by Jean-Francois Dulong.
 - NRW was an instigator of this group as they had struggled with the various Local Authority approaches.
 - Group is seeking to find pragmatic risk-based refinement to SuDs legislation.
 - Any conclusion of the group can be developed into the guidance without the need to change the Act. Potential for a forest exemption to be considered in this forum.
 - The legislative review is planned to start post May 2021 with delivery of review mandate in Feb 2022.
 - Water & Flood Division of WG are looking at a SuDs Bill for Wales.

AP March 05: Bob Vaughan, NRW and Anthony Geddes, Confor to discuss sustainable drainage and share with the group at the next meeting.

- December AP08: Zoe Henderson and Chris Blake to brief Sir David Henshaw of the report and could this be a priority under Green Recovery.
 - Zoe Henderson, NRW mentioned that Chris Blake has resigned from the Board, but this will be moved forward.
- December AP10: Add Green Recovery to the agenda for the next meeting.

AP March 06: Bob Vaughan, NRW to talk to Sarah Williams and provide an update on Green Recovery to the group at the June meeting.

AP March 07: Bronwen Martin, NRW to add Green Recovery to the agenda for the next meeting in June.

Item 3 WLMF Moving forward discussion

7. A survey was sent out to members on Thursday 25th February which consists of ten questions. The Chair thanked those that had already completed the survey but really wants to encourage everyone to take some time and fill in as much as possible or send Bronwen an email with further comments.
8. Bronwen Martin, NRW briefly explained the purpose of the survey. The aim of the questionnaire is to better understand what the members want to get out of the Forum and find ways to improve and move forward.
9. The Chair asked for views on possibly expanding the membership of the WLMF. Bob Vaughan, NRW said that the group has been contacted by several different organisations enquiring about joining the WLMF over the years. The group currently has a very strong membership of representatives of those that manage the land rather than those that are managing the land such as National Trust or Dwr Cymru. We have had quite a strict rule regarding membership, but consideration could be given to whether that is still viable or whether we should broaden the group membership.
10. John Browne, NRW mentioned that face to face meetings and interaction is an important part of any group. It would be nice to look forward to interacting with land managers when we have more options ahead of us.
11. Bernard Griffiths, FUW wondered whether the survey considers how the WLMF works alongside other forums in order to avoid duplication of effort. The Chair noted that some members of the WLMF will also sit on other groups.
12. Rachel Lewis-Davis, NFU Cymru mentioned that different groups need to have their own purpose. Members do not want to go from meeting to meeting discussing the same topics and that duplicating effort is not a good use of time. Considering the purpose of the WLMF is important and setting it in its proper context is very useful. The WLMF is very much about exchange of information and a useful forum to understand what work streams NRW is progressing with a 'no surprises basis'.
13. Marc Williams, NRW agreed that we do not want any duplication of effort and that internally, NRW are discussing with other Fora to make sure the agendas do not duplicate information and that an update can be provided so that the same discussions

are not had at multiple groups. Bob Vaughan, NRW mentioned that colleagues do go to the other Fora meetings to act as a link between and help feed back.

14. Dennis Matheson, TFA mentioned that the Green Recovery document does not have any actual farmer representatives within the stakeholders which drew up the document. The Chair said that it was not meant to leave out farmers, but it was about those which come from different backgrounds with other representatives used to give a different perspective and approach.
15. Bronwen Martin, NRW asked if the members could complete the survey within the next two weeks, by the 15th March 2021. Members are encouraged to add any other comments or suggestions either through the survey or direct to Bronwen via email.

AP March 08: All members are requested to complete the WLMF survey by the 15th March 2021 and return any additional comments to Bronwen via email.

16. Fraser McAuley, CLA mentioned that stakeholders and organisations should share with the WLMF what they are doing going forward. The Chair agreed and mentioned that members are encouraged to add items to the agenda and/or bring topics up in the meetings.

Item 4 PONT Presentation

17. The Chair welcomed Jan Sherry and Emma Douglas from PONT to the meeting and briefly introduced them. Jan is the Senior Manager (Ecology) and leads on biodiversity and habitat advice within PONT as well as having additional management responsibilities including contract and project management. Previously Jan worked for the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and later Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for 15 years as the Heathland Ecologist and latterly covering broader upland habitats. Emma is the South Wales Development Officer and facilitates grazing and associated management across South Wales to benefit farmers, communities and nature. Emma grew up on the Gower Peninsula and continues to assist with the running of a small herd of Welsh Black cattle and horses at the family farm. Emma undertakes conservation grazing with her own ponies and Dexter cattle and she runs her successful small business 'Gower Meadows Beef'.
18. The Chair mentioned that the presentation by PONT links well to the talk given to the WLMF in December 2020 by Mydrian Harries, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue regarding deliberate grass fires in Wales.
19. Jan shared Pont's vision 'to promote environmentally sustainable grazing which delivers multiple benefits for wildlife, agriculture and people now and into the future'. PONT is a not for profit grazing organization consisting of five members of staff, three of which are farmers.
20. Jan gave an overview of conservation grazing which was defined as 'grazing for the benefit of wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage' as well as being important from an agricultural perspective. Our landscape and habitats have always been shaped by herbivores and today livestock (cattle, ponies, sheep and goats) is used as a proxy for extinct prehistoric herbivores.

21. Grazing is important for:

- Agriculture – keeping the sector going
- Conservation – species
- Landscape – shaped by grazing livestock
- Carbon sequestration – increased evidence of well managed pastureland
- Access – keeps footpaths and bridleways accessible
- Community – enables local people to use open access land
- Local economy – supporting agricultural economy
- Fire protection – land management
- Tradition – farming traditions

22. Grazing and livestock management are recorded as issues and risks on 70% of N2K sites impacting on 64% of habitats. Grazing is therefore critical for getting protected sites into a good condition, for example the coastal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Pembrokeshire which is properly grazed and as a result in the Spring it has a magnificent display of Spring Squill which would not be there if the area was not grazed.

23. PONT is a solution focused organization providing:

- Expert advice – site assessments, grazing feasibility studies, grazing management plans, infrastructure plans, costings, ecological survey and monitoring and finding livestock and graziers for sites
- Resolve issues and overcome barriers
- Making conservation grazing viable
- Professional and community training
- Building relationships.

24. PONT works with NRW, NGOs, Local Authorities, individual landowners, community groups and funded projects e.g. HLF, SMS, Big Lottery.

25. Jan shared a project involving Shepherding on Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain) and herded cattle on Aberffraw Common. PONT looked at the possible options, provided advice and found the right stock and grazier.

26. Emma mentioned the importance of resolving issues including access and dogs, arson, roads, community resistance to livestock and stock checking. PONT have done a lot of work on the Kenfig National Nature Reserve (NNR) which is an internationally important site due to having the strongest population of Fen Orchid in the UK. The main challenges for this site are related to public access and livestock including sheep

worrying incidents. A concept called 'Digital Shepard' was developed which included an awareness event with a dog show, which was used to introduce those in the dog walking community to livestock. A collar trial was also used at this site to track sheep which was linked to an app to help the public avoid the sheep whilst out walking. PONT has developed an education campaign by taking sheep into schools to introduce children to livestock. PONT has engaged with the local dog walking community and commercial dog walkers to encourage them to become wardens by practicing good behaviour and being respectful of the livestock.

27. PONT work closely with South Wales Fire and Rescue Service on the 'Healthy Hillside' partnership project. Grazing livestock is essential to reduce the risk of wildfire because ungrazed sites present a massive fuel load. PONT have worked on reintroducing livestock grazing to sites particularly in the South Wales Valleys. Livestock helps to generate fire breaks by creating pathways and when this is coupled with either controlled burning or cutting, the aftermath grazing can significantly reduce the fuel load and risk of catastrophic fires. Each year PONT join the Fire Service on their 'Don't burn Bernie' tour by taking lambs into schools in the Valleys. They talk to the children about the importance of not setting fire to the hillside, teach them about the livestock which could be affected, discuss how the livestock help to prevent fires, and explain how dangerous fires are to wildlife, the environment and communities.
28. A lot of work has been done on Rhos Common which is a very important site for Marsh Fritillary Butterflies. These butterflies have declined due to cattle grazing being removed due to cattle deaths on the very busy road which runs through the Common. An awareness campaign was developed to engage with the local community and help educate them on the importance of grazing for the population of Marsh Fritillary Butterflies. A trial of a 'fenceless fencing system' was introduced, where cattle wear collars and are trained to turn when they reach the limit of their boundary. This is an effective way of stopping the livestock going near the road. A similar Geofencing System is also going to be trialled where the collars are run by GPS and can be linked to an app to track the animals.
29. Community resistance to grazing has been experienced where grazing has not been practised for a long time. Overton Mere had not been grazed for 36 years and with declining amounts of limestone grassland and coastal heath. The area is very popular for dog walkers. An event was held to engage with the local community and present them with the idea of reintroducing grazing. Several approaches were used to overcome challenges including appropriate signage, advance notice to locals and small and quiet breeds (Welsh Mountain ponies and Dexter cattle) were chosen to graze. Since reintroduction of grazing the habitat has improved. A challenge that remains is the amount of dog mess left behind.
30. England has the Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme which often funds conservation grazing but this is not included within Glastir to the same extent. Therefore, conservation grazing needs to be made financially viable in Wales. Heathland bedding has been trialled in Llyn, Anglesey and on the Pembrokeshire coast. There are many advantages to using heathland bedding including managing the heathland vegetation and allowing it to regenerate, cost effective bedding for cattle (significantly cheaper than straw), drains well and keeps cattle clean and nature conservation benefits including creating fire breaks and reducing fire load and fire risk.

31. A wildlife friendly brand has been developed with farmers on Anglesey. The scheme included produce marketing, branding, routes to market, farm shops and box schemes and working with the Pasture Fed Livestock Association.
32. Jan gave an overview of the Llyn Partnership Payment for Outcomes Welsh Government SMS Scheme with three tenant farms. PONT has helped devise the habitat outcomes and a scoring system for the project. They support the farmers and help them improve their score and monitor progress by working together. This scheme has shown that all the farms have increased their scores, therefore receiving an increase in the payments and consequently better biodiversity outputs.
33. PONT also provide professional and community training including:
- Understand livestock grazing – working with farmers
 - Conservation grazing
 - Lantra accredited Stock Checkers course – certified
 - Habitat management courses
 - Community training
34. The Chair thanked Jan and Emma for their interesting presentation and demonstrating how farming, grazing, conservation and the environment can come together. The Chair began the question session and asked how PONT are funded. Jan explained that PONT are self-funded through projects and contract work.
35. John Browne, NRW mentioned that it's so important to recognise the importance of selective grazing in woodlands, and there's a need to be aware of the increased fire risk with new woodlands in their establishment phase (as there's low/no grazing and the grasses become a fire risk).
36. Bernard Griffiths, FUW asked whether an indication could be given as to how much land in Wales PONT are currently involved in managing. Bernard also noted that it is great that PONT are working with farmers, but many farmers are also heavily engaged with delivering conservation benefits with things like Glastir and other schemes. Jan explained that its quite difficult to say exactly how much land PONT is involved with, as it depends on current projects. PONT are currently working on about 30 sites in the Machynlleth area, Emma is working on all of the Gower Commons, there are also about 20 sites on Anglesey, big blocks of land like the Black Mountain in Carmarthenshire, the Black Mountains to the east of the Brecon Beacons and about 40 sites in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. Jan concluded that PONT work on a lot of sites which vary in size.
37. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru asked what the length of the SMS scheme is, in the Llyn Peninsular. Jan advised that initially it was a 3-year project, but Gwynedd County Council and National Trust are looking at other ways to bring money in so that the farmers continue to get support.
38. Dennis Matheson, TFA asked about a project from a few years ago which involved taking a group of farmers and graziers from the Black Mountains to Cumbria to learn

about hefting sheep. Emma mentioned that that project was driven by the Foundation for Common Land and PONT have taken people to see other projects and schemes in other areas which has proved quite successful.

39. Fraser McAuley, CLA asked whether PONT do much work using sheep grazing for biodiversity and conservation. Jan said that PONT also use sheep not just cattle, particularly for grassland habitats. Emma spoke about the work undertaken with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Llanelli where only one pair of lapwings were left in 2017. In order to increase the lapwing numbers several methods were used including cutting down trees to prevent the corvids from picking off the lapwing chicks, sheep were taken across to the 2 hectare island to keep the scrub under control and the use of cattle grazing in the wider area and pony grazing in the winter. This project has been very successful with lapwing numbers increasing to about 22 pairs last year. Sheep are also used for aftermath grazing on wildflower hay meadows and when carefully managed, sheep are a useful tool to help keep scrub down.
40. Bernard Griffiths, FUW asked about the Payment for Outcomes Scheme and wondered whether farmers would be penalised if the outcomes have not been achieved for reasons beyond their control such as weather conditions, even if they have followed all the available advice and guidance. Jan said that penalties are not issued in this system, farmers deliver the outcomes they can and then get paid for those outcomes. Farmers are sometimes happy to get to a certain score and sit on that payment.
41. Anthony Geddes, Confor asked whether PONT have done any work regarding under grazing in native broadleaf or mixed woodland to see what outcomes are possible. PONT have done a lot of work with grazing in woodland and are currently heavily involved with the Celtic Rainforest Project trying to include grazing in the scheme. As more woodland is being planted and fenced off, the maximum benefit will not be achieved unless they are grazed. Anthony followed up by asking whether PONT have accessed any new woodland creation schemes under Glastir, as co-grazing is not allowed and wondered whether PONT have put forward a proposal to show the benefits of integrated land use. Jan said that this will need to be addressed because more woodland is being fenced. Consideration should also be given to wood pasture which is an important habitat in Wales.
42. Dennis Matheson, TFA asked whether PONT have done any trials or work on true agroforestry which incorporates rows of crops between rows of trees, as this is possibly the only type of woodland that a tenant might get away with, without asking the permission of the Landlord as it is likely classed as agriculture. Jan and Emma said no issues have been raised regarding this topic but it could be investigated. Emma said that the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association (PFLA) have several farms in England and Scotland that practice agroforestry. Dennis followed up by mentioning that it must be a bumper year for acorns and that he has lost some livestock to the acorns. Jan mentioned that you must be careful with horses and Sycamore. There are issues which need to be looked at regarding grazing, but cattle grazing has been very successful.
43. The Chair asked Jan and Emma what they want from the group other than communication. Jan mentioned that awareness of PONT, the work they do and to know that they are available to help and support. There are key policy areas which need to be looked at like Future Agri, potential trials like the Llyn project and issues related to

woodland creation. Woodland pasture should also be considered in the future when thinking about woodland planting.

Item 5 NRW Update

44. Bob Vaughan, NRW provided an update on topical issues. Prior to the meeting, Forum members are asked to suggest topics for future NRW updates.
45. **SoNaRR:** NRW has published the SoNaRR summary reports in December 2020. The main report for each of the ecosystems and themes will be published this month on 18th March 2021, which will go into far more detail. NRW has received some questions from some of the member organisations about the chapters already published and NRW are in the process of providing comments but these queries should be answered by the more detailed chapters in the full report.
46. **SAC Rivers:** NRW have provided a release in January 2021 following the report on the Wye catchment. This new report includes all 9 SAC rivers across Wales and looks at the new tightened phosphate targets for these rivers. Several rivers in North West Wales are close to these target levels but those in the Dee, Teifi, Cleddau, Usk and Wye show several failing water bodies within these catchments. The other four SAC rivers in Wales Eden, Gwyrfai, Glaslyn and Tywi passed their targets. Consequently, detailed discussions with Local Authorities are being had regarding future planning but we are also doing a lot of internal work to try and drive these catchments down to the new targets. The cause of the pollution is not particularly well known but monitoring is in place to establish what the levels are. Early indications suggest that there are a range of sources contributing to the phosphate levels including agriculture, sewage works, septic tanks and other activities within the catchments. A link to the NRW website for more information, is provided below:

<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/water-reports/compliance-assessment-of-welsh-river-sacs-against-phosphorus-targets/?lang=en>

47. **Colliery Spoil Tips:** A lot of work has been undertaken in South Wales the last 12 months on the Colliery Spoil Tips issue. A task force was set up primarily driven by Welsh Government and The Coal Authority. NRW has also been involved looking at the number of tips we have a responsibility for which includes 113 colliery tips on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate that NRW look after. The Coal Authority has been putting together a better more wider idea of where all of these colliery spoil tips. In future they are likely to broaden that list to look at sites not just in South Wales but across Wales which will also include quarry and metal mine spoil heaps. The focus so far has been in South Wales where they have found over 2,200 spoil heaps. Risk assessments have been assigned to each of these with about 80 or 90 in the highest risk category and work is being put in place to understand, manage and control the risks. NRW are working with both Welsh Government and The Coal Authority to make sure our sites across Wales are in good condition, we have around 6 in the top category and all of them have a contract with The Coal Authority to review them on a regular basis and a contract with a company that goes out to repair the issue that have been identified. The events of February 2020 show that we cannot be complacent about these issues, as tips can move quickly when saturated with water. This work is ongoing and we are likely to see more on this in the coming weeks. NRW are also

working with the Law Commission looking at the legislation around tips and we have given them some advice on some of the work we have been doing, particularly on reservoir inspections.

48. **Glastir Woodlands:** Currently in Expression of Interest (EOI) 9 now and are waiting for EOI 10 for Glastir Woodland Creation to come in. We are looking at the amount of applications we are receiving and resourcing up within NRW to provide the verification service for Welsh Government. There is a lot of ongoing work associated with the applications that are coming in from Welsh Government and making sure we have the right quality and quantity of staff in place to deal with applications in a timely manner.
49. **Agriculture Regulations:** The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 were announced last month. This has created a big potential workload for NRW in the future to oversee the regulations. Work with Welsh Government is ongoing and a meeting of the WLMF Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution is scheduled for later this week to discuss these regulations.
50. **Beavers:** NRW currently have an application from Montgomery Wildlife Trust for Beaver release into the Cors Dyfi National Nature Reserve. This application has not been determined yet, but when a decision has been made the various media channels and the NRW will have the outcome of the that consideration. NRW have also received an application for a phased release into the Dyfi Catchment. This proposal is to undertake a 5-year study and we are currently awaiting the submission and supporting information to support the application. Once we are satisfied that we have received the complete application, we will be undertaking a public consultation and will make the relevant reports and information available to all parties.
51. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that portioning the phosphate loading to the various sectors is key to this work and wondered how soon NRW hope to do this. Bob Vaughan, NRW said that several modelling solutions are being used to try and find any indications, which is currently underway and hope to have an early indication in weeks rather than months.

AP March 09: Bob Vaughan, NRW to find out a timeframe for the phosphate work and share with the group.

52. Anthony Geddes, Confor mentioned that Glastir Woodland Officers are currently able undertake inspections but other than going out to deal with felling licence infringements, it seems as though many other areas of NRW are still heavily locked-down regarding site visits and wondered whether there is any internal communication on how this 'unlocking' is going to be handled. Huwel Manley, NRW said that things are reviewed in accordance with the Welsh Government Covid-19 lockdown procedures and 'normal' fieldwork will recommence as restrictions are relaxed. New felling licences are currently undertaken remotely using aerial photography. Confor have concerns regarding felling licences, field visits related to felling licences, ecological required visits and trying to keep the private timber supply chain operating smoothly. Huwel said he would look into getting this grouped with the NRW commercial work area, which has been a priority throughout the Covid lockdowns. Bob Vaughan, NRW clarified that NRW assess all work against the Welsh Government priorities and operate well within the government's guidelines.

53. Dennis Matheson, TFA asked whether old metal mines in Wales can be identified where treatment has happened on site and whether different types of vegetation can help identify where these sites are. Bob Vaughan, NRW said that there is a lot of useful historical information used to locate these old metal mines. Remote sensing is also being used as a tool to identify old mine sites, locate assets and help establish water content of tips.
54. Huwel Manley, NRW mentioned that there are a few sites across the Woodland Estate in South Wales where about 106 or 107 mine workings are present. This may cause some slight problems with some of the coups which may have been sold, particularly regarding extraction and timescales.

Item 6 Area Statements

55. Russell De'Ath and Nichola Taylor, NRW shared some ideas and information regarding the proposed upcoming workshop.
56. Russell gave an overview of the previous workshop held in October 2019 which explored opportunities for working together through the Area Statement process. This event was a great opportunity to listen to farmers, foresters and land managers, to seek out some common areas of interest and explore the trusted networks of who people turn to for trusted advice and guidance. At the event, the group discussed how Area Statements and networks could facilitate some of the opportunities to deliver positive benefits for farming, food and forestry sectors.
57. To build on the positive conversations from that first workshop, another workshop session has been proposed to catch up on the work we have been doing with Area Statements and encourage more of those positive discussions. Russell asked for the groups input to help design the proposed upcoming workshop which is going to be held either in April or early May.
58. The Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) is a key delivery mechanism that we want to align with the Area Statement opportunities. Nichola shared her screen which summarised the opportunities in the Mid Wales Area Statement and possible outcomes. Collaborative approaches for Mid Wales Area Statement were also discussed.
59. The Chair asked how this might look and how will it be set up so that something specific can be progressed. Russell explained that some catchment groups already exist. The workshop session will focus on sharing ideas and building on what we have so far.
60. Dennis Matheson, TFA mentioned that the North East Area have a meeting coming up at the end of the month to provide an update. Dennis has attended two meetings in Wrexham and has been very surprised about the lack of knowledge of what was going on in other groups and organisations. The two sessions were on woodland creation and sustainable land management and there was no knowledge at all by the conveners of the Area Statement of the work of the other groups like the WLMF Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution, the Task and Finish Group on Woodland Creation or the problems that tenants face on both of these. The most surprising thing was that there were only two people there that had farming backgrounds, out of about 40 people.

Liaison between the different groups is very important as a lot of the work has already been covered but it seems to get stuck in that particular group and is not accessed by others. Public access is also a topic which needs to be addressed. Russell said that the North East Area has been looking at how they can invite and involve more farmers and land managers in their discussions. Although there may be a gap in knowledge, the people that are leading this work are taking a breadth of view across every single policy area and so it is quite a challenge to understand what is going on across every single field and they are doing their best to support.

61. Bob Vaughan, NRW suggested that the common issues across the different Area Statements need to be identified and addressed and asked whether this group has a role in taking some of those forward. The work currently on going with Welsh Government around the new farming scheme and how that can fit in with Area Statements could be a focus for the group, if the audience is willing. Russell agreed and said that the long-term ambition is to create a common position through the WLMF on the role Area Statements can play in supporting agriculture and forestry in Wales. Bob said that we all need to look at the list of common issues across Wales as well as specific ones located in certain Areas and then engage to work out what needs to be done.
62. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru acknowledged that the workshop will likely be on Microsoft Teams. Another meeting with the farming community was requested as not enough people from the farming community attend the local Area Statement meetings. Hedd has attended the North West meetings and there are only a few farmers that went. So a group for farmers would help engage again. Russell said that the upcoming workshop will be targeted towards farmers and foresters through the different organisation networks to try and host the conversations.
63. Anthony Geddes, Confor explained that from his experience with the Area Statement workshops he has engaged with so far, it is clear that there is a struggle to grasp the tangible outputs and people are getting to the point of Area Statement fatigue. It's not that people are disinterested, it is that they are trying to work out how the tangible implementation of an Area Statement in which ever region in Wales, really starts to create opportunities for businesses and landowners to tie in and to see the positive benefits. At the moment there are lots of conversations, but it would help to see some real project work so that people can feel the benefit and start embedding some of this work into a familiar landscape. Anthony said that it is difficult to ask trained professional foresters, surveyors and agricultural advisors to continue putting in significant amounts of time when things are not moving forward. There is a general frustration, and something is needed to rekindle interest and redevelop engagement. Russell agreed that seeing some of the tangible benefits of this work will be really important to share.
64. Russell suggested looking at what opportunities and benefits there are for using spatial data, information, evidence and maps and capitalising on possible funding such as Natural Flood Risk Management interventions, carbon storage, woodland creation opportunities, opportunities for renewable energy, sustainable intensification and opportunities for improving health and wellbeing of communities. The workshop will be focussed on some questions around where farmers, land managers and foresters go to get technical support and advice which enable them to make decisions. Russell outlined some possible questions to explore through the workshop, like:

- Does spatial data have a role to play in food, farming and forestry systems?
- How is this information currently sourced?
- How do you get the correct balance of local knowledge (e.g. knowledge of your own land) and the data derived from more technical sources?
- What is the scale at which the data becomes meaningful?

65. The Chair mentioned that there needs to be a compelling reason for people to get involved and what are the specific benefits that are going to result from the workshop.

66. Fraser McAuley, CLA mentioned that there are a lot of Area Statement meetings held across Wales. The CLA encourage their members as individuals to get involved but they have received some feedback regarding the lack of tangible benefits for those that actually get involved. Fraser mentioned that things are likely to get easier through the development of the Agricultural Wales Bill and the consultation on how those schemes might work on the ground, which might create more opportunity for these Area Statement workshops.

67. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that we are being asked to comment on how the Area Statements align with the Sustainable Farming Scheme, but we have not really received any detail of the scheme yet. With reference to the pie chart shown earlier, the 'Environment' side shows the rehash of Glastir options and there are themes there that landowners can recognise and engage with. But the other two sections on the 'Economy' and 'Social' it is almost a rehash of Wellbeing and Future Generations statements with no detail there that landowners could identify how they can engage with these processes. The same thing can be applied to the Area Statement in Mid Wales, it was all environment focussed but should be more all-encompassing. Russell agreed that there is a 'chicken and egg' situation regarding linking the new Sustainable Farming Scheme and Area Statements. Bob Vaughan, NRW mentioned that it would be a real missed opportunity if we just wait until the scheme is brought in in 2024. The WLMF and other groups should look at what we would like to happen, build up examples of where things can work in reality not just modelled and then communicate these examples to Welsh Government. This is an opportunity right now to make some real influence, but we need to get on and move forward. The Chair agreed and suggested that it is for the workshop to move this forward and help people understand through pilots or examples. Russell asked the group to share examples of landscape scale initiatives that have managed to achieve wider benefits so that they can be explored in more detail, discover the critical success points and establish the support mechanisms. The Chair suggested an example could be the work of Farming Connect and the Agris gop which worked on river basins with farmers and another could be the Game Wildlife and Conservation Trust (GWCT) and their Farmer Cluster concept.

AP March 10: The group to share examples of schemes which have achieved wider benefits and bring the information to the Area Statement workshop to explore and discuss further.

68. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that it will be difficult to get farmers to engage when talking about GIS systems and spatial data. Example projects are needed to show how things will work on the ground.

69. Anthony Geddes, Confor mentioned that it is difficult to keep up with the different platforms that are used to host different conversations and events for example Yammer, Facebook and NRW website. It is unclear whether the same information being displayed across all of the different platforms. Some continuity is needed to understand where the information is displayed, which resources to look at for updates and how to engage. Consistent messaging and a clearer understanding of where to find information and updates. Russell said that this feedback will be taken on board and that it is a challenge with trying to take a place-based approach and also bringing everything together at a national level.

Item 7 Update from other WLMF Members

70. **FUW:** Bernard Griffiths mentioned that the FUW are involved with the Access to Inland Water Group which is the Sub Group of the National Access Forum for Wales, some stakeholders are concerned about respecting riparian ownership. FUW have been heavily involved with the Access to Ag Group for access to the land and those expert groups have come to an end of their meetings. There was one meeting looking at cross-cutting themes from all of the expert groups including looking at responsible recreation, equity of access, commercial activities and events on public rights of way. The FUW held a seminar last week about livestock attacks and discussed the way people take their dogs out. An interesting presentation was given by North Wales Police and the Dyfyd Powys Police Commissioner. Bernard suggested that perhaps this is a topic the WLMF could include on a future meeting agenda. The FUW are also involved with NRW's Wild Bird Review and are very pleased that NRW have stood up to Wild Justice. There will be discussions on that group to try and develop a strategy for the coming years. A number of consultations are ongoing relating to land use including the Electronic Communication Code where we are trying to get a fair system for landowners because they are not getting fair rent for the mobile phone masts that are on their land. The Water Regulations is another big discussion and the FUW are heavily involved in informing their members on what to expect through briefings and stakeholder meetings.

71. **NFU Cymru:** Hedd Pugh mentioned that NFU Cymru are heavily involved with the consultations on the Agricultural White Paper and the Water Regulations. Hedd asked when a decision will likely be made regarding licences on Beavers. Bob Vaughan, NRW was not sure on a date but will look into the timescale.

AP March 11: Bob Vaughan, NRW to find out a timescale for the decision on Beaver licences and feed back to the group.

72. **YFC Cymru:** (Sian Thomas lost internet connection during the meeting, we have asked whether there are any updates from YFC Cymru).

73. **Confor:** Anthony Geddes mentioned that Confor are busy working with their members on responses to the Agricultural White Paper consultation, which is due at the end of the month. Confor have received some interesting comments regarding the proposed changes to forestry. A topic that continues to be significant is the progressing and streamlining issues that members have with the Glastir Woodland Creation. Ash dieback also continues to be a problem and there is meant to be a Welsh Government update regarding dealing with ash dieback in the coming weeks. From a market position it is incredibly busy, the timber markets are trading well at the moment with

strong demand linked to housing and the fencing market for agriculture is about to wake up again. If any members have got woodland and are thinking of getting into management, it is a great time to do so. Anthony also mentioned that there is a continued concern that we see sustainable and high-quality deforestation or harvesting work. Recent press around deforestation is getting confused with felling trees in Wales verses deforestation for agriculture overseas. Confor are trying to be very clear on messaging and are aware that some people are getting concerned about forestry grown for timber production thinking it should not be felled, but it has a purpose and will be restocked in line with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

74. **CLA:** Fraser McAuley mentioned that the Agriculture White Paper is taking up a lot of time and CLA have taken it around to some of their branch committees as well as taking some specific aspects to their national committees. A final draft will be discussed at the Polisi Cymru meeting which is going to be held on the 9th March. Member engagement on this topic has been good. Time has also been occupied by the announcement on the Agricultural Pollution Regulations, which will be discussed at the WLMF Sub Group meeting this Friday. The CLA have been dealing with member enquiries about the new regulations and what they will potentially mean for them and how it will impact their businesses. The CLA have been working on their Water Strategy Report and are also producing a Planning Report shortly.
75. **TFA:** Dennis Matheson mentioned that the TFA have also been involved with the White Paper consultation and the ability for tenants to access it. The real threats to tenancies include the tree planning program and also the NVZ rules. The TFA wrote directly to the Minister to address these issues, which resulted in a meeting a few weeks ago, where a robust conversation was had. The TFA are now awaiting a response from the Minister with ways to overcome these problems.

Item 8 Fora Updates

76. The Chair gave a brief overview of the updates from other Fora:
77. **WLMF Agri Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution:** The group met in January and continued working through the priority recommendations by identifying specific actions to move them forward and deliver. The next Sub Group meeting has been rescheduled from 22nd February 2021 to the 5th March 2021, following the update on the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021.
78. **Water Forum:** The Western Wales and Dee River Basin Districts consultations on the draft River Basin Management Plans were published in December. Early responses in the consultation period are encouraged and are available on the consultation hub which are open until 22nd of June.

Annually, the Water Forum report on water company performance and hold scrutiny meetings with the water companies, Ofwat and the Environment Agency to review performance and discuss plans for improvement. Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy's performance reports for 2019 were published on NRW's website on 2nd October 2020. The next Water Forum meeting is on 3rd March.

79. **Fisheries Forum:** The next Fisheries Forum meeting is scheduled for 1st April and they have already received some requests for Agenda items. An update paper will be

provided to members. Bob Vaughan, NRW will be attending the Fisheries Forum meeting in April and asked the group if anyone has anything, they would like him to take to the meeting.

Item 9 WLMF Woodland Creation Report

80. The Chair mentioned that Chris Blake, NRW who was Chairing this Group has sadly resigned and that a replacement Chair is being sought.
81. A written response has been provided for the WLMF which was sent out to members as an update prior to this meeting. No one from the team could make the meeting today. If members have any queries regarding the document, these can be passed on and addressed
82. Bob Vaughan, NRW mentioned that the WLMF commissioned the Task and Finish Group to look at the information and produce a report. The update paper that has been provided to the WLMF members identifies the types of issues and challenges and starts to look at whether work is already underway or whether it needs to start afresh and also identifies who is responsible for taking the work forward. Bob asked the group whether there are some areas where WLMF members want to be involved with taking the work and actions forward. Bob also asked the group what they want to do with the report, specifically whether it should be taken to Welsh Government and ask for them to help deliver the work and take it forward.
83. Anthony Geddes, Confor said that the report identifies several areas of action which is worth progressing at a higher level with the Minister, which Confor would support. Anthony asked whether this work is taken through John Travis and Ceri Witchard to forward to the Minister or should the WLMF write directly to the Minister to ask for comment and consideration on the actions raised.
84. Tim Kirk, Confor mentioned that the application process and detail is the most important aspect and getting that streamlined and making it easier is critical. Other concerns are land availability, nurseries, uncertainty of supply and bringing farmers and foresters together.
85. Anthony Geddes, Confor asked what the timeline for taking this forward is. This is something that needs to go forward and not get lost or ignored post-election. Bob Vaughan, NRW mentioned that Welsh Government were involved with the production of the document, but we need to decide as a group what we want to do with it.

AP March 12: Bob Vaughan and Anthony Geddes to discuss the document with John Travis and get engagement on how far the document can be taken.

Item 10 Details of upcoming meetings

86. Dates for this year's meetings have been confirmed and invitations have been sent:
- Monday 7th June 2021
 - Monday 6th September 2021

- Monday 22nd November 2021 – this meeting has been changed from 29th November to 22nd November due to the Winter Fair, new invitations to follow.

Item 11 AOB

87. Meeting minutes: The WLMF meeting minutes from 2019 and 2020 have been updated and can now be accessed on the external NRW website in both English and Welsh.
88. Dennis Matheson, TFA mentioned that he missed the first part of the meeting due to connection issues but wanted to note that his declaration of interest that he is a Co-opted Director of PONT but has no remuneration, no voting rights and the TFA is not responsible for any finances.

Close meeting