

WWMF Minutes

Title of meeting: Wales Water Management Forum

Location: Virtual via MS Teams

Date of Meeting: 03rd March 2021

Present WWMF Members:

Attendees Present: Professor Steve Ormerod (CHAIR), Ceri Davies (NRW), Ceri Jones (NRW), Mark Squire (NRW), Rhian Thomas (NRW), Tony Harrington (DCWW), Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU), Bob Gilchrist (CCW), Gail Davies-Walsh (Afonydd Cymru for WEL), Dennis Matheson (TFA Cymru), Eifiona Williams (WG), Liz Franks (HD), Anthony Geddes (Confor) Kristian James (Public Health Wales), Bethan Evans (Ofwat), Tom Mills (Coal Authority), Andrew Osbaldiston (Environment Agency), Richard Blackwell (WRW for United Utilities)

Apologies: Sian Williams (NRW), Aled Jones (FUW), Nicola Gandy (Pembrokeshire National Park Authority, representing the 3 National Parks), Jean-Francois Dulong (WLGA), Phil Stone (Canoe Wales)

Correspondence members: Mark Tilling (WG Marine and Fisheries Division Peter Birch (C&RT), Dai Harries (WG Land, Nature and Forestry),

Secretariat: Ceri Jones

Note:

Item 1 Open meeting

As Chair, Professor Steve Ormerod opened the meeting setting out logistics for holding the virtual Forum. New members were welcomed, Gail Davies-Walsh (the new CEO of Afonydd Cymru) as the WEL representative and Tom Morris from the Coal Authority .

Item 2 Review minutes and action log

Agreed minutes and actions from the last meeting, no actions were carried over. A final version will be made available on the NRW website page for WWMF

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/water/wales-water-management-forum/?lang=en>

Comments were fed back on the SUDs item from the previous meeting and continues to be a subject to discuss at WWMF. The WG review will be undertaken and there was a suggestion of having a T&F Group for this work area, maybe this would be shared with WLMF plus making connections with nature-based solutions including flood protection. The WWMF agreed that what is key here is the provision of integrated solutions at the catchment scale. Cross border solutions also need to be considered.

ACTION: CJ to follow up with MS plus ensure WLMF are also aware of the discussions relating to SUDs. CJ to also make that link with the wider flood risk discussions.

There was some general discussion on making connections across the various Forums, including those that are organised by others such as WG and DCWW. In terms of NRW Forums, with many cross-cutting themes, in particular with the sustainable farming scheme, there is scope to have some joined up sessions.

ACTION: CJ to continue to ensure links are in place across NRW Forums.

Item 3 Review Terms of Reference

WWMF ToR were agreed in April 2019 so it was timely to review these. Some minor suggestions put forward:

- Core membership – update ‘Some Environmental NGOs’ with Wales Environment Link
- Make clearer the input of correspondence members and members invited for specialist or emerging issues that affect water
- Consider how we can build in practical actions and priorities for the Forum, what are the key opportunities and challenges for water?
- Consider a cross cutting matrix with other Forums
- Adopt a round table brief update from members, using the WLMF as an example as a standard agenda item.
- Diary appointments will be set up – these will show members e-mail addresses, any member not wanting their e-mail address to be shared is to let Ceri know

Some discussion over possible T&F groups for SUDs as picked up under Item 2.

ACTION: CJ to amend ToR for October meeting picking up the first two points. Take forward other suggestions with MS.

ACTION: All – to raise any concerns will sharing e-mails as diary appointments will be used for future meeting dates

Item 4 NRW assessment report of SAC Rivers in Wales (release Jan 2021)

Mark Squire presented an overview with some key highlights from the recently published NRW assessment. A copy of the presentation has been shared with WWMF. This has also been shared with the Local Authorities. The assessments for phosphate condition only, applies in the 9 SAC rivers, not coastal sites. A copy of the report can be found here [Natural Resources Wales / Compliance Assessment of Welsh River SACs Against Phosphorus Targets](#)

Work is ongoing within NRW and with key stakeholders particularly around planning constraints and advice. NRW continue to work with the Environment Agency and Natural England to understand the position in England particularly in relation to cross border catchment rivers. The 'Dutch nitrogen' case law is being considered in how it applies to HRA in SAC rivers and specifically in its application through permitting and planning in a post Brexit context. Local Authorities and the Water Companies are also involved in developing the approach.

Discussion Points:

- An example from Western Australia was shared and the benefit of free sampling of muck and slurry to support sustainable farming. In this way the sampling of slurry and soils could be considered a public good rather than something which could lead to regulatory action.
- NRW has undertaken 'deep dives' on sustainable farming scheme, catchments vary so solutions need to meet the needs for each catchment, this includes assessing loads and source apportionment by sector. Nutrient budgeting was mentioned. There is no quick fix.
- The need for the application of 'fair share' and the use of modelling to ensure effective allocation of Water Company investment within the current AMP programme and looking ahead for AMP7 and AMP8 was discussed. New standards have been incorporated for AMP7 and AMP8 environmental programmes. DCWW confirmed they are very happy to discuss the reallocation of funding in the AMP7 NEP as required to maximise the environmental benefits arising. This could be agreed after the fair share modelling was completed in 2021.
- Reference was made to a University study in the Wye catchment, this includes consideration for legacy levels of nutrients within the soil. Nutrient management plans and actions for sectors are urgently required.
- Importance of join up across sectors and studies undertaken, also need to trial approaches. There are opportunities with new initiatives. Communications are important for integrated working.
- Question was asked about separating load inputs from agriculture and those of small-scale package treatment. Absolute % can be difficult to provide, it is the proportion that's important to enable catchment solutions to be put in place. Catchment sensitivity varies with soil type and geology, as well as farming practice.

- Comments raised about cross border differences and for other sectors to be able to understand the legal differences between NRW/EA/ NE.
- Nutrient Management Boards are in the process of being created for each of the 5 failing SAC rivers. Suggestions that an overarching Board should be put in place to ensure link up was also discussed and supported.
- There is a lot we can learn from the Wye.
- Historically farmers have taken on board the advice of ADAS for the application of fertilisers, we will need to change methods/ approaches used through persuasion if new approaches based on evidence and science are to be adopted and successful.

ACTION: AO to share paper that was referred to for the Wye

ACTION: MS include National Parks in the Nutrient Management Boards

Item 5 River Basin Management Plans

Rhian Thomas (NRW) provided an update on the work for the RBMPs, consultation has begun for the Dee and Western Wales RBMPs, the Severn RBMP will be available at a later date.

Discussion Points:

- Comment raised about the use of the consultation hub where organisations receive multiple member comments. In these instances, it is important that a record of all comments are presented in a single response. Concerns raised that some detail could be lost using the Consultation Hub. E-mailed documents will be accepted, if this is the preferred method to submit a response member were asked to check they have received a receipt e-mail from NRW.
- Question asked about how engaged people are with the RBMP process. The RBMPs do drive improvements and provide funding opportunities.

ACTION: CJ to send consultation questions to both RLD and GDW for use with multiple members

Mark Charlesworth presented further detail relating to the objective setting work. Both presentations, RBMPs and Objective Setting have been shared with WWMF.

Discussion Points:

- It would be helpful to better understand how the legislation fits together with an overview of this (e.g. how the Habitats Directive etc fits within the WFD and the RBMP approach). Much of this detail sits within the RBMP Annex document. Maybe a short paper could be produced from this?
- Rules and methodology are set out in the Annex.
- How do we capture the costs for maintaining the baseline? This is part of the wider economic assessment and not included in the costs presented here. It is something NRW are looking at.
- The subject of inland bathing water was also raised under this item. This follows the first inland water designation in England (which followed the first inland bathing

water designation in Wales – at Llyn Padarn). In Wales there is a discussion happening on this from a water perspective plus under the Green Recovery work. Members asked how this is linked with the Access Forum and the importance of join up across sectors.

ACTION: CJ ensure RLD and KJ and GDW are involved in discussions relating to inland bathing water, particularly important for these sectors to be involved. Also update NRW Access Forum lead to ensure join up across water and outdoor recreation.

Item 6 Water Resources West Update

Richard Blackwell (Water Resources West) updated on progress and high-level timetable for Water Resources West. They are producing a long-term multi-sector adaptive water resource plan, a copy of the presentation has been shared with members.

The impact of Covid and future use of water was raised in relation to this work as there has been an increase in water consumption over the last 12 months from domestic users. This is being looked at. How we communicate water usage to the general public was also raised so terms used can be related to, so for example rather than referencing mega litres using number of baths.

Item 7 Ofwat

Bethan Evans provided the background and key areas of work for the Welsh office of Ofwat. The main objectives include legislation, operations and Ofwat's regulatory approach. Importantly for Wales, the learning from PR19 is being considered and this will inform the next price review in 2024. A high-level design document will be published by Ofwat in May and there is an openness to do things differently in Wales for PR24. Work is ongoing with WG, NRW, DWi and Ofwat.

Members welcomed this approach having someone dedicated to work in Wales in the hope that Ofwat will be better able to align itself with the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Item 8 Any other business

The following AOB were highlighted:

- Water Health Partnership report was highlighted, and members were encouraged to look at the mapping elements would be a useful source of evidence to support planning and environmental permits.
- NVZ rules in Wales and implications for tenant farmers and the need to look at tenancy law. New Regulations come into force on the 1st April. WLMF subgroup have been involved with this matter. The issue was being flagged to WWMF.
- EU Exit and future reporting. A question to WWMF and a topic to return to, what would be useful and what do we want to communicate from our work such as Bathing Waters and other Directives/ domestic legislation. One option is to look at

using the Future Generations language rather than our former EU style reporting,
For information Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones has been appointed as the Interim
Environmental Protection Assessor, Wales. She will commence her role on 1 March
2021.

Close meeting @ 13:00 and next meeting 20th October 2021