

Meeting Notes

Title of meeting:	Wales Water Management Forum
Location:	Virtual via MS Teams
Date of meeting:	14/12/2023
Attendees present:	Steve Ormerod (Chair), Ceri Davies (NRW), Ceri Jones (NRW), Ruth Johnston (NRW), Tony Harrington (DCWW), Richard Blackwell (WRW for United Utilities), Jill Howells (NRW), Adriana Kiss (WG), Ceri Davies (NRW), Natalie Hall (NRW), Jean- Francois Dulong (WLGA), Gwenllian Roberts (OFWAT), Daniel D Davies (DCWW), Inoka Manatunga (NRW), Lia Moutselou (CCWater), Thomaz Andrade (NRW), Caroline Harris (NRW), Elaine Harrison (Confor), Lia Murphy (Ofwat), Gail Davies-Walsh (WEL rep – Afonydd Cymru), Elizabeth Franks (HD), Adrian CL Jones (WEL rep - NWWT), Dennis Matheson (TFA)
Apologies:	Rachel Davies-Lewis (NFU), Lia Moutselou (CCWater), Tom Johnstone (National Parks Rep), Phil Stone (Recreation rep), Gareth Parry (FUW), Andy Morritt (Coal Authority), Fraser McAuley (CLA)
Secretariat:	Ceri Jones

Item 1 Open meeting

As Chair, Professor Steve Ormerod opened the meeting setting out logistics for holding the virtual Forum. This was the rescheduled session which had been planned for October.

New members were welcomed, Elaine Harrison will represent Confor, and Lia Murphy will represent Ofwat.

Some adjustments to the agenda were set out for Item 2, listed sessions will be presented first followed by members updates and finally the WWMF Terms of Reference.

Item 2 Review minutes and action log

Agreed meeting notes and actions from the last meeting. It was agreed all actions were completed.

An update on the nutrient review work was shared at the meeting and this is copied below;

- NRW are working on a plan to publish the information early in the new year.
- The method used in this review largely follows the 2016 NVZ methodology. We did this to allow the results to be compared with those previous assessment of waters. Water Quality data from 1990 to 2021 was included in the assessment. The processed datasets underwent statistical assessment to assess the trends of TIN and orthophosphate for each sampling location.

ACTION: CJ to set up Action log for future sessions which can be used by the forum

Item 3 Member's contributions and Update paper – highlights and open discussion

PR24 Business Plan – Daniel Davies (DCWW)

DD presented on the PR24 Business plan overview on expenditure and submissions of the plan. Copies of the slides have been shared with members. There has been a proposal of significant investment in the next AMP. NEP and WINEP enhancement to major expenditure address stormwater overflows and focuses on phosphorus and sanitary determinants on SAC rivers. The Ofwat methodology is around the number and duration of spills. In Wales, the approach will tackle the most harm whereas in England, companies will be incentivised based on spills.

Customer bills are to rise by 2030 which will be driven by an increase in expenditure, regulatory adjustments, AMP penalties, indexation, and profiling. Customer priorities are focused on reducing leakages and water supply resilience.

Company business plans were submitted in October 2023, in June 2024 a draft determination will be submitted with the final determination being in December 2024.

There will be an opportunity to comment on the draft determination (June 2024), it was suggested that WWMF could keep track of the timeline and any appeals which may follow. DD is happy to share the upcoming consultation information. PR24 will be about deliverability and PR29 will be the critical review point for required climate change adaptations. AMP9 will focus on the infrastructure changes which are required to do this.

ACTION: Members to advise what they require in terms of briefing for this work, this may include keeping track of the timeline and key milestones

Water Resources West and Severn Thames Transfer Update – Richard Blackwell and Mark Matthews (WRW and United Utilities)

RB presented the update for Water Resources West (WRW), copies of the slides have been shared with members. Significant water needs arise from climate change, population growth, environmental improvement, and new resilience expectations. To date, there have been a number of consultations and reconciling plans, the final Regional Plan is due this winter. The key points of the Water Resources Planning and Policies is to ensure that the water supply is resilient to climate change, there is a 50% reduction in leakage by 2050 and recognising the need for further abstraction licence change as reduction of river flows will be experienced due to climate change.

England and Wales water transfer was discussed with the greater deficits of water in the Southeast than the North and West. New sources of water in the North and West are generally more cost effective than the new sources in the Southeast. There's validity in exploring these transfers as they could be an effective option to support the water needs of the lacking areas. This is an opportunity to bring investment into the region. Extensive customer engagement has been undertaken. Customers want to be informed when water supply is likely to change, understand what the benefits to the local community would be, focus on the environmental aspects and how water transfers work and why they are needed.

The proposed Severn Thames Transfer (STT) is currently not required, it is a fall-back option. STT is subject to the approval of Water Company Resource Plans. It is in initial stages of design. Stakeholder engagement, planning and permitting programs are being prepared. Local engagement is to commence in 2024. This could provide a connection of the River Severn to the River Thames for the transfer of raw water to the Southeast during times of drought. If in England the Abingdon Reservoir does not come to fruition, then the STT would be required by 2040. If customer demand reduction levels are not achieved STT would be needed by 2050.

United Utilities and Severn Trent Water are collaborating to release up to 25MI/d of water from Lake Vyrnwy into the River Vyrnwy to support Severn Trent customers by 2030. This will require minor modifications to the existing plant and equipment to Lake Vyrnwy.

Members commented that they have conducted a lot of work on variable releases from reservoirs in Wales and the benefit to migratory fish species. By simply not releasing block fixed releases and releasing in variable patterns to mimic pre reservoir spate flows has a significant benefit. They are also leading on several gravel augmentation schemes downstream of reservoirs in Wales. Swansea University is to release publications which will demonstrate the importance of flow in the Severn not just for migratory species but also evidencing for the first time the importance of Severn estuary to the fish population in Wales.

River Basin Management Planning for 2027 – Ceri Jones (NRW)

CJ presented an update on the work for the next update to the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for 2027. This included early suggestions for update these Plans and how members can contribute towards this work. Better integrate of the RBMPs in terms of other

legislation, how to improve presentation and engagement with stakeholders was considered. The feedback from the recent WWMF online survey was also considered during the discussion.

What could change look like:

1. Further integration of protected area objectives
2. Economic assessment and presentation of opportunities for intervention
3. Presentation on a management catchment basis
4. Making use of new tools (power BI) for presentation of data
5. Alignment with NRW digital strategy

Points to consider:

- Implications and risks of protected area objects need to be fully understood
- What is meant by integration
- How do you make better use of ecosystem services, natural capital approach and demonstrate wellbeing
- How do you present the information in a manner to capture a broad-based audience and how will it be accessible to all
- How information can be found on the NRW website and guidance on Water Watch Wales. How effective and user friendly is this
- Do we present on a management catchment basis

Members were asked to feedback their suggestions to CJ on the back of the session, and CJ also asked if it would be helpful to set up a T&F Group to focus on this work area. 2024 will see the first Statutory Consultation, 'Working Together' this will set out the Statement of Steps for this next update.

ACTION: Members to feedback early thoughts on the approach to the next RBMPs and confirm if they would support a T&F Group

In relation to the current RBMPs members questioned the accuracy of WFD data and if the monitoring for this is. They also asked about the tracking of current actions and the progress being made with these. This information is not currently available/ visible to external stakeholders.

ACTION: CJ to bring a new paper to WWMF for the RBMPs to summarise progress so that WWMF can have sight and track progress

It was suggested that we do not need to 'reinvent the wheel' on how we present information, it was suggested that the Teifi Pilot Catchment work could be looked at as an example/ approach for 2027. In terms of Legislation, any approach will be in line with existing Legislation and must meet the requirements of the WFD Regulations.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to link up NRW digital leads with the Ofwat equivalent. There has been a lot of work undertaken in this space in Ofwat which may help inform approaches.

ACTION: GR to pass on RJ the Ofwat contact

It was suggested that it would be useful to see the environmental data used for WFD compliance assessments presented collectively with that from DCWW and other stakeholders on a single platform/portal. It may also be possible to include citizen science data gathered in this manner. The compliance data could then be presented in the one out all out way, but also by the determinant in a bid to understand the challenges. It was noted that NRW already do this in the summary reports and in the classification release FAQ but maybe this needs to be in a different format. As an example, see section 2.1.4.2. page 24 or Western Wales Summary at [Western Wales RBMP 2021 2027 Summary \(naturalresources.wales\)](https://naturalresources.wales/Western%20Wales%20RBMP%202021%202027%20Summary)

Evidence or the lack of it is impacting prioritisation of the key contributors to failure. It was suggested that this is clear from the Teifi Exemplar catchment meeting. Resources and funding whilst important are dwarfed by the lack of focus from not linking compliance failure to actions to deliver.

Comment was made that although Water Watch Wales is very good, there is room for improvement and for it to be made more 'user-friendly' with easier to understand details about each sub-catchment for the public

It would be extremely useful to undertake a mapping exercise to identify key national priorities, policies and so forth which may link to RBMP or require the data to inform decision. Due to resources and funding situation across Wales, in the next phase it is important to balance ambition versus delivery and mean to prioritise activities.

The point was raised as to what is the impact of the recent JR against Defra on its implementation of the WFD. The separate legal case on Costa Beck needs to be reviewed in terms of its impact to Wales approach.

Terms of Reference (ToR) Ruth Johnston

Terms of Reference were established 4 years ago and reviewed by WWMF every 2 years. Consideration was given to the current purpose of WWMF and if this is clearly set out under the ToR. How the forum connects with other Fora and requirements for any subgroups was raised.

It was noted that the agendas are 'NRW heavy' and that the purpose of this forum is to be collaborative. Members were asked what their expectations are to ensure the ToR meet the purpose of the forum.

As the scope is broad and included the previous role of the River Basin District Liaison Panels it was suggested that for the purpose of this particular role having sight of an action plan for delivery and progress would be useful, WWMF should be collaborating to seek opportunities to make a difference. How we plan for the 4th cycle was also included picking up on the earlier discussions at the meeting, including review of the Statutory Guidance for the River Basin Management Plans. To do this it was suggested that maybe a subgroup for this work is required (see earlier action under Item 3).

ACTION: Members to reflect and email to Ruth Johnston with suggestions focusing on need for collaboration, coordination, and interaction

Commonalities across fora and potential reviews across the various for a, many of these groups have been active for several years and it isn't clear how effective they are and how useful their outputs are.

It was highlighted that the group doesn't have the capacity to cover all aspects of water, therefore a robust governance structure with a high level of confidence is needed. Other stakeholders need to be held accountable and responsible for the delivery of their work areas. The example of the Better River Water Quality Task force was given which is responsible for managing sewer overflows. A point to consider is the impacts, and the visibility of the action plans of all the other sectors.

A joint for a session is going to be planned in the new year for Diazinon Investigations Update.

ACTION: CJ to share invite for the joint forum session for Diazinon

Item 7 AOB and date of next meeting

No AOB were raised other than the suggestion of a Field Trip to be planned potentially for May 2024 for the Forum. Next meeting is confirmed as 14th March 2024.