



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

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**Date of Meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Venue:** WG Offices,  
Rhodfa Padarn,  
Aberystwyth  
SY23 3UR

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**Present:** Zoe Henderson (NRW Board Member and Chairperson)  
Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)  
Eirwen Williams (Menter a Busnes)  
Stephen Bradley (DCWW)  
Creighton Harvey (Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation)  
Bernard Griffiths (FUW)  
Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru)  
Andrew Chambers (Welsh Government)  
Spencer Conlon (Welsh Government)  
James Dowling (Welsh Government)  
Betsan John (Welsh Government)  
Rob McCall (NRW)  
Helen Haider (NRW)  
Bob Vaughan (NRW)  
Marc Williams (NRW)  
Brian Pawson (NRW)  
Matt Lowe (NRW)

**Apologies:** Kirsten Hughes (HCC)  
Rhianne Jones (CLA)  
Jamie McCoy (AHDB)  
Luke Davies (Welsh Government)  
Meinir Wigley (NRW)  
Geraint Weber (NRW)  
Jeremy Frost (Welsh Government)

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No:	Item	Action
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### 3. Update on NRW Dairy Project

Matt Lowe confirmed that the eight new agricultural officers have now completed both NRW internal and Harper Adams training. The new officers have undertaken 20 accompanied farm visits with a further 20 planned. Low risk farms are being visited initially.

Staff contracts have been extended until the end of July 2019, with c.500 dairy farm visits likely to be completed during this period. Additional funding is being sought in order to extend the project.

The new officers will be providing advice and guidance on pollution prevention and compliance, along with implementation of best farming practice. Visits are focussed on regulatory requirements and involve identifying clean and dirty water separation, P & N nutrient loadings to land, whether the farmer uses a risk map in relation to the spreading of slurry and assessing whether current infrastructure on the farm is compliant with the SSAFO Regs. A combination of requirements and recommendations will be detailed in most farm reports. Requirements cover those actions that must be undertaken within a certain timescale. Examples of recommendations include installing guttering to separate clean and dirty water or adding a sleeping policeman to contain dirty water on the yard.

#### ***AP1 – Circulate NRW Dairy project farm report template (Matt Lowe, NRW)***

All structures subject to the SSAFO regulations will be assessed and any requirements will be listed in the report. Where a non-compliance is identified with a significant risk of pollution, NRW will require the farm to become compliant. For example, defective silage clamp containment, insufficient slurry storage, or poorly constructed / maintained structures. Insufficient slurry storage does not automatically mean a new slurry store will be required; farmers can reduce the volume of slurry production via clean and dirty water separation and other infrastructure improvements.

Where significant infrastructure improvements are required, the recommendation will be that the farmer should contact Farming Connect.

Where a non-compliant structure poses a significant risk of pollution, this must be addressed, and the farm brought into compliance. NRW will need to ensure action is undertaken to meet compliance. This may involve serving a SSAFO Notice (following an agreement between NRW

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and the farmer on a reasonable timescale) or there may be a voluntary agreement between NRW and the farmer.

During the farm visit, NRW officers will be asking farmers if they have a Manure Management Plan and a Nutrient Management Plan. If farms have inadequate land to spread the slurry the officers will suggest exporting the slurry off farm, acquiring more land or reducing the overall volume of slurry produced (via a reduction in cattle numbers). A conversation with the farmer will take place prior to the report being produced. The value of another conversation taking place after the report has been produced was highlighted by sub-group members. This would help to ensure that the farmer understands the content of the report and there is more awareness around risks.

***AP2 – Consider whether to follow up the production of the dairy project farm reports with a second farm visit (Matt Lowe and Huwel Manley, NRW)***

NRW will collect on the number of dairy farms visited, number of non-compliant structures, nutrient loadings to land, and volume of slurry being produced. Sub-group members asked if a report of the findings will be produced at the end of July 2019 or at the end of the project.

***AP3 – Consider whether to produce a short report of the findings from the dairy project at the end of July 2019 (Matt Lowe & Huwel Manley, NRW)***

#### **4. Agri Pollution Statistics Update**

Marc Williams showed members a graph of all substantiated water pollution incidents for 2017 by sector. Domestic & residential, agriculture and water industry were the three highest contributing sectors, but a large number of incidents fall within the 'premises not identified' category.

A graph of all incidents to water according to the type of pollutant was also provided. Contaminated water, inert waste, oil & fuel and sewage were the most frequent types of pollutants.

The graph of agricultural pollution incidents (up to 1/10/18) needs some additional work in terms of the severity of the incidents, how they compare to other contributing sectors, impacts of winter rainfall etc.

Further discussion took place regarding the importance and impact of high rainfall events on incident numbers. The SSAFO regulations and the corresponding slurry storage requirement of 4 months were introduced in 1991. The latter may now be less applicable in light of the more intense rainfall events now taking place.

A graph showing NRW's enforcement responses over the period 2016-18 was also provided. The information was derived from the NRW COLINS system for recording legislative breaches. The 'advice and guidance' column needs to be treated with caution as NRW staff may not always enter this kind of data into the system. In reality, most of the farmers inspected will receive some type of advice from NRW officers. A much higher number of warning letters were issued by NRW. The number of prosecutions is relatively small. Owing to the timeframes involved in getting a case to court, prosecutions will only be included within the dataset once the casefile has been closed.

The benefits of comparing the NRW incident data with information from similar locations in south-west or north-west England was discussed as was the possibility of seeking further advice from relevant NRW staff with expertise in statistical analysis.

***AP4: Prepare draft narrative to accompany future releases of updated statistics on agricultural pollution/enforcement outcomes and share with rest of sub-group (Brian Pawson & Meinir Wigley, NRW)***

***AP5: Undertake interpretation of the NRW agri pollution incident data – comparison with other contributing sectors, incident severity, impact of winter rainfall etc – and seek advice on further statistical analysis (Marc Williams, NRW)***

**AP6: Source comparable English data on agricultural pollution incidents and circulate to sub group members (Bob Vaughan, NRW)**

## **5. Recent TV coverage of agri-pollution**

The group discussed the recent coverage on S4Cs Y Byd ar Bedwar programme. This involved interviews with two anglers, an NRW officer (Huwel Manley), a representative from NFU Cymru (Aled Jones), another farmer from Carmarthenshire, an un-named whistle-blower and the Cabinet Secretary. Sub-group members were disappointed at there being no reference to the positive nature of the work now being co-ordinated by the WLMF sub group. In particular, the programme focussed on regulation and didn't consider the other four key measures (voluntary initiatives, innovation etc.) highlighted within the WLMF interim report.

It was confirmed by WG officials that the Cabinet Secretary was being regularly updated on the work of the WLMF sub-group. As indicated during the recent S4C programme, the Cabinet Secretary would be making an announcement on regulation very soon.

The group discussed the benefits of writing to the Cabinet Secretary and whether it would be timely to issue a press release addressing the issues raised within the S4C programme and describing the work of the WLMF sub group. It was noted that a similar English language programme was likely to be aired next week on HTV.

***AP7: Prepare draft letter for the WLMF chairperson to send to the Cabinet Secretary, drawing attention to the value of using the WLMF sub-group as a way of exploring the nature of the regulatory interventions required and the progress that has already been made. (Brian Pawson, NRW)***

***AP8: Prepare draft press release regarding the work of the WLMF sub group and circulate to member for comment (Brian Pawson & Meinir Wigley, NRW)***

## **6. Farming Connect Agri-Pollution Delivery Programme**

Eirwen Williams confirmed that nine sustainable farming events took place across Wales during September. These were attended by around 2000 farmers. The final targeted event (no 15) took place on 7<sup>th</sup> November in the Afon Ddu/Dulas catchment. Farmers attending these events will receive follow up contact from Farming Connect regarding the range of advisory services available. Seven Agrisgôp groups now have been formed as a consequence of the events run across the 28 targeted catchments.

***AP9: Provide data regarding outcomes from the Farming Connect events for inclusion within the WLMF press release (Eirwen Williams, Menter a Busnes)***

On behalf of Menter a Busnes, a survey of farmers was undertaken in August 2018 using telephone interviews with approximately 10% of registered farm businesses. Farmers were asked 'On a scale of 1-6 how important is water quality?' Some 87% of those interviewed provided a rating of 5 or 6.

***AP10: Compare the telephone survey data results for 2018 with those of previous years to determine whether there has any change in terms of farmer attitudes to water quality (Eirwen Williams, Menter a Busnes)***

Some discussion took place regarding how the Farming Connect work programme should progress next year and whether the focus should move into new catchments or remain with the same 28 priority waterbodies. It was agreed that the existing catchments are still high priority with additional work required to secure engagement with those farmers who are yet to make use of the advice and guidance available. Further work should be carried out to identify the kinds of changes being made by those farmers who have already started to engage.

***AP11: Determine which farmers did not participate in the Farming Connect on-farm events as part of considering how to engage such businesses in future. Consider how best to identify the extent of the changes made by those farmers who did participate (Eirwen Williams, Menter a Busnes & Marc Williams, NRW)***

Marc Williams shared with the group the new catchment initiatives map. This shows where additional advisory work (over and above the 'day job') is now being undertaken within catchments across Wales. Further discussion took place as regards the criteria used to determine what should go onto the map and what shouldn't. It was confirmed that the final version of the map would be published on the Water Watch Wales website.

***AP12: Send further comments regarding the Catchment Initiatives map to Marc Williams (All)***

***AP13: Identify potential areas of agri-pollution work that Farming Connect could take forward in future - for discussion at the next WLMF sub group meeting (All)***

## **7. 'Brexit and our Land (WG Green Paper)**

Zoe Henderson thanked all of the sub-group members who had inputted into her recent letter to the Cabinet Secretary regarding the Brexit and our Land consultation.

## **8. Slurry Storage Calculators/Use of Straw as animal bedding on dairy farms**

Differences between the various slurry storage calculation methods being used across Wales were discussed. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to set up a small working group to examine this issue. Membership will comprise NRW, WG, AHDB-Dairy and Farming Connect.

***AP14: Set up working group to look at the various slurry storage calculation methods now being used across Wales. (Marc Williams, NRW)***

***AP15: Prepare a short paper outlining the different approaches to slurry storage calculations now being used – and the scope for any further alignment. (NRW/WG/Farming Connect/AHDB Dairy)***

A short discussion took place on the possible use of straw and woodchip as animal bedding and whether it would be feasible for dairy farms to produce farmyard manure (FYM) rather than slurry. Bob Vaughan mentioned that the Pontbren project undertook a study on woodchip bedding. Rachel Lewis-Davies said that this topic had already been discussed by members of the NFU Cymru Water Quality Task and

Finish Group

**AP16: Circulate information from the Pontbren Project about using woodchip corral as animal bedding (Bob Vaughan, NRW)**

**AP17: Circulate feedback from Water Quality Task & Finish Group that considered the use of straw as bedding on dairy farms. (Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru)**

**AP18: Identify whether Farming Connect have issued any guidance on the use of straw/woodchip on dairy farms and the production of FYM rather than slurry (Eirwen Williams, Menter-a-Busnes)**

**AP19: Identify whether HCC/AHDB Dairy have issued any guidance on the use of straw/woodchip on beef/dairy farms (Brian Pawson, NRW; Kirsten Hughes, HCC; Jamie McCoy, AHDB-Dairy)**

## **9. Partnership Project on a Voluntary Approach to Nutrient Management**

NFU Cymru, FUW and DCWW previously secured support from the NRW Partnership programme in order to develop the Voluntary Initiative (VI) on nutrient management. Lorna Davis has now been appointed as the project manager and will start work at the beginning of December. Lorna has extensive experience within the water sector, has worked as an Agrisgôp group leader and has just completed a Nuffield Scholarship on nutrient management.

Rachel Lewis-Davies is now identifying suitable dates for meetings of the Nutrient Management Steering and the NFU Cymru Task and Finish Group.

It was agreed that it would be helpful for Lorna Davis to be introduced to representatives from a range of stakeholder organisations (in particular NRW and WG) as soon as possible. Lorna will be providing a short presentation on her role at the next WLMF sub-group meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December and it was agreed that she should also be invited to attend all subsequent sub-group meetings.

**AP20: Ensure Lorna Davis (Voluntary Initiative on Nutrient Management) is invited to all WLMF sub-group meetings (Marc Williams & Helen Haider, NRW)**

## **10. WLMF Sub Group Action Plan**

The Action Plan is still under development. Only limited feedback has been received from members following the special planning meeting which took place in Aberystwyth on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

**AP21: Provide written feedback to Brian Pawson by 16.11.18 on the**

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### ***Action Points arising from the special planning meeting in Aberystwyth (All)***

Various members of the sub group have been contacted by Ian Roderick (Schumacher Institute) in relation to the project looking at the Root Causes of agri pollution.

Various comments regarding the specification for the Nutrient Burdens to Land project have been received by Helen Haider. The project specification will now be amended before the invitation to quote (ITQ) is issued.

The two projects on Intensive Farming & Environmental Permitting have now gone out to tender.

Some discussion took place regarding amendments to the Agricultural Holdings Act and tenancy reform and how recommendations 7.9-7.12 of the Interim Report can be progressed.

***AP22: Provide an update on Agricultural Tenancy reform for consideration at the next meeting of the sub-group (Andrew Chambers, WG)***

### **11. Arrangements for future sub group meetings**

#### **12 December (FUW Offices, Aberystwyth)**

Speaker 1 - Tony Loizou (CFF); Speaker 2 - Lorna Davis (Voluntary Initiative on Nutrient Management)

It was suggested that Wrexham might be a possible venue for the meeting in January.

It may be possible to invite a representative from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to speak at the meeting in February. Ian Roderick (Schumacher Institute) will also require a slot on the agenda.

***AP23: Confirm dates and locations for the WLMF sub group meetings scheduled during January-March 2019 (Helen Haider, NRW)***

***AP24: Arrange WLMF sub group meeting dates for the remainder of 2019 (Helen Haider & Marc Williams, NRW)***

***AP25: Speak to mark Aitken of SEPA about whether he can attend the WLMF sub-group meeting in February (Brian Pawson, NRW)***

***AP26: Forward bilingual agendas and action points from the most recent WLMF sub-group meetings to Bob Vaughan so that they can be loaded onto the NRW website (Helen Haider, NRW)***



## 12. Minutes from meeting on 11 Oct and outstanding action points

It was confirmed that AP13 from the sub group meeting on 11 October still needed to be progressed:

*“Draft some suitable wording to cover key messages to farmers as part of the SAP update (Meinir Wigley, NRW & Andrew Chambers, WG)”*

**AP27: Circulate revised draft of key messages on agri-pollution for inclusion in the forthcoming SAP update. (Andrew Chambers, WG)**

## 13. Update on relevant diary activities

Creighton Harvey explained that the CFF, Afonydd Cymru and the West Wales Rivers trust meeting with Carmarthenshire Council on agricultural planning had now been postponed until the New Year.

Rachel Lewis-Davies and Helen Haider will both be speaking at the Dee Steering Group meeting in Rossett on 13<sup>th</sup> November

DCWW will be launching a follow-up to the PestSmart programme at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair on 26<sup>th</sup> November. This is an initiative promoting the safe use, storage and disposal of pesticides in Wales.

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## 14. Any other Business

Rachel Lewis-Davies is drafting an article on the Code of Good Agricultural Practice (CoGAP) for inclusion in the NFU Cymru magazine (*Farming Wales*).

Andrew Chambers explained that an update on the outcome of the most recent Sustainable Production Grant (SPG) application window will be available shortly.

**AP28: Provide an update on the outcome of the most recent SPG window at the next sub group meeting (Andrew Chambers, WG)**

Creighton Harvey has recently written an article for Farming Wales on the importance of good water quality when seeking to maintain healthy populations of fish. Creighton also highlighted issues with issue of soil run-off from some fields of maize stubble in SW Wales the day preceding Storm Calum. A picture was shown of Ferryside Square covered in soil.