

Confirmed Board Minutes

Title of Meeting **NRW Board Meeting (Day 2) – Public Session**

Date of Meeting: 16th September 2020 Venue: Skype

Time of Meeting: 09.00

Board Members Present
Sir David Henshaw, Chair
Clare Pillman, Chief Executive
Prof Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chair
Karen Balmer
Catherine Brown
Julia Cherrett
Geraint Davies
Howard Davies
Dr Elizabeth Haywood
Zoë Henderson
Dr Rosie Plummer
Prof Peter Rigby

Executive Team Present
Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting
Prys Davies, Director of Corporate Strategy and Development
Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial
Gareth O’Shea, Executive Director of Operations

Additional Attendees present:
Catrin Hornung, Head of Communications - All items
Helen John, Head of Governance - All items
Steve Burton, Head of People Services – Item 4

Secretariat:
Natalie Williams
Ellis Williams
Rhiannon Spencer

Public Observers:
Daniel Willis (Vattenfall)
Gareth Wardell

Item 1 Open meeting

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the second day of the meeting and the first public session since March and the beginning of COVID-19.
2. There were no apologies or declarations of interest
3. The Chair outlined the conduct of the meeting which would follow the normal Board format and noted that guests would be invited to enter a dialogue later in the meeting. He further emphasised the use of the Skype conversation function where attendees were welcome to enter questions and comments.

Item 2 Chair's Business

4. The Chair thanked the whole team and the whole of the NRW staff for their extraordinary efforts during the very difficult period.
5. The Chair updated on the Green Recovery project and the proposals that were emerging as part of the process. He added the evaluation of the schemes was being conducted by a steering group with the intention to take the list of schemes and recommendations to Welsh Government in mid-October. He emphasised the need to deliver the proposed schemes.

Item 3 Chief Executive's Report

6. The Chief Executive noted how pleasing it was to operate in a public session again. She reflected on events since the last public session.
7. The Chief Executive explained that the extreme rainfall throughout the three storms in February caused devastating flooding which impacted people's lives and livelihoods. She extended her sympathies to all those who were affected by the flood and thanked all the NRW teams and other emergency services for their support.
8. The flooding was severe and following the recovery process a major review had been conducted of the events and the NRW response.
9. It was indicated that these events will become more prevalent and more severe with climate change and would continue to affect communities and individuals across Wales, and hence NRW.
10. The Chief Executive explained that the NRW had barely reached the recovery phase of the flooding before we moved into the preparation for the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. She particularly noted the efforts of the ICT department who ensured staff members could work from home effectively.

11. During this period NRW maintained major incidence response, maintained production of timber from our forests and continued to repair and survey flood assets.
12. The Chief Executive introduced the two new Executive Team members to the meeting; the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Customer and Commercial and noted the Executive Team is now at full complement.
13. The Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting, Knowledge strategy stated that areas of focus are being shifted in preparation for the Brexit transition period with important work being conducted in collaboration with governments across the UK, and principally with Welsh Government, around the EU Environmental Principles.

Item 4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

14. The Director of Corporate Strategy and Development introduced the item and provided context for the item. He explained that the equality plan had been developed with a range of various Public Sector organisations.
15. He explained that the working group felt there was a good foundation within NRW that would support the wider equality plan objectives, such as staff networks, links with a range of stakeholders and good organisational culture and values. The group wanted to better articulate the focus of equality, diversity and inclusion and how they can help to deliver NRW strategic objectives.
16. It was a collective challenge for Board members and the Executive to drive in order for NRW to be effective on EDI as an organisation. The recommendation was for the Board to agree the draft of the single equality plan to ensure compliance with the public sector equality responsibilities.
17. The Head of People Management advised this plan was developed in partnership with other public sector organisations that were listed. The intention was to bring in external support to develop the shared objectives further in order to develop a better set of cultural principles.

ENDORSED: The Board supported the action plan and objectives and agreed to move them forward and come back to them at January Board.

Item 5 Business Plan performance dashboard 2020/21 Q1 (Including twice-yearly Customer Service Update)

18. The Chief Executive introduced the item and provided a presentation which looked at NRW's performance for Quarter 1 of 2020/21 (ie to June 2020).

19. During this very unusual period, a major review of the Business Plan had been conducted, which was approved at the Board meeting held on the 15th September.
20. The presentation highlighted five strategic priorities: responding to climate emergency; responding to the nature emergency; developing and using our evidence with partners to advocate for and delivery SMNR; developing NRW into an excellent organisation that serves communities of Wales; responding to the UK leaving the European Union and any opportunities it could bring.
21. In terms of staff wellbeing, the Executive Director of Operations updated on the Time to Talk initiative.
22. The Chief Executive mentioned Stephen Marsh-Smith's passing and recognised that he was a great friend to NRW and a great champion for river and water quality in Wales who would be sorely missed.
23. It was confirmed the planned UKWAS Audit would still be going ahead in early October, which - due to COVID-19 - would be a desk-based exercise.
24. The Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial updated on the Customer Programme and explained that there was a clear understanding of the desired direction for the Customer Service strategy.

Close Board meeting

Item 6 Interactive Q&A Session with Public

25. The Chair welcomed questions and observations from the public. The topics covered were:
 - The Commercial Strategy. Assurance was given that the strategy would be drafted with customer engagement with the ambition to go live in April as a co-produced strategy.
 - The delay of bringing new sites on the Welsh Government Woodland Estates for onshore renewable wind farms.

ACTION: The Chief Executive undertook to write to Mr Gareth Wardell to outline where NRW are with the Brechfa Dau project – CEO Office

Close meeting
