

# Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution

## Minutes

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

**Location:** Skype

**Date of Meeting:** Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

### Present Members

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Eleri Salisbury, NRW (Minute Taker)

Sarah Hetherington, NRW (SH)

Ed Davies, NRW (ED)

Ruth Johnston (RJ)

Nichola Salter, NRW (NS)

Katy Simmons, NRW (KS)

Bob Vaughan, NRW (RV)

Marc Williams, NRW (MW)

Dennis Matheson, TFA (DM)

Kate Snow, United Utilities (KS)

Aled Jones, FUW (AJ)

Arfon Williams, WEL (AW)

Andrew Chambers, WG (AC)

Fraser McAuley, CLA (FM)

Geraint Hamer, WG (GH)

Jamie McCoy, AHDB (JM)

Adriana Kiss, WG (AK)

Lee Price, Menter a Busnes (LP)

Sarah Jones, DWWW (SJ)

Shane Thomas, CFF (ST)

Spencer Conlon, WG (SC)

Creighton Harvey, CFF (CH)

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru (RLD)

James Ruggeri, HCC (JR)

## **Apologies**

Matt Lowe, NRW

## **Item 1: Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and opened by referring to the sad loss of Mr. Steven Marsh Smith and described him as a missing friend and colleague. The Chair expressed gratitude for the great work he did and the tremendous amount he had done for the good of rivers and wildlife of Wales. She stressed the importance of this group's work and how it must continue to make changes as he would have wanted.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Chair asked members to declare or raise any conflicts of interest in respect of the agenda items.

NB: All members of the group have completed declaration of interest forms already but should also declare if they have an interest in anything on the agenda.

## **Item 2: Minutes from previous meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

Chair said a few words about re-starting the group's work and continuing through these terrible times we're living through. All were invited to think about how the group moves forward in a positive way that continues towards its goal. She explained that this is not a place for long anecdotal discussion on the problems.

Chair said that as a group the want is to support agriculture and farming, to have a vibrant agriculture sector within Wales and asked all to consider how over time the group can provide for productive agriculture whilst not polluting.

Chair said the group should be proud of the work done over past 3 years in various activities which have made a big difference.

Chair spoke about being inspired at the DCWW conference the previous week. Bethan Evans a speaker there had spoken around innovation and nudge behaviour. Chair explained how she thinks that this is what this group had been doing, nudging industry to do better and better and how this is something for the group to think about.

Chair said that there had been talk about better data and referred to a SWEPT Project Report. Again, the Chair suggested that this is something for the group to look at i.e. data and the need for evidence.

The Chair spoke of scaling success how the group had had some fantastic Farming Connect meetings and programmes and suggested that the group now should scale up.

Chair also said that the group should try to avoid overloading. Creating too many actions that cannot be done. She suggested the group in today's workshop pull out a few things, focus on and move forward.

Chair asked all to stay positive and look at those things than can be done to support Welsh agriculture to be better and avoid accidents and situations and reduce defused pollution. Think about behaviours, work collaboratively.

Chair was delighted to welcome E Davies. Ed from NRW will initially provide support to the WLFM Group on two days a week basis until January, then 3 days in a technical role and hopefully becoming full time by April 2021 for a 12 month period. ED's role was explained which includes some of the work with agricultural statistics.

Chair encouraged all to share their contacts details with ED and possibly have a chat to help him get to know everybody.

Chair explained that other good news was around the administrative role. Interviews are scheduled for the following week and this would be support for the WLMF and the task groups on woodland creation as well as managing some projects.

RV explained that NRW have put some effort and resource into this because it wants to move the project forward. He said that whilst appreciating the struggle each agency has on resources they are encouraged to, if possible, join in where they can to help provide resource and get involved to push things forward.

Chair worked through minutes for changes and the following comments were made:

- Page 5 – CH raised Action Point July 1. In it is said that “CH said that Angling Cymru are concerned that NRW & DCWW are criticised because the public need..’ this should be Afonydd Cymru.
- CH also said that as a general point when doing the minutes asked whether the format is to use full names or just initials. He asked whether that given that these papers are for wider publication maybe should just use initials. Chair agreed that going forward just initials are used.
- Chair raised the question regarding status of the web and inclusion of the group's Minutes. MW updated the group to explain all minutes are on the site. Work to be done on the format to ensure it is web accessible. CH expressed thanks for completing the work.
- SJ referred to the last meeting and discussion around Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and messages to wider public or landowners and explained that she had sent on to MW but can send again some links to DCWW website and a short booklet that explains what CSOs are. MW asked that it please be sent again.

### ***AP November 01: SJ to share information about Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) with the group.***

- Chair recognised that this is a hot topic and CH agreed and explained that Afonydd Cymru are discussing the whole issue and their stance is one of investigating what happens and why before reaching any conclusion and not following on any general criticism without knowing the full facts.
- DM explained that two local domestic sewage spillages had been reported situation were reported and updated the group to say that it had been fixed by the person responsible but did take 6 months.

- RV stressed that if any information like this is known and have examples of where the reaction isn't as good as expected then do let him know and things will be chased through to try and make sure that timings happen in a timely fashion so enable learning and improvement.

### ***AP November 02: group to share reactions regarding incidents/investigations with BV/NRW.***

- Chair asked for an update on the River Wye algal bloom. RV said that there had been a lot of interest around this over the summer and the immediate assumption has been that it's because of the increase in poultry units being developed. NRW doing a lot of work regards this and plan on providing a situational report later in the year. He explained that there are two measures to look at in relation to the Wye, the Water Framework Directive Measures and SAC Habitats Directive and NRW have carried out a lot of reassessment of data and modelling. Monitoring was tightened in 2014 and consequences is that phosphate levels in the river are not down to the target levels set. This is an issue but one that is different from the algal bloom so NRW putting a programme in place to achieve the very stringent target. Also, there is an investigation into why the blooms are happening. Clearly nutrient issues but the root cause is unknown because generally phosphate levels have been decreasing since the 1980s.
- CH asked to highlight that Afonydd Cymru and others have great concern on this and said anything NRW do will be watched very closely other groups too.
- RV said that feedback and scrutiny is good as it keeps the organisation aware of its role and all want the same outcome and said again that NRW working hard on the Wye and other rivers in Wales to review the situation.
- FM via the side bar text asked if there was an update on the incident in Pontithel. RV was aware of the investigation but was not in possession of the latest information.

### ***AP November 03: RV to seek latest update on the incident in Pontithel and update the group.***

- SC gave an update explaining that work continues providing advice to the Minister on the proposed regulation and anticipates putting evidence forward to the minister in the coming weeks. AW asked what will that advice look like? Will it be similar to the draft proposals for the regulations or a significant change or amendment i.e. broadly the same? SC was not in a position to say.

## **Item 3: Brief Recap, Review and Resources**

Chair mentioned the terms of reference and the need for some update. She explained that the group are focused on water pollution with a bit on air and plastics.

Chair invited comments and said if none would then review and update with ED as the group go forward.

AF referred to air and water and that origin of pollution often being the same he said it seems sensible to bring air pollution into this group's work more formally because the cause is often the same.

DM explained that his understanding had been that the air consultation person was going to be invited to join this meeting as a result of a conversation some two months ago. The Chair seemed to recall the same.

SH said that the full Wales Land Management Forum when updated with the ammonia guidance said that the way it would come together would be through this sub-group, but summer hasn't been as anyone planned and stakeholder engagement was been carried out on a 1:1 basis. She said Jeremy is planning to bring it back to this group but consultation still open and that NRW are looking at a policy on betterment which is across natural resources rather than a single issue but not in a position to bring anything yet.

RLD commented that approaches/responses have to be considered holistically and that with the ammonia screening guidance consultation the proposals will work against the objectives of this group to improve water quality. She also confirmed that consultation open until 30 November.

The Chair said that there's a need to be sure that different programmes that are contradictory and so suggested that maybe air can come into the group and asked RV if a conversation was required about that and adding it to the terms of reference.

***AP November 04: RV and Chair to discuss and review ToR to ensure they are complementary with other working groups such as Fisheries and Water Forums.***

RLD made the point that investments that recognise environmental improvements need to be supported and understood through the policy framework otherwise one will work against the other.

CH supported RM comments to some extent in that investment required to help water pollution but there is a lot of common ground and measures taken also with air pollution and supports that the group deal with both.

Decision taken to be well co-ordinated in one group.

SH spoke about the scope of the group and explained that caution was required to try and do everything in one go and suggested that a clear work programme required setting out what will be delivered.

RLD wanted to make it clear that she was talking about the specific issues of ammonia screening guidance which will act as a barrier to the progress in the area of improved water quality by preventing infrastructure projects being taking forward.

Chair asked all to keep thinking about what can be done, in manageable pieces. She asked that group members think about what they can do individually and what their own organisation can do to assists to find solutions to the problems.

***AP November 05: members to explore finding solutions to problems and work as a group.***

Previous Action Points:

- March 3rd – Discussions to take place on how to move the AgriScope group forward: MW spoke to Mark Squire who will be speaking with Eifiona in WG about capital funding for water sampling kits and also about support for the groups. LP no further update.
- SH asked that in relation to other groups that have finished if they have any lessons been identified that this group might take, good practice or outcomes achieved. LP said not publicly divulged because it is in confidence with those businesses, but he will speak with the manager within Farming Connect about case studies and examples of work undertaken.

***AP November 06: LP to look into Farming Connect case studies and examples of work undertaken to identify lessons learnt.***

- RV gave update on funding to support the water standard report. Looking internally and externally for funds. There is an opportunity from next year to look at a competitive bid which RV will be looking at that route to try and get some money back into the group. Chair asked if anyone heard DCWW talker about OFWAT Innovation Funds and whether this might be an opportunity.
- SJ not sure what that is eluding to and offered to go away and find out. SJ directed all to the DCWW Innovation web pages where there is opportunity to submit new ideas and innovative thinking.
- Gravel Action - Outstanding
- CSO Statistics – Action completed.
- KS to send River Dee Project link to RB – Outstanding
- Competencies Framework for WLMF Group – Action Outstanding
- Action still outstanding Communications –

***AP November 07: SC to send an email update to MW for circulation on waste plastics.***

- U10 was done

## **Item 4: WLMF Sub Group Priority Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 3.1**

MW gave background and asked group how to take this forward, who could lead and support this?

SJ asked for more information about NRW's Nutrient Loading Project and what it is. MW to circulate the work packages. MW explained that NRW information will come back to the group from that but asked what other data might be available/accessible from other organisations or sources.

***AP November 08: MW to circulate the work packages for the Nutrient Loading Project.***

AK said that there are some projects being funded from water quality capital budgets that might fit under this description. Pilot projects like BRICKS project in relation to water quality. Geraint leading so liaison suggested.

CH emphasised importance of this issue. MW asked again for any ideas on how to go contractors and response was to make it attractive enough to contractors.

Chair explained to all that the problem is understood but asked where help and support can be sought to address the root cause of pollution which the recommendation.

MW asked if the feeling was that this is the only project that should be looked at or should there be other work.

CH said there is other work.

AW suggested trying to establish the scale of the problem through remote sensing, aerial photographs.

SH spoke about the Nutrients in Wales and what it will delivery but suggested that what needs to be done is to look into practices and obtaining the evidence.

RB also explained that there's no problem with the Nutrient work and the point is are there any other root causes that need to be explored to give a better chance of sorting out the whole picture.

ED suggested that EA have a sediment pollution risk mapping tool which works on the basis of satellite imagery which allows better focus of resources on identifying where sediment pollution is more likely to occur.

SJ suggested behaviour change getting land managers in some cases to tweak what they are doing or sometimes radically. She was not aware that is any baseline of current behaviours practices to know how to pitch messaging. SH also said the barriers to change are unknown.

KS explained that this type of work is being done with in a specific catchment with the EA picking random but representative farms to attempt to get a picture of what compliance is like on those farms. She may be able to fund something but would have to be done on the Dee but limited to the Dee. RV to speak directly with KS and would need NRW to lead because of rights to enter. Chair said that this was an exciting opportunity for evidence piece work on key river.

***AP November 09: RV to speak directly with KS and would need NRW to lead because of rights to enter.***

LP said Farming Connect supports business registered with infrastructure and nutrient management planning and support and advice and then follow-up to understand what actions taken on recommendations and could do some analysis on any priority catchments.

DM asked if dairy project officers are gathering information and suggested that the problem is likely to be the length of time that it takes.

SN commented in relation to the Dairy Project to say it is not just dairy farmers that spread organic materials to land for agricultural benefit. Utility, Waste for example and accredited digestate going onto land and important this is remembered. Would be interesting to know what compliance EA are looking at in the Dee catchment to see what might be duplicated in Wales.

KS said was happy to share but it only just starting.

ED said he believes EA have a sediment pollution risk mapping tool which works on the basis of satellite imagery which allows them you better focus resources on identifying where sediment pollution is more likely to occur.

RV said that with WG and DCWW they how the Catskill approach was in setting nutrient spreading conditions at a field scale.

SH said that real positive if looking at those wider practices as part of this work and NS point is good one and should be included as working with KS and LP moving forward.

#### **Recommendation 4.7**

MW reminded all the recommendation and appropriateness of an EPR Intensive farming approach and asked if there is any action required to deliver some of this work.

RLD asked if Environmental Permitting Dairy & Beef Tech Working Subgroup is just in and if NRW are just observing and the wider point is in terms of the direction future policy where things sit. She said that somethings might be best delivered through the future scheme and know whether this should be advanced now.

MW confirmed that the work is led by EA and it is England. NS confirmed the NRW there watching brief.

SH asked AW if this is something that is being done on the Gwent levels

AK was not aware that any review of EPR is ongoing in the WG.

SH said our work should be evidence based and would come from the Nutrient Loading Project and to be evidence led what needs to be done as preparation for that.

RV asked if watching the work being done in England is good enough or in Wales does any work need to be done in Wales to see the benefits?

SH responded to say she is asking is whether what needs to be done is clear analysis and where does that sit. If this has been seen as a priority questioning why and what they think needs to be done.

AW asked what the review in England covers more than water.

RLD explained it being driven by the Clean Air Plan and Air Quality Objectives.



RV said that lessons from England can certainly be picked up but is there any additional work wanted to see whether the direction that DEFRA are perusing on this is where Wales wants to go.

SH said EPR is quite air dominated and emphasised that this group should be looking at the round and considering it in relation to sustainable management of natural resources underpinning the Well Being Act.

RV suggested that commissioning a piece of work to do that with Nick's help and report back to the group and have a discussion with WH. SH suggested it would be useful to keep a watching brief, look where limitations are and the value of the EPR approach.

AK said she though it needs to be considered within the work of the development of the new schemes and the review of the regulatory framework.

Chair asked if Jeremy would feedback on any learning.

#### **Recommendation 4.12**

MW again gave brief background to the Recommendation.

***AP November 10: RJ to provide update regarding River Basin Management Plan at next meeting.***

Chair asked if anyone measuring soil running down rivers and turbidity monitoring is happening on the Dee looking at stability and colour.

There is an investigation on the Dee looking to put turbidity monitors in the next 4-5 weeks and linking it to colour.

DM said that very keen to have state of soils assess as part of outgoing tenant payment for tenant rights that may be of interest. RV said this good point.

AH asked if the work being done by WG on agricultural land classification is relevant. SH said that this is about the ability to provide the – agricultural provisioning service. It doesn't look at risks associated in terms of soil loss.

SJ said as part of the Brecon Beacon Mega Catchment work there's some risk mapping with Beacon Waters Group.

***AP November 11: SJ to check status and share case study from the Brecon Beacon Mega Catchment.***

SJ also mentioned maize under sowing trials with Wye & Usk.

***AP November 12: SJ to find out more about maize under sowing trials and share with the group.***

RV regarding the Well representation, the work to modelling of catchments looking at soil erosion within fields. DCWW also done similar soil erosion mapping in upland catchments so something along those lines possibly i.e. the risk of movement of soils. Partly LIDAR, but the risk of certain activities within certainly fields. NS said Wye & Usk SciMap getting

this funded or the GIS capability would be good. SH explained that there is a data cost associated with it and agreed that this is a good idea and maybe delivered by WG on My Farm as a data layer.

LP explained that there's ICT project through Farming Connect programme and delivered through LANTRA and possibility here to have some workshops on SciMapping and the benefits. Currently digitally provided.

***AP November 13: LP offered to take this up with LANTRA and report back.***

SH asked if Kate or Afonydd Cymru could share any lesson they might have

CH – providing drills to assist with the work but some farmers not speak to Simon and report.

GH said WG Water Branch has been liaising with colleagues regarding the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring Programme (ERRAMP) - there are lots of soil samples collected, for example UKCEH.

***AP November 14: GH offered to check with colleagues on ERRAMP where soil samples collected by for example UKCEH.***

RV asked Afonydd Cymru could provide or share any learning they have if this could be discussed.

***AP November 15: CH to speak with Simon and report back.***

DM referred to the interim report and how it says that planting trees can stop soil run off and also referred to the problems getting permission to plant trees and since trees so useful in preventing run-off suggested that this group could look into.

AW said that something that needs to be looked at is unintended consequences of public policy.

CH referred back maize and its purpose and some for electricity generation and asked if some data or number was obtained on where it goes for what purpose and suggested that NRW would have to pick up or Farming Connect.

RL asked if there is any data or information on bioeconomy. And mentioned the de-carbonisation agenda that there could be standards that might drive this. SC said he can look into it but not heard anything about increased to feed these plants.

***AP November 16: RV and WG to discuss bioeconomy information.***

RV asked if other department in WG are thinking about these things and RV to speak with climate change people.

***AP November 17: RV to talk to climate change department in WG.***

Chair asked if then what is required is to find out who are contracted growers and are they growing in a responsible way that don't pollute rivers and how to ensure they are held to account.

DM expressed his view on biodigesters are bad news for tenants because they get approached to erect a bio-digester, has not enough ground to grow what's needed for it and then large rents are provided for maize growing up to 4 or 5 times agricultural rent and feels this issue need to be looked at.

SJ suggested that maybe the owners of any anaerobic digester can show trace of the material that's going into it. DM suggested that it might need to go back to planning stage that proof of where the volume of material would come from

SH suggested that the issue is complicated and a key issue for the group would be the regulation. SN explained that there are permitted AD plan and Exempt AD plants. There are poor practices happening and is being looked at by EA and NRW and sits with the waste side of the business and very complex.

SH asked what the output of the WG soil policy and evidence programme – and if the group need to pull that in for wider discussion what's come out of that as it fits with James Kirk and his work which could help.

Decision taken to leave the leave rest of Recommendation for the additional meeting scheduled on 16 November 2020.

MW stressed that what will be required are the actions necessary to carry out the work.

## **Item 5: WLMF Sub Group Communications Plan Update**

KS provided an overview of work that's going on the Comms Plan. She's taken on board those comments received and updated. Revised plan will be circulated in the next few days. A few more changes to make after meeting with DCWW's comms team priorities to. Looking to pick a few key priorities to get things setting and set some base lines around what's already known, what are the needs to know and what are the wants to know.

Examples of tasks are setting up a survey for this group initial, finalising key messages and consistent messages and set up of an events calendar to include any seasonal messaging or best practices or good news stories. And referring to the Nudge behaviour KS has met with change behaviours advisor for her support.

## **Item 6: WLMF Sub Group Membership**

Chair referred to letter from Chris Mills asking for an Afonydd Cymru seat in the group.

Also want to consider AW from RSPB who's been a deputy to remain WEL's membership is 25/30 members and the role will be to report back and bring information and concerns from them.

Chair asked all to consider the two things.

CH gave background to Afonydd Cymru and proposed he be the representative for Afonydd Cymru.

AW explained that he would for the time being stay on as sub but the WEL member is a subject still in discussion. AW supported having an Afonydd Cymru seat on the group as well as WEL seat.

Chair referred to the ToR and asked for group thoughts. SH said that the feedback between WEL work and this group is critical and getting the relationship right is key.

DM thought clean air was coming to this group today as many solutions for air are the same as clean waters.

There was some discussion and the Chair concluded that she, RV and AW need to follow-up and reach a decision on WEL before a reaching decision on Afonydd Cymru.

RV referred to being a sub-group of the Wales Land Management Forum but there are also Fisheries Forum, a Water Forum a biodiversity group too and asked if there's some way to bridge some of these by getting better representation from those groups and getting broader views by joining up a bit better.

***AP November 18: Chair to speak further with RV and AW about WEL representative and the decision about Afonydd Cymru deferred for now. Chair to inform Chris Mills.***

CH asked for Afonydd Cymru seat question to come back at the next meeting.

ED to set next year dates.

FM raised the Wales Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee and sub-committee meeting 1 December.

***AP November 19: details to be sent to RV in relation to the soil erosion discussion earlier.***

MW raised Sheep Dip and informed group that NRW has a draft position statement on the disposal of waste sheep dip.

***AP November 20: MW to circulate the NRW draft position statement on the disposal of waste sheep dip for the group to comment.***

CH informed all that he has been to two sittings of Llanelli Magistrates Court and in the case of agricultural pollution the only people who will be able sitting going forward will be district judges with a certification for environmental offences which should bring about some consistency

## **Item 7: Future Sub Group Meetings**

- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November – continue
- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December

***AP November 21: ED to send out meeting dates for 2021.***

## **Item 8: Any other Business**

MW informed group about the Water Standards – and asked RLD if the steering board or the water quality task & finish group is still active and if the comments being collated need to go back to that board for discussion or to this sub-group. RLD confirmed that they still exist and can be re-convened and are there and available to assist

## **Close meeting**