

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: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Date of Meeting: 17th October 2022

Present:

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Marc Williams, NRW

James Ruggeri, HCC

Einir Williams, Farming Connect

Shane Thomas, Carmarthen Fishermen's Federation

Creighton Harvey, Carmarthen Fishermen's Federation

Mathew Walters, Welsh Government

Polina Cowley, Welsh Government

Nichola Salter, NRW

Sarah Jones, Dwr Cymru

Sarah Hetherington, NRW

Chris Thomas, NRW

Kate Snow, United Utilities

Bernard Griffiths, FUW

David Letellier, NRW

Katy Simmons, NRW

David Ball, AHDB

Additional Attendees Present:

Caroline Hawkins, NRW (Item 5)

Secretariat:

Bronwen Martin, NRW

Apologies:

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru

Chris Mills, WEL

Delyth Lewis-Jones, AHDB

Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

1. Zoe Henderson (NRW Board Member and WLMF Sub Group Chair) welcomed all to the Microsoft Teams meeting and noted apologies. Please note that the meeting is being recorded for the purpose of capturing the minutes and the digital file will be deleted once the meeting minutes have been approved.
2. Zoe recalled that the last meeting was held in July. A number of people were away in August and the September meeting was postponed because it was a National Bank Holiday for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
3. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of 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 Review of Minutes

4. The Chair confirmed that once the meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed by the group, they will be published on the NRW for the public to access. Therefore, it is important that the minutes are an accurate record of the meetings.
5. The group reviewed the previous meeting minutes from 11th July 2022.
6. No comments or suggested amendments were received in respect of the July meeting minutes.
7. Bronwen Martin, NRW shared the actions log and the following updates were of note:
 - AP Dec 02: Katy Simmons, NRW to provide more details regarding the newsletter subscriber numbers.
 - Katy said she has run a report from the last newsletter which was sent out on the 24th August 2022. The newsletter was delivered to the 612 subscribers at that time. Of those subscribers, it was actually delivered to 597 people and there were 15 that bounced back. Katy said she would look into that and delete those addresses if they

are not working anymore. There were six people that unsubscribed from that newsletter. The newsletter itself was opened 788 times. Regarding the clicks on the links within the newsletter, there were 63 clicks on those links and the most popular one (18 clicks) was the Wales environmental pollution incidents link that was within one of the articles. The second favourite link was to the information page on NRW's website about this WLMF Sub Group and the third favourite was for the NFU Cymru's Shaping Welsh Farming's Future Report. At the time of sending out the latest newsletter, there were 612 subscribers and there have been 138 new subscribers since. Katy said the newsletter was promoted a bit more on NRW's social media and shared through partners and stakeholders.

- Katy said she was starting to gather content for the next newsletter which will come out in the last week of November. Katy is also putting together a table for the next year of deadlines and when the content is needed which will be circulated to members. Katy confirmed the deadline for the November newsletter content will be 4th November and asked members to get an article or information to her by then.

AP October 01: Members to provide Katy Simmons, NRW with articles or information for the next newsletter by 4th November.

- AP Feb 05: Andrew Chambers, Welsh Government to see whether there is an update on tenancies and the work that DEFRA is doing.
- Matthew Walters, Welsh Government said Andrew has moved teams and is no longer working on the agricultural pollution side. Matthew said he would pick up the outstanding actions for Welsh Government.

AP October 02: Bronwen Martin, NRW to send Matthew Walters, Welsh Government a list of the outstanding actions for Welsh Government.

- AP April 07: Chris Thomas, NRW to provide a presentation on the 4 Rivers for LIFE Project.
- Bronwen said Chris and Susie are hoping to provide a presentation in November.
- Chris said they should have a lot more information by November as the launch is in a couple of weeks' time.
- AP May 05: Members to share information or knowledge regarding the nutrients within the feed cycle, particularly regarding poultry feed.
- Bronwen said she has not received any information from members and asked those present if they were aware of any information, data or had any knowledge in this area. Members did not offer information.
- AP July 07: Polina Cowley, Welsh Government to share information and evidence regarding the impacts of ammonia emissions on the health and safety of farmer populations.
- Polina said she will not discuss health and safety in today's presentation but is planning to do a series of presentations around ammonia and will hopefully cover on health and safety next time.

8. Zoe recalled an action about under sowing maize and asked Matthew whether there was information circulated. Matthew said he would follow this up.

Item 3 Matters Arising

9. Zoe welcomed the group to discuss any matters arising from the previous meeting minutes, relevant documents or recent topics.
10. Zoe formally recognised the work of the WLMF Sub Group Alternative Measures Task & Finish Group. The Alternative Measures Task & Finish Group submitted the report to Welsh Government for consideration on 30th September 2022. Zoe thanked all involved in the process, it was a tremendous effort. It was acknowledged that not everybody has endorsed absolutely everything within the report, but it contains some really good suggestions for alternative measures for The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

Creighton mentioned a meeting with the Land Use Group of Wales Environment Link (WEL) where they discussed whether the WEL logo should be included on the report. This has not been finally resolved but the report is appreciated and many of the recommendations are also appreciated but not every WEL member can endorse it.

Zoe asked Welsh Government whether others have submitted Alternative Measures proposals. Matthew said they have received about five in total and Welsh Government have acknowledged every submission. Welsh Government will now go back to each participant with information about what the next stages will be. Matthew reminded the group of the requirements within the Regulation for the Minister to make a statement about what happens next (the Minister's statement must be made by April 2023). Welsh Government will go through a process to understand what each individual assessment is, what the impacts are and then determine what action (if any) would be taken.

Creighton asked whether NRW have made a submission. David Letellier, NRW confirmed that NRW made a submission.

11. Zoe asked whether Matthew could help the group understand more about Lesley Griffiths' (Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd) written statement on the Cooperation Agreement: Agricultural Pollution (published 5th October 2022) – [Welsh Government: Written statement - Cooperation Agreement: Agricultural Pollution](#). Zoe said there is a need for clear communication to make sure that everybody understands exactly what it means. Matthew said the Minister's statement was published on 5th October. There was a political agreement that was agreed through the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru which is around working with the farming community on the deployment of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations. Fundamentally, this is not about getting rid of the regulations, and this is not about starting again by reviewing it from the beginning. This is about how we go about implementing the regulations – the specific word 'deployment' should be emphasised. Welsh Government have recognised that the situation has been difficult over the past 18-months around some of the external issues (e.g., costs), which is part of the reason to look at that single measure of the regulations. This impacts one single measure, the delay to April 2023 is just for the 170 kilograms per hectare (kg/ha) limit of livestock manure for the holding ([The Water Resources \(Control of Agricultural Pollution\)](#)

[\(Wales\) Regulations 2021 - Regulation 4](#)). This will allow time for a consultation to take place on a licensing scheme. It is very important to note that the consultation will be a full and open consultation and Welsh Government will be taking views from everyone. The detail that is presented as part of the consultation will contain what is envisaged (e.g., what the scheme might look like and how it could operate). Matthew said they are hoping for a full 12-weeks of consultation time. As part of that, there is a reminder that the scheme would operate until 2025, so it is a transitional item not a long-term change to the regulations. Alongside that, there will be an Economic Environment Impact Assessment on the changes that the license scheme will make to that 170kg/ha limit and what impacts that will have both environmentally and economically. Matthew said the scheme design will come out of this. The consultation process should be started around mid-November 2022. To support that, there is additional funding up to £20 million, this has not been fully determined/allocated at the moment so Welsh Government are keen to work with the industry on that.

Regarding the alternative measures, Matthew said the WLMF Sub Group proposal had a similar element in it around increasing in the limit to 250kg/ha. Welsh Government will look in detail about how/what that impacts and whether some of the suggestions made within the report will inform part of the consultation. Matthew said it is really important to say that the 250kg/ha limit being consulted on will be subject to the crop need and other legal considerations. It is not a guarantee that spreading will be allowed up to that limit as there will be other considerations, all of which will form part of the consultation.

Welsh Government will be looking to the WLMF Sub Group members to help get the consultation messages out there by engaging with other stakeholders and industry.

Dennis Matheson, TFA asked about Welsh Government's plans regarding the issues for tenants complying with the Regulations and whether they will now wait until the newly formed Tenancy Working Group comes up with something. Dennis said time is fast running out when some of these rules will have a severe impact on tenants. Matthew said regarding the tenancy issues, this has been discussed across several months and a lot of that comes down to the initial approach in terms of enforcement (how NRW and RIW go about the initial enforcement). There are established processes in dealing with those issues and there is no change beyond the single measure outlined in the written statement.

Creighton discussed the background of the regulations and concluded that a 3-month delay is not unreasonable but expressed disappointment that there is a delay. Creighton said as far as Afonydd Cymru, CFF and some WEL members are concerned, they welcome the mention of licensing provisions because it is the first time licensing has been mentioned for agriculture in relation to slurry and nutrient matters.

Einir Williams, Farming Connect said there is confusion amongst farmers. Farming Connect have run 15 roadshows shows across Wales on the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations which explained what they meant and what support is available. The roadshows have been very well attended, but the last three were cancelled pending the minister's announcement and they are now to be rearranged. There will also be a mop up session on 26th October to update those who attended the roadshows.

David Ball, AHDB asked for clarity regarding what Matthew had said about the consultation on licensing and that spreading and crop need would be considered. David Ball said he understood that the 170kg/ha rule is purely to do with nitrogen production, nothing to do with spreading or crop need but nitrogen produced from livestock on farm. Matthew said the wording of this specific regulation says the total amount of nitrogen applied to the holding, whether direct by the animal or spreading does not exceed 170kg/ha limit. It is related to the manure applied but across the whole holding rather than the individual limits for individual fields which is the higher limit of 250kg/ha. David Ball maintained that in order to be compliant, it is purely a question of how much nitrogen is being produced by animals per hectare on the holding. Nichola Salter, NRW said the 170kg/ha limit is for the total nitrogen from livestock manures on the holding. There are other measures that you will need to do to ensure that the environment is fully protected. David Ball said irrespective of what the number is, it is a question of how much nitrogen is produced by the animals on the holding divided by the number of hectares that the farmer has access to, for either grazing or spreading. Nichola said yes, for that individual measure but reminded everybody that they need to look at the regulations as a suite of measures. Nichola mentioned that NRW recently published manures and slurries and when they are considered wastes under existing legislation - [Natural Resources Wales - How to use manures and slurries appropriately](#).

David Ball asked whether the consultation would focus on the 170kg/ha limit versus 250kg/ha limit. Matthew said it will focus purely on those two issues but where derogations exist or similar measures exist elsewhere, there are additional controls required to prevent pollution. It will form a significant part of the consultation in terms of what measures, or any actions, might be required to prevent additional negative outcomes from having a high nitrogen application limit. However, it may be a result of the consultation that there are no additional measures required. David Ball emphasised that when messages are communicated to farmers, they need to be very clear and precise. Zoe agreed and asked for a summary regarding the limits and crop need. Nichola said it depends on what you are putting on, the 170kg/ha limit is for livestock manures and the 250kg/ha limit is for organic manures as defined by the regulations (anything that is plant, human or animal source) but you cannot put more on than the crop requires (nitrogen plan). This is why you need to look at the measures all interrelated as a whole because it is not quite as clear cut. There is other legislation which should also be considered. Nichola said she is hoping to get some communications out to help farmers and is in discussions with Farming Connect and Welsh Government to try and clarify things because there is confusion. David Ball suggested that it is not complicated as long as the documentations are accurately worded without confusing messages.

Creighton asked to clarify that there is a holding limit, but you are still subject to crop need requirements. So effectively there are two limits running hand in hand, whereby you have a holding limit which is the maximum amount you can put on of nitrate, but if you have a soil, which is already over the limit in terms of phosphate saturation, then you might already be over crop need before your manure is applied. Nichola said these regulations do not cover phosphate currently but because of the limit of a nitrogen there would be a knock-on effect on the limit of phosphate, just by association of what is in the content of the manures. There is a whole holding limit and then there is the limit per hectare, but you still have to have your nitrogen plan so that you are putting on what your crop needs. Your nitrogen plan is limited in the fact that by the hectare limit you can only put on 250 kilograms per hectare from organic manures (as defined by the

regulations), so you can top it up with 'bagged fertilizer', but you cannot put anymore organic on.

David Letellier asked whether farmers understand what has been discussed today and if not, what needs to be in place to actually help them and is it part of this group's remit to set something up. David Ball said a lot of farmers do not understand and mentioned that at past AHDB events, farmers were either very shy in coming forward or they just did not know the detail of the regulations. David Ball suggested that the recent Farming Connect roadshows would be better informed of the situation on the ground. Chris Thomas, NRW disagreed and said most farmers that he has talked to would understand the regulations. Most of the arable and dairy farmers who are likely to head towards this limit and potentially have issues with it, seem to be aware. Chris said he has had more questions from beef and sheep farmers. David Letellier suggested that often some businesses will employ someone to help with environmental issues because they can afford it. David Letellier said that is not likely to be the case with many farmers, but this could potentially be an area where the group might get the biggest gains by upping efforts in terms of information and building those environmental skills and understanding of what is needed. Einir said Farming Connect have been running agricultural pollution workshops on the workbook in every region where they have held the agricultural pollution roadshows and thus far, they have been oversubscribed everywhere. There is a mixture in terms of the farmers that have booked on, some are aware of what they need to do but for others it is coming as a massive shock. Einir said her colleague in mid-Wales recalled that many beef and sheep farmers are panicking when they do not need to and some of the bigger dairy farmers have not been seen at the Farming Connect events, which is a worry. In terms of filling in the workbook itself, generally, it is not difficult for those who work daily with spreadsheets, but for farmers that are not familiar with spreadsheets it is not an easy task. Therefore, some farmers might pay somebody else to complete it for them but in doing so they will then lose ownership of the document. Subject to budget, Farming Connect might be able to run some more workshops and are also in the process of creating a 'how to' video to help people complete the agricultural pollution workbook.

Nichola said that we need clear communication and guidance, but we also need to help stop the scaremongering. More people are signing up for the Farming Connect events so hopefully they will get some additional funding to put on more events, however not all farmers are able to get on to webinars, so messages still need to be calmly and rationally communicated through other channels. Einir agreed and said the tone and delivery of the Farming Connect workshops has tried to help farmers not to panic by telling them what support (e.g., workshops, clinics, and surgeries about different elements of the regulations) is available to them. There is lots of help out there for farmers which has been the message at the roadshows.

David Ball said AHDB has a very useful readily available online calculator tool called the [AHDB: Slurry Wizard](#) which is on the AHDB website. The tool allows the user to calculate their compliance with both the 170kg/ha rule and also their five months storage requirement based on the animals that are on their farm, housing period, rainfall, yards etc. David Ball suggested that information about the AHDB slurry wizard tool could form part of any communication that is planned or any other activity that will shed light on the regulations for farmers. David Ball mentioned that in England, the Environment Agency are about to launch a grant scheme for slurry storage and they

are requiring all applicants to use the AHDB slurry wizard to demonstrate their storage capacity needs.

Creighton acknowledged that it was a pity that no one from NFU Cymru is in this discussion as they have a big membership, and they also have incredibly good communications systems. If NFU Cymru were here not only could we know what they were going to do in terms of communication but some of the points raised could be shared with them so they could put their members minds at rest. Zoe asked Bernard if FFW are doing specific communications or whether they could do with any help to get messages out to FFW members. Bernard recalled some of the discussion and suggested that we are in this predicament because of the insistence of rolling out regulations pan-Wales. As some have already mentioned, this should not really be an issue for the beef and sheep farmers. If we had a more targeted approach, the whole messaging and the communications issue would not be as problematic as it is. Matthew said Welsh Government are certainly very conscious that the wording of the written statement might create a slight degree of ambiguity. When Welsh Government head towards the consultation and put information out there, they will be looking to stakeholders to help communicate the messages clearly. Welsh Government welcome stakeholders to work with them to clarify the language so that the messages for farmers are clear.

12. Zoe briefly mentioned a few other relevant topics including the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee review of the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations and the substantiated pollution data which was circulated to members before the meeting. Regarding the substantiated pollution data and graph, Creighton said it was encouraging that the trend tends to be downward but questioned what the effects of the COVID restrictions were on NRW visits and movements during the last couple of years. Creighton recalled an incident where nobody from NRW attended yet it was a very impactful incident. At the time, Creighton was given various explanations as to why nobody attended including it was late in the day, COVID restrictions and it was a low priority. David Letellier said as far as he was aware, there were no restrictions to NRW's statutory work from COVID restrictions and staff were given a letter to show that they were key workers (e.g., responding to flooding and pollution incidents etc.).

Item 4 Ammonia Presentation

13. Polina Cowley, Welsh Government gave an overview of what ammonia is and statutory obligations.
14. Ammonia (NH₃) is a toxic, highly reactive and soluble colourless gas with a pungent odour. Most of the ammonia in the environment comes from the natural breakdown of manure, dead plants and animals. Not all the nitrogen (from manures and fertilisers) is taken up by plants; large amounts (about 50%) are lost to the environment as a pollutant through evaporation, volatilisation, nitrification, denitrification, run-off or leaching. When NH₃ reacts with atmospheric acids Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitric oxides (NO_x) it produces Particulate Matter (PM) that damages respiratory and cardiovascular systems in people and animals. Polina said in a future meeting she would explain more about how particulate matter effects human health.

15. Polina showed a graph from [The National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) which indicated Wales' normalised trends for all pollutants from 1990 until 2017. According to the graph, ammonia has not undergone any reduction and from 2005 it has actually increased.
16. The National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018 (NECR) set Emission Reduction Commitments (ERCs) for the UK for 2020-2030 for 5 key pollutants. These mirror the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) targets under the Gothenburg Protocol. Where UK is not projected to meet its NECR commitments an obligation is triggered to publish a National Air Pollution Control Plan (NAPCP) to set out measures to achieve the ERCs. The NECR sets a target for reduction of ammonia emissions of 8% by 2020 and 16% by 2030 on 2005.
17. Polina gave an overview of the ammonia pollution trends in Wales using a graph from the [National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory \(2005-2019\)](#). About 91-92% of NH₃ emissions in Wales come from agriculture. Agricultural NH₃ emissions in Wales in 2005 were 21.48 kilotons (kt) and in 2021 they were estimated to be 23.33kt, which is an increase of 8.3%. Instead of reducing NH₃ emissions, they have increased in Wales. Disaggregation of NH₃ emissions in Wales is very different from England. The biggest polluting sector in Wales is cattle: cattle manure management (livestock housing, manure storage and outdoor concrete yards) and its application to land make 70% of all NH₃ emissions.
18. Creighton said slurry is a wretched substance. It is difficult to manage as a liquid and there is really no thought to manage it as a gas. These discussions should have been had in the late 80's. Slurry is causing damage to the air (both in the countryside and in cities), it is causing damage to our waterways, and it is causing damage to our land. Polina said slurry can be viewed as a wretched substance but on the other side, there is evidence that it can also be a significant part of the circular economy and sustainable farming. So instead of looking at it from the negative point of view, we can try to find a way of using the nutrients instead of polluting the air with ammonia and other gases or soil with nitrogen.
19. David agreed with Polina and said we really should be looking at this as a valuable resource not a 'waste' material. David asked has any proposals been discussed for any regulation, legislation or policy around measures to reduce ammonia emissions in Wales. David said he was aware of what is happening in England with the Clean Air Act and proposals to control some farming activities. Polina said she could not comment specifically but understands that the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) are looking at a voluntary approach on ammonia measures which is mentioned in the [Sustainable Farming Scheme Outline Proposals for 2025](#) document. Polina said Welsh Government has also produced a guide for managing slurries. The Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations also contributes to the reduction of ammonia, it has been modelled that about 1.5% of reduction of ammonia in Wales is expected as a result of these regulations. Farming Connect has been running a really interesting online interactive tool that shows farmers how they can reduce ammonia.
20. Chris asked Polina what the breakdown with regards to ammonia from poultry on the graph was shown. Polina confirmed that poultry was not included on the graph, you will be able to find a breakdown by species in the Clean Air Plan.

Item 5 NRW Corporate Plan

21. Caroline Hawkins (NRW) joined the meeting to provide an overview and update on NRW's Corporate Plan. Members were informed of an upcoming opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the NRW Corporate Plan.
22. Caroline said she wanted to raise awareness of where NRW are the development of the next Corporate Plan for Natural Resources Wales and invite WLMF Sub Group members to get involved over the next few months when NRW come back to you with the more formal shape of the plan. Members will be able to feedback on how the plan looks and anything in there that you think NRW need to consider.
23. The next NRW Corporate Plan will take us to 2027 which is in line with the current programme for government. Caroline explained what NRW has been doing over the course of this year regarding the development of the Corporate Plan. Initial feedback was gathered earlier in the year regarding how the current corporate plan has worked and whether there are things in there which could be different/better. Caroline mentioned the next phase will be throughout November and there will be another opportunity for people to provide feedback. NRW will then start to finalise the plan ready to go through the final approvals for launch in the spring next year.
24. This Corporate Plan is going to bring in a set of wellbeing objectives and the steps to take in order to meet them. NRW will be very specific in terms of the steps to deliver longer term objectives which will take us to 2030 and go beyond the life of the current government. We want our well-being objectives to represent what we want to do in the medium to longer term. The well-being objectives within our plan will be in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is why they are called well-being objectives.
25. We have met with our NRW Board and with our Executive Leadership Team and it is likely that our next well-being objectives will be centred around the climate emergency, nature emergency and preventing pollution.
26. In early November 2022, we would like to come back to the WLMF Sub Group to show you what has been formed and consolidated following the engagement sessions over the summer months. There will be about 6 or 7 specific questions within the next phase of communication asking for your views on those objectives, how you think they come across and about the delivery of them. In particular, we want to make sure the next Corporate Plan is clear and easy to understand, ensure that the steps are ambitious enough to meet the well-being objectives and identify opportunities in that plan.

Item 6 Discussion: Priorities

27. Prior to the meeting, members were asked 'what are your organisation's main priorities regarding agricultural pollution?' and were given an action to share one or two priorities from their individual organisation linked to tackling agricultural pollution in Wales (including any examples of actions undertaken by their organisation). The purpose of this ask was to make sure the WLMF Sub Group evolves and has direction going forward to tackle agricultural pollution that will meet the group's main themes. Those who were unable to attend the meeting were asked to email their written action for it to be read out during the meeting.

28. **NFU Cymru:** A written response to the action was provided by Rachel Lewis-Davies. In terms of NFU Cymru's priorities, these include supporting their members with the regulations and providing information on water quality through their communication channels. There is an upcoming consultation on the licensing approach proposed by Welsh Government and NFU Cymru will be working with their members on that.
29. **FUW:** Bernard said FUW would also be aiming to secure proportionate regulation. We have heard lots of this phrase in the last few years 'the right tree in the right place' and that is also relevant for having the right regulation in the right place. FUW will also be trying to secure sufficient time for businesses to transition into the new requirements especially infrastructure projects, so the timeline for introducing regulations should be extended given current inflation costs and pressures on food security and many families are going to struggle to meet the current timeline of August 2024.
30. **DCWW:** From the water side of the business, Sarah Jones said DCWW will be looking to carry on working collaboratively to safeguard drinking water sources that DCWW abstract from for public drinking water. They will be looking to safeguard the quality of those going forward and the 23 safeguard zones which have been designated by NRW. DCWW will be looking to continue to either lead projects themselves or work with others for example working with Chris Thomas, NRW and the team with the 4 Rivers for Life Project. DCWW have been a funder of that project and are keen to carry on actively working with them and the rivers. Sarah mentioned the proactive work in the Brecon Beacons Mega Catchment is another priority for DCWW. They have established a Beacons Water Group, which is a farmer led group looking to trial different ways of working which could be scalable for the next asset planning period. The DCWW Biosolids Team will continue to follow the Biosolids Assurance Scheme to recover waste to land. Sarah mentioned that DCWW have recently appointed River Quality Liaison Managers which are a brand-new role and a point of contact for people wanting to know more about water quality in their area, liaising with MP's, AM's and councillors. They will also be actively involved in the Nutrient Management Boards that are linked to SAC rivers.
31. **United Utilities:** Kate Snow said United Utilities' interests in Wales are around Lake Vyrnwy, the Upper River Seven and the River Dee (nearly one third of United Utilities' water comes from Wales). United Utilities have been working in the River Dee and Vyrnwy for the past 10 to 15 years and giving one-to-one farm advice, working in partnership mainly (United Utilities not the delivery body) providing advice and small-scale intervention funding on farms. United Utilities are interested in improving the water environment. They do not have any waste water assets in Wales, so everything they are interested in is linked to abstraction for drinking water, to keep bills low, reduce our carbon footprint and chemical usage. Specifically, they are producing an AMP 8 bid which is for the next five years in conjunction with four water companies who are putting it together (Hafren Dyfrdwy, United Utilities, Seven Trent and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water). For the Dee, that includes cryptosporidium, turbidity, colour, PFAS chemicals (emerging chemicals of concern) and pesticides. United Utilities have been working on the Dee for well over 15 years which involves a lot of monitoring. Kate mentioned that United Utilities need to undertake some stakeholder consultations around their AMP 8 bid process. This is a great opportunity for WLMF Sub Group members to put forward any innovative ideas about how things can be delivered on the Dee. Kate said they will be looking at delivering in partnership so members can contact either her or Laura Flower from Severn Trent. Bronwen said that is a great opportunity for WLMF Sub

Group members to get involved and asked Kate to share information which can be circulated to members after the meeting.

AP October 03: Kate Snow United Utilities to share information which can be circulated to members regarding innovative ideas for the AMP 8 bid work.

32. **TFA Cymru:** Dennis said the current main priority for TFA Cymru is working on the barriers that exist for tenants trying to access the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme because presently, not many tenants will be able to access the scheme or take advantage of some of the options. Dennis mentioned that details for the Agricultural (Wales) Bill were recently published which were supposed to deal with some of these issues and it is extremely disappointing that it does not. Last February, George Eustice set up a Tenancy Working Group in England and a report was published by Defra last Thursday which included 74 recommendations as to how tenants could access the English scheme. In Wales, Lesley Griffiths MS said that she was going to set up a similar group that is only just now being convened, and the first meeting will likely be in November. Dennis suggested that Welsh Government have had four years to come up with something already knowing what the problems are. As far as the pollution regulations are concerned, TFA Cymru really want some answers as soon as possible.
33. **Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC):** James said he did not have any specific priorities to share. HCC are not a lobbying body but generally support things that add to Brand Wales. HCC want farmers to be sustainable and profitable because that is what keeps them in business.
34. **AHDB:** David Ball said AHDB have focused more recently on greenhouse gases. Carbon and being carbon efficient are something that AHDB are quite focused on. AHDB have been modelling some farming activities or typical farming systems to see how/if they can get to net zero. AHDB have also done some carbon foot printing of a range of farms and farming systems across Wales and developing a 'what works centre', which will contain information about what measures can be implemented on farm to reduce the environmental impact of the farming activities and these will be evidenced and given scores depending on how effective they are and how affordable they are. This work centre will contain lots of measures that can be implemented by farmers to reduce their environmental impact.

AHDB are doing a series of meetings around the country about the water regulations to try to raise awareness, highlight what they mean for farmers and discuss how the obligations can be met. AHDB have also done a lot of work on raising awareness of ammonia when the Clean Air Act came out in England. AHDB held a number of meetings around the country on ammonia and what farmers might do to reduce their ammonia emissions, including what was proposed in the English regulations. David suggested that perhaps AHDB are well placed to help spread messages across Wales when we know a little bit more about the proposals for Wales. Regarding the modelling work that AHDB have been doing, Bronwen asked whether any of that has been published yet and if so, could David sign post WLMF Sub Group members to it. David said it has not been published yet, AHDB commissioned two pieces of work looking at various farming systems and what sorts of measures can be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach net zero on those farms. When available, it will be in an easy-to-understand format rather than scientific language.

35. **Carmarthen Fishermen's' Federation (CFF):** Creighton said CFF are the eyes on the ground because their members are walking the rivers every day of the year. CFF are holding an upcoming meeting to emphasize to members the importance of reporting incidents to NRW through the reporting system. CFF members will be recommended ways in which they can improve the quality of their reporting to get a better response; the better the information provided, the more chance there is in having a response. Currently, there is some resistance because CFF members feel that when they report matters, sometimes there is very little response. Creighton said he has explained to them that there is a grading of responses that NRW use based on the seriousness of the incident. CFF will continue to encourage their members to report matters.

Creighton said there is a concern related to the SFS, current proposals do not include National Minimum Standards and do not outline the increase in enforcement options or regulation operations for NRW.

36. **Farming Connect:** Einir previously mentioned the Farming Connect roadshows and the upcoming webinar (26th of October). Workshops are also available for completing the Agricultural Pollution Workbook. Farming Connect will be running workshops on completing risk maps as well. Digital surgeries are also available where people can chat with an environmental consultant regarding nitrogen loading on farm. Farming Connect have been running on farm clinics on infrastructure, soil, manure, water, and diversification. The Farming Connect dedicated web page for agricultural pollution acts as a one stop shop for the services that they offer. There are other services available such as mentoring support. Einir said Farming Connect really appreciate any collaboration with WLMF Sub Group members and stakeholders to help get the message out there about the upcoming events they are running.

AP October 04: Einir to share the Farming Connect webinar booking details with members.

37. **NRW:** David Letellier said it is important that NRW works with Welsh Government to look at resources. Issues about resources are always helped by demand. David reminded the group of how critically important it is to report any pollution incidents.

NRW have a role to play in innovation, whether directly or indirectly involved. We talked about slurry management earlier and what is happening already. Perhaps there are further opportunities that could be piloted in Wales. David discussed NRW's role in innovation and evidence.

David said it would be good to get a greater understanding on who visits what farm in Wales. NRW carryout compliance and advisory visits and Farming Connect visit farms but do NGO's visit farms. There is a whole host of people working for a common goal so it would be good to understand what other organisations also undertake visits. This would help understand the links, for example look at what we all do, understand how much resource there is, understand if we are targeting the right areas or if we are maximizing the limited resources. David said this is something he would like to in the next 6 to 12 months.

Zoe said it she was pleased to hear David Letellier highlighting the importance of evidence. Recently, there has been traction on 'citizen science' used to help support and gather evidence. However, we have not really seen this get off the ground with

farmers or fishermen. Sarah Hetherington, NRW said NRW have got a work stream on Citizen Science in terms of how it can be used. Although, one of the difficulties is regarding the principles like what we can use it for and how we can make the best of it. This is all being worked out at the moment, but it has been progressing over the summer. Sarah Suggested that a colleague Sue Byrne might be available to provide a presentation and explain the process to members.

AP October 05: Bronwen Martin, NRW to invite Sue Byrne, NRW to provide a presentation about citizen science at a future meeting.

38. **Welsh Government:** Matthew said he is focussing primarily on what happens next regarding the consultation for the licensing scheme. A longer-term plea from this group is related to the four-year statutory review within the Regulations, so from a regulatory perspective Welsh Government would beginning to start that process probably early to mid-2023. Welsh Government will be starting to bring in the evidence and looking at what works with the regulations and what does not. Matthew said this is a forward look for people to share things can inform the review from the discussions in this group, particularly around alternative technologies and where regulations as they currently structured might be barriers to the use of alternative technologies.

Polina said she would be providing more information about how ammonia effects health and the environment at the next meeting. Polina said she is also really interested in alternative technologies particularly around ammonia and the treatment of slurry.

AP October 06: Polina Cowley, Welsh Government to provide a presentation about how ammonia effects health and the environment at a future meeting.

39. Shane Thomas, CFF mentioned the need for greater surveillance of unpermitted water abstraction on catchments across West Wales. This is an increasing issue, especially this year and has become quite evident due to the lack of water and a lot of small streams are completely drying up.

40. Zoe thanked everyone for sharing their priorities. This has been an excellent opportunity to understand what is going on in all of the different WLMF Sub Group organisations.

Item 7 Any Other Business

41. Marc gave a brief update on the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) process. Pre-COVID, a meeting was held to look at the various challenges. An Expression of Interest (EOI) has now been put together. The general challenge that this focusses on is nutrient efficiency and how farmers will be enabled to apply organic and manufactured fertiliser in a way that supports farm production without causing pollution. Marc recently met with Aber Innovation and Welsh Government regarding the SBRI and how it can move forward. Marc asked the group if they thought nutrient efficiency is still key, how we can find innovative solutions and are there innovative ways to make nutrients more efficient on farms. Marc also asked about involvement from the members of this group. Welsh Government said that involvement from a stakeholder group like this is in our favour of getting the funding, particularly for the phase one which is 100% funded by Welsh Government. Then going forward into the phase 2 (demonstration phase), it is around 50% funded by Welsh Government and then the

remaining funding would be sourced elsewhere. Marc asked whether there are any members that could provide any financial contribution towards this. It is still in the scoping stage, so it is very unlikely that we could be able to deliver anything in this financial year. However, if we can scope the project out and get a commitment from members (whether that is in kind contribution, resources or financial) then we can move this forward by advertising it, explore the businesses and then have a panel of people willing to be on a Project Board to decide what projects/businesses to support. Marc said he would keep everybody updated. Zoe said this is a good initiative to keep pushing on. Marc asked members to contact him directly if they are willing to contribute or have any questions.

AP October 07: Members to contact Marc Williams, NRW regarding support for the SBRI opportunity.

42. Zoe mentioned that there is a huge amount of work going on with the water companies to reduce pollution. Zoe suggested that perhaps a future meeting could include an overview on what is going on from the NRW perspective and from the water company perspectives as to how that is being tackled. There has been a big escalation to reduce the pollution from water companies and fundamentally from all of us as consumers.
43. Zoe reminded the group that Winter Fair will be held on 28th and 29th November 2022 at The Royal Welsh Agricultural Showground.
44. The next WLMF Sub Group Meeting is Monday 21st November 2022.

Close meeting