Agenda

Title of meeting:	**NRW Board Public Meeting**
Date of meeting:	**Wednesday 18th November**
Time of meeting:	**10:10 – 13:45**
Location:	**Teams**

Time	Item
Public Meeting	
10:10 **(5 mins)**	**Item 1. Open Meeting** • Welcome • Declaration of Interests • Explain conduct of meeting Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair **Summary: To NOTE any declarations of interest**
Preliminary Matters	
10:15 **(5 mins)**	**Item 2. Review Minutes and Action and Decisions Log** **2A. Review Minutes from 22nd September Public Board Meeting** **2B. Review Public Action and Decisions Log** Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair **Summary: To APPROVE the minutes of the previous meeting and the Action and Decisions Log**

10:20
(10 mins)

Item 3. Safety Moment

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev (Chair)

Presenter: Rhys Jones, Board Member

Summary: For a member of the meeting to provide a brief reminder or tip related to health, safety, or wellbeing. Rhys Jones to discuss wellbeing.

Setting the Scene

10:30
(20 mins)

Item 4. Update from the Chair

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

Summary: To NOTE the Chair's update to the Board

10:50
(40 mins)

Item 5. Report from the Chief Executive

Sponsor and Presenter: Ceri Davies, Chief Executive

Summary: To NOTE the current position and update the Board on key activities

Paper Ref: 26-11-B07

Governance, Risk and Assurance

11:30
(20 mins)

Item 6. Update Reports of Committees and Forums

Sponsors and Presenters: Committee Chairs

Committee/Fora met since last Board:

- Audit & Risk Assurance Committee – 25th September – **Paper ref: 26-11-B08**
- Protected Areas Committee – 29th September – **Paper ref: 26-11-B09**
- People Committee – 8th October – **Paper ref: 26-11-B10**
- Strategic Delivery Committee – 4th November
- Evidence Advisory Committee – 10th November
- Wales Land Management Forum – 21st September – **Paper ref: 26-11-B15**

Committees/Fora not due to meet until after Board:

- Finance Committee
- Wales Water Management Forum
- Wales Fisheries Forum
- National Access Forum for Wales

Summary: To NOTE the updates from the Board Committees and NRW Forums.

Strategic Planning

11:50
(20 mins)

Item 7. Approaches to Tackling Illegal Waste Activity in Wales

Sponsor: Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence
Presenter: Nadia DeLonghi, Head of Regulation and Permitting; Michelle Griffiths, Operations Manager for South Central

Summary: To NOTE the current position on waste crime and NRW's role in dealing with criminality and permit breaches. A number of interventions are being planned to strengthen our approach to detection, disruption and enforcement. The Board are asked to provide a STEER on the actions proposed or consider alternatives.

Paper ref: 26-11-B11

12:10
(45 mins)

Lunch

Delivering Our Plan

12:55
(20 mins)

Item 8. Finance Performance Report – Q2

Sponsor: Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Presenter: Catherine Allan, Head of Finance

Summary: To APPROVE the change in the latest forecast from £322.6 to £323.1m. To SCRUTINISE the financial performance for Q2.

Paper Ref: 26-11-B12

13:15
(20 mins)

Item 9. Business Plan Performance Dashboard Quarterly Update – Q2

Sponsor: Prys Davies, Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Evidence
Presenters: WBO Leads; Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy and PMO

Summary: To APPROVE the Business Plan 2026/27 Q2 Performance Report.

Paper ref: 26-11-B16

Discussion by Exception

13:35 **(5 mins)**	**Item 10. Feedback on Today's Meeting** Sponsor: Neil Sachdev, Chair **Summary: Review of the meeting, what worked and what we need to do differently.**
13:40 **(5 mins)**	**Item 11. AOB**
13:45	**Close Public Meeting**

Unconfirmed Minutes

Title of meeting:	NRW Board Meeting (Public)
Location:	International Pavilion, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells
Date of meeting:	22nd September 2026
Members present:	Neil Sachdev, Chair Ceri Davies, Chief Executive Dr. Hushneara Begum Dr. Pete Fox Mair Gwynant Sarah Albon Dr. Rebecca Colley-Jones Prof. Calvin Jones Lesley Jones Prof. Rhys Jones Helen Pittaway Adam Taylor
Executive Team Members Present	Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence Dominic Driver, Executive Director of National Operations Lyndsey Rawlinson, Executive Director of Place Operations Louise White, Executive Director of People, Facilities and Fleet
Attendees present:	Phil Williams, Head of Governance and Board Secretary (All items) Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office (All items) Meinir Wigley, Head of Communications and Digital Transformation (All items) Catherine Allan, Head of Finance (item 7 only)

	Mary Lewis, Head of Natural Resource Management Policy (item 8 only) Huwel Manley, Head of Operations, South West Wales (item 8 only) Neil Parker, Team Leader, Biodiversity Policy & Strategy (item 8 only) Matthew Park, Manager, Land Stewardship (item 8 only)
Observers present:	Ash Pearce, Team Leader, Protected Sites Programme (item 8 only)
Apologies:	Mark McKenna
Secretariat:	Rhiannon Spencer, Board Secretariat Team Leader and Deputy Board Secretary Sian Johnston, Board Secretariat Team Lauren Hughes, Board Secretariat Team Deb Lee, Board Secretariat Team Andrea Bennett, Board Secretariat Team
Declarations of Interest	None

Item 1. Open Meeting

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. There were no new declarations of interest and apologies were noted as above.

Item 2. Review Minutes and Action and Decision Log

Item 2A. Review Minutes from 29th July Public Meeting

2. The minutes from the public Board meeting on 29th July were reviewed and agreed.

Item 2B. Review Public Action & Decision Log

3. The Action and Decision Log was reviewed.

Item 3. Safety Moment

4. The Chief Executive introduced the item and the Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence (SPE) reflected on the high temperatures and wildfires during the summer. The burden on operational staff and the learning regarding public perception on NRW's responsibilities were highlighted. The current masks provided

to staff attending fires was under review, as there was a need to upgrade to more effective equipment. There was also a need to consider rotas, especially regarding specialist staff resource. Staff wellbeing in offices would also need to be considered as only one office had air conditioning.

5. The Chief Executive (CEO) highlighted that NRW were providing input into the Future Generations Commissioner's review of how sustainable public body services for the future were, against the backdrop of climate change.

6. The Chair reflected that climate resilience linked to energy security and that other types of ventilation could be considered, not just air conditioning. The importance of how NRW and Wales built itself for the future and learning from the summer's events was highlighted.

7. Following a request from the Chair, Prof. Rhys Jones agreed to present the safety moment at the next meeting on the wellbeing of new students under pressure, as there were similarities to the pressure that colleagues were under.

ACTION: Prof. Rhys Jones to present the Safety Moment at November Board on the wellbeing of new students under pressure due to similarities to the pressure NRW colleagues may experience.

Item 4. Update from the Chair

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

8. The Chair outlined events that he had attended including the Eisteddfod where he had liaised with members of the farming community, Welsh Government (WG) officials and other stakeholders. The Chair had also met with individual NRW Board members and with John Davies, Chair of the Independent Review into the Bureaucratic Burden on Family Farms in Wales. It was noted that several of the non-Executive Directors were waiting for confirmation of extensions to their terms of office. Regular WG Sponsorship meetings had continued. In upcoming meetings, the Term of Government Remit Letter would be discussed.

9. Other up-coming engagements included meeting with Members of the Senedd at a Senedd event and a National Farmers Union (NFU) celebration of Welsh Food and Farming event. The importance of building relationships with the farming community was acknowledged as this was an important sector for Wales. There would also be a performance review with the Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability, a Public Body Security meeting and a meeting with the CEO of Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water (DCWW). The Board would be updated on these at the next meeting.

Item 5. Update from the Chief Executive

Sponsor and Presenter: Ceri Davies, Chief Executive

10. The CEO provided an update on the CEO Report and highlighted key issues. Regarding UK wildfires, Wales had been disproportionately affected over a prolonged period of time, with 57% recorded in Wales. Delivery of preplanned work

was impacted due to staff resources being focused on the fires. The issue would need to be strategically considered as the preplanned work was in place to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

11. Although there had been some recent rainfall that had relieved some of the pressures on the natural environment, Wales remained in drought. This was evidence of the real impact of climate change. The CEO would be attending a summit on the Welsh wildfires to discuss learning from the summer's events and changes that would be needed, in order for the public sector to fulfil its various roles in the future. NRW would need to calmly present the evidence gathered to avoid reflex responses that could cause issues in the longer-term.

12. The challenges with negative media coverage on aerial firefighting kit were highlighted, with a reminder that NRW supported the Fire and Rescue Service as a Category One responder. Historically NRW had held aerial firefighting capability for the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE). NRW would work closely with WG and the Fire and Rescue Service on extending coverage for the whole of Wales. This would also need to be completed within a UK context as skills were scarce in this area.

13. The Executive Director of National Operations (NatOps) highlighted Annex 1 in the CEO Report and the professionalism of colleagues. An update on Strategic Risk Two (SR02) – Escalating Environmental Threats was provided and events provided evidence of the effects of climate change. The overall benefits of the working relationships within the Local Resilience Forum system in Wales were noted, however, there was still work to be done in this area.

14. The Board queried if the costs of climate change to Wales would be quantified and catalogued to present to WG. There were costs across all sectors and landowners from flood, tragedy and wildfire events. Work had commenced on calculating the costs of NRW's response, the opportunities that been lost and costs of delayed work. NRW could advocate that WG and the Local Authorities followed in NRW's example.

15. Further to a query, it was explained that preventative work in terms of land management would take several years to have a significant impact. However, contingency plans and improved reaction times would be key in the short-term. This would be part of the strategic consideration. It was suggested that generally, each prolonged event, costed NRW around £2-3m with three events per year. The Board would discuss this in the future.

ACTION: Board Secretariat to add a further discussion on prolonged extreme weather events and impact on climate change to the Board Forward Look.

16. Collaboration and partnership working over the previous five years had an improved response, however it was suggested that there was a need for further investment. It was also suggested that reporting should demonstrate both the return on investment achieved and the costs avoided through preventative measures.

17. It was noted that a DCWW reported on the cost of the 2018 weather on the farming sector with an estimated figure of £175m. The more stringent penalties and how serious fire setting was taken in France was also highlighted. It was suggested that prevention would be difficult in the UK given the current legislative situation and that land management response should be a focus.

18. The impact of ongoing incidents on resource capacity and wellbeing was highlighted. A review of the current response models was required, including consideration of the cumulative pressures on the same colleagues responding to multiple incident types. The Board agreed to review NRW's Capacity and Resourcing Model to assess whether it remained sustainable in the face of catastrophic events, and to explore alternative approaches, including the potential for reserve capacity arrangements, at the next Board Strategy Day.

ACTION: A discussion on NRW's Capacity and Resourcing Model would be added to the agenda for the next Board Strategic Day.

19. Nature-based solutions were highlighted as a preventative approach. There was a focus on supporting upland communities to improve water storage, carbon capture, biodiversity and sustainable food production, while reducing downstream climate and flooding impacts.

20. The Board thanked all colleagues involved in incident response and requested an update on winter flooding preparedness including colleague wellbeing, and a review of lessons learned from the wildfire response. It would be important to understand the full costs of incidents, including economic, environmental, social, wellbeing, productivity and reputational.

ACTION: Board Secretariat to add a review of the wildfire lessons learnt to the Board Forward Look.

21. The CEO outlined key events from the summer including the Royal Welsh Show and Eisteddfod, with conversations with key land managers and farming organisations to build good professional relationships. Key areas to work on were agreed with the NFU and the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW). The CEO had also met with regulatory and multi-service organisations, particularly noting the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor in Wales (IEPAW), who had various reports that NRW had contributed to. NRW also had a positive relationship with Audit Wales. The recent work with fellow regulators regarding nuclear energy was outlined.

22. The number of commendations were welcomed by the Board and further detail on the areas where they have been received was requested for future reports. These details were part of the Managers Monthly Guide and could be provided to Board in the future.

ACTION: CEO Office to include the areas where commendations had been received to future CEO Reports.

23. The CEO explained that NRW were working well with sister organisations to disrupt illegal waste activity whilst ensuring that it did not move the issue elsewhere. Root causes, legislative changes and economics flow were being reviewed, including different types of disruptive tactics. Waste crime was an area of focus as the challenges were significant and linked to organised crime, particularly within the North East and South East areas of Wales. A multi-agency taskforce that had been set up to identify the issues in the North East, as well as team restructures within NRW. An organisational wide approach was under review and there was learning from other organisations that could be adopted.

24. The Board suggested that heavier penalties to deter offending throughout the UK should be lobbied for. NRW were working strategically with the Wales Revenue Authority to ensure tax law was being utilised; NRW would also liaise with Local Authorities.

25. It was understood that work to identify who the users of the illegal waste services was underway. A strategic discussion on whether legislation needed updating and whether organisations had enough powers to deal with the issues effectively was required. Businesses also needed educating to review their supply chains. It was confirmed that the proceeds of crime legislation were used by NRW.

26. The Board welcomed the update on the Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre and that it was in the final stages of reaching an agreement that would be signed in the near future.

27. The proposal to have one environmental body in Scotland was brought to the attention of the Board. NRW had provided feedback on the positives and lessons learnt from its amalgamation. The Chair thanked the team for engaging well with the Scottish Government public bodies and noted that the proposal was based on good environmental outcomes not cost savings.

28. The Chair outlined NRW's role regarding nuclear energy. NRW needed to advise WG appropriately to avoid unintended consequences. It should not prevent growth, but it had a duty to prevent damage to the environment by making sure decisions were appropriate for the areas they were proposed for.

Item 6. Update Report of Committees

Sponsors and Presenters: Committee Chairs

Finance Committee (FC) – 8th September

29. The Chair of FC noted there was no further update.

Strategic Delivery Committee (SDC)

30. The Chair of SDC gave an overview of the response to the Chancellor and how NRW would support delivery of the UK Nuclear Programme with a specific request for Board-level input. The Board discussed the response and approved the reply.

DECISION: The Board approved the response to the Chancellor seeking assurance on how NRW would support delivery of the UK Nuclear Programme.

Item 7. Finance Performance Report

Sponsor: Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Presenter: Catherine Allan, Head of Finance

31. The Executive Director of F&CS introduced the Finance Performance Report, and the Head of Finance presented the financial position. Board approval was requested to change the latest forecast from £322.4 million to £322.6 million, confirming the change had been considered by Executive Team (ET) and FC.

32. The Timber Income sales forecast was highlighted as a key risk due to an operator going into liquidation and a downturn in sales during the first part of the year. In terms of mitigation, a flash sale was due to take place at the end of September ahead of the scheduled e-sale in October, after which the position would be clearer. The affected operator represented approximately £2.6 million of the potential shortfall, whilst WG retained a £33 million floor for the income position.

33. Capital expenditure was also highlighted as a key risk due to the North Wales Accommodation Strategy. There were two options under consideration, with meetings expected towards the end of September. The budget impact depended partly on whether the selected lease would be in the WG building or not. NRW was also reviewing investment in permitting and planning infrastructure against its Multi-Year Plan.

34. The contingencies were highlighted, with an increase in overprogramming which would bring NRW into a better financial position for mid-year, where spending could be scaled back, if necessary, rather than leaving an underspend. Further clarity would be provided at the November Board meeting. The Board agreed to approve the change in the latest forecast from £322.4 million to £322.6 million.

DECISION: The Board agreed to approve the change in the latest forecast from £322.4 million to £322.6 million.

35. The Board discussed the continued pressure on public finance and agreed that the organisation would continue examining how to become more effective and efficient, including reducing unnecessary red tape. A programme to define a future NRW that was lean and efficient whilst continuing to protect the environment and serve customers could be of benefit.

Item 8. WBO1 Nature Presentation

Sponsor: Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence
Presenters: Mary Lewis, Head of Natural Resource Management Policy; Huwel Manley, Head of Operations, South West Wales; Neil Parker, Team Leader, Biodiversity Policy & Strategy; Matthew Park, Manager, Land Stewardship

36. The Executive Director of SPE introduced the item and presenters, highlighting the importance of nature and Wellbeing Objective 1 (WBO1) – Nature is Recovering - Protecting Nature in Focus. The focus for the team had been on protecting nature, recovering nature and working to create resilient ecosystems and protecting habitats.

37. The Head of Natural Resource Management Policy presented a delivery overview on WBO1, which included progress in restoring 4,000 hectares of peatland. Further restoration was planned and advice would be provided on a range of applications, including planning and licencing in relation to its effect on nature.

38. The Team Leader for Biodiversity Policy and Strategy explained that Wales was contributing to the Global Biodiversity Framework, 30by30 – protecting 30% of land, sea and freshwater by 2030. The commitment had been carried through the UK National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and into NRW's corporate planning, with NRW focusing on actions within its legal duties and operational responsibilities.

39. Based on current evidence, statutory guidance, and available mechanisms, NRW estimated that Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) work and recognition of qualifying areas on the Land In Our Care could contribute to approximately 8,000 to 8,500 hectares by 2030. The team stressed that the marine environment already exceeded 30% protection numerically, however, gaps in ecological resilience meant that existing protected areas could not be treated as a completed task.

40. The team distinguished between formally counting protected areas and demonstrating that they were effectively managed for nature. NRW was required to collate evidence and report through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) UK biodiversity indicators, however, current systems were stronger at recording individual projects than measuring outcomes at national scale. The Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) Designated Site Management Plans were identified as a key mechanism for improving effective management, although air pollution, wildfires, and other external pressures were expected to limit results.

41. NRW needed better evidence on where programmes such as the Nature Networks Programme and metal-mine work were improving previously unprotected areas. Upstream spatial planning should be used to identify where designation, restoration, and partnership action would have the greatest effect, reducing later regulatory and delivery burdens.

42. The Manager of Land Stewardship outlined NRW's approach to using Conservation Area Networks (CANs) across the WGWE. With 5,000 to 6,000 hectares of ancient woodland proposed for recognition whilst the wider Estate was treated as a longer-term pathway toward improved ecological condition. The team were due to present a revised interpretation to WG, where acceptance would depend, in part, on whether NRW's existing monitoring was considered sufficient, including monitoring undertaken under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. The remaining areas of the approximately 48,000 hectare Estate under CANs was described as pathway

sites that could be improved through normal business process over several decades.

43. The Head of South West Wales Operations (Ops) explained plans to increase SSSI notifications, strengthen landowner engagement, Resilient Ecological Networks (RENs) and expand so that individual protected sites contributed to nature recovery. The team emphasised that early, clear engagement with landowners was central to designation; recent SFS applications showed that some applicants were unaware that riverine areas had been notified. The Operations team were working with owners before formal notification where possible.

44. Six terrestrial RENs projects demonstrated how working in partnership with public sector bodies, service boards, trusts and private landowners had enabled mapping of critical biodiversity infrastructure and prioritisation of areas for enhancement. The SFS might support eligible landowners, whilst alternative WG funding might be needed for others.

45. The Board questioned whether the strict Naturfa and designation criteria would discourage participation or produce disconnected sites. The team explained that Naturfa reflected a global effective conservation management framework, therefore NRW could not change the underlying criteria. However, NRW could work with WG on making the pathway category more welcoming to sites that were improving and making long-term contributions, rather than requiring them to meet the highest threshold immediately. Alongside the pathway category, combined use of designations, ecological networks and landscape-scale planning could make delivery more inclusive and effective.

46. The Board queried whether a focus on sites already meeting a high standard would slow the progress towards 30by30 and discourage landowners who were willing to improve nature. It was proposed to allow sites to enter through improvement plans and to use a Wales-wide network map to prioritise connected areas, rather than isolated individual sites.

47. The Board discussed identified landscape-scale delivery as a major opportunity gap. NRW were exploring how designated landscapes, major landowners, and WG forums could support connected action across larger areas, rather than relying only on separate site-by-site designations. The Board agreed that no single mechanism should replace the others. SSSIs remained central for protecting important ecological features, while flexible and climate-aware designations, Naturfa or its successor, RENs, funding schemes, and accessible public messaging should work together. The Board and Executive Director of NatOps noted that climate change made it inappropriate to define success solely by restoring a fixed historical state. Designation should protect underlying ecological processes and support adaptable management, including habitats and species responding to changing climate conditions.

48. The Board discussed the impact of the recent wildfires and the need for forward-looking management as climate change was altering habitats and land use. The

team reported that Wales was among the worst affected areas, with approximately 15,500 hectares impacted and the largest individual fire in the UK. The team confirmed that a full assessment of damage to designated sites was still pending.

49. The Board suggested a move beyond technical reporting of hectares and activity by explaining why nature recovery mattered to food security, national security, health, and the economy, by showing the measurable impact NRW enabled across Wales. The Board also queried the language used around 30by30 and Naturfa and suggested less exclusive language should be used to help the public understand by focusing on nature, habitats, and species rather than hectares and site counts. The Head of Natural Resource Management Policy identified an opportunity to frame nature as critical infrastructure rather than as an optional addition or constraint on development.

50. The Board noted that NRW could not change the national position alone, so it had to create conditions that enabled landowners, government, non-government organisations (NGOs), and communities to deliver more nature recovery. The Board suggested that the team return with a clearer account of how it could help close the remaining gap towards the 2030 ambition, including the support, policy changes, resources, or partnership actions needed from the Board and other stakeholders. The Board thanked the team for their work and requested there be a focus on impact rather than activity to further engage the public and landowners.

Item 10. Feedback on today's meeting

51. The Board discussed if future meetings could be adapted to more public-facing meetings, with a shorter private session.

Item 11. AOB

52. There was no AOB.

End Meeting

Public Board Meeting Action & Decision Logs

Action Log - Board Meetings										
Action No.	Meeting Category	Meeting Date	Item No	Para No	Paper Sponsor	Action	Owner	Due	Status	Notes/Updates
25	Public	22/09/2026	3	7	Neil Sachdev, Chair	ACTION: Prof. Rhys Jones to present the Safety Moment at November Board on the wellbeing of new students under pressure due to similarities to the pressure NRW colleagues may experience.	Rhys Jones, Board Member	18/11/2026	Ongoing	Email sent to Rhys and added to the agenda. Action to be marked as completed after the Board meeting
26	Public	22/09/2026	5	15	Ceri Davies, CEO	ACTION: Board Secretariat to add a further discussion on prolonged extreme weather events and impact on climate change to the Board Forward Look	Board Secretariat	24/09/2026	Completed	A hold has been added to January Board in anticipation of extreme weather over the winter period.
27	Public	22/09/2026	5	18	Ceri Davies, CEO	ACTION: A discussion on NRW's Capacity and Resourcing Model would be added to the agenda for the next Board Strategic Day.	Board Secretariat	19/11/2026	Completed	

28	Public	22/09/2026	5	20	Ceri Davies, CEO	ACTION: Board Secretariat to add a review of the wildfire lessons learnt to the Board Forward Look.	Board Secretariat	18/11/2026	Completed	A note has been added to the FL.
29	Public	22/09/2026	5	22	Ceri Davies, CEO	ACTION: CEO Office to include the areas where commendations had been received to future CEO Reports.	CEO Office	18/11/2026	Ongoing	Response: Will aim to include the information from the November Board report onwards

Decision Log - Board Meetings

Decision No.	Meeting Category	Meeting Date	Item No	Para No	Paper Sponsor	Decision
59	Public	22/09/2026	6	30	Pete Fox, Board Member	The Board approved the response to the Chancellor seeking assurance on how NRW would support delivery of the UK Nuclear Programme.
60	Public	22/09/2026	7	34	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services	The Board agreed to approve the change in the latest forecast from £322.4 million to £322.6 million.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	Chief Executive's Report (Public Session)
Paper Reference:	26-11-B07
Paper presented by:	Ceri Davies, Chief Executive
Purpose	Information and discussion
Summary	The paper provides the Board with an update on current issues.

Introduction

1. Since the September Board meeting, we have had several valuable sessions that brought together our wider Leadership Team. At the busiest times, it is vital that we keep talking to one another, strengthening our collective leadership and focusing on our strategic aims. In September, we held a Senior Leader Conference in Aberystwyth for our Executive, Leadership and Management Teams. This was a really good day, during which heard from Nick Halfhide, CEO of NatureScot, and Llyr Gruffydd MS, Minister for Rural Resilience and Stability. My thanks to both for their support and contribution. In October, the Executive and Leadership Teams gathered again for a two-day collaborative development event facilitated by JAM Consulting. Also in September, we held our first team leader leadership conference. This was very well attended and feedback has been excellent. We have committed to running these leadership conferences annually.

2. In late September, I attended the Chair's regular review meeting with our Minister. This was a positive meeting focused on NRW's performance and priorities, the budget discussions taking place within Welsh Government (WG), and matters such as the CEO recruitment campaign. We are grateful to the Minister for agreeing to attend our November Board meeting.

3. At the start of October, I attended the His Royal Highness (HRH) the Prince of Wales' visit to Skenfrith. This was widely reported in the media; the focus was on the impact of serious floods in the village, in Monmouth and the wider catchment over recent years, and the work now being done to mitigate the risks of flooding. We are, of course, playing a significant role in that work and the Prince of Wales was interested in the experience of residents and the wider community, and the options for catchment-scale solutions.

4. During October, I had my quarterly call with Roch Cheroux, CEO of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), and a catch-up with Chris Walters, interim CEO at Ofwat. I also attended a Water Regulator Joint Leadership Group (WRJLG), the first involvement for NRW in this forum, which brings together representatives from Defra and WG with the CEOs of the Environment Agency (EA), Ofwat and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. The group is leading work to prepare for the establishment of a single integrated water regulator in England and a new economic regulator in Wales. Focusing on aligning current regulatory practices where possible, delivering the priorities set out by UK and Welsh governments and preparing organisations for a significantly different approach as we go into Price Review 29 (PR29). There will need to be cultural and behavioural change across the industry even before the expected legislative changes are introduced; the WRJLG is working towards clear shared expectations, aligned communication and opportunities for joint working to support the transition.

5. I had a further meeting with Ambition North Wales (ANW), alongside WG colleagues, to discuss investment and development projects in North Wales. Our strategic relationship with the ANW team is developing, alongside greater information-sharing, and is already prompting positive feedback from businesses. We will continue to work closely and constructively with them on planning, permitting and regulatory matters.

6. Other stakeholder meetings included with Lhosa Daly, Director for Wales at National Trust Cymru; Juliet Vickery, CEO of the British Trust for Ornithology; Philip Duffy, EA CEO; and Catherine Mealing-Jones, the new Auditor General for Wales. I also had my quarterly call with the Future Generations Commissioner, Derek Walker, during which we discussed climate resilience and Wales' preparedness for extreme weather, following the heatwaves, wildfires and drought of the summer months.

7. Alongside the Chair, I attended the Public Leaders' Forum in October. The First Minister gave the keynote speech, focusing on the recently published Programme for Government. We have also had our regular Sponsorship Committee meeting, and the first Wales Climate Change and Resilience Summit, chaired by the First Minister and including three Cabinet Ministers. The theme was resilience in the face of a changing climate using our experiences of flooding and wildfires over the past year. The summit brought together partners from across Wales to consider the increasing impact of wildfires and the actions needed to strengthen national resilience and preparedness. Agenda topics covered the underlying and immediate causes of wildfire, the firefighting response and wider emergency coordination.

8. Discussions at the summit reflected the significant wildfire activity experienced this year, with more than 15,000 hectares affected, and highlighted the growing recognition of wildfire as a key climate and environmental challenge. It provided an opportunity to share our work on wildfire prevention, mitigation and risk management, including our programme through the Wildfire Strategic Oversight Group and our involvement in the Wales Wildfire Board, which strives to raise awareness and create a "wildfire-wise" Wales. The summit reinforced the importance of a coordinated national approach to reducing wildfire risk, strengthening preparedness and supporting long-term land management and climate adaptation. More details of the key messages and priority outcomes are noted further below.

9. In connection with our nuclear regulatory work at Wylfa, I met Paul Dicks, Director of Regulation at the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Our discussion covered the lead regulator model, engagement with nuclear partners and Project Gwyndod, the new small modular reactor nuclear power project on Anglesey. Gwyndod is being used as a “lead and learn” work programme to develop the lead regulator approach in the context of a new-build reactor site. We have a project team in place, allowing for progress with preparatory work, and continue to work with the Lead Nuclear Regulator Group alongside key partners.

10. I was delighted to sign the Welsh Language at Work Charter (the Twf Charter) during October. This important document, developed by TUC Cymru, enables us to collaborate with colleagues and our recognised trade unions in creating an inclusive bilingual workplace and increasing the use of Welsh at work. We very much want NRW to be a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone who uses the Welsh language, including our customers and partners. The example set at our Board meetings, now increasingly bilingual, is welcomed and important in this respect.

11. The first week of November brought our Evidence Conference. This annual event reinforces our work as an evidence-based organisation and highlights the projects and outcomes in which data and evidence make such a difference. The theme this year was “Transforming Evidence into Action” and the agenda included a plenary address by Professor Peter Madden of Cardiff University, who spoke about using evidence to support a just transition to a regenerative future. I was pleased to open the conference, listen in to presentations and hear colleagues talking with passion and commitment about their work. A panel discussion considered what turns good evidence into good decisions, and our new four-year Evidence Framework was launched by our Head of Knowledge and Evidence, Michael Gerardo. Thank you to everyone who organised, contributed to and attended this engaging day.

12. The Executive Team (ET) hosted a joint executive session with the Crown Estate at the start of November. We shared our strategic priorities, current priorities, emerging risks and opportunities, and discussed potential areas for collaboration and joint working. This builds upon similar engagement with the executive teams at National Trust Cymru and DCWW over the last twelve months, through which we have built stronger stakeholder relationships and learned from each other. We hugely value this open and supportive collaboration with our partners.

13. In November, I attended the Arwain Symposium, another significant WG event that brought together the leaders of public bodies across Wales for the launch of the new national school of government for Wales. This is intended to provide a renewed national focus to leadership, learning and capability in the Welsh public sector. Keynote speakers included management consultant Professor Dave Snowden and leadership expert and coach Diana Osagie.

Strategic Updates

Wales Climate Change and Resilience Summit – Key Messages and Outcomes

14. The presentation to the summit highlighted that wildfire ignition in Wales is driven as much by social factors as environmental ones. While climate change and land management practices play an important role, recreational arson and the close

urban-rural interface, particularly in the South Wales Valleys, remain key contributors to wildfire incidents. It was emphasised that sustainable management of uplands, grasslands, forests, heathland is essential, but that long-term success will also depend on influencing behaviours through community engagement, education and partnership working.

15. The discussion also reflected on the achievements of the Healthy Hillsides programme (2018 to 2023), which brought together ten organisations to address the root causes of wildfire. Although progress has been made, it was recognised that further collaborative action is needed to deliver the recommendations of the *Wildfire Wise* report, which focus on embedding wildfire resilience into land management and policy, securing sustainable funding, developing accredited training and guidance, strengthening strategic leadership across agencies and using evidence-based approaches to guide prevention and response activities. Collectively, these actions aim to create more resilient landscapes and communities across Wales and reduce future wildfire risk.

16. Following the summit the Minister issued a statement setting out a number of priorities:

- Multi-agency work to support a strengthened Wales Wildfire Board to bring together all partners on a national basis to prepare for next year's wildfire season, covering early intervention strategies, risk management, public communications and multi-agency co-ordination.
- A new pan-Wales approach to monitoring spring and summer resilience risks to ensure government departments and the responder community have a focused and consolidated risk picture for prioritising planning and resourcing.
- A rapid evidence review to better understand the role of land management in supporting wildfire resilience and a separate review of the Heather and Grass Burning Code.
- Bringing in international expertise to support Welsh Fire and Rescue Services with training and preparation.
- A structured pan-Wales register for farmers and landowners to indicate their willingness to provide vehicles, equipment and local knowledge to help with a firefighting response.
- A review of evidence and options with the fire and rescue services on improved health monitoring and decontamination procedures.
- Exploration of further preventative actions to reduce risk, including renewed efforts around public engagement to highlight risks and how we can minimise them.
- Continued work with UK Government and other devolved administrations to deliver a comprehensive nationwide solution to the current lack of UK aerial firefighting assets.

17. We are already working with WG on many of these priorities, and as the current chair of the Wales Wildfire Board we are in discussion on next steps regarding that partnership.

Permitting and Nutrient Management

18. We continue to see increasing numbers of poultry development proposals, particularly within sensitive river catchments. Our focus remains on ensuring nutrient

management, water quality and protected sites are appropriately considered, while providing timely advice to planning authorities.

19. The increase in proposals comes against the backdrop of the twelve Powys poultry applications called in by Welsh Ministers in November 2025, which could collectively accommodate more than 700,000 birds and remain undetermined by the planning authorities after almost three years under holding directions. Cumulative environmental effects, particularly in relation to nutrient management and impacts on protected river catchments, remain a key consideration.

20. Nutrient management is also a concern in relation to the Lower Berse Farm housing development in Wrexham, where nutrient impacts on the River Dee need to be considered further. Our work here is helping to establish a clearer framework for future planning decisions in the catchment. In the GP Biotec case, a planning appeal relating to a proposed waste reception building at Talgarth in Powys was dismissed, confirming that the development should be considered as a “waste development” rather than a farm diversification project. This decision provides greater clarity on the planning requirements for the project moving forward, and for the definition of major development.

Infrastructure Developments in North East Wales

21. We continue to provide advice in respect of Connah’s Quay Power Station, a nationally significant infrastructure proposal. We have responded to a statutory request for further information from the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero on environmental impacts and habitat protection. The final decision is currently scheduled for 9 December.

22. We remain closely engaged with Knauf and their agent on environmental considerations, particularly air quality and protected sites, to help inform mitigation measures required for the planning decision on their proposed new manufacturing site in Shotton. In respect of Kronospan, we have launched a public consultation on proposed permit changes for a new manufacturing facility. The process demonstrates our role in balancing economic development with protection of communities and the environment.

23. Liverpool Bay Carbon Capture and Storage is a major low-carbon infrastructure project linking industrial carbon capture facilities in North West England and North East Wales to offshore carbon dioxide storage beneath Liverpool Bay. It is a complex, first-of-its-kind development involving several regulators and a range of environmental permits. Many other key projects are linked and dependent on this. Our teams have worked proactively with the developer and partner regulators to clarify regulatory responsibilities, provide timely advice and respond quickly to emerging issues. This has helped give the developer greater certainty on the approval’s pathway and enabled key project milestones to be delivered to programme.

Renewable Energy Proposals

24. We continue to advise on major renewable energy proposals across Wales. Examples include Rhiwlas Energy Park, where the planning inspector suspended the examination requesting further environmental information from the applicant. This is

the second renewable energy application to be paused, indicating the importance of good quality application submissions, robust evidence and early issue resolution. For Parc Ynni Calon y Gwynt, we identified key environmental risks at the pre-application stage, enabling issues to be addressed before submission. For Esgair Cwmowen, we provided advice that enabled the project to progress while ensuring environmental considerations were fully considered.

Operational Updates

Water Company Annual Performance Reviews

25. We held our annual reviews of water company performance in Wales during September, meeting with the executive teams of both Hafren Dyfrdwy (HD) and DCWW. These meetings happen every year in September, and are an opportunity for NRW, the Environment Agency (EA, regulator for DCWW's operations in England), Ofwat and WG to discuss the previous year's performance with each company. The EA and Ofwat hold similar meetings with the English water companies at around the same time.

26. The draft 2025 performance data has already been shared with the Board; the final reports were published at the end of October. It is positive to see that HD have maintained their high level of performance overall this year; we are confident in the direction of travel and that this high standard should be maintained. The situation with DCWW is more challenging, as overall their performance remained poor in 2025. Their CEO was very open about the challenges they are facing; he has asked his team to produce performance improvement plans for what can be achieved in the short term, while at the same time planning ahead for the next 30 years to 2055. We expect to learn more about these plans and how we can support them shortly.

27. October also saw the publication of the Joint Insights Report, the first combined assessment of water company performance across England and Wales produced by NRW, the EA, Ofwat and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. Significant work has been undertaken across regulators to ensure consistency of messaging and promote a coordinated regulatory approach.

28. We continue to play a leading role in collaborative regulation across England and Wales as preparations begin for the next water Price Review (PR29). Following agreement by the Joint Leadership Group of water regulators, including NRW, a joint statement was published in early November setting out regulators' shared programme of work, signalling a strengthened collaborative approach and formally launching the PR29 process. Welsh Ministers set out Welsh priorities for PR29 in late October.

River Severn Drought Order (RSDO)

29. In August, the EA and NRW jointly applied for a Drought Order to help protect water supplies in the River Severn catchment. This is the first time an application has been made in 37 years, highlighting the pressure placed on water resources during the spring and summer, and the dependence of multiple water companies on the River Severn.

30. The return of some rain in the area has meant that levels in the Clywedog Reservoir have started to recover and are now above the trigger level for a Drought Order. The increased flow in the Severn also means that regulated releases from the reservoir to support flows are not currently required and are unlikely to be required over the winter. As a result, we are seeking to withdraw the Drought Order application, and a notification of this withdrawal is currently being drafted for Defra and WG.

31. The experience gained this summer, including the associated cross-border working with the EA on this matter, has helped our preparedness for future hot summers.

Water Primrose

32. Following the identification of an infestation of water primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*), a highly invasive non-native species, on the lower River Ely above Cardiff Bay, we have worked closely with WG, Cardiff Harbour Authority and the EA to manage the incident. Extensive boat surveys of Cardiff Bay and the lower reaches of the Rivers Ely and Taff, supported by survey mapping, have confirmed the main infestation within the lower River Ely below Leckwith Bridge, with additional isolated occurrences identified in the lower River Taff.

33. A coordinated treatment programme commenced in late September, led by the EA under licence using Triclopyr herbicide. During treatment operations, a greater extent of the plant was identified than originally recorded and treated. All identified plants were treated within six hours, and follow-up inspections the following day confirmed signs of wilting, indicating the treatment was effective.

34. Prior to the treatment activity, preparatory works led by NRW were undertaken which included securing permissions, regulatory authorisations and environmental assessments to enable treatment activities. The response required rapid reprioritisation of our operational resources and close collaboration between our teams. Though communications were prepared, no enquiries were received from the public or media.

35. The immediate risk of further spread has been significantly reduced; however, ongoing management will be required. Continued monitoring will be undertaken throughout winter by Cardiff Harbour Authority, with a further survey planned for spring next year. Additional treatment is expected to be required over the next four years, and a longer-term management plan is currently being developed.

Digital Waste Tracking

36. Digital waste tracking became mandatory for waste receiving sites in Wales and England from 1 October, marking a significant step towards improving waste traceability and transparency. While implementation has commenced, challenges remain including industry readiness, the cost of software required to integrate with the system, and the current lack of regulator access to submitted data. We continue to work with WG, Defra and industry partners to address these issues and support successful implementation. Future expansion of the system is expected to require further policy and technical development.

Internal Updates

Evidence Conference

37. The sixth NRW Evidence Conference was held virtually on 5 November under the theme "Transforming Evidence into Action". The conference featured contributions from broadcaster, science communicator and countryside campaigner Mary-Ann Ochota, internationally recognised researchers and United Nations advisors on sustainability and its socio-economic aspects, climate change, decision-making, futures, innovation and the ethics of environmental policy (Peter Madden, Patrick Devine-Wright, Luci Attala and Andy Stirling). As we launched our new strategic approach to evidence, we welcomed Helen Doran, Principal Impact Specialist at Natural England (NE), who developed NE's Evidence Framework, futures capacity and its published Areas of Research Interest.

38. NRW and Welsh Government colleagues presented a diverse and innovative range of case studies, from the use of satellite collars on goats for conservation grazing to protect rare bryophytes, to the behavioural elements of flood response. The event provided a valuable opportunity to share learning, challenge current approaches and explore how evidence can be applied more effectively to address the complex environmental challenges facing Wales. Attendees left with a shared commitment to gathering, analysing and using the right evidence in the right place to achieve our Wellbeing Objectives and the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.

Customer Service Transformation Programme

39. As part of WG's commitment to streamline the marine licensing process following the Renewable Energy Deep Dive, customers can now submit all marine licence applications online through our Customer Platform. This transformation delivers a simpler, faster and more accessible application process, providing customers with a single digital route to apply, track progress and interact with the licensing service. It reduces reliance on paper-based and manual processes, improves transparency, and creates a more efficient and user-friendly experience for applicants.

40. As the first service to be delivered through the Customer Service Transformation Programme, this also represents a significant milestone in modernising our service delivery. The approach, capabilities and benefits established through this service will pave the way for future services to be brought onto the platform, enabling customers across a wider range of services to experience the same improvements in accessibility, efficiency and customer experience.

Winter Preparedness

41. As an organisation, we are generally well prepared for winter, with plans, training, equipment and response arrangements in place across the organisation. The main concern is not whether we can respond to incidents, but whether we can sustain our response during a prolonged period of severe weather or multiple incidents.

42. The latest seasonal forecast indicates a higher-than-normal chance of a much wetter winter. The likelihood of wetter-than-average conditions has increased from around 20% to 40%, and wider weather patterns may also bring an increased risk of storms and heavy rainfall. In readiness, winter planning has been reviewed across operational and support teams, and staff training, duty rotas, escalation

arrangements and incident response plans have been updated. Vehicles, equipment and flood response resources are largely ready for use. Regular leadership oversight and preparedness meetings will continue throughout the winter while our Communications teams have strengthened public information, media engagement and stakeholder preparedness activities.

43. The most significant risk is staff capacity and resilience. Several teams rely on a relatively small number of experienced staff and volunteers, while vacancies, sickness absence and the need to support newly trained officers add pressure. There are concerns that a prolonged period of flooding or severe weather could lead to fatigue and reduce organisational resilience over time. Protecting staff wellbeing and ensuring sustainable working arrangements are therefore key priorities.

44. We understand where our key infrastructure risks lie and have plans in place to manage them. Several flood risk assets remain below their required condition, although these are being monitored and managed. Attention is being given to some known local issues and vulnerable assets, and work continues to maintain critical telemetry systems and manage the risks associated with older technology until replacement systems are fully operational. ICT systems have winter support arrangements in place and can prioritise support for operational teams. Overall, teams are confident that risks are understood and that mitigating actions are in place.

45. While response capability is strong, conducting important recovery work after incidents, such as damage assessments, data collection and learning reviews can be challenging. There is a need for continued leadership support to ensure this work receives sufficient priority once immediate operational pressures have reduced. We are setting up recovery arrangements now to initiate if we must go into recovery following significant flood incidents.

Crymlyn Bog Restoration Project

46. The Crymlyn Bog Restoration Project won the prestigious Chair's Special Award at the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Cymru Awards for its exceptional demonstration of engineering excellence using a nature-based solution. Delivered through our LIFEquake project and civil engineering contractor EcoVigour, the initiative successfully restored the hydrological balance of Wales' largest lowland fen, long considered too wet due to the loss of function of a historic canal that used to maintain the hydrological balance of the site. The site team had to clear the canal using heavy specialist amphibious machinery on highly unstable, waterlogged quaking peat.

47. Crymlyn Bog is a globally significant wetland that provides a critical habitat for rare species, such as the fen raft spider. Peatland landscapes in general store significant amounts of carbon, help regulate water levels and provide important wildlife habitats. Maintaining the right hydrological conditions is essential if they are to continue delivering these benefits. The award celebrates how the Crymlyn Bog restoration successfully addresses nature recovery and climate resilience.

Communications

Corporate Communications

48. During this period, the Communications and External Affairs team managed a significant programme of proactive communications alongside several high-profile regulatory, environmental and reputational issues. Key activity included communications relating to Withyhedge Landfill, waste deposits in Coedpoeth, drought and flood preparedness, regulatory decisions, enforcement activity and preparations for forthcoming water sector reports. We also supported communications around the decision by the Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution to undertake further engagement on the proposed Glyndŵr National Park, and continued work with partners on wildfire preparedness.

49. The team promoted a range of positive stories highlighting NRW's work, including successful enforcement action following damage to Berwyn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and national recognition for the LIFEquake project, which received the Institution of Civil Engineers Chair's Award. We also supported communication in response to wider political and policy developments, such as the extension to slurry spreading arrangements and public debate around environmental regulation. Internally, we supported communications around the Chief Executive recruitment process.

Internal Communication and Engagement

50. The team supported communication of the Ein Llais survey results, recognising the positive themes in the feedback while demonstrating commitment to improvement where needed. This work aligns with broader organisational activity to improve colleague experience, wellbeing and leadership. We have also helped to promote the Evidence Conference, held in November, including a series of colleague stories showing how evidence informs decision-making and delivery across NRW.

External Affairs

51. Stakeholder engagement remains a key focus. A further “Conversations with NRW” event, held after the September Board meeting in Builth Wells, brought together stakeholders, Board members and colleagues to discuss local issues, listen to concerns and strengthen relationships. Feedback is being reviewed to inform future events.

52. The team also supported senior leadership engagement at a range of stakeholder events, such as Empower Cymru and the WBO2 stakeholder event, with further engagement planned through Future Energy Wales. Working closely with colleagues across NRW, we supported delivery of the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) webinar series, stakeholder engagement for the Joint Regulators Insights Report and engagement activity linked to a range of consultations and programmes.

53. Advice and support have been provided across several significant projects to help ensure engagement activity remains proportionate, effective and aligned with organisational objectives. These include supporting stakeholder engagement activity relating to the Trawsfynydd Small Modular Reactor pre-application consultation, reintroduction of Land Access Fees and the sheep dip consultation.

Building Resilience to Climate Change

54. Climate resilience has been a major focus during this period as Wales transitions from an exceptionally dry summer into the autumn and winter flood-risk season. The annual #BeFloodReady campaign generated widespread media coverage and a significant increase in public action. Extensive advance planning included proactive media briefings, multiple Local Resilience Forum briefings and the coordination of spokespeople and media opportunities, helping to secure widespread news coverage during the week. The campaign also brought community voices into the story, demonstrating how local flood plans and preparedness can help people take practical action rather than relying solely on flood defences. Flood warning registrations increased significantly during the first three days of the campaign compared with the previous week.

55. We also supported management of drought-related issues, including preparation for a potential Drought Order for the River Severn and messaging as conditions improved in some areas. We continued to support the multi-agency Water Efficiency Campaign and promoted the launch of the Peatland Restoration Grant, highlighting the role of nature-based solutions in climate resilience.

Minimising Pollution

56. Significant resource has been devoted to preparations for the publication of the Joint Insights Report on water company performance and NRW's accompanying reports. The team also managed extensive media and stakeholder interest relating to water company performance and regulation.

57. The Withyhedge Landfill permit variation required substantial communications support due to the level of public concern. Communications focused on explaining NRW’s regulatory role, the permit decision and ongoing investigation activity. We also supported consultation on Kronospan's proposed permit variation and communication relating to the temporary extension of the slurry spreading period following exceptional dry weather. This work aids understanding of NRW's regulatory role and supports effective stakeholder and community engagement around complex environmental issues.

Supporting Nature’s Recovery

58. Nature recovery continued to provide opportunities to demonstrate NRW's impact and partnership working. Communications surrounding publication of the latest salmon stock assessment balanced concern about declining stocks with examples of ongoing recovery work, including river habitat improvements and fish passage projects. We also secured strong coverage for species recovery initiatives, including the continuation of the Magical Mammals project and the discovery of the rare bog grass moth at Cors Geirch National Nature Reserve.

Summary of Complaints, Commendations and Correspondence

59. In August and September, the Central Correspondence Team (CCT) worked on 111 items of correspondence, a noticeable increase from 84 the previous two months, with September being our busiest month ever. 99% of incoming correspondence was answered within the service level agreement (SLA)**,** against a 90% target. The correspondence was received from a wide range of people and organisations including WG and individual Members of the Senedd, other elected political

representatives, stakeholders, members of the public, local authorities and other government bodies, community councils, businesses and action groups. The main topics for were Kronospan, the wildfires, River Towy water quality, Taffs Well Quarry, the proposed Menai Strait data centre, Coedpoeth waste concerns and Minera.

60. There have been 54 new Access to Information (ATI) requests since our last update, with 75 completed responses sent out during August and September. 93% of those were responded to within our 20-working day SLA, against a 90% target. The main topics for ATI over the period were river pollution and water quality, Hafod Landfill, wildfires, Kronospan and historic contaminated land.

61. Following the data breach relating to data shared externally in 2021, we received a request from an AI Agent apparently acting on their own behalf, not for any organisation or client. We referred it to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for guidance. The ICO were very interested in the matter and do not appear to have been made aware of any previous similar requests. They advised, "*based on the specific wording, we consider this to not be made by 'a person' and therefore not a valid request that you need to respond to.*"

62. Since our last update, we have received 14 commendations for the organisation or individual staff.

Team	Commendation Detail
Land Management North West	Commendation for NRW staff who helped coordinate assistance for a member of the public in distress Newborough
Customer Hub	Commendation for NRW staff for excellent customer service
Land Management South East	Commendation for NRW Staff for assisting St Brides Wentlooge
Land Management Mid South	Commendation for NRW staff for going above and beyond providing directions and clear advice re the Horseshoe walk
Land Management North West	Commendation for NRW staff for their exceptional support for a staff member's family member during a night time emergency.
Integrated Engineering & IDD SE team	Commendation for Ops team in Newport for clearance works on reens overgrowth
Land Management North West	Commendation for NRW staff for their patrols of Gwydir forest this summer
Enforcement Crime Team	Commendation for NRW staff following their site visit to Cosmeston re Fisheries Enforcement
Operations South West & South Central	Commendation for NRW staff for thie collaborative work on R&D Exemption Application
Land Management North West	Commendation for NRW staff for their exemplary work during recent heat.
Fforest Operations North	Commendation for NRW staff for their assistance in locating their lost dog in Beddgelert Forest
Developmnet & Flood Risk North	Commendation for NRW staff for his professional and pragmatic approach in issuing a permit determination.
SE Assets, Integrated Workforce and Integrated Engineering Teams	Commendation for NRW staff for their continued work and support with a Flood Group
Complaints & Land Management South East	Commendation for NRW staff regarding response to service request for Cefn Pwll Du Machen horse step over

63. We opened 82 complaints in August and September, again a significant increase from the previous two months. However, 43 of these were Welsh language complaints for the naming of Coed Braich Melyn Wood. Following a meeting with the Welsh Language Commissioner, this particular matter is being referred to their Local Place Names Panel, which will meet in January to determine what the name should be.

64. 95% of complaints received were responded to within our 20-working day SLA, against a 90% target. 82 complaints were closed during the period, again our busiest month ever, with 56 upheld (including the 43 on Coed Braich Melyn Wood) and 26 not upheld. The other main topics for complaints in August and September were wildfire response, water quality and Kronospan. In addition, two Ombudsman decision notices were received; their decision was not to investigate either of the matters raised.

65. The Complaints & Commendations Annual Report 2025/26 was approved at the Corporate Services Business Group in October alongside a summary report and accompanying infographics. Over the coming months, we will engage with management teams across the organisation to present the customer insight contained within the report, with a view to helping to inform decision-making and drive continuous service improvement.

Forward Look

- Wednesday 25 November – Finance Committee
- Thursday 26 November – Board Member Public Accountability Training
- Friday 27 November – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Wednesday 9 December – Board Update Call
- Thursday 10 December – People Committee
- Thursday 21 January – January Board Meeting
- Wednesday 3 February – Finance Committee
- Wednesday 17 February – Board Update Call

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	ARAC Update for Board
Paper Reference:	26-11-B08
Paper sponsored by:	Mair Gwynant, Chair of ARAC
Paper prepared by:	Board Secretariat
Paper presented by:	Mair Gwynant, Chair of ARAC
Purpose of the paper	Information
Summary	To provide a verbal update to the Board in respect of 25th September 2026 ARAC meeting.

Background

1. This update for the Board is in respect of 25th September 2026 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting.

Update

Scene Setting from Chief Executive

2. The Chief Executive outlined ongoing challenges NRW faced including resources pressures and waste crime in North East Wales. ARAC discussed waste crime including communications on how NRW was tackling it within their remit and how to ensure the root cause was addressed to avoid moving the issue to different areas of the UK. Risk management and the application of the Internal Control framework was also discussed and ARAC challenged whether these were embedded across the whole organisation. It was explained that this was an area of focus and would be discussed at the upcoming Executive Team (ET) and Leadership Team (LT) event. ARAC also discussed the reputational risks arising from the incorrect public perception of NRW's role and responsibilities in relation to recent incidents.

ARAC oversight of risk management framework and assurance

3. ARAC discussed the PowerBI reporting from the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and the risk registers feeding into this. Supporting the completeness and the quality of the risk data within was a focus for the Risk team and this would continue. Risk scores would also be reviewed to ensure that they did not provide a false sense of assurance.

4. ET were also reviewing risks collectively to identify common themes, reduce duplication, and strengthen oversight across the organisation. Regular deep dives of strategic risks had been scheduled for ET, with two completed since the last ARAC meeting. The Organisational Risks and Issues Log (ORIL) was also discussed.

Audit Wales

5. A new Auditor General for Wales had been appointed, Catherine Mealing-Jones. Audit Wales and the Finance team had reviewed issues that had arisen during the 2025-26 audit and were now considering actions to take forward for improvements to next year's audit. Planning for the 2026-27 audit would begin at the end of the year.

Internal Audit

6. The Internal Audit reports for the previous quarter had provided Moderate and Substantial opinions and the key messages from these were noted. Assurance was provided that ET would be considering the holistic view in their discussions of audit reports going forward, and this would be reflected in the ARAC Executive Lead's report to ARAC. The management actions were also being scrutinised in ET meetings with appropriate challenge. The Head of Internal Audit noted that she was encouraged that overdue actions were reducing but noted that the Internal Audit team continued to emphasise focus on actions so that more did not become overdue.

7. An overview of additions to the Internal Audit Rolling Plan was provided and ARAC approved these. The Key Performance Indicators were highlighted and ARAC were informed that these were being reviewed.

ARAC Governance

8. A 12 month Forward Look would be presented to the next ARAC meeting and ARAC welcomed the new format of the meeting.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	Protected Areas Committee (PrAC) Update for Board
Paper Reference:	26-11-B09
Paper sponsored by:	Adam Taylor, Chair of PrAC
Paper prepared by:	Board Secretariat
Paper presented by:	Adam Taylor, Chair of PrAC
Purpose of the paper	Information
Summary	This summary provides an update in respect of the PrAC meeting held on 29th September 2026.

Background

1. This update for the Board is in respect of the 29th September 2026 Protected Areas Committee (PrAC) meeting. Board members can access all Committee meeting documentation via the Diligent portal.

Condition Assessment Monitoring of Designated Sites

2. An update on the Condition Monitoring Programme was provided. This would focus on enhanced delivery of end-to-end monitoring, with improved systems, efficiency and the realisation of opportunities to improve knowledge and condition assessments of SSSIs. Long-term and interim solutions to enable efficient online data entry and enhance collaborative monitoring were outlined.

3. The new and innovative methods and approaches to monitoring were discussed. It was reported that colleagues in the South East had completed desktop assessments of all 88 terrestrial SSSIs in the area using the new rapid assessment approach; PrAC welcomed the outputs, understood the value of collaboration, and that supporting Place-based delivery would be important.

Performance Framework for Wellbeing Objective 1 (WBO1) - Nature

4. PrAC were presented with an overview of the Performance Framework focussed on WBO1. This demonstrated a clear line of sight from the organisational plan to delivery, including the two nature Outcomes and performance.

5. PrAC understood that some metrics were more mature than others. The timeline of the Framework was queried and it was recognised that some minor adjustments would be needed once the new Remit Letter was received. PrAC made suggestions on narrative, to also include percentages to show progress, and to improve the display of impacts on certain Projects. It was also suggested that the Framework could capture advice on how to prevent environmental harm, such as avoiding development on floodplains, high nature value sites and ecological corridors.

Forward Look

6. PrAC reviewed the Forward Look, made suggestions for possible future agenda items, if meetings were not needed for Notification purposes, and possible topics to move to the Strategic Delivery Committee (SDC).

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	People Committee (PC) Update
Paper Reference:	26-11-B10
Paper sponsored by:	Mark McKenna, Chair of PC
Paper prepared by:	Board Secretariat
Paper presented by:	Mark McKenna, Chair of PC
Purpose of the paper	Information
Summary	To provide an update to the Board in respect of 8th October 2026 PC meeting.

Background

1. This update for the Board is in respect of the 8th October People Committee (PC) meeting. Board members can access all Committee papers and minutes via the Diligent portal.

Wellbeing, Health & Safety Q1 Report and Learning & Development and Leadership Management Development Q1 Report

2. PC were presented with the Wellbeing, Health and Safety (WHS) Q1 Report (Annex 1) and the Learning & Development (L&D) and Leadership Management Development (LMD) Q1 Report. The reports were discussed, queries raised over Electric Vehicle near-miss reports and injuries reported under a 'blank' category, with clarification and assurance provided.

3. The format of future reports was discussed. PC suggested that a dashboard visual summary was preferred but understood a balance was needed to ensure the Committee had the appropriate level of data to give assurance and to endorse ahead of Board approval.

PC endorsed the Wellbeing, Health & Safety Q1 Report and recommended Board approval.

Strategic People Plan

4. PC were presented with the Strategic People Plan and noted its alignment to the Corporate Plan refresh. It was assured that results from the Ein Llais Survey would be incorporated into the priorities. PC discussed the Plan, its potential genericness and implementation difficulties. Recommendations were offered for inclusion, and PC agreed with the priorities outlined. The Plan would return to PC for approval at the December meeting.

Strategic Equality Plan

5. Previous feedback provided by PC on the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) had been incorporated and was presented alongside the Inclusion Workforce Infographic. The format of future versions was outlined and PC discussed the narrative, the measures and the outcome focus.

6. PC noted the ambitious SEP and that responsibility for delivery would need to be distributed across the organisation, with possible external specialist support and collaboration with other Welsh public bodies; delivery pace could be adjusted to available resources. PC recommended publishing the ambition and mechanisms now as intervention was needed immediately; timelines could be revisited.

PC approved the Strategic Equality Plan subject to recommendations on narrative, Infographic and prioritisation refinements noted.

Standard Committee Business

7. The Forward Look was reviewed. On reflecting how the meeting had gone, the PC Chair summarised that the strategic agenda and discussion time had been appreciated and that Ein Llais had been the link throughout.

8. The September 2027 meeting date was ear-marked to be held in person offsite.

List of Annexes

Annex 1 – Wellbeing, Health & Safety Q1 Report

Wellbeing Health and Safety Q1 2026/2027

Highlights

Headlines from Q1 2026/27 include: -

Active Monitoring performance has recovered substantially over the past 12 months and remains close to target, although further effort is required to achieve consistent performance across all directorates.

Hazard reporting - Hazard reporting continues to show a positive upward trend, increasing from 21 reports in Q3 2025/26 to 36 reports in Q1 2026/27, indicating increased workforce engagement in identifying and reporting risks.

Serious incident reviews (SIR) -There were no serious incident reviews commissioned

RIDDOR-reportable incidents – No RIDDORs occurred during Q1. One Lost time injury (LTI) was reported during Q1.

Occupational Health referrals were received from across the organisation, although the majority originated from Operations: Place and Service, indicating continued utilisation of the service within operational teams.

Several wellbeing initiatives were delivered.

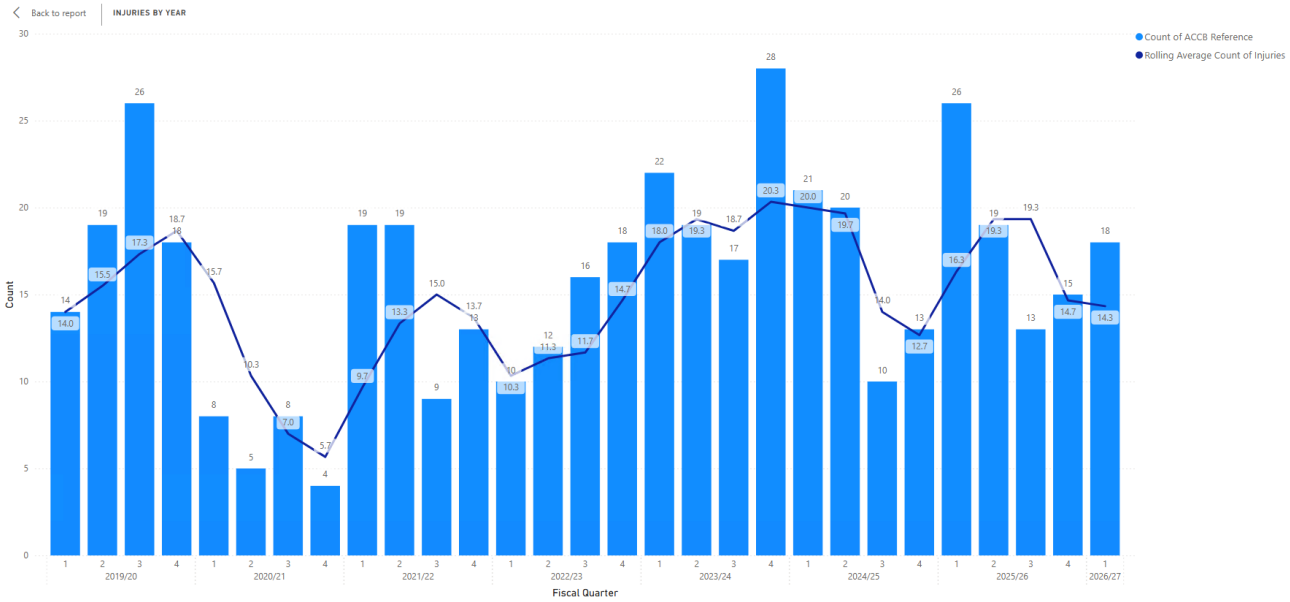
Incidents in NRW

There were 183 incidents reported in NRW in Q1 26-27.

See Appendix 1 for statistics table.

Injuries

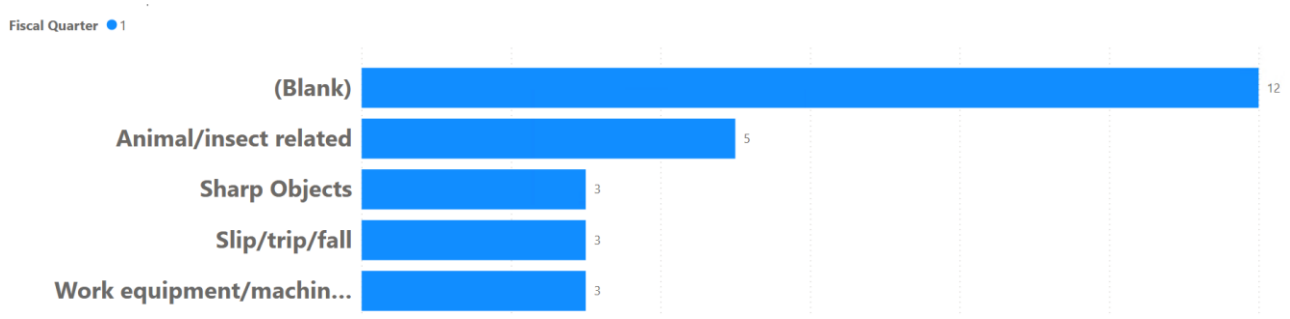
- Injury reporting



While injury numbers have risen over the last three quarters, the continued reduction in the rolling average suggests an overall improving trend. The recent increase may be indicative of enhanced reporting and greater reporting confidence rather than a worsening of safety performance.

A breakdown of reports by directorate can be found in Appendix 2.

- Cause of Injuries



This is the top 5 causes of injuries.

Animal and or insect related is the top reported cause of injury during Q1 26-27. There are a high number of undefined causes. During Q2, there is additional resource being allocated to working with the business to closing out incidents appropriately to reduce this and enable more effective analysis.

Fatalities

There was one member of the public fatalities in Q1 26/27. This was a member of the public fatality in the waterfalls country.

Historic fatality numbers can be found in Appendix 3.

RIDDOR reports

There was no RIDDOR reportable staff injuries in Q1.

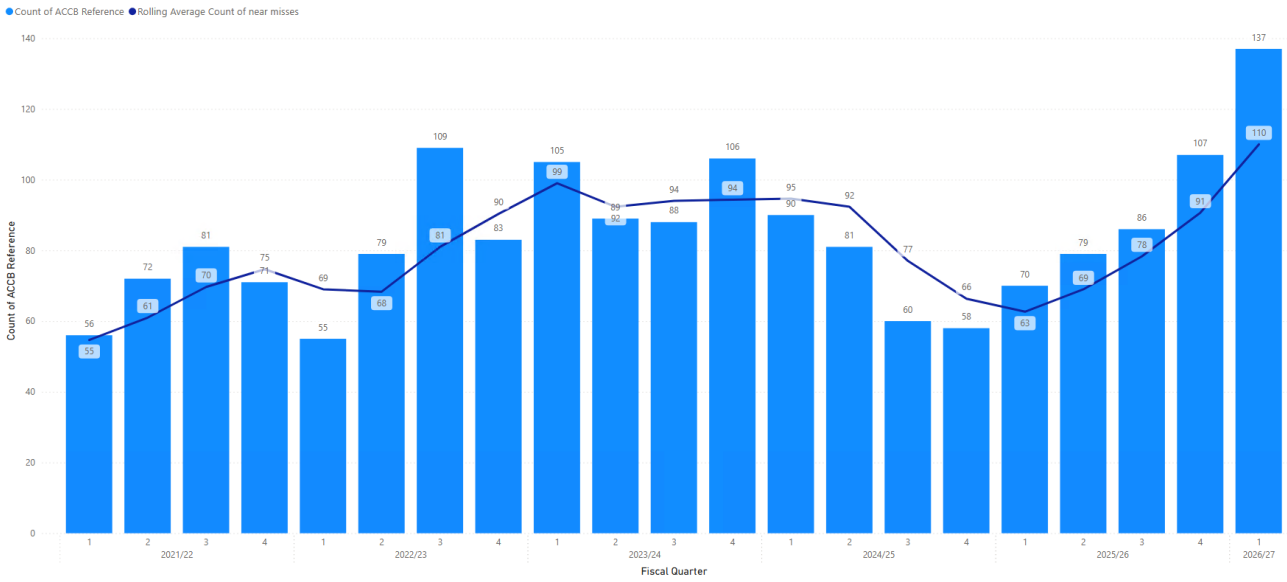
Lost Time Injuries

There was one lost time injury to colleagues during Q1.

- A member of staff suffered a cut to the leg when cutting tree protectors.

Near Misses

Near Miss Reporting



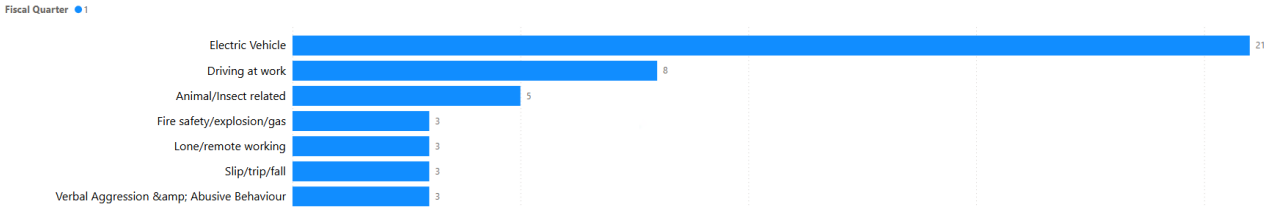
Near miss reporting has continued to increase over the last three quarters, rising from 86 reports in Q3 2025/26 to 137 reports in Q1 2026/27. The rolling average has increased from 78 to 110 over the same period, indicating a sustained improvement in reporting

levels rather than a short-term fluctuation. The record number of near miss reports submitted in Q1 2026/27 suggests growing workforce engagement with hazard identification and reporting, providing greater opportunities to address risks proactively before incidents occur.

To further support proactive engagement, licences for all operations colleagues have been rolled out.

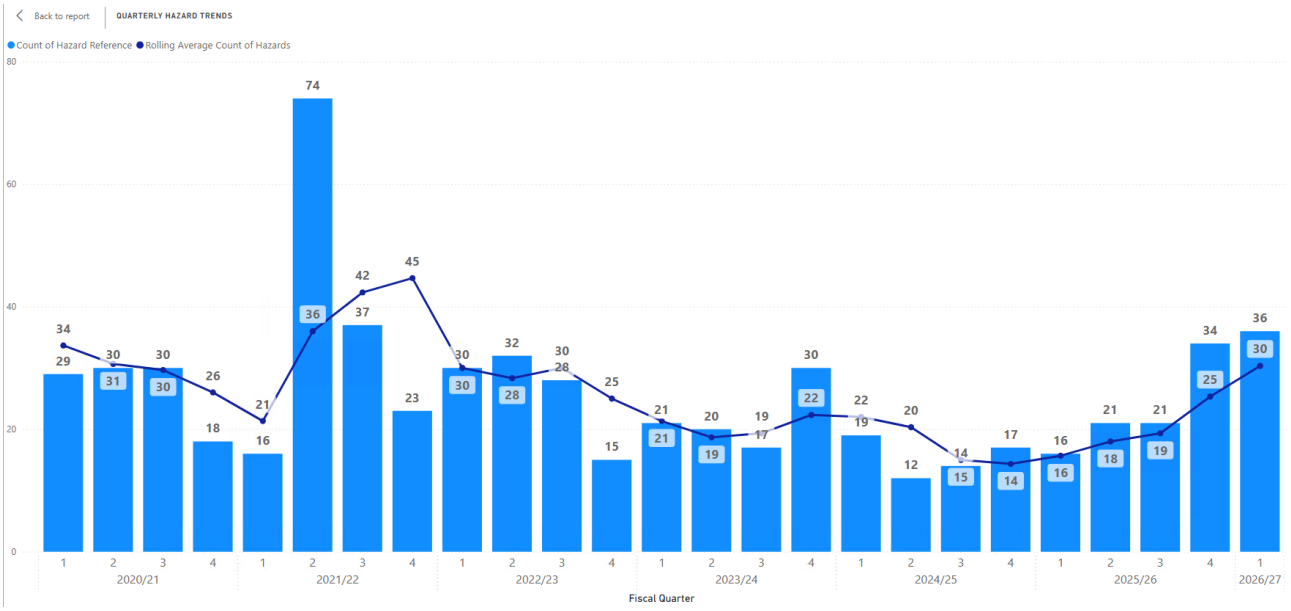
There have been 63 colleague related near misses reported in Q1 26/27 (Appendix 4).

Cause of Near Misses



Electric vehicle followed by driving at work were the highest cause of near misses to employees over Q1 26-27. The driving at work had three incidents that were actually EV related as well. There has been an emphasis on driving at work from both Fleet and WH&S which will have focused the staff attention and therefore contributed to the reporting. Fleet are supplied with a report of all near misses that relate to EV on a regular basis.

Hazard Reporting

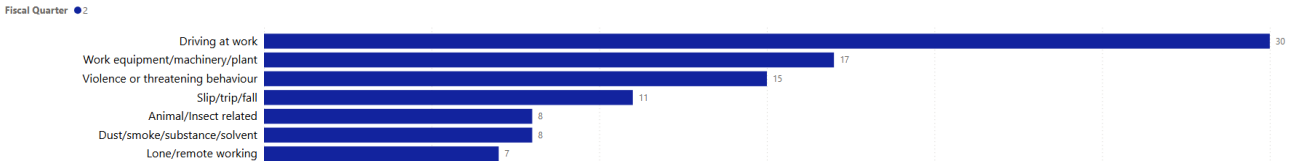


Hazard reporting has continued to improve over the last three quarters, increasing from 21 reports in Q3 2025/26 to 36 reports in Q1 2026/27. The rolling average has also risen steadily from 19 to 30, demonstrating a sustained improvement in reporting levels. This trend is encouraging and may reflect increased awareness, engagement and confidence among colleagues to identify and report hazards, supporting a proactive approach to risk management and incident prevention.

Forward Look into Quarter 2

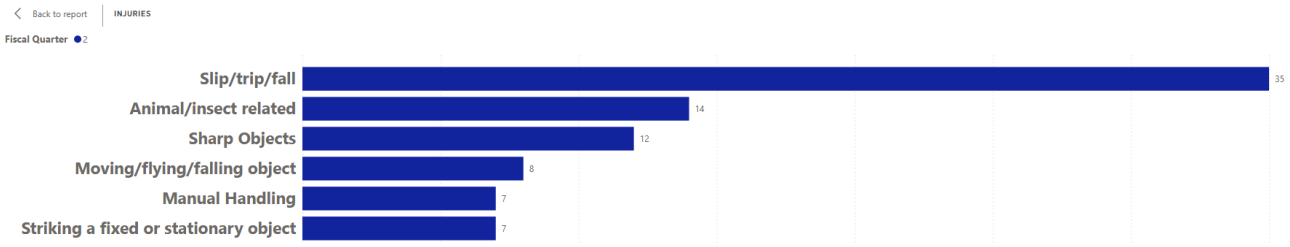
By looking backwards at Q2 in previous years, it is possible to see if there have been any trends and look to put initiatives in place to support staff in advance.

Near Misses Q2



Historically driving at work, work equipment and violence and threatening behaviour have been high causes of near misses in Q2. WH&S will be sharing a toolbox talk driving at work and the violence at work policy and procedure has just been launched. Revamped training on lone and or remote working will also be cascaded during Q2 to reinvigorate the control measures available to support situations where there could be violence and or threatening behaviour.

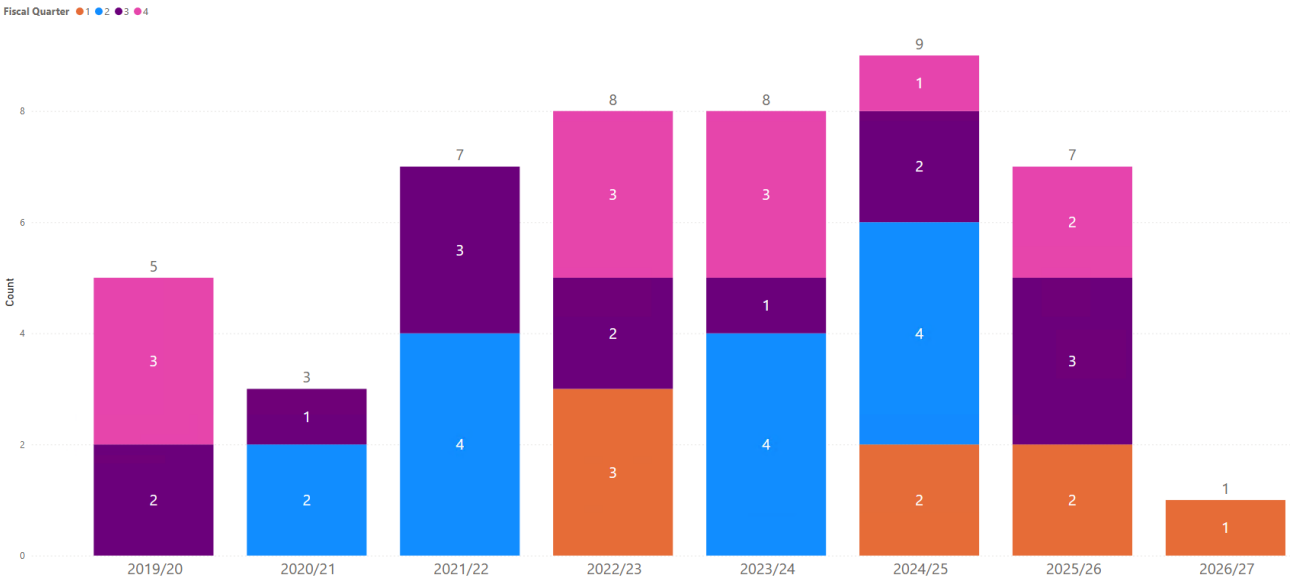
Injuries Q2



Historically, slips, trips, falls have been the most common cause of injuries during Q2. A toolbox talk will be shared in Managers Monthly as a reminder of steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of slips, trips and falls. The tick TBT will also be reshared as animal / insect related is also a high cause of injury.

Serious Incident Reviews

During Q1, there was one Serious Incident Reviews (SIR) commissioned.



The SIR commissioned was:

- Waterfalls 12 – a MoP fatality in the waterfalls country

SIR Status

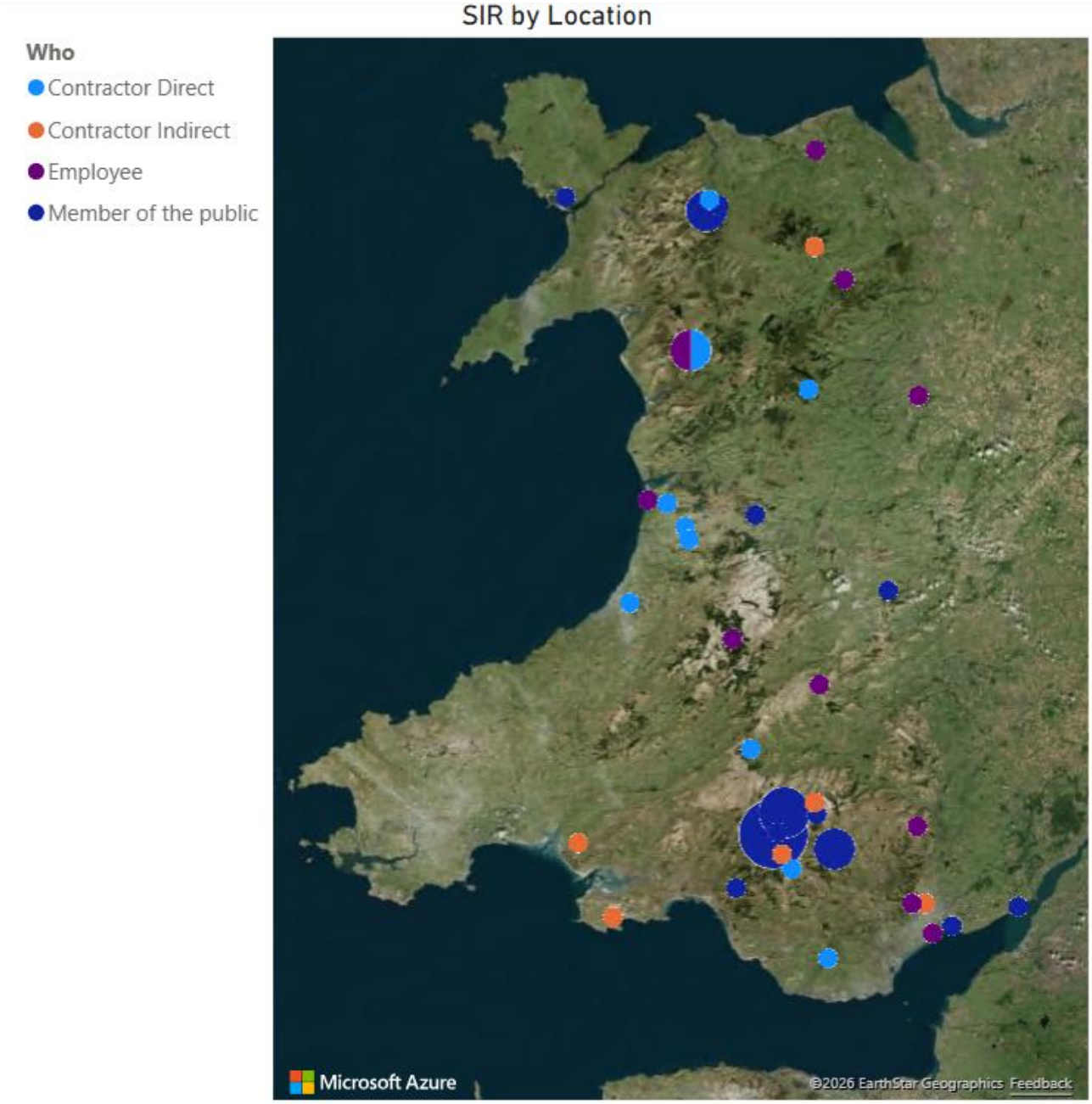
ACCB Reference	Date Commissioned	Status	SIR Name	SIR Type	LT Sponsor	Brief Description
ACCB1092/A12	19 October 2021	Paused	Coed Taff Forest - 3rd contractor	Fatality	Gavin Bown	Contractor Chainsaw Fatality
ACCB1092/A21	13 October 2025	Paused	Motorbike fatality 2 - MoP	Fatality	Gavin Bown	MOP fatality after colliding with a tree
ACCB1092/A22	12 February 2026	Paused	Waterfalls Country 9 MoP Serious Injury	Injury	Gavin Bown	Mop fell from closed footpath causing serious injuries
ACCB1092/A46	23 July 2026	Paused	Geirionydd 1 - MoP	Fatality	Dylan Williams	MoP fatality - drowning
ACCB1092/A53	09 June 2025	Paused	Motorbike fatality - MoP	Fatality	Gavin Bown	MOP fatality after colliding with a tree whilst on a motorbike experience - Permissions - Yamaha
ACCB1092/A66	26 November 2025	Paused	Corwen Forest Block - Employee	Injury	Elsie Grace	Employee lost footing and fell
ACCB1092/A67	31 March 2026	Paused	Waterfalls 10 - MoP	Fatality	Gavin Bown	MoP fatality - drowning
ACCB1092/A68	29 June 2026	Paused	Waterfalls 12 - MOP	Fatality	Gavin Bown	MoP fatality - drowning
ACCB1092/A69	10 July 2024	Paused	Waterfalls Country 8 - MoP	Incident	Gavin Bown	MOP fatality from closed footpath
ACCB1092/A72	23 July 2026	Paused	Geirionydd 2 - MoP	Fatality	Dylan Williams	MoP Fatality - drowning
ACCB1092/A20	31 March 2025	Open - With Action Owners	Hafod Fawr SSSI - Contractor	Hazard	Gavin Bown	Glysophate herbicide sprayed in field without notification
ACCB1092/A1	07 November 2019	Complete - Actions in progress	Failure of lifting equipment - employee	Dangerous Occurrence	Martin Cox	Boom became detached on one side. The worked immediately stopped works and removed the machine from site to prevent any environmental issues
ACCB1092/A18	24 June 2024	Complete - Actions in progress	Car collision - Employee	Injury	Gavin Bown	3rd party vehicle collision with NRW vehicle
ACCB1092/A23	30 September 2024	Complete - Actions in progress	Pen Y Cymoedd windfarm - 3rd Party Contractor	Incident		Contractor crossed underground cables
ACCB1092/A30	28 October 2025	Complete - Actions in progress	Peterstone Excavator	Incident	Steve Morgan	Excavator Bogged
ACCB1092/A31	04 September 2024	Complete - Actions in progress	Car Roll - Employee	Incident	Steve Morgan	NRW vehicle collision with 3rd Party

All open actions are being chased through ET members as agreed in the WH&S committee meeting.

All paused incidents that are paused pending coroner review are regularly checked with legal.

If you require further details on Open SIRs details available on request.

Serious Incident Review Locations



The cluster of Member of public (purple) SIRs in South Wales is predominately made up of Waterfalls incidents.

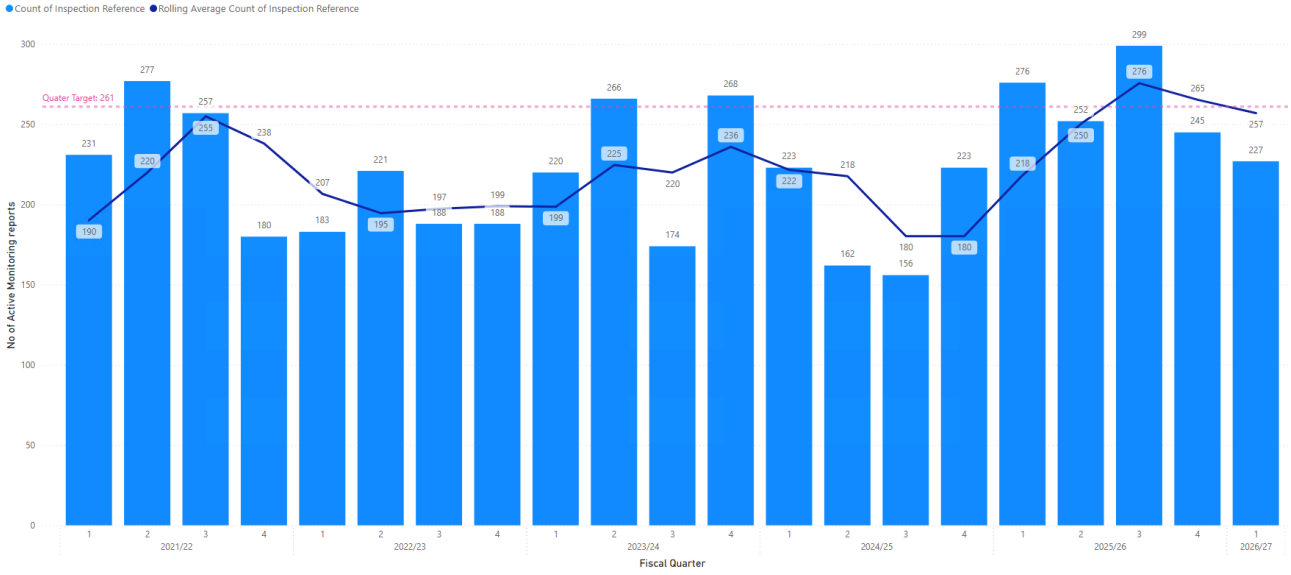
SIR Open Actions

All open actions are being chased through ET members as agreed in the WH&S committee meeting.

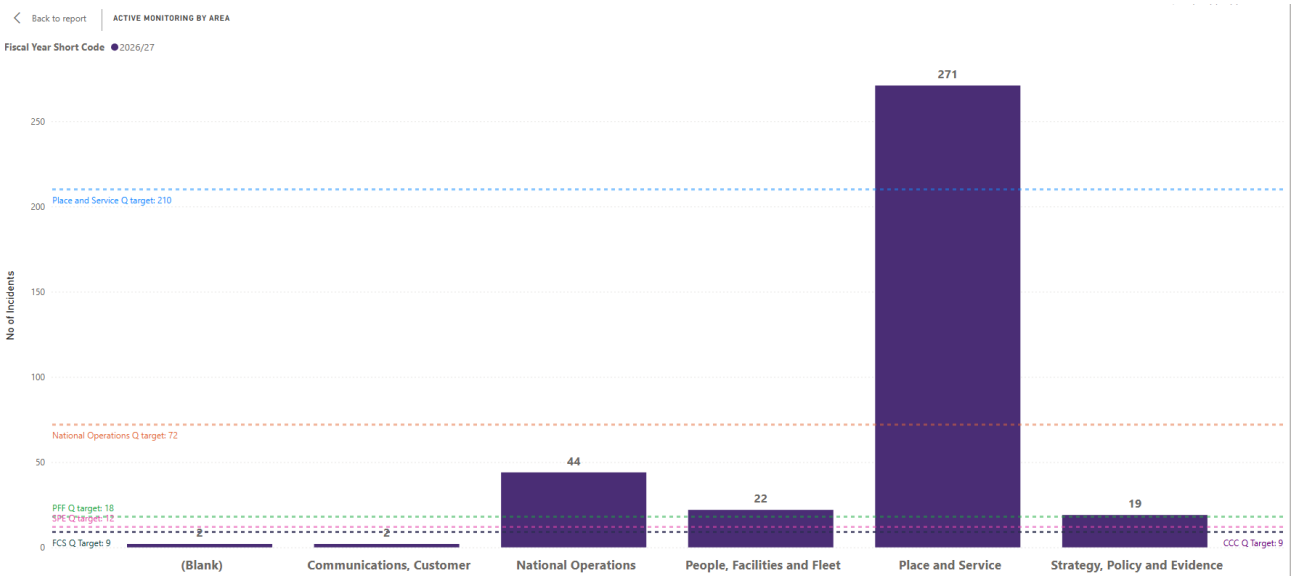
There are forty three actions open following SIR reviews. There are twenty three actions that are overdue. There is one further action due in Q2.

The full list of SIR actions can be found in Appendix 5.

Active Monitoring



After a sustained decline during 2024/25, Active Monitoring reporting recovered strongly throughout 2025/26. The three-quarter rolling average peaked at 276 reports in Q3 2025/26, exceeding the quarterly target of 261. Although activity reduced in Q4 2025/26 and the latest rolling average has fallen slightly to 257, performance remains significantly higher than the levels seen during 2024/25 and close to target.



Performance data indicates that several directorates are not currently meeting their active monitoring targets. A renewed emphasis on active monitoring is therefore required. To assist teams, drop-in support sessions will be offered, and training materials covering the purpose, benefits, and expectations of active monitoring will be recorded and published on the LMS.

NNR Audits

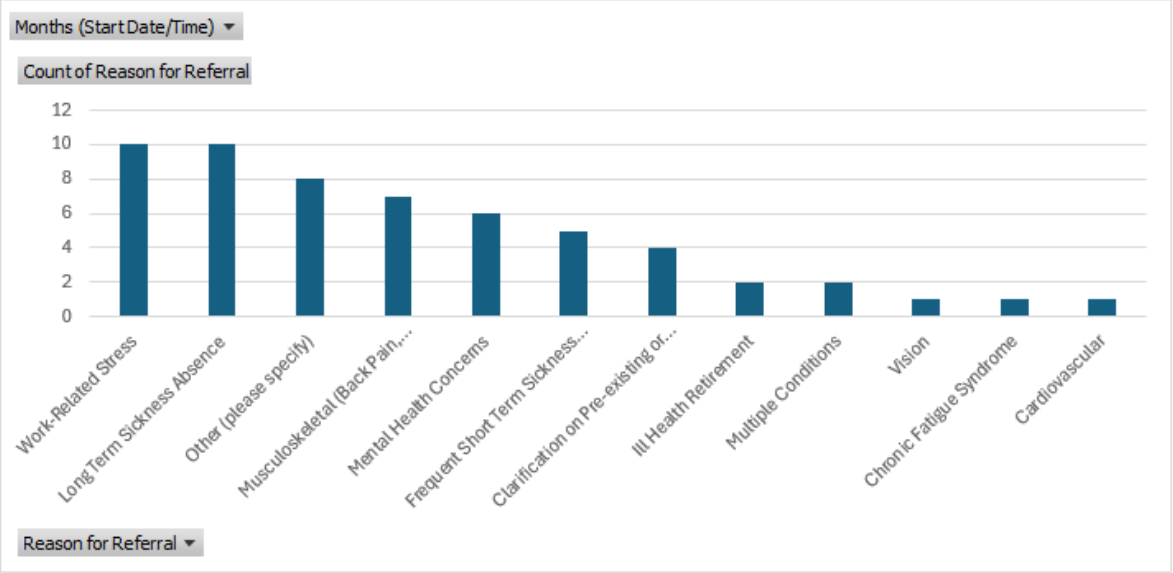
During Q1 26/27 two audits were conducted, combined audit of Y Berwyn and Cors Fochno NNR's. There were no WH&S non-conformities arising from the audits.

NRW occupational health statistics

Reason for referral

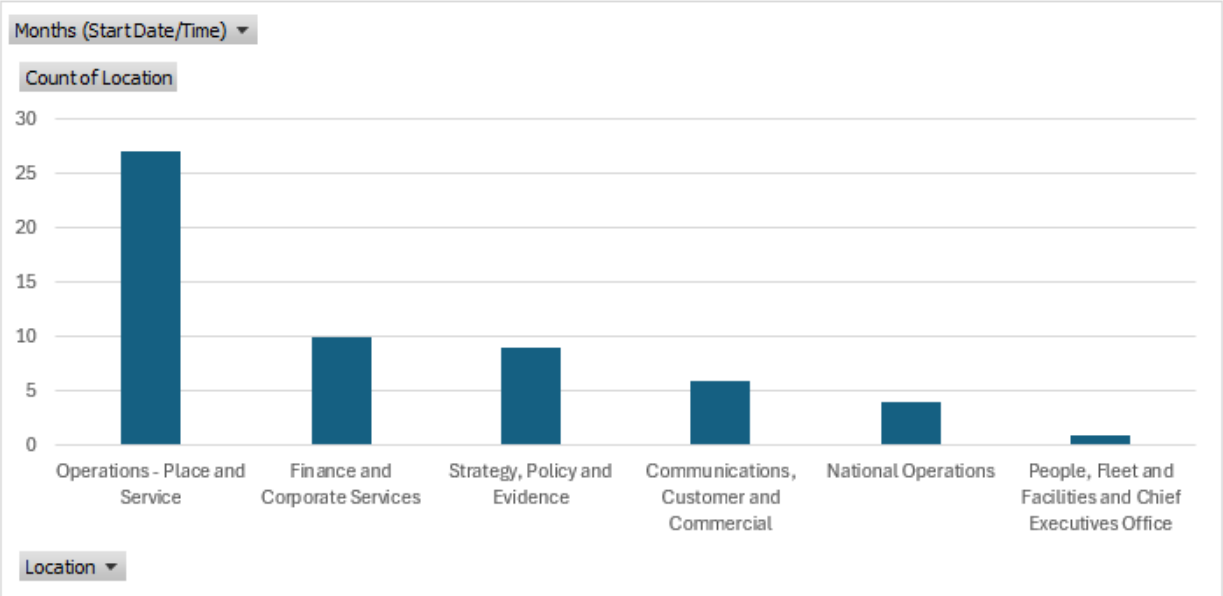
The most common reasons for Occupational Health referrals during the Q1 were work-related stress and long-term sickness absence, with both accounting for 10 referrals each. This was followed by other health-related concerns (8 referrals), musculoskeletal conditions (7 referrals), and mental health concerns (6 referrals).

The data continues to highlight the importance of early intervention, supportive management conversations and timely access to occupational health advice and support.



Referral by Directorate

The majority of Occupational Health referrals originated from Operations – Place and Service, with smaller numbers received from all other business areas. Referrals were recorded across the organisation, demonstrating utilisation of the Occupational Health service within a range of teams and functions.



NRW Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) statistics Q1

There is a delay on June's data due to the transition to a new platform that supports the EAP provider on 1 June. The data below covers April and May.

Accessing 24/7 helpline

Every new caller to our 24/7 EAP helpline receives a clinically led telephone triage. This includes an initial risk assessment and access to in-the-moment emotional support when needed.

Where appropriate, individuals are booked in for a full clinical assessment with a qualified counsellor, covering their presenting concerns and any risks. If a client presents with elevated risk, the EAP respond promptly with tailored care planning and case management, ensuring safety and continuity of support.

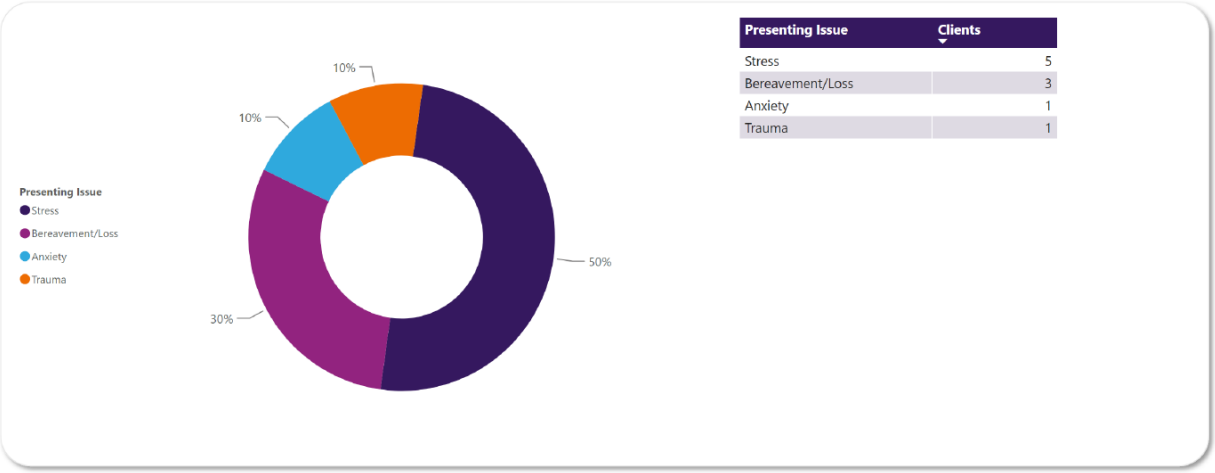
The below graph shows the number of calls received by the EAP and the number of new staff who have been triaged.



Presenting issues

The graph below summarises the new key issues reported by colleagues during their clinical assessments.

New Clients 01 Apr 2026 - 31 May 2026: 10



Presenting Issue	Clients
Stress	5
Bereavement/Loss	3
Anxiety	1
Trauma	1

Wellbeing initiatives and developments

- In May a review of incidents reported on AssessNET identified cases where laptops were being used in fleet vehicles while charging. A reminder was issued to staff that vehicles do not provide a suitable DSE workstation due to restricted space, poor posture and insufficient ergonomic support, increasing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.
- During mental health awareness week in May, we promoted this year's theme of "Action" by encouraging colleagues to take small practical actions to support their wellbeing. This included taking proper breaks, checking in with colleagues, and making use of the wellbeing hour. Information on available wellbeing support was also re-promoted.
- During Foster Care Fortnight, we raised awareness of our Fostering Friendly policy and signposted colleagues to additional information and support available through the Fostering Network.
- We continue to support our Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) through quarterly check ins. Emerging themes and feedback are shared with the Leadership and Executive Team member to help inform ongoing wellbeing priorities and support arrangements.

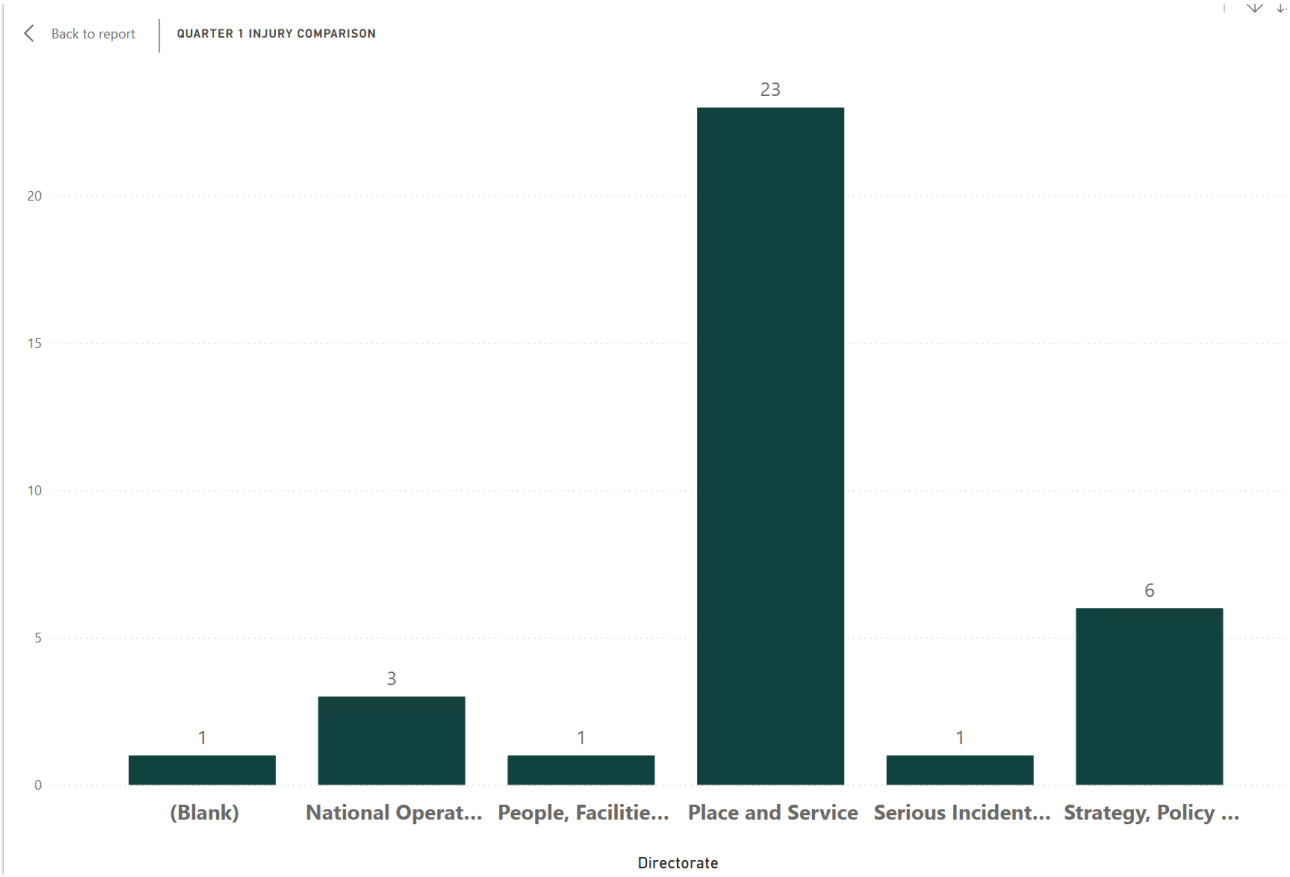
Appendix 1 – Incident statistics

	Q1 26/27	Q1 25/26	25/26	24/25	23/24	22/23	21/22
RIDDOR – staff	0	2	5	2	5	3	7
Lost time injuries – staff	1	2	5	5	6	3	3
Injuries, no lost time – staff	18	21	53	52	65	43	51
Near miss – staff	63	36	162	178	186	175	156
Serious incident reviews	1	2	7	8	8	9	7
Injuries - contractors	1	1	4	5	9	8*	3*
Injuries – public	2	6	26	26	46	38	38
Near miss – contractors	16	22	67	67	70	68	62
Near miss – public	14	10	37	37	31	33	30
Property Damage	9	14	47	47	48	53	36
Hazards Reported	36	15	66	66	89	199	166

* Includes 1 RIDDOR Reportable injury to a contractor. This will have been reported to HSE by the contractor but has been included in our statistics to ensure a suitable investigation/review takes place.

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Appendix 2 – Injury statistics



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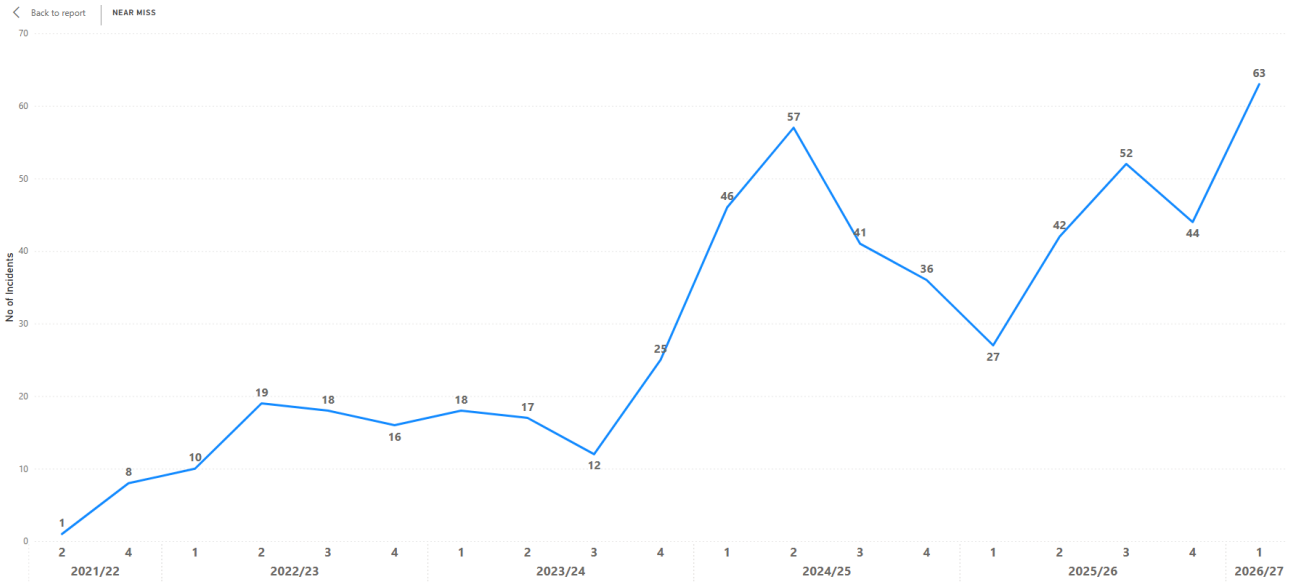
Appendix 3 – Historic Fatality Statistics

	Q1 26-27	25-26	24-25	23-24	22-23	21-22	20-21	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17
NRW Staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contractors	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
MOP	1	4	5	2	5	8	0	0	1	2	4

The reported fatalities could have taken place on NRW estate or were reported to NRW as we were seen at the time of report to have a vested interest.

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Appendix 4 – Near Miss Statistics



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Appendix 5 - SIR Actions

Record Reference	Action Required	Issued To	Issued date	Due Date	Agreed Extension	Notes
ACCB1092/ A1	NRW policy to be developed for plant disposal and replacement.	Andrew Jones	29/07/2020	16/12/2024	31/12/2026	Policies being rewritten across fleet, this will be part of these policies. Aim is to complete by end of December
ACCB1092/ A18	Fleet and L&D to work together to create a module on learning management system for all drivers with key driving information. This will need to be made mandatory for all staff driving NRW vehicles on a yearly basis.	James Poyser	13/02/2025	30/09/2025	31/03/2026	Ongoing AJ to provide updated timescales. Coms and Engagement plan has started with timescales over the next 3 months including roadshows at Llandarcy and Monmouth to share driving information. LMS has been drafted and will be launched end of September 2026.
ACCB1096/ A4	complete actions from further considerations report assigned against ACCB1092/A18	James Poyser	13/02/2025	31/03/2026		Will be closed when action 5199560 as the last outstanding action is closed.

ACCB1097/ A7	Timber Sales Manager to prepare some communications to remind all timber customers of their responsibility: 1. to appoint a competent person(s) to undertake the role of Forestry Works Manager (FWM) 2. that in fully discharging the FWM role, NRW's expectation (supported by FISA Managing Health and Safety in Forestry) is that timber purchaser FWM's arrange and lead the pre-commencement with their contractor, inviting NRW as Landowner to be present, rather than the other way around 3. to ensure that they have their own pre-commencement forms on which their FWM's can record the pre-commencement meeting, a copy of which should be provided to NRW in exchange for a copy of our own pre-commencement form	StJohn Ashworth	14/08/2025	29/08/2025		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 6 - Details on de-bogging process for NRW owned plant will be added to Fleet intranet pages	Andrew R Jones	02/06/2026	30/06/2026	30/09/2026	Fleet have only just gained approval for updates on intranet page. Agreed extension until end of September 2026.
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 6 - De - bogging arrangements for NRW plant to be added to MMG	Andrew R Jones	02/06/2026	30/06/2026	30/09/2026	Fleet have only just gained approval for updates on intranet page – MM will be completed at the same time. Agreed extension until end of September 2026

ACCB1092/ A30	Action 3 - Amend technical Sign off process within MyNRW to ensure line manager of the person hiring the plant is now responsible for Technical Sign Off.	Andrew R Jones	02/06/2026	30/06/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 6 - Review de-bogging contract considering hiring of plant.	Andrew R Jones	02/06/2026	31/07/2026	30/09/2026	Initial conversation has taken place with United plant. Agreed extension pending final sign off
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 3 - Provide options paper to Finance Business board with Plant Hire Insurance with a view to getting an options signed off.	Andrew R Jones	02/06/2026	31/07/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 4 – IWF Team Leaders and WHS to review risk assessment to ensure the inclusion of risk of bogging machinery	D.Letellier M.Jones (assigned to two people)	02/06/2026	31/07/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 9 - Review to ensure daily checks are taking place on machinery. Each IWF TL & each L&A Manager to undertake active monitoring to ensure use	G.Evans G.Jones G.Thomas S.Mountford E.Rossington J.Dooley N.Davies R.Handley I.Williams J.Barnes S.Pearson D.Williams	02/06/2026	31/07/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 3 - Review PUWER proforma for suitability to mitigate risk in terms of third party plant hire	C.Morgan	02/06/2026	30/09/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 1 - Review CPP / PCI process to identify where design for creation of stable platforms in wet conditions should sit.	D.Letellier M.Jones W.Davies	02/06/2026	31/12/2026		

ACCB1092/ A30	Action 8 – Review banksman training to ascertain if it is fit for purpose, including what machinery is used for the training.	D.Letellier C.Leith J.Dooley R.Lane	02/06/2026	31/12/2026		
ACCB1092/ A30	Action 10 – Work with Learning and Development to develop de-bogging training for all excavator operators that is appropriate.	C.Leith R.Lane E.Rossington N.Davies	02/06/2026	31/12/2026		

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NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Update
Paper Reference:	26-11-B15
Paper sponsored by:	Professor Rhys Jones, WLMF Chair
Paper prepared by:	Nichola Taylor, Specialist Advisor: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
Paper presented by:	Professor Rhys Jones, WLMF Chair
Purpose of the paper	Information

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

The Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) meetings take place four times per year, and they provide an opportunity for Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and other WLMF membership organisations to share information, identify common interests and work together in a collaborative way on strategic land management issues.

Update

6th July Meeting

1. A WLMF meeting was held on Monday 6th July and was primarily a Pollution themed meeting. The meeting included the following discussions and presentations:

   - **Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations (CoAPR) Compliance Delivery.** NRW provided an update on CoAPR Compliance, including findings from inspections undertaken across Wales. There has been a slight increase in compliance. Discussions included silage and slurry storage infrastructure and the challenge of older agricultural infrastructure.

   - **Catchment to Tap: The Dee Partnership in Action.** United Utilities provided the latest updates on the Turbidity National Environment Programme (NEP) partnership project on the River Dee. The Dee Partnership sees the four water company abstractors on the river, Dŵr Cymru, Hafren Dyfrdwy, Severn Trent and United Utilities, come together to tackle a shared problem. The initiative aims to reduce sediment entering the Dee, which can affect drinking water treatment, river ecology and protected fish populations. Key themes included the use of shared monitoring

data, satellite-based risk mapping, targeted interventions with land managers, and a proposed farm grant scheme to support measures.

- **Groundwater Code: Sheep dip.** NRW gave a talk on the issues with diazinon and the launch of the consultation period for a refreshed Groundwater Code: Sheep Dip. Discussion centred on the continuing importance of diazinon-based sheep dip for sheep scab control, given increasing treatment resistance and limited alternatives, alongside the need to minimise risks to groundwater and surface waters. Concerns were raised regarding disposal routes for spent sheep dip and the potential cost implications. Stakeholders were encouraged to engage with the consultation process to ensure practical and proportionate implementation.

- **Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Project Update.** NRW provided an update on the SAC Nutrients Project in the River and Marine SACs, including the development of a Catchment Nutrient Recovery Plan as part of an Integrated Approach. Members discussed the Integrated Approach being developed to support both environmental restoration and sustainable development by identifying nutrient reduction measures, restoration trajectories and future development capacity. The work aims to provide greater certainty for planning authorities and developers while ensuring progress towards nutrient reduction targets and improved condition of protected sites. Collaboration across NRW, Welsh Government (WG), local authorities and stakeholders was identified as essential to delivery.

- **Delivering 30by30 Together: NRW's Approach to Nature Recovery in Wales.** NRW gave a presentation on NRW's approach to delivering 30by30 through Resilient Ecological Networks (RENs). The presentation highlighted the role of protected sites, RENs and the voluntary Naturfa sites, which recognise areas already delivering long-term biodiversity benefits without creating additional designation or regulation. The discussion emphasised the scale of biodiversity loss in Wales and the need to move beyond protected site designations towards a more connected and resilient ecological network.

2. The minutes of the July meeting were approved at the 21st September meeting and are available on request.

21st September Meeting

3. A WLMF meeting was held on Monday 21st September and was a Woodland themed meeting. Members of the forestry Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), a sub-group of the WLMF, were invited to this meeting as it had a woodland theme, and a short RAC meeting was also held. The meeting included the following discussions and presentations:

- **Trees for Farms for Rivers**. NRW provided a talk on how we can use trees to improve resilience on farms, with examples provided from the Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project.

- **Tree health.** An update was provided by NRW on the latest tree health issues in Wales, including on update on Ash dieback, *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Ips typographus*.

- **National Forest for Wales case study.** NRW, in partnership with the owner of a farm in Carmarthenshire, gave a presentation about the management of a block of woodland as part of wider commitment to regenerate, diversify and manage the land.

- **Woodland Creation Small Grants Scheme.** NRW provided an update on a positive change to WG's Small Grants Woodland Creation Scheme, with an opportunity for questions.

- **Welsh Government update.** WG colleagues provided an update on the new Woodland Management Scheme and the forestry elements of the Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability White Paper, encouraging members to submit a consultation response.

- **NRW review of stakeholder fora.** NRW provided an update to members on the stakeholder fora review being conducted by Wavehill Consulting on behalf of NRW. Members were advised that they will all be sent a short questionnaire for completion if they would like their views to be taken into account.

- **Forestry RAC.** Members of the forestry RAC met very briefly and were thanked for completing their first term of appointment of three years. NRW explained that the forestry RAC is being included in the stakeholder fora review to see whether there are options to improve the way that it functions.

4. Once the minutes of the 21st September are approved further details will be provided in the next Board update, and a copy will be available on request.

5. The next WLMF meeting will be a Pollution themed meeting and is scheduled for January 2027.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18th November 2026
Title of Paper:	Approaches to Tackling Illegal Waste Activity in Wales
Paper Reference:	26-11-B11
Paper sponsored by:	Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence
Paper prepared by:	Michelle Griffiths, South Central Wales Operations Manager
Paper presented by:	Nadia De Longhi, Head of Regulation
Purpose of the paper	Discussion / Information
Summary	The Board is asked to note the current position on waste crime and our roles in dealing with criminality and permit breaches. A number of interventions are being planned to strengthen our approach to detection, disruption and enforcement. The Board are asked to provide a steer on the actions proposed or consider alternatives.

Background

1. Waste crime is illegal activity involving the handling, transport, treatment, storage or disposal of waste. It can cause environmental damage, harm to human health and significant economic and financial impacts.

2. NRW's Strategic Crime Assessment 2025 identifies waste crime as the dominant environmental crime issue across its intelligence, with repeat offending, commercialisation and, in some cases, organised activity. The financial model of waste creates opportunities for criminal profit, while increasingly complex waste movements and regulation can make offending difficult to detect.

3. NRW regulates the legitimate waste industry while also responding to illegal activity. Increasing enforcement demand creates pressure on operational and legal resources and can divert people from routine regulatory and preventative work. Waste crime cannot be eliminated entirely. Our approach needs to combine prevention and robust

regulation with intelligence-led detection, disruption, intervention, enforcement and partnership working.

4. This paper provides the Board with an overview of the current position, the challenges for NRW and the work underway to strengthen our response.

What is waste crime?

5. Waste crime includes illegal waste sites, large-scale illegal disposal, burning, waste mis-description, illegal exports and waste-related fraud. The waste industry has developed into a complex recycling and resource-management system involving multiple organisations and movements of waste, alongside an increasingly complex legislative framework.

6. The waste industry has shifted from simple pre-2000s landfill disposal operating model to a complex recycling and resource-management system involving many movements and operations. This transformation supports an ambition to move to a circular economy that goes beyond recycling but has also created an opportunity for criminal activity.

7. Waste is handled and processed by many more actors as it moves through the system. Some offenders operate entirely outside the regulatory system. Others establish apparently legitimate businesses or obtain authorisations that can provide cover for deliberate offending.

8. The economic model when dealing with waste creates particular opportunities for criminality. Operators are paid to accept waste, while costs then arise to undertake legitimate treatment and disposal. They can therefore profit by avoiding costs, misdescribing waste or operating outside regulatory controls. There is limited financial incentive for proper management. Criminals can exploit this by taking waste cheaply and disposing of it illegally, or by misdescribing waste to avoid costs such as Landfill Tax.

9. Waste crime is driven primarily by financial profit combined with a high-profit, low-risk and low detection operating model.

Criminality in the waste industry

10. Over recent years, we have seen a step change in the sophistication of criminal behaviour in the waste sector. The organisation, scale and speed with which the criminal activity takes place has changed dramatically and presents an ongoing threat in Wales.

11. There is strong evidence Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) now operate within the industry. OCG waste crime involves structured, large-scale, and often multi-faceted criminal networks running commercial-scale illegal operations and are often engaged in other criminality including laundering money, modern slavery, drugs and tax evasion.

We should be cautious when referring to waste offending as ‘organised crime’ as there is a scale of offending and not all waste criminality comes under the definition of an OCG.

12. Waste crime generally operates through two broad approaches. Some offenders work entirely outside the regulatory system, taking waste at low cost and dumping it illegally. Others exploit the appearance of legitimacy by establishing registered businesses, obtaining authorisations and using regulatory compliance as cover for criminal activity. This can make offending difficult to detect, as concerns may initially be treated as compliance issues rather than deliberate criminal behaviour. The environmental, financial and social harms may not be evident at the point of regulation and can emerge elsewhere in Wales, across the UK or internationally through the movement, treatment or disposal of waste. These approaches are not mutually exclusive; organised criminals often move between them, and efforts to close loopholes in one area can displace activity into the other.

13. There is an inherent health and safety risk to staff when dealing with any form of criminal activity. The skills, experience, and judgement required in these circumstances differ significantly from those needed to regulate and engage with compliant operators.

Our role in in responding to waste crime

14. Reducing harm from serious environmental crime contributes to NRW's Corporate Plan and Well-being Objective 3 – Tackling Pollution. NRW both regulates the permitted waste industry and responds to illegal activity, taking a risk-based approach to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources for human and environmental well-being. We undertake our enforcement activities in line with our Enforcement and Sanctions Policy. Much of our day-to-day waste regulation compliance work funded via charged regimes, whilst incident response and enforcement is Grant in Aid funded.

15. Our **Waste Regulatory** teams and **Once in Wales Waste** teams play a dual role of regulating the industry and responding to incidents and offending. We regulate more than 600 permitted waste sites, alongside waste exemptions, hazardous waste producers and waste carriers. In 2025, there were 347 intel reports for waste activity, of which 129 related to illegal waste sites.

16. The **Central Enforcement Support Team** provides a specialised intelligence and enforcement support function for the regulatory and enforcement capability of NRW. It provides guidance on enforcement processes and manages sensitive data and intelligence.

17. Our **Tackling Waste Crime** officers, who are funded by WG and work in waste regulatory teams, have a key role in enforcement including trialling innovative interventions and disruption approaches.

18. Policy and regulatory approach support is provided by the **Regulatory Futures Team**.

19. We work with several partner organisations to tackle this problem, including the Police, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), and Local Authorities. We have some seconded Police Officers, who support our actions in tackling waste crime, but their main purpose is to tackle Wildlife Crime.

20. We work in partnership with the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) who are responsible for the collection and management of Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT) within Wales.

21. We are also an active partner and sit on the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) - GOV.UK. This is a collaborative network of environmental law enforcement agencies that work to target criminals that are engaged in serious and organised waste crime.

22. This work is resource intensive as investigations can be complex and protracted, with enforcement activity diverting staff from routine regulation. The waste industry often adopts a highly adversarial and litigious approach to investigations and enforcement action. This can extend the time that investigations can take and securing positive outcomes for the communities impacted can be slow.

23. NRW and Local Authorities have distinct responsibilities for illegal waste disposal. The term “fly-tipping” is often used to describe any illegal waste deposit, but this can be misleading. Local Authorities typically deal with smaller-scale fly-tipping incidents on public land, while NRW regulates more serious waste crime and provides specialist support through Fly-Tipping Action Wales. To avoid confusion, the term “waste crime” should be used when referring to offences that fall within NRW’s regulatory remit.

Current assessment of waste crime in Wales

24. We have identified **tackling waste crime as a key priority within our Corporate Plan Refresh.** One of the key targets in the refreshed Plan is to reduce harm from waste crime, articulated as follows: By 2030, NRW will reduce the environmental and economic harm caused by organised waste crime by disrupting unauthorised waste activity from at least 10 high-risk facilities each year.

25. The NRW **Strategic Crime Assessment 2025** concludes that meaningful reduction in environmental crime requires a shift from managing individual incidents towards disrupting the systems that enable persistent offending.

26. **Impacts on Place Operations:** Place Operations and Legal Services are seeing increasing illegal activity which creates pressures far beyond environmental regulation and places increasing demands not only on NRW but on local authorities, communities, public services and partner organisations. The causes of this are not fully understood but could be as a result of displacement from England, where there is greater action being taken, supported by significant investment from Defra.

27. It is important to recognise that waste does not respect the Place boundaries defined by NRW. Waste generated in one area may be transported, processed, treated or

disposed of elsewhere. Effective action therefore requires intelligence sharing and coordinated interventions across the whole of NRW and with partner agencies.

28. The current assessment of waste crime identifies five principal challenges and how we are responding to them:

- **Funding and capacity**: Wales does not currently have the same level of focus, funding, resources and specialist skills available elsewhere in the UK. There is a risk that of displacing criminal activity into Wales. To address this, we are submitting a bid to Welsh Government (WG) for more resource and are working closely with colleagues across the border through JUWC to see where we can support each other as appropriate.
- **Technology**: drones, body-worn cameras, geospatial tools and intelligence-led surveillance techniques are not yet fully established as enforcement tools within NRW. We are having conversations with colleagues from across NRW to understand how we can strengthen and develop this as we go forward.
- **Intelligence and tasking**: the Enforcement Tasking Review 2023 and Strategic Crime Assessment 2025 identify the need for a formal tasking process so resources can be directed towards the highest threats and risks. We agree with this approach and will consider this further through our Waste Crime Internal Steering Group.
- **Structure and capability**: capabilities to undertake enforcement vary across the six Places as specialist resources are dispersed and regulatory officers have dual regulatory and enforcement roles. We are therefore working together to understand how we overcome this, share resources accordingly and upskill and bring in new resource where appropriate.
- **Regulatory divergence**: regulatory reforms could create crime displacement pressures and differences in enforcement capacity, and we will ensure we continue to influence and advise WG and DEFRA on this.

29. There is no single intervention that will tackle waste crime. Waste crime is a persistent and adaptive threat and as long as there are opportunities for financial gain, individuals and organised groups will seek to exploit weaknesses in the system.

30. Whilst waste crime may never be eliminated entirely, our aim should be to maintain a robust regulatory framework for permitted operators and a strong intelligence-led response that continually disrupts criminal activity, making it more difficult, less profitable and riskier for offenders to operate. Through collective and sustained action, waste crime must be continuously managed, reduced and disrupted.

Risks, Risk Appetite and opportunities

SR07 - Regulatory Failure: failure to maintain an effective regulatory system could reduce our ability to secure compliance, undertake proportionate enforcement and achieve intended regulatory and well-being outcomes.

RBG25 - Unable to manage waste flows: sector vulnerabilities could contribute to illegal handling or disposal, misclassification, waste fires, illegal shipments and site abandonment.

RBG44 - Increase of Serious Organised Crime activity in waste crime: increased SOC activity could lead to more significant offending and greater environmental harm.

RBG48 - Enforcement capability: insufficient specialist training and resilience could affect investigations, case preparation and the use of specialist enforcement techniques.

Wider implications

(a) Well-being Objectives: Tackling waste crime contributes to a healthier, more resilient and more equal Wales by reducing pollution, protecting communities from environmental harm and ensuring that those who comply with environmental regulation are not disadvantaged by criminal activity. The approach outlined in this paper supports the sustainable management of natural resources and the wider ambition of a prosperous Wales through the promotion of a lawful and sustainable circular economy.

(b) **Finance:** This paper does not seek approval for additional expenditure. Existing activity is funded through current arrangements, although future proposals to strengthen NRW's response to waste crime may require additional investment and will be subject to normal financial approval processes. We are also working on charge funding reviews including consideration of charging for some of our enforcement activities

(c) Resource implications: Waste crime investigations are resource intensive and place increasing demands on regulatory, intelligence and enforcement functions. The actions outlined in this paper will seek to improve coordination, prioritisation and effectiveness, with any significant changes to resources or structures being progressed through established governance processes**.**

(d) **Equality:** This paper does not propose any changes to policy or service delivery and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. Equality considerations will be assessed as part of the development of any future proposals arising from this work.

(e) Data Protection: This paper does not introduce any new processing of personal data, and a Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required. Existing intelligence and enforcement activities will continue to operate within established legal and data protection frameworks.

Next Steps

- **Establishing a Waste Crime Internal Steering Group** to strengthen coordination, intelligence sharing and consistency across NRW.

- **WG Funding for Waste Crime:** Submitting a bid to WG to increase resource for tackling waste crime in NRW, as part of the annual process with Waste Policy branch

- **Review into refreshing and recalibrating** enforcement approaches, structures, processes and operational tools.
- **Recruitment campaign for specialist staff**: to be launched in November 2026 enabling NRW to attract and recruit specialists with the required knowledge, skills and experience to undertake investigative and intelligence roles.
- **Evidence and monitoring of waste crime**: Introduce and maintain an 'Illegal Waste Sites Register' to provide evidence, monitor trends, target resources and measure interventions.
- **Regulatory Reform:** Maintaining our advisory and influencing role with WG and DEFRA to help shape and implement regulatory reforms.

Recommendation

The purpose of this paper is for information and discussion. The recommendation is to endorse the next steps proposed and to provide any additional steer.

Approval / Consultation process

Approval/consultation process **Responsible: Who has developed the paper/process and who has had input?**	Head of Business for Regulation – Nadia De Longhi Head of Service for Regulation – Martin Cox
Accountable: Who is accountable for the ultimate approval? Who will be or is being asked to approve?	Head of Business for Regulation – Nadia De Longhi
Consulted: Who has been consulted to date? Where endorsement is required, is this in place? Will further consultation be required?	Regulation and Policy Approaches Manager – Helen Jenkins Tackling Waste Crime Specialist Advisor – Karl Wright As detailed approaches develop these will use existing governance with Enforcement Subgroup and Waste subgroup
Informed: Who has been informed or who needs to be further information about the work?	Waste and Enforcement Subgroup members

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	18 November 2026
Title of Paper:	Finance Performance Report
Paper Reference:	26-11-B12
Paper sponsored by:	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Paper prepared by:	Catherine Allan, Head of Finance; Mark Collins, Business Finance Manager
Paper presented by:	Catherine Allan, Head of Finance
Purpose of the paper:	Approval (change in forecast) / Discussion (Financial Performance)
Summary	To approve: Change in the latest forecast from £322.6m to £323.1m. To scrutinise: Financial performance to the end of September 2026.

Background

1. Annex 1 summarises financial performance to the end of September 2026 and the latest year-end forecast.

2. Income performance has deteriorated since July and is £4.8m below plan year to date. This is primarily due to lower-than-expected timber income. The latest forecast assumes timber income of £30.0m, £5.6m below budget. Management actions to reduce the impact are set out in the report.

3. Expenditure remains well controlled. Spend to September was £120.7m, £3.1m (2%) below budget, with savings being achieved across all major expenditure areas.

4. A central provision of £7.5m remains available to manage pay award costs and other emerging pressures. A further £3.6m is held to manage programme over-commitments.

5. Current programme over-commitments total £3.1m across Nature and Climate Emergencies (NaCE) (£2.1m) and Flood (£1.0m). These will be actively managed to remain within approved funding limits. A further £4.2m is yet to be allocated to specific projects across NaCE, Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT), Fleet and Facilities.

6. While expenditure remains below budget and contingency provisions are available, active management will be required to maintain a balanced year-end position.

Risks and opportunities

7. Financial performance is monitored through the Finance and Corporate Services Risk Register and contributes to the strategic risk of achieving long-term financial stability.

Opportunities

- Expenditure remains below budget, providing some offset to lower income.
- Central contingency provisions remain available to manage emerging pressures.
- Programme spend can continue to be prioritised and rephased where required.

Risks

- Timber income may reduce further if market conditions deteriorate.
- Delays in programme delivery may impact achievement of planned outcomes.
- Inflationary and other cost pressures could reduce available flexibility later in the year.

The wider implications are:

(a) **Finance:** This report is about the financial performance of NRW. We hold a risk within the Finance and Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register.

(b) **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WBFGA):** Every component of the budget contributes to one or many of our Wellbeing Objectives.

Next Steps

8. Executive Team will continue to monitor income, expenditure and programme delivery, with a particular focus on timber income and capital programme performance. Updated forecasts will continue to be reported to Board throughout the year.

Recommendation

9. Board is asked to:

- Approve the revised forecast expenditure of **£323.1m** (previous forecast: **£322.6m**).
- Note and scrutinise financial performance to the end of September 2026.

Index of Annexes

Annex 1 – Financial Performance Report

Paper ref: Annex 1 – 26-11-B12-A1

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales



NRW Board, November 2026

Financial Performance Report to September 26

Content and Key Messages

Update will cover:	Messages:
Update on the latest forecast changes as at September 2026 compared to the previous reporting period, an increase from £322.6m to £323.1m.	Overall, the full-year budget has increased by £0.5m, largely reflecting £0.6m of additional commercial surrenderable wind energy income and the associated increase in payments to the Welsh Government.
Financial performance as at September 2026.	Income performance has weakened since July, with a year-to-date shortfall of £4.8m against plan. This is largely attributable to timber income, where the latest forecast suggests an outturn of £30.0m, £5.6m below the opening position. Potential mitigating measures are set out on the next slide. Expenditure remains below budget, with spend of £120.7m to September, £3.1m (2%) lower than planned. Savings are being realised across all major expenditure categories, providing some offset to the income shortfall.
Update on contingencies and under/over programming.	Central contingencies of £7.5m are available to manage staff-related costs and other emerging financial pressures. In addition, a central over-programming provision of £3.6m is held. Programme over-programming currently totals £3.1m across NaCE (£2.1m) and Flood (£1.0m) and will be actively managed through the year to remain within approved funding limits. A further £4.2m within the NaCE, DDaT, Fleet and Facilities programmes is yet to be allocated to specific projects and profiled into delivery plans.
The main risks and opportunities to our budget this year	The principal risk to the 2026/27 financial position is the forecast shortfall in commercial timber income and the capital programme delivery. While expenditure remains below budget and central contingencies are available, active management of programme spend, over-programming and other mitigating measures will be required to offset the potential reduction in income and maintain a balanced year-end position.
	The individual pages within the report provide further detail on the points raised above.

Financial Pressures & Mitigating Measures

Revenue pressures	£m	Details
Central over-programming	-3.6	Current over-programming position.
Timber income shortfall	-5.6	Land Stewardship & Commercial Business Group approved a revised forecast of £30m against an opening budget of £35.6m.
Total pressure	**-9.2**	
Mitigating measures		
North accommodation delay	3.8	Delayed until 2027-28.
Known underspend	1.5	Mid-year forecast (non-staff).
Central contingency (£0.75m September)	0.4	Estimate surplus.
Land Stewardship forecast reduction	1.0	Exploring up to £1m with business leads; aim, minimise impact.
Salary forecast	TBC	Recruiting to 93% of the structure, with the timing of recruitment creating a forecast surplus of up to £1.4m. While recruitment controls have helped manage the impact of funding reductions, work is underway to identify sustainable longer-term workforce solutions.
Additional WG funding	TBC	Seek additional Welsh Government funding linked to the timber income guarantee - suggest triggering this if timber income drops below £30m.
TOTAL	**-2.55**	**Remaining central over-programming**

Timber Income Position

Current Position

- Year-end timber income is now forecast at **around £30m**, with a likely range of **£29m-£32m**.
- This is approximately **£5.6m below the original budget of £35.6m** (around **14% lower**).
- Performance to date is being driven by **lower demand from timber processors**, reduced production across most sectors, and slower than expected timber dispatches.

Key Risks

🔴 **Income target will not be achieved this year** - dispatches are currently around **19% below budget**, making recovery to the original target highly unlikely.

🔴 **Weak market conditions** - construction activity remains subdued; processors are operating at minimum production levels and timber prices have weakened.

🔴 **Customer and operational pressures** - a customer insolvency has reduced expected income, while haulage and contractor constraints limit how quickly timber can be brought to market.

🔴 **Income timing risk -** income is expected to be delayed into **2027/28** rather than lost altogether.

Opportunities

🟢 **Income recovery through additional sales** - extra timber sales have been undertaken to recover part of the income lost through customer insolvency.

🟢 **Strong future sales pipeline** - most of this year's timber volume has already been sold and remains contracted, providing confidence that deferred income should be realised in future periods.

🟢 **Potential market improvement** - reduced imports and lower timber stocks in Europe could create greater demand for domestic timber when market conditions strengthen.

Overall Message

The issue is primarily one of timing rather than loss of timber sales. While the 2026/27 income target will not be achieved, most of the shortfall is expected to be deferred into 2027/28. The focus remains on maintaining market share, supporting customers and maximising income recovery as conditions improve.

Annex

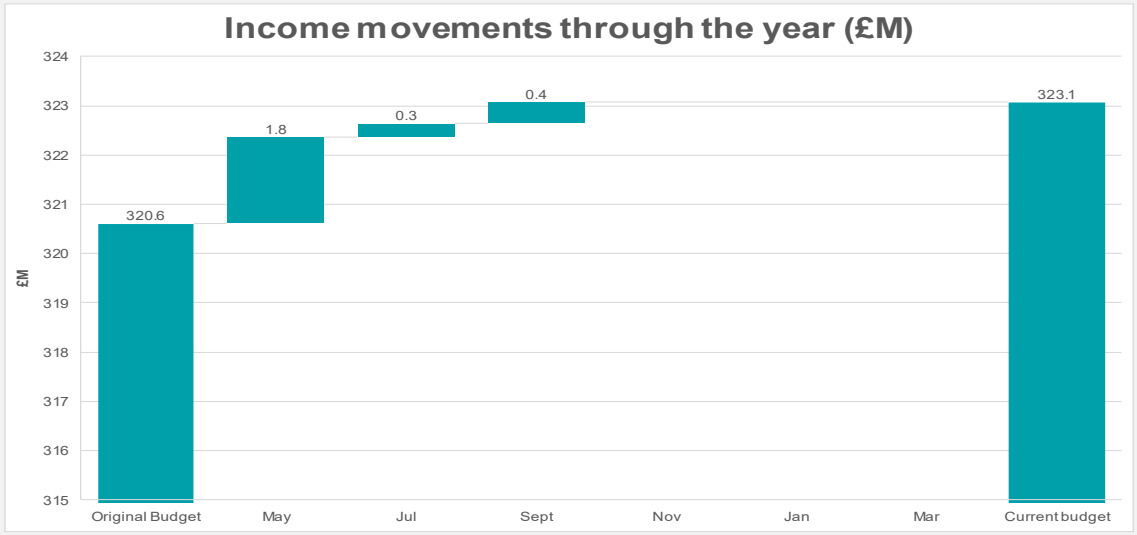








Financial Performance – Income Forecast



Income movements

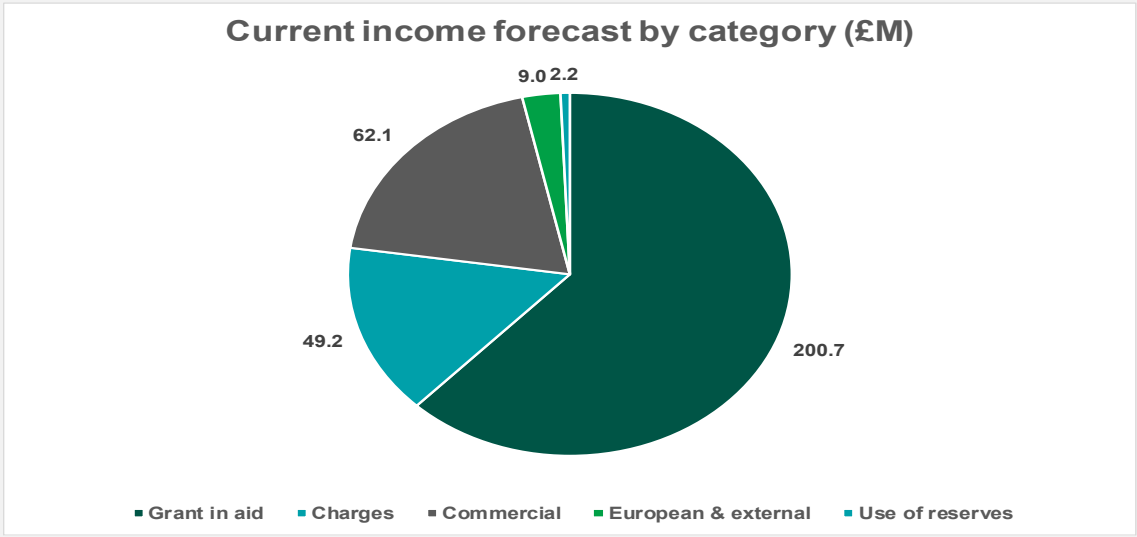
Charges: £0.4m increase driven by higher regulatory income, reducing the draw on charge balances.

Commercial: £0.6m increase from additional surrenderable wind energy income, offset by a corresponding increase in the payment to Welsh Government.

European & Other External: £0.4m reduction due to revised LIFE programme profiling.

Welsh Government Grants: £0.1m increase following the award of Beaver Management Strategy funding.

Use of Balances: £0.3m reduction reflecting higher regulatory income.



Risk and opportunities

1. Timber (Commercial) Income
Current forecast of £29m-£32m compared with a budget of £35.6m. This remains the most significant financial risk and the mitigation plan assumes an outturn of £30m.

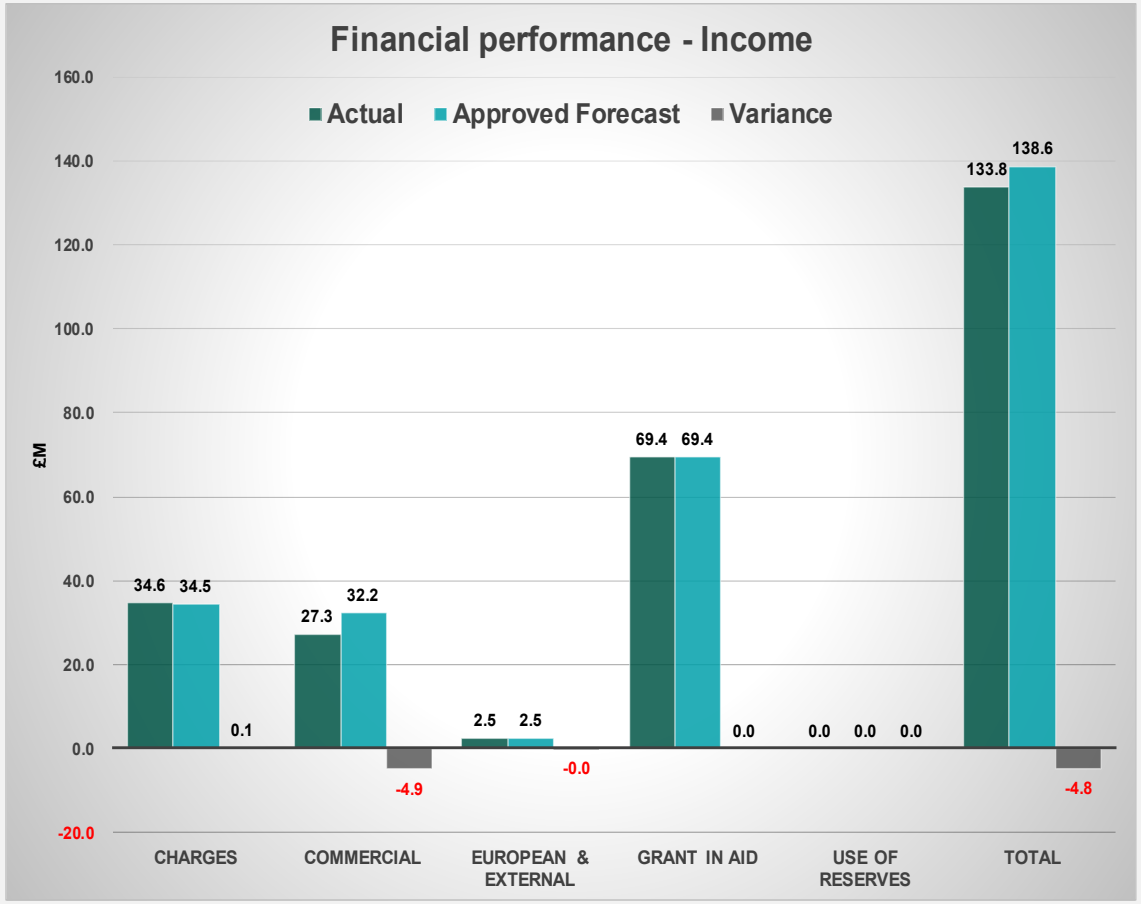
2. Wind Energy
Higher income and lower land acquisition costs are expected to increase repayments to Welsh Government by £1.4m.

3. WG Funding (GiA & grants)
Risk of under-utilisation of the Waste grant allocation. Alternative spending options are being explored, but some funding may need to be returned to Welsh Government. Early notification has been provided.

A forecast capital underspend of £0.6m has recently been flagged for the Coal Tip Safety grant due to a planning issue on Pen yr Englyn. Welsh Government have been informed. This has not yet been reflected in the ledger.

Finally, a forecast underspend of £0.4m-£1m has recently been flagged for the National Forest element of NaCE. The range reflects known efficiencies in delivering one piece of work and the unknown outcome of a planning issue. This has been flagged with Welsh Government and not yet reflected in the ledger.

Financial Performance - Income



Charges

Approved Forecast (£M) 49.2 **Original Budget (£M) 49.1**

The September review has resulted in a net improvement of £0.6m to the income forecast. Growth in Water Resources/Abstraction, Advisory Services, EPR Waste and Water Quality is more than offsetting minor reductions in UK ETS and Fish Other income. The overall position remains positive, with no significant risks identified ahead of the November review.

Commercial

Approved Forecast (£M) 62.1 **Original Budget (£M) 60.8**

Car Parking - £0.4m ahead of profile, driven mainly by Newborough. Forecast update due in October.

Energy Delivery - Overall, surrenderable energy income has increased by £0.6m, with current income received in line to profile. The quarterly forecast review is underway; any changes will also be reflected in October.

Timber - Income is £5.2m below profile, with the latest forecast indicating an outturn of approximately £30.0m, compared with a budget of £35.6m. The shortfall reflects a combination of weaker market conditions, reduced demand and prices, customer-specific issues, and increased operating costs. This remains the most significant risk to the financial position.

European & Other External

Approved Forecast (£M) 9.0 **Original Budget (£M) 8.6**

In line with profile.

Grant in Aid

Approved Forecast (£M) 200.7 **Original Budget (£M) 200.0**

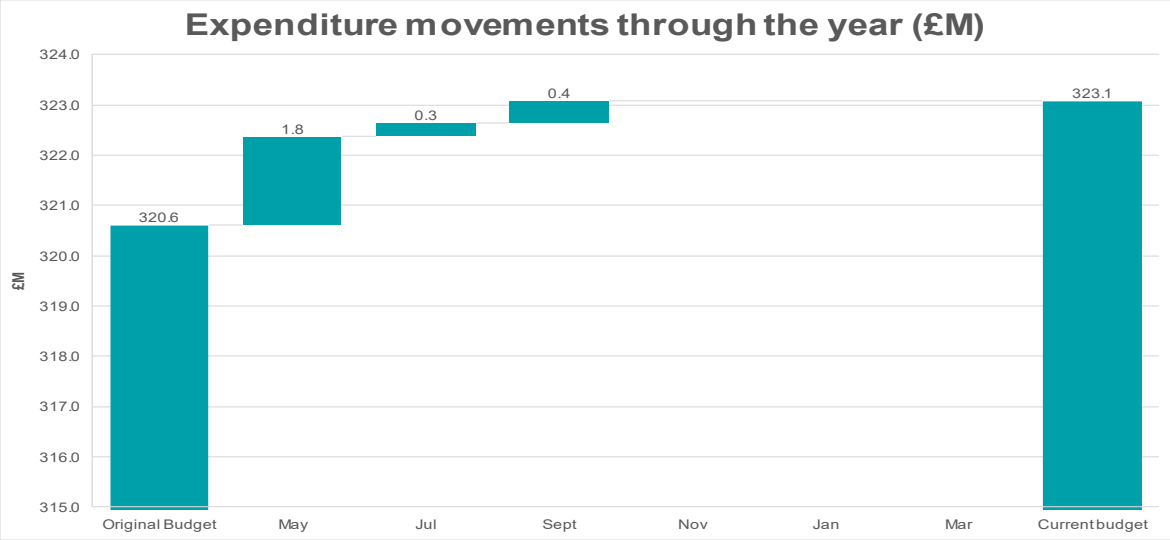
In line with profile.

Use of Balances

Approved Forecast (£M) 2.2 **Original Budget (£M) 2.1**

In line with profile.

Financial Performance – Expenditure Forecast



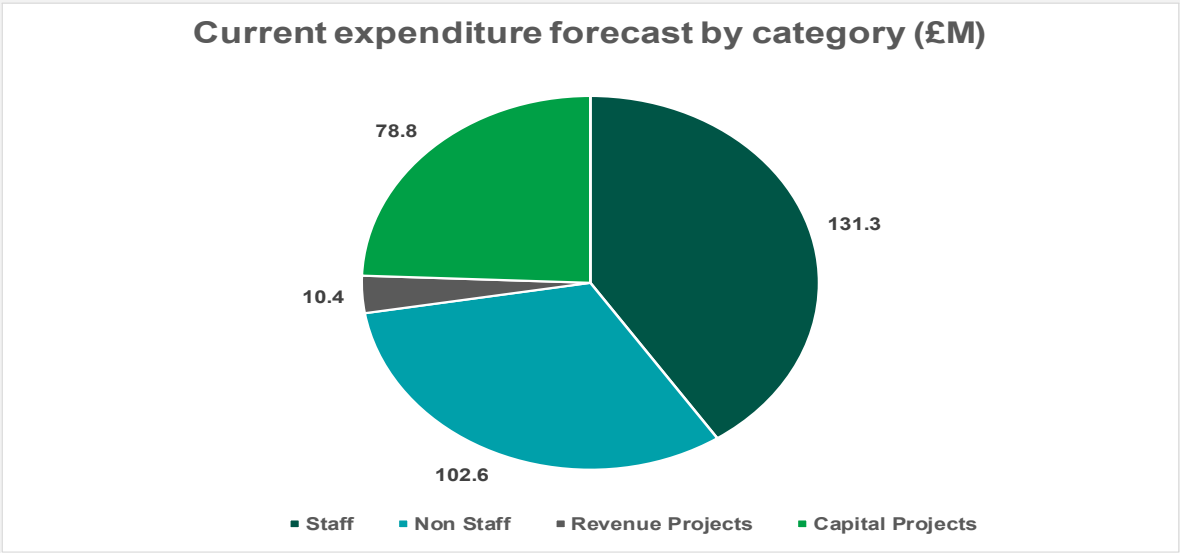
Expenditure movements

Staff
Budget increased by £0.8m, reflecting the People Restructure and additional Water Quality funding.

Non staff
Net increase of £0.7m, driven by a £1.4m increase in payments to Welsh Government from higher wind energy income and lower land acquisition costs, partly offset by transfers to staff budgets.

Revenue Projects
Revenue Projects have reduced by £0.2m, linked to the Life project programme.

Capital Projects
Capital projects have reduced by £0.8m linked to the reduction of the wind energy funded land acquisition.



Risk and opportunities

1. Capital programmes
The capital programme is expected to reduce by at least £5m, primarily due to the deferral of the North Accommodation move and a slower pace of investment in technology and systems pending prioritisation of the Multi-Year Plan. A full reforecast of the capital programme will be completed later this month.

The funding released from the reduced programme could be used to partially offset the forecast shortfall in timber income and support the delivery of central over-programming targets.

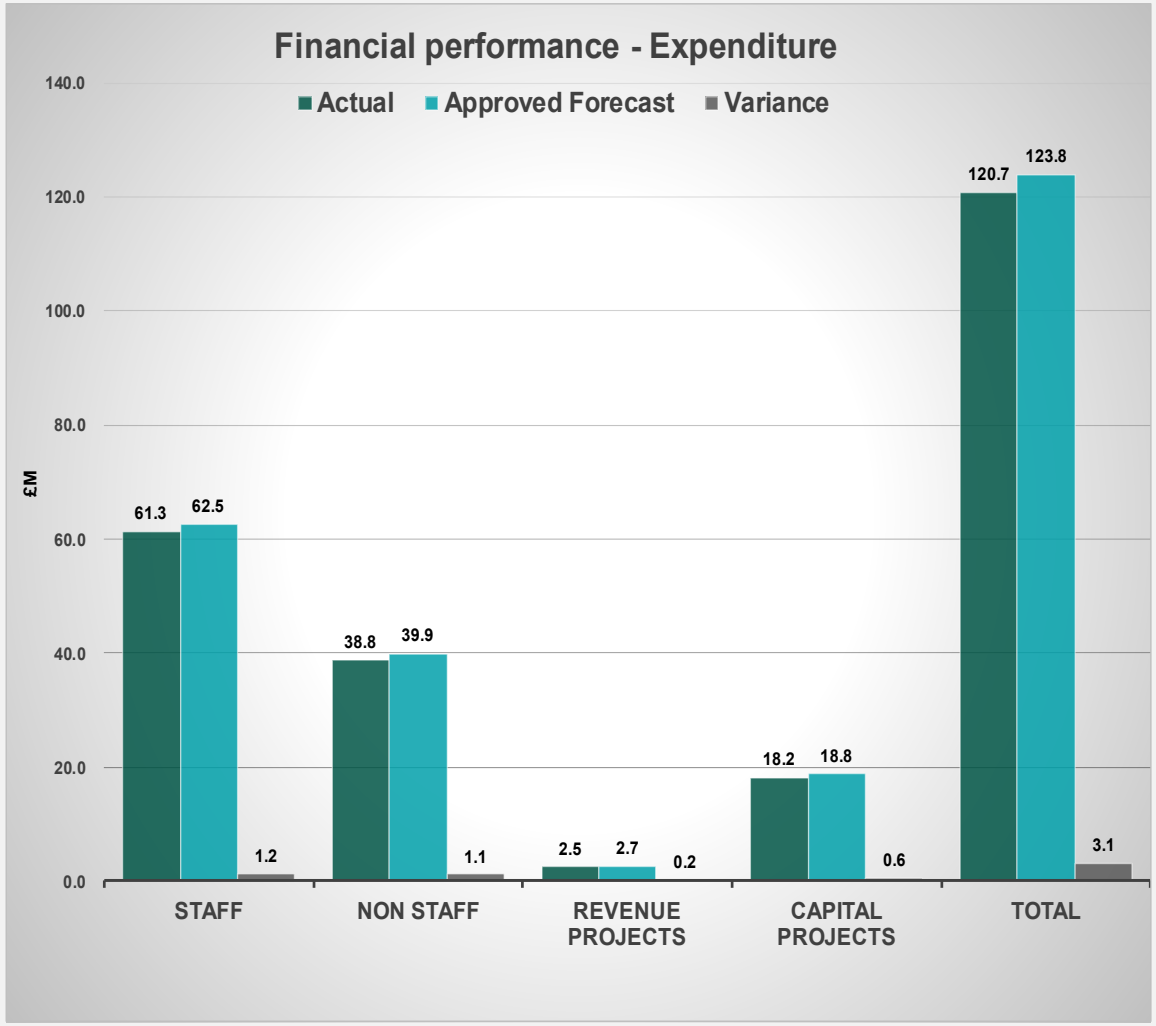
2. Land purchase opportunity
Two land acquisition opportunities, Newborough and Cefn Ddu, are currently progressing. Both have received Ministerial approval and funding confirmation from Welsh Government and will be included within the third supplementary funding letter.

4. Staff budgets
Although vacancy levels continue to reduce, a year-end underspend of approximately £1.2m is still forecast.

At this stage, Directorates should continue to prioritise the reinvestment of available budgets where appropriate. However, any known underspends should be returned at the earliest opportunity to support wider organisational budget management. Budgets should not be retained solely as a contingency against unidentified future pressures.

5. New investment areas
Work continues distributing the £3m budget into water quality, biodiversity and other. £0.35m of the water quality allocation has been returned.

Financial Performance - Expenditure



Staff

Approved Forecast (£M) 131.3 **Original Budget (£M) 127.9**

Staff costs are £1.2m below budget at the end of September, £0.6m higher than reported in July. Vacancy savings account for £0.4m of the increase, although staffing levels continue to improve and are forecast to reach 99% by year end. The remaining £0.2m reflects the re-profiling of non-pay staff costs. While recruitment activity remains strong, a year-end underspend on staff budgets is still anticipated.

Non Staff

Approved Forecast (£M) 108.6 **Original Budget (£M) 113.2**

Non-staff expenditure is £1.1m below plan at the end of September, with variances spread across several Directorates, including CCC (£0.2m), National Operations (£0.4m), Operations (£0.4m) and SPE (£0.2m). The underspend is broadly distributed across teams, with no significant areas of concern other than the Welsh Government-funded Waste Grant, which is currently £0.3m behind profile. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government regarding the use of the forecast underspend.

Land stewardship expenditure remains broadly on track, with 62% of the annual budget still to be spent. Delivery is progressing ahead of the position seen at the same point in each of the previous two years, when 66% and 70% of annual budgets respectively remained unspent.

Central over-programming remains at £3.6m.

Revenue Projects

Approved Forecast (£M) 9.7 **Original Budget (£M) 10.5**

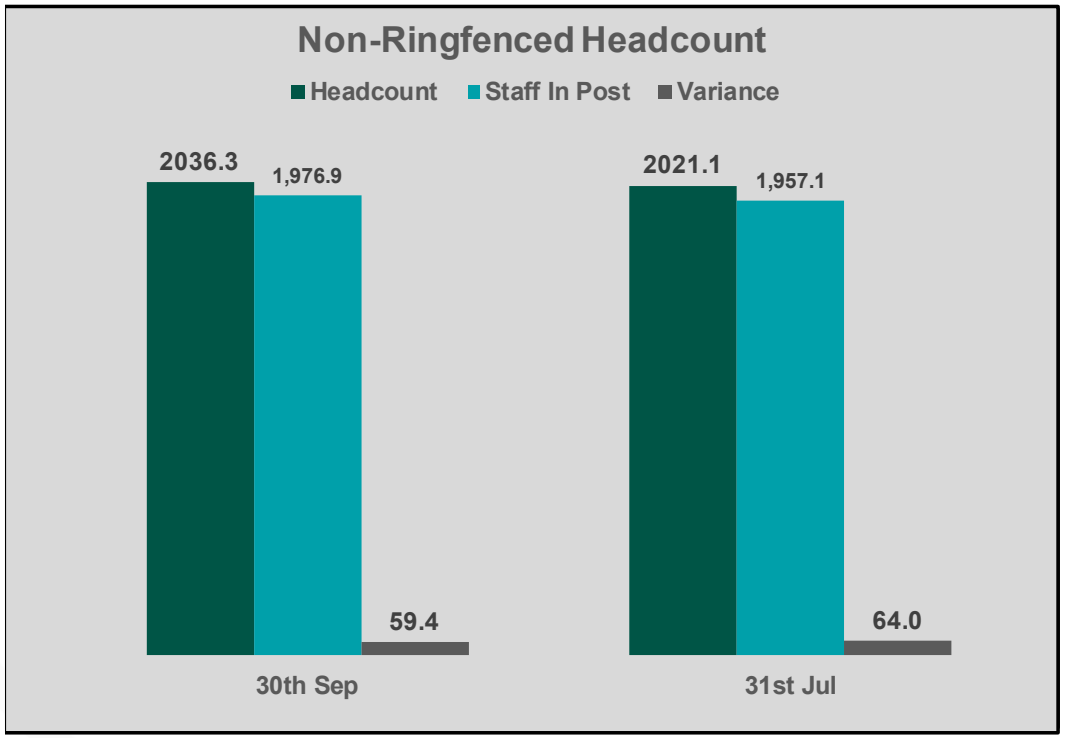
The revenue project programme is performing broadly to plan with current costs in line to budgets.

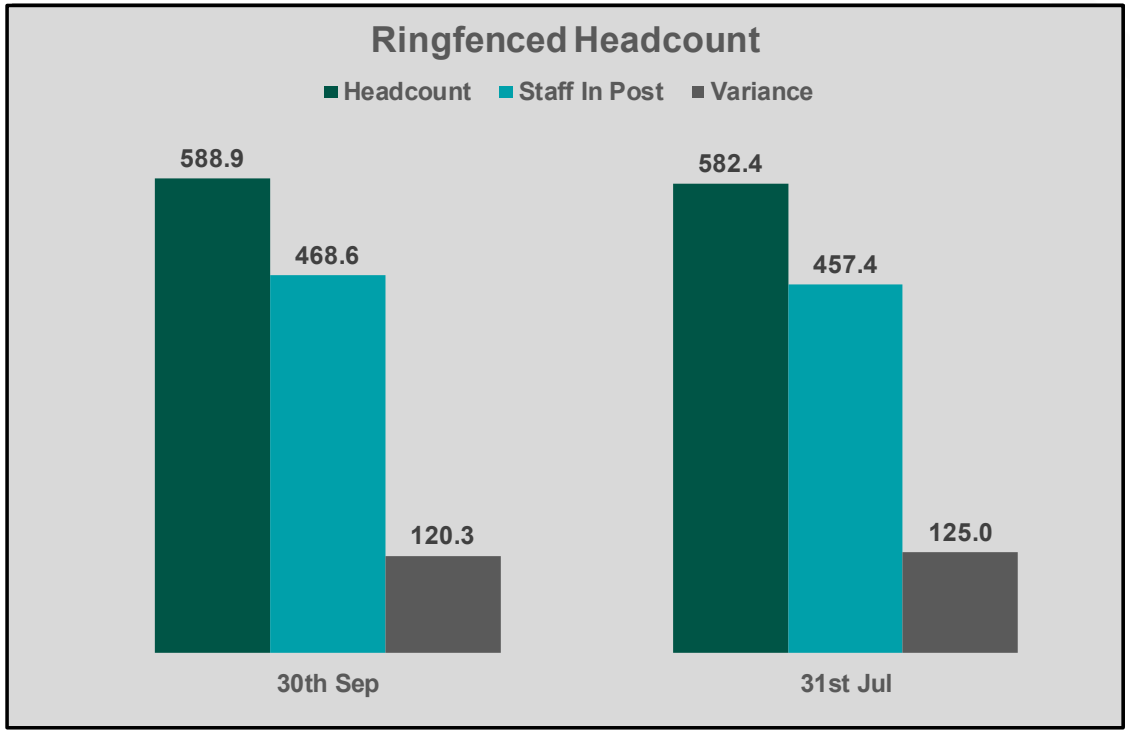
Capital Projects

Approved Forecast (£M) 73.5 **Original Budget (£M) 69.0**

Capital programme: Broadly on track, with only minor variances across Flood and NaCE.
Over-programming: £2.1m in NaCE and £1.0m in Flood. Further over-programming within Flood may be possible.
Accommodation Programme: Forecast underspend of c.£3.8m following project delays. Funding expected to be released in October. This will create additional pressure on future capital budgets.

Financial Performance – Headcount Ceiling





Commentary

1. Non-ring-fenced staff numbers have increased since July but due to an increase in the headcount ceiling (new posts with funding starting in September) staffing levels have remained at 97%. Ring-fenced staffing levels have increased from 79% to 80% as a result of new appointments.

2. The number of staff now stands at 2,445.5fte, an increase of 31.0fte.

3. The number of agency staff now employed is 36, a decrease of 8.

4. There are approximately 64(fte) active recruitments (as per Kallidus) from advertising to interview stage. 53 non ring-fenced and 11 ring-fenced.

5. An additional 65 posts are currently at the requisition stage of the recruitment process awaiting approval.

6. CCC and now PFA are slightly over their ceiling. National Operations and SPE could also be in the position of exceeding their ceiling depending on the outcome of current recruitment.

7. Staffing levels have remained consistent but staff numbers are increasing, if they continue to increase at the current rate, staffing levels will reach 99% for non ring fenced posts and 81% for ring fenced posts by the end of the calendar year.

Contingencies

Rag status



Balances (contingencies and programme under/overs)	Jul-26 £m	Sep-26 £m	Movement £m	Confidence Level (RAG Status)	Comments
Contingencies and provisions					
Pay Award Provisions	3.9	3.9	0.0		Budget held centrally at 3%.
Other staff contingency	0.7	0.6	-0.1		Contingency held for flexible resource pool and any corrections required to opening budget.
Central Contingencies	0.9	1.1	0.2		Central contingencies have been set aside to cover unexpected costs, particularly those associated with the review of personal vehicle use but the outcome looks positive.
Staff Budget Undistributed (Directorates)	1.7	1.4	-0.3		Budgets linked to new funding will be transferred to posts once established.
Capital Contingency	2.8	1.9	-0.9		The capital contingency has been partly allocated to fund customer transformation £0.3m and £0.6m to complete the fish movement registration service replacement (Starfish).
Over-programming					
Central over programming (revenue)	-3.6	-3.6	0.0		No change.
Overprogramming (Directorates)	-0.4	-0.4	0.0		Primarily linked to Land Stewardship.
Flood Risk Capital (Directorates)	-1.4	-1.0	0.4		Overprogramming has reduced to £1.0m, ideally we would like this to be higher.
NaCE (Directorates)	-3.2	-2.1	1.1		Overprogramming has reduced by £1.1m, this will continued to be managed down as we move through the year to be in line with the overall allocation.
Under-programming					
Water Resources Capital (Directorates)	-0.1	0.2	0.3		Further projects have been removed from the programme changing the overall position to an under programming.
Awaiting distribution					
DDaT Programme	0.2	0.2	0.0		Mostly awaiting projects being assured and approved allowing codes to be set up.
NaCE Programme	0.3	0.3	0.0		
Fleet & Facilities Capital Programme	3.7	3.7	0.0		Due to the delay in the implementation of the accommodation strategy, a high proportion of the funding is unlikely to be utilised this financial year.

Note

All contingencies/over programming are held centrally unless indicated otherwise.

Trajectory Forecast

Staff Trajectory Forecasted year end position	Approved Budget £m	Gross Savings NRF Posts £m	Charge Related Savings/Deficit £m	Net Savings/Deficit NRF Posts £m	Commentary
Communications, Customer & Commercial	7.6	-0.3	0.0	-0.3	An overspend of (£0.3m) on staff costs is forecasted at year end. The Directorate has exceeded its headcount ceiling throughout the financial year and are currently 7.0fte over on non ring fenced posts.
Finance & Corporate Services	13.9	0.1	-0.0	0.1	An underspend of £0.1m on staff costs is forecasted, FCS are expected to be 2.8fte under their headcount ceiling on non ring fenced posts following the latest set of recruitment.
People, Facilities & Fleet	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	A neutral position is expected at year end. The Directorate have recently gone over their headcount ceiling however any financial impact is forecasted to be offset by underspend earlier in the year.
Strategy, Policy & Evidence	22.8	1.2	0.3	0.9	As a result of a number of vacancies since the start of the financial year, an underspend of £0.9m is forecasted at year end. However, the number of people in post has increased consistently and the Directorate are expected to be only 5.4fte under their headcount ceiling following the current batch of recruitment.
National Operations	19.5	0.0	0.1	-0.1	Overspend of (£0.2m) forecasted at year end on staff costs. The Directorate has seen a number of changes following phase 2 of the ET restructure and following the latest batch of recruitment, are expected to be at their headcount ceiling.
Place & Service	51.9	0.9	0.2	0.7	Vacancies have remained consistent since April which has resulted in a forecasted underspend of £0.7m at year end. The Directorate is undertaking a significant amount of recruitment, after which it is expected they will be 23.5fte under their headcount.
Chief Executive	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	The Directorate is at its headcount ceiling and as a result a neutral position is forecasted at year end.
TOTAL: NRW	**124.6**	**2.0**	**0.6**	**1.4**	

Financial Performance – Revenue Projects

Revenue Projects by Programme	Actual YTD £m	Approved Forecast YTD £m	Variance YTD £m	Approved Forecast FY £m	Remaining Budget FY %	Original Budget FY £m	Commentary
External Funded	0.5	0.6	0.0	2.4	78%	3.1	All projects spending align with profiles; however 78% of the full year budget remains to be utilised. The project leads are confident that they will spend later in the year.
Waste Regulation	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.7	62%	0.7	Minor variances, no concerns.
NaCE	0.4	0.4	0.0	1.4	73%	1.4	In line with profile. Overprogramming will be managed down as we move closer to financial year end.
Land Stewardship	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.9	80%	1.0	In line with profile and no known risks.
Tech Transformation (DDaT)	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.9	77%	1.1	Three projects in total; disaster recovery being the largest budget. No concerns.
Reservoir Programme	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	74%	0.3	Slightly ahead of profile, however no concerns.
Other WG Funded	0.7	0.7	0.0	2.7	74%	2.7	In line with profile.
Other (inc Fleet & Facilities)	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	51%	0.0	In line with profile and no known risks.
TOTAL: NRW	**2.5**	**2.7**	**0.2**	**9.7**	**74%**	**10.5**	

Financial Performance – Capital Projects

Capital Projects by Programme	Actual YTD £m	Approved Forecast YTD £m	Variance YTD £m	Approved Forecast FY £m	Remaining Budget FY %	Original Budget FY £m	Commentary
External Funded	1.9	1.9	0.0	4.8	61%	3.8	All projects within the programme are on track to spend the allocated budgets. No known risks.
Flood Risk	5.4	5.5	0.1	17.9	70%	17.9	The programme's principal risks resides within three areas; Stephenson Street, Presteigne and fleet purchases, which make up almost a third of the overall allocation. Stephenson Street has compensation payments that were not originally factored into the opening budget and Presteigne includes building a property estimated at £0.9m. Almost £2.5m of the fleet purchases budget remains, however the fleet manager is confident that this will be delivered by the end of the financial year Over programming currently stands at just under £1m.
NaCE	5.4	5.3	-0.1	23.7	77%	23.7	The NaCE capital programme is slightly overspent by £0.1m. This almost solely relates to over programming, which will be managed down as we move through the year. Overprogramming has decreased from £3.3m in July to £2.1m.
DDaT Inc Customer Service Transformation	1.9	2.2	0.3	5.4	65%	4.2	Whilst the current costs are in line to profile, there still remains £1.5m awaiting project assurance for project set up.
Land Stewardship	0.5	0.6	0.0	1.6	67%	0.6	The majority of the funding relates to infrastructure improvements funded by Welsh Government. These are due to start later in the year.
Coal Tip Safety	0.5	0.4	0.0	2.7	82%	2.7	Main risk resides with Pen yr Englyn who have experienced major delays. The project accounts for £1.8m out of the £2.7m Programme and will be monitored over the coming months to quantify the underspend risk.
Waste	0.1	0.3	0.2	1.3	96%	1.0	The electronic waste project will not spend the full allocation. Discussions are in place to repurpose the funds to the service transformation projects.
Reservoirs	1.1	1.1	0.0	2.3	54%	2.3	All projects are on track to spend according to plan, no known risks.
Water Resources	0.6	0.6	0.0	2.0	68%	2.0	The overall funding has remained the same at £2m. The programme is currently showing an under programme of £0.2m and have £0.3m on a holding code for projects awaiting distribution. It is highly likely that the programme will be in a position to hand money back, we will agree a figure ahead of the next reporting period.
Other WG Funded	0.2	0.2	0.0	1.6	89%	1.4	The funding consists of nine projects with Wales Coastal Path the largest at £1.5m. No known risks.
Other (inc Fleet & Facilities)	0.7	0.7	0.0	10.2	93%	9.4	Made up of three main streams; fleet and facilities (£6.6m), IFRS 16 Leases (£1.3m) and central capital contingencies (£1.9m). The accommodation transformation will be delayed, resulting in a substantial underspend. This will be confirmed and handed back in October. The delay is likely to put further pressure on next years capital budgets.
TOTAL: NRW	**18.2**	**18.8**	**0.6**	**73.5**	**75%**	**69.0**	

New Funding Update

WG Grant or Externally Funded	Full Year Budget £000	Spend YTD £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Forecast Var to Budget £000	Risk to spend
Wales Infrastructure Fund	5,000	2,361	5,000	-	Relevant schemes are being considered to mitigate a forecast underspend of £0.5m.
Water Enforcement Funding	3,520	1,024	3,328	192	Current projected underspend of up to £0.2m driven by a combination of recruitment delays and change in proposed team structure (more part time staff). This is a reduction from July due to successfully bringing in additional work (e.g. 6 new enforcement apprentices). Mitigation actions are underway including review of relevant rechargeable spend.
Reservoir Safety	3,065	1,339	3,065	-	No risk to spend highlighted at this stage.
Sustainable Farming Scheme	1,628	728	1,628	-	Potential risk of underspend being managed by review of relevant rechargeable spend.
Waste	5,237	1,469	4,737	500	Likely underspend of £0.3m-£0.5m which we are actively discussing with Welsh Government. Hand back of £0.2m of revenue funding formally declared to Welsh Government on 5th August. The underspend is driven by recruitment delays across 13 posts, and factors in mitigation efforts including recharge of relevant spend.

Progress redistributing the Wellbeing Objective investment budgets (£3m) & other budget 'pots'

Investment Area	Full Year Budget £000	Budget Allocated £000	Balance yet to be allocated £000		What is the plan for redistributing the remaining budget?
* WQ (GiA into WBO)	1,200	705	145		£0.35m of budget with no confirmed spending plan was handed back to central balances at September.
* Biodiversity (GiA into WBO)	1,200	766	434		The unallocated £0.4m relates to the DDAT 'Safle/AMX' scheme. Progress across all allocated budgets is being reviewed during October.
* Other (GiA into WBO)	600	475	125		Plans are in place to achieve full spend.
DDaT staff (GiA)	963	771	192		Three of the 21 planned posts have yet to be created in Kallidus. A detailed implementation plan is in place, including post status, grades and cost centres. Budgets are transferred from the relevant work order once posts are established.
Land Stewardship (timber income >£33m)	2,669	2,295	374		Of the £2.7m additional budget, £0.8m was allocated to DDAT. In June, for the remaining £1.9m, £0.2m has been allocated to the Customer Platform (CCC) and £1.3m to Land & Asset Managers. Roll our of the remaining £0.4m has been paused and may be pulled back to offset the timber income reduction.

*** TO NOTE**: Prioritisation of the WBO investment budget was approved by the Exec Directors of Strategy, Policy & Evidence and Place Operations and included in the opening budget, as agreed by ET.




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