



# Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

## Minutes

**Title of meeting:** Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

**Location:** Welsh Government Building, Aberystwyth

**Date of Meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**Present:**

Zoe Henderson (NRW Board Member & WLMF Chairperson)

Hedd Pugh (NFU Cymru)

Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru)

Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)

Marc Williams (NRW)

Geraint Davies (NRW)

Tim Kirk (Confor)

Sian Thomas (Young Farmers Association)

Bob Vaughan (Sustainable Land Farming & Forest Manager, NRW)

Geri Mills (Secretariat, NRW)

Huwel Manley (Operations Manager Land and Assets, NRW)

Dominic Driver (head of Land Stewardship, NRW)

Nichola Taylor (via skype NRW)

Russell De'Ath (via skype NRW)

Simon Bareham (via skype NRW)

Sarah Hetherington (NRW)

**Additional Attendees Present:** none

**Secretariat(s):**

Helen Haider (WLMF Agri-pollution Co-ordinator, NRW)

Marc Williams (WLMF Agri-Pollution Co-ordinator, NRW)

**Apologies:**

Ruth Jenkins (Head of Natural Resource Management Policy)

Ceri Davies (NRW Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting)

Martyn Evans (Head of South West Wales Operations, NRW)

Anthony Geddes (Confor)

Meinir Wigley (NRW)

Chris Blake

## **Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest**

1. Zoe Henderson welcomed all to the meeting noting apologies.
2. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.

## **Item 2 Minutes from the last meeting and any matters arising**

3. There were no amendments to the minutes of the last meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and these have now been placed onto the WLMF webpage on the NRW website.
4. Review of Action Log:
  - February AP01: Update provided at meeting. Discussion is active and ongoing including linkages to Area Statements. It was noted that the local representative is key in Area Statement development with messages picked up at national level co-ordinated by local representatives. Huwel Manley highlighted work done in Carmarthenshire to launch a rural strategy, information to be shared with the Group.
  - February AP08: The Chair confirmed that linking the Forum together will be discussed during the meeting.
  - February AP12: Update to be provided at the next Forum meeting in December.
  - February AP18: Bob Vaughan confirmed that he continues to discuss with NRW Waste colleagues with an update to be provided at the next Forum meeting in December.

- May AP14: Chair confirmed that a National Area Statement event will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, further discussion during meeting.
- May AP22: Chair confirmed further discussion within Woodland Creation Agenda item.

### Item 3 WLMF Governance

5. The Forum discussed the recent request from the Snowdonia National Park to join the membership of the Forum. In conclusion the Forum decided that the Chair should write a response offering to consider the NRW relationship rather than consider membership.

***AP September 01: Chair to write to Snowdonia National Park and offer to arrange a meeting to discussion the purpose of the Forum and consider options for strengthening the NRW relationship.***

### Item 4 NRW Update

6. **Organisation Design:** Huwel Manley confirmed that the new Organisational structure had been introduced across NRW on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The Organisation had faced a reduction of 160 staff over the last 2 years which had driven the change for a revised structure.

Huwel confirmed that the following appointments had been made:

Head of South East Wales – Steve Morgan

Head of South West Wales – Martyn P Evans

Head of South Central – John Hogg

Head of Mid Wales – Martin Cox

Head of North East Wales – Lyndsey Rawlinson

Head of West Wales – Sian Williams

Head of Development, Planning and Marine – Rhian Jardine

In respect of forestry skills, Huwel and Bob confirmed that there is a need to review the skills and competency of staff new to forestry roles with consideration being given to a graduate forestry programme.

Bob confirmed that the turnover of staff in roles continues with 20% vacancies existing within his own team. The Organisation is working within its new structures however these are not yet up to capacity, it was noted that the Brexit Programme had recruited additional resource.

***AP September 02: Bob Vaughan to share the latest organogram for the Organisation including the full organogram for the Sustainable Land Team.***

Sarah Hetherington confirmed that 4 additional appointments have been made within the team for Brexit. The focus is on the 3 possible scenarios of no deal, close

relationship or staying within the EU. It was confirmed that NRW are proactively engaging with Welsh Government around its regulatory functions and possible Brexit implications.

Huwel Manley confirmed that recruitment is underway for additional/replacement Diary Project Officers, when appointed all officers will be trained ahead of completing any farm visits.

The Forum discussed the access routes for the public when contacting NRW which is primarily via the Contact Centre, NFU noted the need for a triage system to be in place to ensure that people are connected to the right people within NRW to provide support and assistance. Sarah Hetherington confirmed that this was an identified workstream currently being reviewed.

- 7. Policy Update:** Bob Vaughan confirmed that the current focus was on responding to the WG Consultation Sustainable Farming and our Land. A key policy information briefing had been circulated for information to internal NRW staff and escalated to the NRW Board. NRW is currently working closely with WG, noting the concerns around the deadline for submissions which is 30<sup>th</sup> October with Brexit on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

Work is also ongoing to provide advice for the proposed regulation changes from January 2020.

NFU also noted concerns around the timing of response to the WG Consultation and Brexit, which is also impacting on the timing of the UK Agriculture bill.

***AP September 03: Sarah Hetherington to share NRW comments on the WG Consultation Sustainable Farming and our Land with the Forum for information.***

- 8. Ammonia:** Simon Bareham gave a flavour of the wider development work under way and proposed bringing more detailed projects to the Agri Sub Group for consideration. The Agri Sub Group are asked to review revised guidance originally produced in 2017 to allow NRW to consider feedback and key issues ahead of rolling out revised web-based guidance in April 2020.

***AP September 04: Simon Bareham to liaise with Geri Mills to present to Agri Sub group.***

Huwel Manley highlighted a need to provide clarity on ammonia emissions to the farming sector, this guidance may impact on diversification options around poultry units. Simon confirmed that Welsh Government are leading a review group.

NFU noted that farmers are operating in difficult times and therefore need some guidance to support diversification options. Highlighting that farmers want opportunities but need to have stability ahead of investment, explaining the need for an integrated framework which is sustainable and robust.

The Chair confirmed that the matter will be managed via the Agri Sub Group.

***AP September 05: Chair to discuss the need for an integrated framework for Farmers at an Agri Sub Group Meeting.***

9. **Area Statements:** Russell De'ath and Nichola Taylor joined the meeting via skype to provide a brief ahead of the engagement session planned for Friday 4th October in Builth Wells. The workshop is aimed at providing clarity to the purpose and structure of area statements, provide engagement opportunities and join up on challenges and opportunities faced across the sector.

The Chair confirmed that regional representatives from the land management sectors will be invited to attend the session.

***AP September 06: Formal invitation to be extended to the Land Management Sector as soon as possible Russell De'Ath/Nichola Taylor.***

## **Item 5 NRW Woodland Creation Programme**

10. Bob Vaughan explained that a number of woodland creation programmes are under way following the First Ministers keen interest which follows on from the commitment made by Elin Jones, AM a few years back to plant 100K hectares of woodland.
11. The woodland creation plan approved by the NRW Board is commencing with focuses on:
- compensatory planting of new woodland to replace loss due to the energy creation programmes.
  - NRW is considering options to purchase additional land into the Welsh Government woodland estate for planting.
  - The Plant! Programme continues with around 4,000 trees planted monthly in north and south Wales.
  - Centenary Planting – community planting of small areas across Wales
  - Glastir woodland creation continues with an announcement by the Minister at the Royal Welsh Show in July for additional money to go into the Scheme
  - Continue working with local Authorities to create urban planting schemes
  - National Forest for Wales – Minister announcement made which Welsh Government is now working on to develop
12. Bob Vaughan provided an update on discussions in respect of barriers to Woodland Creation work with Chris Blake (NRW Board Member), the session had identified barriers and considered options to overcome. Bob Vaughan sought the Forums opinion on the creation of a WLMF Sub Group to move this area of work forward.
13. The Forum noted concerns expressed around addressing realistic targets for planting and the cost associated with this investment, including seeking permissions and Environmental Impact Assessments. Alongside these challenges are the rules set by Welsh Government in respect of rural payments which cease after 10 years.

14. The Forum expressed a need for an enabling scheme which many farmers would be willing to pursue, noting the concerns of tenant farmers.

## **Item 6 Sustainable Farming and our Land Consultation**

15. Bob Vaughan noted deadlines for submissions to Welsh Government Consultation.

## **Item 7 Update from Confor/NFU/FUW/YFC/TFA**

16. Update from Confor:

- Timber overloading – NRW are gathering information and statistics to consider the issue further
- Tree disease – new plans are in place to tackle P ramorum with Wales currently achieving better success than across the UK
- Tree disease - Oak processionary moth, whilst this is usually common in South East England cases have now been found in North and South Wales, thought have been imported into the country on young trees.
- Tree Disease - Ash Die back is a considerable problem across Wales. The Forum noted an ash tool kit provided by the Royal Forestry Society as particularly useful.
- Mineral extraction claims in respect of mineral reserved rights Confor are now joining up with Kirsty Lees, NRW to prepare for the pending court case.
- Woodland indicators – Welsh Government are currently drafting woodland indicators.
- Carbon credits – more and more taking on board.
- Woodlands for Wales – the Welsh Government is discussing amendments to policy via the strategy advisory panel

***AP September 07: Provide clarification on the felling regulations for trees affected by Ash die back.***

17. Update from NFU:

- Roadshow of meetings on sustainable farming and our land, concerns were expressed about the timing of the consultation and the Brexit deadline date of 31<sup>st</sup> October.
- Working on the submission of evidence to the minister on water quality in relation to new Water Regulations.
- Recently launched a sustainable agricultural award which closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September at the NFU Conference

#### 18. Update from YFC:

- Annual General Meetings have just concluded with the appointment of new Chairs
- Meeting for our members 9th October, asking unions to join us
- Work will begin shortly on establishing YFC visions for the future with the new Chair Lee Pritchard from Glamorgan.

#### 19. Update from Tenant Farmers Association:

- Continuing to push for amendments to the Tenancy Law which needs to be proposed via the Wales Agricultural Law which is now postponed to 2021. It had been hoped to incorporate within the UK legislation as a tabled amendment however this is now postponed until after Brexit.
- Nutrient Management Scheme: Tenants will not be able to comply within their existing tenancy agreements; a request has been made to Welsh Government for either postponement or exclusion.

### **Item 8 Fora Updates**

20. The Chair confirmed that a discussion had been held with Steve Ormerod, NRW Board Member who Chairs both the Fisheries and Water Forum about sharing information across the Forum. It was agreed that confirmed minutes would be shared across the Forum.

21. The Forum extended an invitation for Steve Ormerod to attend a Forum meeting when next convenient.

### **Item 9 Proposed 2020 Dates for Diaries (Geri Mills)**

22. Proposed meeting dates for 2020:

- Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

23. Next Meeting date: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019

24. The Forum noted the proposed dates for 2020 and welcomed outlook calendar appointments to hold dates in diaries.

## **Item 10 AOB**

25. The members of the Forum concluded that the meeting had been positive and discussion progressive.

## **Close meeting**