



Title of Meeting: Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Sub-Group on Agricultural Pollution

Date of Meeting: 11th February 2019

Venue: Welsh Government
Offices
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
Aberystwyth
SY23 3UR

Present: Zoe Henderson (NRW Board member & chairperson)
Bob Vaughan (Sustainable Land Farming & Forest Manager, NRW)
Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)
Sara Jenkins (Menter a Busnes)
Stephen Bradley (DCWW)
Creighton Harvey (Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation)
Bernard Griffiths (FUW)
Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru)
Lorna Davis (NFU Cymru)
Dr. Stephen Marsh-Smith (Wales Environment Link)
Spencer Conlon (Welsh Government)
Rob McCall (NRW)
Helen Haider (NRW)
Marc Williams (NRW)
Matt Lowe (NRW)
Sarah Hetherington (NRW)

Apologies: Rhianne Jones (CLA)
Jamie McCoy (AHDB)
James Ruggeri (HCC)
Kirsten Hughes (HCC)
Andrew Chambers (WG)
Betsan John (WG)
James Dowling (WG)
Rob McCall (NRW)
Geraint Weber (NRW)
Brian Pawson (NRW)

Also in attendance by telecon

Mark Aitken (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) for item 10 only

No: Item

2. Welcome and Apologies

Zoe Henderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that Mark Aitken (Principal Policy Officer for land within SEPA) would be joining the meeting later and making a presentation on the work that has been undertaken in Scotland to reduce agricultural pollution.

3. Agricultural Regulation Update

Due to the potential legal implications of the Welsh Government's decision to bring forward new agricultural regulations to cover nutrient management, only limited discussion took place under this item.

NFU Cymru confirmed that they have concerns over the lawfulness of the proposed new regulations and are awaiting a response from WG. NFU Cymru also reiterated their commitment to safeguarding and improving water quality, to the work of the WLMF sub-group and to delivering the recommendations set out within the Interim Report on Agricultural Pollution. The CFF also highlighted the importance of the WLMF sub-group continuing to work on these issues.

The TFA indicated that their main concern is in relation to the transition periods. They have written to Lesley Griffiths requesting a minimum 4-year transition period which would allow tenant farmers to comply with the regulations. The TFA were disappointed with the decision to implement new regulations but understood why this had been made.

The WLMF sub-group recently received an email from an agricultural contractor expressing concerns about the potential impact of the new regulations on rural businesses. A holding response had been sent but a more detailed reply needed to be provided. The email sent to the WLMF inbox referred to an alternative proposal, but no further details of what this involves have so far been provided.

Further work on taking forward the new agricultural regulations still needs to take place. As a result, the importance of the WLMF Task & Finish group on regulation continuing to meet was highlighted. The minutes from the previous Task & Finish Group workshop held in Builth Wells on 11th January are still in draft and require completion.

AP1: Provide a response to the email from the agricultural contractor and obtain a copy of the alternative proposal referred to

(Bob Vaughan/Zoe Henderson & Marc Williams, NRW)

AP2: Arrange a further meeting of the WLMF Agricultural Regulation Task & Finish Group (Marc Williams, NRW/Andrew Chambers, WG)

AP3: Complete and circulate to the WLMF sub-group the minutes from the meeting of the Task & Finish Group on Regulation held on 11 January (Marc Williams, NRW/Andrew Chambers, WG)

4. Farming Connect Agri-Pollution Delivery Programme

Farming Connect are continuing to work on the national agricultural pollution campaign; offering both clinics and advisory services. A recent grassland and soil event attracted 250 attendees. A case study is being developed in relation to advice on infrastructure and nutrient management planning. The case study will be released in the press and will be circulated to the sub-group.

Nine “Sustainable Farming” events are due to take place with two of them being held later this week in Brecon and Lampeter. Six further “Farming for the Future” roadshows have been planned and these will enable participating farmers to apply for a Farm Business Grant. The format of the current Sustainable Farming events will follow the same pattern as during the previous round. Feedback on these events has been very positive. For example, a survey during an on-farm targeted event in November showed that 93% of the 120 farmers involved had found the event useful. Farmers were also asked if they’d made changes to reduce pollution during the last year with 60% of them saying they had done so. Farmers were asked if they had reduced the volume of dirty water on farm with 62% confirming that they had taken action on this. A full update regarding the survey results will be circulated. This will include a regional breakdown.

Further discussion took place regarding the identification of new catchments within which Farming Connect can deliver additional targeted advice. NRW are currently taking this work forward and are drawing up a list of potential new catchments to share with sub-group members.

NRW have prepared a catchment map which shows the location of work now being undertaken across Wales by a wide range of organisations as part of reducing agricultural pollution. The map will be published on the NRW website and also on the Water Watch Wales website. A question was asked about whether the location of all Enforcement Undertakings should also be added to the map.

Further work is currently being undertaken with LANTRA to develop contractor e-learning packages. Once the lambing season has concluded, Farming Connect will be organising the provision of

additional one-to-one advice by building and infrastructure advisors.

A discussion took place regarding water quality monitoring. Farming Connect do not carry out this type of monitoring, but NRW undertake such work as part of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) programme. It was confirmed that the WFD programme does not include specific farm level monitoring. NFU Cymru are undertaking work to establish a monitoring baseline as part of the project on developing a Voluntary Approach to Nutrient Management. This work includes identifying the gaps in current monitoring programmes.

Lorna Davis confirmed she had met recently with farmers within the Cemaes catchment on Anglesey and looked at river flows, nutrient loading resulting from weirs and the impacts on the bathing water beach. There is a Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) bid to undertake diatom sampling to determine if there has been improvement in water quality following interventions undertaken on farm. DNA analysis has been undertaken at Cemaes which shows a combination of humans, cattle and dogs contribute to the nutrient loading. A case study on Cemaes Bay is currently being drafted and will be shared with sub-group members. The Voluntary Approach project will also be considering the applicability of a range of softer intervention mechanisms such as swales and Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS).

Potential funding sources are available via Farming Connect to assist with establishing nutrient monitoring at a local level. A discussion took place regarding the kinds of opportunities now available to develop practical on-farm monitoring solutions. NRW and NFU Cymru have already organised a workshop with water industry representatives to look at this issue. NFU Cymru are also developing guidance and worksheets regarding the establishment of on-farm monitoring and are working on a project plan which is awaiting approval. This will link to the Farming Connect programme and ongoing work by Afonydd Cymru.

It was pointed out that increased monitoring of water quality could lead to more pollution incidents being reported. Nevertheless, the benefits in terms of the additional knowledge gained from more extensive monitoring are clear.

Sara Jenkins asked that if there was any additional work that required undertaking, then sub-group members should contact Farming Connect. Further discussion then took place around the nutrient management planning (NMP) update provided by Farming Connect and whether it would be better to adopt a targeted approach in future rather than one covering all of Wales. It was noted that the Farming Connect advisory service is available to all farmers across Wales and is not currently operating at maximum capacity.

Discussion then shifted to the need to change current levels of understanding regarding the state of rivers in Wales. There is little

coverage in the media of riverine and soil ecology. The WLMF sub-groups short film on agricultural pollution covers this issue and the same is true of the Sustainable Farming events. The Voluntary Approach project aims to tackle this issue also. CFF are looking at catchment initiatives where farmers are approached to work on tributaries. Afonydd Cymru are already undertaking similar work with farmers. The importance of understanding a farmer's motivation for taking action/ making certain decisions relating to agricultural pollution was also raised.

AP4: Circulate a full update regarding recent Farming Connect survey results (Sara Jenkins, Menter a Busnes)

AP5: Circulate Farming Connect press notice covering the farmer case study on infrastructure and nutrient management planning (Sara Jenkins, Menter a Busnes)

AP6: Contact Geraint Weber (NRW) with further suggestions on any new catchments within which Farming Connect should be undertaking targeted advisory work (All)

AP7: Upload map of existing catchment initiatives onto the NRW and Water Watch Wales websites (Marc Williams, NRW)

AP8: Consider adding the location of relevant Enforcement Undertakings to the catchment initiatives map (Marc Williams, NRW)

AP9: Circulate details of the diatom monitoring work to WLMF sub-group (Dr. Stephen Marsh-Smith, WEL)

AP10: Circulate Cemaes Bay case study to WLMF sub-group (Lorna Davis, NFU Cymru)

AP11: Identify potential solutions to get the message across to farmers regarding the impact of farming practices on invertebrate and riverine ecology. (Dr Stephen Marsh-Smith, WEL/Creighton Harvey, CFF)

5. Update on NRW Dairy Project

During the period up until January 2019, the eight dairy project officers undertook 175 farm visits. A tool for recording the information gathered during the visits is now in place and this is capable of being interrogated. The slurry storage calculator has been updated and can also be interrogated. The calculator also has a scenario testing system to determine what difference various types of interventions can make, although this doesn't include a cost- benefit analysis.

NRW is using a spreadsheet-based system to record the outcome of

farm visits and project officers are inputting all data onto this. Information gathered from these visits will have an important bearing on future decision making by Welsh Government in relation to the format of the new regulations e.g. the length of the transition periods. A full update on the NRW dairy project will be provided during the forthcoming WLMF sub-group meeting in April.

Questions were asked about whether farm tenancy or ownership details are recorded by the project officers and whether farm reports are now being sent out to farmers. Reports are being provided to farmers, although there was an initial delay caused by the uncertainties around future slurry storage requirements. Difficulties in ensuring that the correct advice is given to farmers when the regulatory goal posts are shifting was highlighted.

It was noted that farmers are also being advised regarding the changes to water abstraction licensing requirements. The Voluntary Approach Project is looking at standard intervention costs and ways in which these can be packaged up for farmers.

AP12: Update WLMF Sub-Group on the results from the NRW dairy project results during the forthcoming meeting in April (Matt Lowe, NRW)

AP13: Check whether NRW dairy project officers are recording farm ownership/tenancy details (Matt Lowe, NRW)

6. Update on Voluntary Approach to Nutrient Management

NFU Cymru have been gathering information from NRW and Welsh Water and giving presentations to various policy boards within NFU. Proposals are in development for a more innovative approach to communications and a catchment model is to be made available for display at agricultural shows. Another proposal involves identifying what information is available so that farmers can be provided with their own maps showing local water quality, geology etc. This work has now been allocated to a contractor who will conduct a scoping study.

A further project is being developed to look at whether it will be possible to undertake farmer-led monitoring. As part of this work, water quality guidance is being developed and will be shared with the sub-group. Another project will look at identifying what farmers need to do to meet Farm Assurance (FA) standards. Details of this work will also be shared with the sub-group.

A question was raised in relation to how success will be measured and what types of evidence will be needed to demonstrate that farmers can operate successfully within the closed periods. NFU Cymru have met with staff from Puffin Produce to see how they are operating as well as with representatives of the team working on Brand Wales. The inaugural

meeting of the steering group for the Farmer-led Voluntary Approach project will take place later in February.

Further work on mapping the Agricultural Land Classification is also taking place. NFU Cymru and TFA are attending a meeting on 13th February regarding this.

AP14: Circulate further details of the Voluntary Approach proposal designed to identifying how farmers can meet Farm Assurance standards (Lorna Davis, NFU Cymru)

AP15: NFU Cymru to bring proposal regarding on-farm monitoring solutions to the next WLMF Sub-Group meeting (Lorna Davis, NFU Cymru)

AP16: Circulate details of Voluntary Approach proposal on water quality guidance to all WLMF sub group members (Lorna Davis, NFU Cymru)

7. Update on WLMF Action Plan

NRW staff met recently to identify a suitable lead for each of the items within the Action Plan. Once the Action Plan has been circulated for comment within the sub- group, it will be finalised and published on the NRW website, hopefully by the end of March. As it has been almost a year since the Interim Report on Agricultural Pollution was published, there may be a need to identify additional items within the Action Plan. It was discussed that the Action Plan should be called a Progress Report before publishing on the website.

It was suggested that the Action Plan should be linked to the available evidence with the barriers to delivering individual actions also being highlighted e.g. the planning system. NRW are currently working to develop a way forward regarding planning for WG and are developing planning guidance for them. A conference regarding planning in the agricultural sector will shortly be taking place and Aled Davis of NFU Cymru will be one of the presenters. Other speakers include representatives from Local Authority Planning Departments and Cardiff University. The target audience is community and town councillors as well as individual farmers. Questions were asked about whether there is a mismatch in relation to the capacity of the planning system to consider the “in-combination” and “cumulative impacts” arising from several developments taking place in close proximity to each. A further update will be provided at the next sub-group meeting.

AP17: Circulate revised draft WLMF Action Plan to sub-group members (Marc Williams, NRW)

AP18: Send comments regarding the draft Action Plan and any additional actions required to Marc Williams (All)

AP19: Add links to existing evidence and barriers to achieving outcomes into WLMF Action Plan (Marc Williams/Helen Haider, NRW)

AP20: Ensure that a discussion on the WLMF Action Plan is included within the next sub-group meeting agenda (Helen Haider, NRW)

AP21: Aim to publish WLMF sub-group Action Plan on the NRW website, ideally by the end of March 2019. (Marc Williams, NRW)

AP22: Feedback to WLMF sub-group regarding planning conference (NFU Cymru)

AP23: Talk to NRW Planning staff about barriers to achieving outcomes (Bob Vaughan, NRW)

AP24: NRW to provide a further update regarding planning issues at the next sub-group meeting (Bob Vaughan, NRW)

8. Arrangements for future sub-group meetings

The date currently identified for the WLMF sub-group meeting in April clashes with that of the Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF). As a result, the sub-group's scheduled meeting will need to be re-arranged.

The benefit of the sub-group undertaking site visits was highlighted. For example, there is the potential to visit Cemaes Bay. Welsh Water also offered to arrange a visit to a water treatment facility. The possibility of visiting the Gwent levels was also discussed.

The work on Root Cause Analysis is progressing well. Ian Roderick from the Schumacher Institute will be attending the next sub-group meeting to make a presentation.

Farming Connect would like to make a presentation on nutrient management planning (NMP) and infrastructure advice at a future sub group meeting.

AP25: Re-arrange date of WLMF sub group meeting in April (Helen Haider, NRW)

AP26: Scope the potential for WLMF site visits to Cemaes Bay/DCWW Water Treatment Plant/Gwent Levels (Helen Haider, NRW)

AP27: Send any further ideas for possible WLMF sub group site visits to Helen Haider (All)

AP28: Ensure a 2-hour slot is added to the sub group agenda in March so that Ian Roderick has space to make a presentation (Helen Haider, NRW)

AP29: Ensure space for a Farming Connect presentation on NMP & infrastructure advice is added to the agenda for the WLMF sub group meeting in March (Helen Haider, NRW)

9. Minutes from WLMF sub group meeting on 14 January & outstanding Action Points

During the sub-group meeting in January it was noted that West Country Rivers Trust were keen to make a presentation to the sub-group. It was suggested that it might be appropriate for a representative from a Welsh River Trust to attend a future sub-group meeting. AP8 from the minutes of the meeting on 14th January has now been revised. Stephen Marsh-Smith will now investigate whether a Welsh River Trust representative can attend a future sub-group meeting.

The following Action Points from 14th January remain outstanding:

AP1: Circulate existing note on WLMF work planning (Brian Pawson).

AP3: Identify areas of work that would benefit from funding under the SPG scheme at a future meeting (Helen Haider/Marc Williams).

AP6: Provide draft Terms of Reference to cover the future work of the WLMF Task and Finish Group on Regulation, in particular (i) advise on communications issues around the new regulations including transition periods (ii) provide further advice in relation to the Welsh Government's impending consultation on the wider regulatory floor (Andrew Chambers).

AP9: Afonydd Cymru to provide an example of a farm assessment report and circulate to the sub-group.

AP10: Establish whether there are any correlations in the incident data which could be used to promote positive messages (Marc Williams). Further work needs to be undertaken to establish whether there are any correlations. The incident data needs updating to include 2018 in its entirety.

AP16 – Investigate why some farmers have yet to be notified as to the outcome of the Eol stage of the most recent SPG round (Andrew Chambers).

AP18: Identify a second tranche of catchments where Farming Connect can undertake further targeted work in 2019. Ideally by early February. (Geraint Weber, NRW). This work is ongoing and will

be discussed at the next sub group meeting.

AP21: NRW to identify a speaker to provide an update on the impact of NVZ designation on water quality in Wales (Brian Pawson/Geraint Weber, NRW).

10. Mark Aitken (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) – Reducing Agricultural Pollution in Scotland

Mark Aitken gave a presentation on how SEPA have worked with farmers to improve water quality in Scotland. Key issues include high rainfall and large areas of inland water with one third of the 960 waterbodies not meeting good ecological status (GES). Coastal Scotland has more arable farming with high numbers of failing waterbodies. Dairy farming was also a focus of SEPA's work.

Scotland has General Binding Rules (GBRs) which are based on existing good agricultural practise. SEPA undertook an awareness raising campaign regarding the GBRs over a period of 7-8 years. SEPA also worked with NFU Scotland and the agricultural colleges to establish 'Farming & Water Scotland' who then attended approximately 600 events. Publications were produced that were easy for farmers to use. These included tractor cab stickers.

SEPA employ staff from farming backgrounds and also undertake additional staff training. The training locations include farms belonging to members of NFU Scotland.

SEPA identified 14 priority catchments based on bathing waters, drinking water catchments etc. so as to prioritise those locations where pollution causes the greatest risk to human health. Within these catchments they found around 4000 instances of non-compliance with the GBR's on farms. These were identified over 5838km of river. For every 1km of river walked, a non-compliance issue has been found. One-to-one farm visits have been undertaken with over 3000 initial visits now having taken place. Typical issues identified during catchment walkovers included ring feeders located next to watercourses and cattle gaining access to stream beds.

Soil management in Scotland is also an issue with erosion and ploughing down the slope causing particular problems. SEPA are currently working with farmers to improve soil management.

The one-to-one advisory programme includes a full yard and field visit. Farmers are then sent a post-visit letter which includes a map with mitigation advice. A second follow-up visit is also scheduled. No prosecutions are taken against farmers at this stage. Initial farm visits have identified poaching, slurry and manure management, clean and dirty water separation and pesticide handling as major concerns.

One thousand follow up visits have now been undertaken. Some 45% farms were found to be compliant, 41% were working towards compliance and 14% of farmers had not yet started any work. A further set of visits to 172 non-compliant farmers/those working towards compliance resulted in 23% compliance, 14% taking action and 34% who had made no further progress. Prosecutions are considered where insufficient action has been taken after three visits.

Farmers in priority catchments have a better chance of accessing grants but do not receive any more money than others. Those farmers in priority catchments who apply for grants have a 100% success rate in securing funding. Scottish Water have also been giving 100% grants to farmers within their priority catchments.

To date approximately 5000 farms have been visited out of the c.18,000 farms that receive the Basic Farm Payment. There are around 3000 crofters in Scotland, so it is estimated that around one third of farmers have now been visited by SEPA.

The national programme of awareness raising has increased the level of compliance encountered during the first visit assessment from 35% to 55%. The most successful part of the campaign was awareness raising via farming press coupled with the promotion of success stories and case studies.

SEPA are not aware of any problems encountered by tenant farmers being refused permission to install slurry stores by their landlords. Tenancy issues have been much more of a factor in relation to woodland creation.

The process of water quality monitoring within SEPA is similar to that undertaken by NRW. SEPA measure a baseline across Scotland and some Nitrate Vulnerable Zone areas have been de-designated as a result.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, further discussion took place regarding the need for a longer-term plan to deliver farm improvements rather than simply focussing on visiting every dairy farm across Wales. In particular, there is currently no provision in Wales for undertaking follow-up visits.

AP30: Obtain a breakdown of SEPA advisory visits which includes herd size, hectarage, per capita income etc (Helen Haider, NRW)

AP31: WLMF sub-group members to email Helen Haider with any further questions for Mark Aitken (All)

AP32: Circulate a copy of Mark Aitken's presentation (Helen Haider/Marc Williams, NRW)

11. WLMF Sub Group Priorities for 2019

Once the sub group Action Plan is complete, further work will be necessary in order to identify the key work areas to focus on during the coming year. CFF reminded the group of work being undertaken on microplastics in rivers. Any gaps in this work could be plugged by the sub group. NRW are pushing the issue of farm plastics and the use of farm wrap and recycling. NRW are also working internally to develop key messages which will be shared. Scotland has only just stopped the burning of farm waste. A discussion took place regarding a company in Neath who recycle farm plastics to produce products such as benches, damp proof lining etc. It was highlighted that whilst the sub-group should keep an eye on the plastics issue, it should not be a major priority as the focus should be on water pollution from agriculture.

The WLMF sub- group project focussing on the nutrient capacity of the Welsh landbank is now being funded via WG's work on Brexit and our Land.

Sub-group members also identified innovation as a work stream of work that they wished to see taken forward. The possibility of setting up a workshop with Innov8 was discussed.

AP33: Identify sub group priorities/key work areas for 2019 (All)

AP34: NFU Cymru to pass details of plastics meeting in Stonely to Sarah Hetherington (Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru)

AP35: Contact Innov8 to explore the idea of undertaking a workshop with the WLMF sub-group (Bob Vaughan, NRW)

AP36: Circulate NRW's key messages in relation to farm plastics (Sarah Hetherington, NRW)

AP37: Circulate details of BPI Plastic Recycling to WLMF sub group members (Helen Haider, NRW)

12. Update on relevant diary activities

The TFA will shortly be meeting with the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs. Sub group members suggested that the work of the group should be promoted along with the message that we are here to assist the Minister.

AP38: Send Dennis Matheson any further key messages for TFA's meeting with the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs (All)

Zoe Henderson will be attending the NFU conference on 19 & 20 May.

Steven Bradley is attending an all-Wales grassland event on 6 June.

Prince Charles has indicated that he would like to discuss the issue of agricultural pollution with NRW and other organisations. The date of 25 February has been suggested as one possibility.

13. AoB

The Welsh Government's announcement in relation to the development an eradication programme for sheep scab will lead to increased sheep dipping in Wales. The number of farmers wishing to attend courses on sheep dipping has increased.

England have undertaken a consultation that parallels NRW's Working Together Consultation (a statutory exercise leading up to the publication of the reviewed and updated River Basin Management Plans). A group similar to the Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF) has been established and there is also an Agriculture and Land based working group.

With regards to the impending publication of the catchment initiatives map it was suggested that the sub group could convene a conference or workshop regarding all of the work underpinning this.

AP39: Inform Sarah Hetherington of any issues that farmers are experiencing in relation to sheep dipping (All)

AP40: Discuss potential for conference/workshop (based on the catchment initiatives map) at a future sub group meeting (Helen Haider/Marc Williams, NRW)
