

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Minutes

Title of meeting:	Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)
Location:	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Date of meeting:	11 March 2024
Members present:	Professor Rhys Jones, NRW Board Member (Chair) Ruth Jenkins, NRW Michelle Griffiths, NRW Elaine Harrison, Confor Dennis Matheson, TFA Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru Huwel Manley, NRW Claire Powell, Wales YFC Rhys Jones, NRW Sarah Hetherington, NRW
Attendees present:	Julie Boswell, NRW Sue Buckingham, NRW Brian Price, NRW
Apologies:	Tim Kirk, Confor Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru Gareth Parry, FUW John Browne, NRW Jon Goldsworthy, NRW
Secretariat:	Bronwen Martin, NRW

Item 1. Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

1. Professor Rhys Jones (WLMF Chair) welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies. Rhys welcomed Michelle Griffiths (Sustainable Land Manager, NRW) and Rhys Jones (Sustainable Land Management Team Leader) to the meeting. Claire Powell joined the meeting to represent Wales YFC and noted that Angharad Davies will be their new representative from 1st April 2024.
2. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.
3. The group were reminded that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of capturing the minutes and the digital file will be deleted once the meeting minutes have been compiled.

Item 2. Minutes from the last meeting, actions & matters arising.

4. Once the meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed they will be translated and published on the NRW website. The Group reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on 11th December 2023 and accepted them as a true record.
5. The group reviewed the outstanding actions and verbal updates were provided:
 - Dec AP01: Huwel Manley/John Browne, NRW to look into who is leading on forestry SuDS to see if there has been any progress made and feedback to the group.
 - Bronwen mentioned that she had spoken to Helen Cariss, NRW who has agreed to look into this and feedback. Huwel mentioned that Welsh Government have a review group looking at SuDS.
 - Dec AP02: Jon Goldsworthy, NRW to feedback comments regarding farmers not having the opportunity to feed into the sheep dip permit decision.
 - No further action, comments have been fed back. The consultation on our regulatory fees and charges for 2024/2025 (Strategic review of charging, SRoC) closed on 8th January 2024.
 - Dec AP03: Bronwen Martin, NRW to look into whether information about the RAC membership can be shared with the WLMF (note: need to consider GDPR).
 - The Forestry RAC is not a public group and only NRW can seek advice, therefore the membership list will not be shared. Elaine Harrison is the link between the WLMF to RAC.
 - Dec AP04: Bronwen Martin, NRW to consult with colleagues about adding information about the Forestry RAC to the external NRW website.
 - See above. Information about RAC membership will not be published on the NRW website. However, Rhys and Ruth agreed that broad information about the existence of the RAC could be included on the NRW website.

AP 11th March 01: Bronwen Martin to talk to colleagues about including broad information about the existence of the RAC on the NRW website.

- Dec AP06: Bronwen Martin, NRW to look into arranging a future presentation on Area Statements, Natural Resources Policy and perhaps State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR).
 - State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) presentation on the agenda today. Colleagues have advised that it is too early to provide any meaningful update on NRP and Area Statements – added to the forward look.
- Dec AP07: Jon Goldsworthy and Huwel Manley to follow up with colleagues regarding an update on beaver release in the Dyfi Valley.

- Ruth mentioned that this was also discussed in the NFU Cymru meeting she recently attended with Ceri Davies, NRW – they took an action to follow this up and provide an update through the forum.
 - Dec AP08: Rhys Jones to talk to Ruth Jenkins about having a possible in-person meeting later in 2024.
 - Discussion at the last meeting about maybe having one out of the four meetings in person. We will perhaps have an in-person meeting in the summer or autumn.
 - Dec AP09: Bronwen Martin, NRW to invite James Cooke, Welsh Government to present at a future soils themed meeting.
 - Bronwen has spoken to James Cooke about presenting at a future meeting and he would possibly be available for the summer or autumn meeting.
6. Regarding the Welsh Government’s Sustainable Farming Scheme Consultation, Ruth mentioned that NRW submitted a response and said we would be happy to share it if anybody would like to see it - [Natural Resources Wales: Responding to the Sustainable Farming Scheme](#).

Item 3. State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales

7. Julie Boswell, NRW joined the meeting to provide a presentation on the process of updating SoNaRR. The purpose and requirements of SoNaRR are set out in the Environment Wales Act and the statutory guidance which we follow. These requirements inform the methods we use and the content of the five yearly report.
8. SoNaRR assesses Wales’s sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and sets out a range of opportunities for action. SoNaRR adopts a systems view of the relationship between the environment (natural resources and ecosystems), society and the economy. Julie provided an overview of how SoNaRR assesses SMNR. SoNaRR is an evidence base to inform policy and change and uses the DPSIR framework: Driver, Pressure, State, Impact and Response. The drivers of change include Climate Change, INNS, Pests and Diseases, Land and Sea use Change, Over-exploitation and Pollution.
9. Julie discussed the process of identifying evidence for SoNaRR 2025, how it comes together and the anticipated timeline. The assessment will be published online with a possible option for it to be downloaded. After publication, we would like to produce some user specific products and details of which will be planned over the next few months.
10. Dennis Matheson, TFA Cymru mentioned the Welsh Government have just commissioned Miller Consulting to do a consultation on food security. This was a consultancy that did the original Sustainable Farming Scheme three-day consultation just after Brexit in Aberystwyth. At the time, food security looked to be about two thirds of the way down the list of priorities. Dennis asked if SoNaRR will that take it into account along with any findings of the latest consultation. Julie said she would pass this information on to those leading on the specific assessments. Dennis said as far as things currently stand, very few tenants are going to be able to take advantage of the scheme because of barriers and their tenancy agreements. That means up to 30% of

Wales will not be achieving Welsh Government's targets – this must come into your evidence unless the scheme is dramatically changed.

11. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru mentioned that Glastir came to an end last December and the Wales Habitat Scheme is just for one year. It is worrying that environmental schemes are perhaps not the priority for the future. About 3000 farmers have been taking part in Glastir, Tir Gofal and even Tir Cymen before that. A lot of farmers have been in an agri-environmental scheme for over 30 years. Julie mentioned that NRW will be using the [Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring & Modelling Programme \(ERAMMP\)](#) reports which will be coming out in the summer as part of our evidence base to show what previous schemes have provided.
12. Rhys said the framework that you're adopting focuses on the ecosystem and the environment and the social and economic context but there's also an important land and regulatory context that has an impact on the state of the environment and natural resources in Wales. Rhys asked if those factors come into SoNaRR. Julie said they certainly will do; a colleague is currently working on the evidence for land use management change drivers and pressures. That will then feed through into the assessments around the social and economic parts of SoNaRR.
13. Sarah mentioned the Food Security report that Welsh Government have commissioned is in its formation stages which involves stakeholder consultation. The report hasn't been published yet, so it's probably not at a stage where we could use the data for SoNaRR. Sarah said she has a contact for this work.
14. Rhys asked about presenting the evidence in terms of outlining priorities and opportunities. Julie said as we work through the report, we do identify possible opportunities but following through with action is not just down to NRW, it's also for the people of Wales. We will identify options and opportunities and then present them for others to pick up and work through. As part of this assessment, we are trying to bring out some of the actions that have happened since the last report and gathering that information as part of our evidence packs so that we can explain what has been addressed since or there are things that still could be picked up.
15. Rhys asked about the calls for new evidence in relation to waste, landscape, energy and non-renewable resources and is there a pattern in terms of certain areas being reasonably well served in terms of evidence. Julie said last time we had some themed chapters such as waste and land use, but landscape was not a theme, so we want to address that in SoNaRR2025. In terms of how we identify new evidence, those leading on the assessments are specialists in those policy fields and they will go out and talk to relevant people to identify what are those emerging themes to consider as we go forward – this process is currently ongoing.
16. Rhys asked about citizen science because it did not seem to feature as part of the hierarchy of evidence. Julie said she is relying on those working in that field to help identify the relevant evidence and highlight if it has come from citizen science. For example, biodiversity assessments include a lot of citizen science such as bird surveys and bat surveys. Ruth said where evidence is accepted as part of the process, we have to be comfortable that it's appropriate levels of information that have been verified.

AP 11th March 02: Bronwen Martin, NRW to share a copy of the SoNaRR presentation and contact details for Julie Boswell, NRW.

Item 4. Reducing ammonia emissions from agriculture near protected sites

17. Sue Buckingham and Brian Price, NRW to provide an update on the work to reduce ammonia emissions from agriculture near protected sites. Brian has been looking at reducing ammonia levels around Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), where it comes from and assessing the nitrogen loading on sites (in the form of gaseous ammonia).
18. Brian provided an overview of the anthropogenic inputs which is one of the drivers from human activity and described the sources, transport/transformation and deposition. The effects of elevated nitrogen and ammonia were illustrated in photographs of algal gunk. UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) were commissioned to provide a Nitrogen Profiling App. Brian explained the modelling undertaken to assess sites and identify causes which helps to tailor the response based on local emitters. The results from some of the samplers and sensors located on/near SSSIs were shared with the group. Brian highlighted some of the practical actions farmers can do to reduce ammonia emissions.
19. Brian described the site-specific Site Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) which aim to identify local emission sources, reduce nitrogen deposition and ammonia levels which impact protected sites and enable a more collaborative and integrated approach to address excess nitrogen deposition and ammonia.
20. Sue summarised reactive nitrogen losses from food production and provided an overview of ammonia emissions by source in Wales with specific statistics for emissions by agriculture sector. Sue looked at the value of nitrogen lost to air as ammonia from a farm business perspective. Sue also described the human health impact of ammonia and Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM 2.5). Sue mentioned some of the available funding streams and advice available to farmers in Wales to reduce ammonia.
21. Huwel recalled some of the points around the public health impact of PM2.5 and the potential impact on the health of farming families. Huwel asked if there was any Public Health Wales data or evidence around this. Sue said Welsh Government have looked at the benefits of nutrient planning, but it does not look like that has been pulled together with the public health aspect. Huwel and Sue agreed to have a conversation after the meeting about who to discuss this with in Welsh Government.
22. Dennis asked about the relationship between methane emissions and ammonia. Dennis recalled information about a study reducing methane emissions directly from cattle where they were fed asparagus seaweed which reduced emissions by 90%. Farming Today on Radio 4 also highlighted a farm on an Oxfordshire Estate which has made an investment in a plant to process slurry and waste into a transportable form of pellets while retaining all the nutrients – this would then be taken to the east of the UK where there's a shortage. Dennis suggested that it would be better to stop cattle emitting it in the first place. Sue mentioned that there are many additives available, but none are currently accepted by Defra, this is a watching space.
23. The group discussed possible solutions including the use of new technology and innovation, the cost of food production, policies, market mechanisms and support for farmers.

AP 11th March 03: Bronwen Martin to share copies of the ‘Reducing ammonia’ presentations and contact details for Sue Buckingham and Brian Price, NRW.

Item 5. NRW Updates

24. Prior to the meeting, the WLMF Update Paper was circulated. Members are encouraged to review the document beforehand and come to the meeting with questions. Rhys acknowledged that a lot of time goes into producing the WLMF Update Paper and thanked those who have contributed.
25. Michelle mentioned the new workplace recycling regulations will be launched on the in April 2024. This is for all businesses and non-domestic places in Wales - [Welsh Government: Changes to workplace recycling](#).
26. Elaine asked about the Woodland Water Code and whether that is something that Confor could get involved in. Sarah said The Woodland Water Code is being developed by a consortium led by Forest Research, funded by the UK Government through Defra’s Nature for Climate Fund programme. Sarah asked if Confor is linked in at a UK level, Elaine said she would talk to her colleague in England.
27. Ruth mentioned that we are undertaking a review of all of the forums that NRW lead. As part of that review, we would like to provide a short questionnaire for members to provide feedback.
28. No further comments were made in respect of the written NRW updates provided prior to the meeting.

Item 6. Updates from FUW / NFU Cymru / Wales YFC / Confor / CLA / TFA / Welsh Government

29. **FUW:** A representative was not present.
30. **NFU Cymru:** Hedd said NFU Cymru has been extremely busy over the last few months with the SFS consultation. They have engaged with over 5,000 members through their roadshows and county meetings. We await to hear the Welsh Government’s response after they read all of the consultation responses. Hedd mentioned that there is a lot of frustration amongst farmers, not just because of the SFS but also NVZs, TB and the Wales Habitat Scheme. The work on the SFS has not finished, we will need to work with Welsh Government to move things forward.
31. **Wales YFC:** Claire provided an update regarding the new colleague starting in April. Claire said Wales YFC are keen to feed into any consultations because we are the future of the agricultural industry and we do want to be part of any and all discussions possible.

Since Christmas, the Rural Affairs Committee has been really busy gathering our members views on the SFS. We had a workshop with both the Farming Unions present and the Policy Officers talked to our members about the scheme and provided support on how to respond to the consultation. We devised our own template which was shared to our members directly and on our social media networks. We had a lot of responses which were actually physically printed and taken to the Senedd last week and

presented to Mark Alexander. We also had a 45-minute meeting with Mark Alexander where our Senior Officers put their views across as young people and the future of agriculture. They shared their thoughts on the scheme and how it is going to impact them. We're now keen to hear Welsh Government's views on what they're going to do with that scheme and how it's going to progress.

32. **Confor:** Elaine Harrison was not able to provide an update due to travelling.
33. **CLA:** A representative was not present.
34. **TFA Cymru:** Dennis Matheson said TFA Cymru's main task has been trying to persuade Welsh Government that the new scheme doesn't work for tenants. Leslie Griffiths, MS has said a number of times that if it doesn't work for tenants then it doesn't work at all. Well, on that basis, it doesn't work at all. For example, of the 17 Universal Actions which you have to undertake to enter the scheme, Dennis said he could only definitely do 10 of them. Therefore, it is hard to see how this scheme can happen really. The anticipated roll out is in January 2025 but this needs to be postponed until all the problems, not just the issues for tenants, can be resolved.
35. Rhys acknowledged that this has been a difficult time with the SFS and the consultation and thanked those who have been feeding into the process. It's taken a lot of work to coordinate responses along with the actions and additional work that you've had to do in order to make the consultation response process meaningful to your organisations and members. We'll now wait to hear the outcomes from Welsh Government in due course.

Item 7. Any Other Business

36. The next meeting will be held in June/July 2024 – a date is to be confirmed shortly.

AP 11th March 04: Bronwen Martin, NRW to circulate the remaining 2024 meeting dates.

37. No other business was raised.

Close meeting