

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Minutes

Title of meeting:	Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)
Location:	MS Teams Meeting
Date of meeting:	17 th March 2025
Members present:	Prof. Rhys A. Jones (Chair), NRW Board Member Huwel Manley, NRW Mary Lewis, NRW Michelle Griffiths, NRW Elen G. Richards, NRW Sarah Hetherington, NRW Gemma Haines, FUW Fraser McAuley, CLA Elaine Heckley, Confor Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru Dennis Matheson, TFA John Browne, NRW Tim Kirk, Confor Angharad Davies, Wales YFC Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru Jon Goldsworthy, NRW Marc Williams, NRW Andrew Chambers, Welsh Government Catherine Osborne, Welsh Government
Other attendees:	Neil Harrison, NRW Julie Boswell, NRW Chris R. Thomas, NRW
Apologies:	Gareth Parry, FUW Ruth Jenkins, NRW (has a new role) Matthew Walters, Welsh Government
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.
2. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.

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

3. 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 9th December 2024 and accepted them as a true record.
4. The group reviewed the outstanding actions and verbal updates were provided.

Item 3. WLMF Membership Update

5. Professor Rhys Jones mentioned some upcoming changes to the WLMF meetings and membership. NRW has decided to pause the monthly meetings of the WLMF Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution (for now) and integrate its membership into the main WLMF. A letter was sent to members of the WLMF Sub Group informing them of this decision. It is important that we all work efficiently and effectively and avoid duplication of work. Going forward, the issues around agricultural pollution will be addressed in the main WLMF, and we will consider whether this will be approached with a standing agenda item or a specific themed meeting. Rhys acknowledged the important work of the WLMF Sub Group and recognised the contributions of the group. Rhys suggested that the WLMF Sub Group could be reconvened in future (as necessary) but would likely adopt a Task & Finish structure. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the WLMF will subsequently be reviewed and updated following this decision – a draft ToR will be circulated to members ahead of the next WLMF meeting.
6. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru recognised the overlap in membership but pointed out some key differences. The membership of this group has included organisations that represent those directly managing land in Wales. The membership of the WLMF Sub Group has a wider membership and incorporates lobbying-type groups. Rhys ensured that the ToR would include reference to managing different perspectives and the need for balanced conversations and views.
7. Gemma Haines, FUW also raised some concerns around this decision and suggested the ToR need to address these. The WLMF still needs to facilitate the opportunity for key policy discussions.
8. Dennis Matheson, TFA suggested NRW could consider reducing the number of WLMF Sub Group meetings instead of pausing the group (e.g. quarterly or every 2 months instead of monthly meetings). Dennis said the WLMF Sub Group was instrumental in overcoming the issues around tenant farmers and the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations. Dennis reminded the group that the WLMF Sub Group report from 2018 and subsequent recommendations was not taken forward by Welsh Government. Rhys mentioned that there would be a trial period, and we would perhaps reflect on the changes in around a year's time. Rhys discussed the difficulties in finding items and presentations for the monthly WLMF Sub Group agendas.
9. The NRW Forum Review has not concluded yet – analysis of the stakeholder survey responses is ongoing, and any next steps will be communicated in due course.

AP01 17th March 2025: Bronwen Martin, NRW to revise the WLMF Terms of Reference and circulate the draft document to the group for review.

Item 4. State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) 2025

10. Julie Boswell, NRW joined the group to provide an update on the progress of State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) 2025. This follows an initial presentation provided in [March 2024](#). The [State of Natural Resources Report 2025 - interim report summary \(2024\)](#) was published in December 2024 and outlines the plans for SoNaRR2025, highlights key new evidence on what has changed since SoNaRR 2020, and summarises the main messages that are emerging from that evidence. Julie provided an overview of the SoNaRR foundations including the drivers, pressures, state, impact and response. The drivers of change have been identified as climate change, Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), pests and diseases, land and sea use change, over exploitation and pollution.
11. NRW has spent the last 18-months updating the evidence that will be used in SoNaRR 2025 for the eight broad ecosystems and three main natural resources of air, water and soil. We're now in the process of using this evidence to write the assessments against each of the four aims of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR). This allows us to integrate the evidence on the pressures of natural resources and ecosystems from society and economic activity. We'll soon be moving on to the overall assessments and identifying the key messages and priorities going forward. Julie showed a timeline which outlined the key milestones, status and next steps.
12. Julie mentioned the proposed SoNaRR2025 products including a webpage, visual contents and a key messages video. Some summaries might also be produced, and contents may also be downloadable. Julie provided an overview of some of the evidence which is still in development.
13. Rhys said the proposed new format is interesting and it looks like it is going to be far more interactive than past SoNaRR.
14. Dennis mentioned that he previously attended an event in Cardiff regarding the launch of NRW's Corporate Plan. Dennis recalled that there was no mention of food security, and it doesn't look like much attention is being paid to food security in this report either. It is fundamental as we're going to run out of food. Julie noted Dennis' comments.
15. Rhys asked about the general use of SoNaRR and whether other organisations use it as a source of information to inform their work. Julie was aware that some organisations reference it in their work. NRW use it and Welsh Government also use it when developing their policies. However, we have struggled to audit how other people are using SoNaRR.
16. Rachel said NFU Cymru went through the first SoNaRR with a fine-tooth comb and subsequently used it quite extensively. Some of the statistics were very useful and it was often referred to in NFU Cymru publications and in correspondence with Welsh Government and Senedd members. However, it was difficult to identify the 'golden thread' between the first and second iteration of SoNaRR, the second one was far more abstract and conceptual and therefore, it was less useful. Rachel explained that the 'golden thread' between SoNaRR editions is really important because comparisons can be made. Consequently, a completely new version or a new format with a new analysis or methodology is less helpful. Julie confirmed that the method has stayed the same, but the way it is being presented and described has changed. Additionally, we did not have the four aims of SMNR for SoNaRR 2016 and SoNaRR 2020 was the first

time we assessed progress against SMNR. Our plan is making it clearer how the evidence has been gathered using 'driver, pressure, state, impact and response' (DPSIR) and describe what that means for each of the four aims of SMNR. This format will hopefully enable us to easily update it when new evidence arises in the future.

17. Fraser McAuley, CLA asked when it is due to be launched and is there going to be a launch event which stakeholders can be involved in. Fraser also asked for an update on Area Statements. Fraser discussed the usefulness of previous iterations of SoNaRR and suggested it is important to understand how Welsh Government policies have addressed the issues and gaps highlighted in the previous reports and what progress since. Julie said the report has to be published by the end of December 2025. A launch event will likely be arranged sometime in January 2026, and we will certainly be inviting all our stakeholders. Regarding an Area Statement update, in the triangle of production there is SoNaRR, the Natural Resources Policy (NRP) from Welsh Government and then the Area Statements which respond to the Natural Resources Policy. Mary Lewis, NRW said as part of the Case for Change process, NRW are reviewing our capacity and reducing some work areas. It has been agreed that we will be cutting back to a degree, the amount of work we do on Area Statements. We're internally reviewing the approach that we take to producing them and is an active conversation with Welsh Government.
18. Dennis said he attended the Annual General Meeting of TFA last week and the Chairs of all the regions are unanimously in despair with everything that has been stacked against farmers recently, that includes inheritance tax, net zero and the withdrawal of grant funding. All these things are a risk to food security in the UK. We are an essential primary industry but there is hostility towards rural communities from Westminster – there is a very real worry in the industry. Dennis also referenced the Well-being of Future Generations Act and questioned subsequent progress.
19. Fraser asked how Welsh Government has used SoNaRR in the past and intends to use the new report. There seems to be an inconsistency regarding the process and uncertainty about how it is going to be used going forward. Julie mentioned that some areas of Welsh Government do use SoNaRR and have referenced it.
20. Rachel mentioned the Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets Bill and said it remains very unclear about how the monitoring and target setting requirements will be integrated into a strong framework. Welsh Government have not got around to publishing or consulting on an updated Natural Resources Policy (NRP) either. Rachel questioned how NRW will integrate SoNaRR with other requirements brought forward as a result of that Bill. Julie acknowledged the complexities and said SoNaRR includes a biodiversity assessment and so perhaps that will form part of how SoNaRR is used to deliver what Welsh Government are wanting us to report against.
21. Rhys recalled the possible opportunity of stakeholders being involved in user testing sessions. Julie welcomed the group to contact her if they were interested in being involved.

AP02 17th March: Bronwen Martin to circulate a copy of the SoNaRR2025 presentation.

AP03 17th March: Members to contact Julie Boswell if they are interested in being involved in SoNaRR user testing sessions.

Item 6. Fly-tipping in Wales

22. Neil Harrison, NRW joined the meeting to provide a presentation on fly tipping in Wales. Fly tipping continues to be a problem for farmers, land managers and foresters. Neil shared some key messages along with some approaches to tackle fly-tipping.
23. The legal definition is 'the illegal deposit of waste onto land that does not have a permit to accept it or licence to accept it'. A more practical definition is anything over a black bag tends to be regarded as fly-tipping, anything smaller than that would generally be considered 'litter'. Fly tipping can range from a single black bag dumped next to a public litter bin, to the large-scale illegal dumping of commercial waste.
24. Local authorities deal with the majority of fly tipping incidents, and they have a duty to clear fly tipping from public land. NRW does also have some responsibilities with regards to fly tipping but generally gets involved when the fly tipping is on a larger scale (e.g. over 20 tonnes of waste linked to commercial waste operations, an illegal waste crime or if hazardous waste is involved over certain thresholds). Fly tipping on private land is the responsibility of the landowner and they will need to pay for the responsible and legal removal of that waste. When it comes to enforcement against that, some Local Authorities will investigate an incident on private land, but others are not so proactive. This might be because of an internal policy or perhaps that they don't have enough resources to focus on incidents on private land.
25. Neil provided some photographic examples of different types of fly tipping seen across Wales – the images were all captured using the FlyMapper system over the past three months.
26. The Welsh Government strategy identified four key areas which drive fly tipping including domestic, commercial, organised crime and transient populations. Neil mentioned that 70% of fly tipping contains waste from households. If you're a householder, you've got a legal duty to check that whoever you pass your waste to is a registered waste carrier. Unfortunately, only 60% of the public understand their Waste Duty of Care. Neil's team have been running campaigns to raise awareness – this is one of the best interventions to reduce fly tipping in Wales.
27. Neil provided some examples of the most common types of waste dumped including construction and demolition material, white goods and electrical items, commercial waste, green waste and hazardous waste. Levels of fly tipping can be affected by various factors, including economic activity, cost of living, waste policies and provision and seasonal factors. Neil mentioned the broken window theory where an area with fly-tipping or other antisocial behaviour attracts more fly tipping. Therefore, Local Authorities put a lot of focus on clearing fly tipping as soon as possible. This should also be true for private landowners to prevent an area becoming subject to further fly tipping. There are many impacts of fly tipping including economic, environmental and societal.
28. Neil discussed the penalties for fly-tipping. NRW is keen on tackling illegal rogue traders that are undermining legitimate waste businesses that are disposing of waste responsibly. The legislation generally used is the Environmental Protection Act, Sections 33 and 34. Under Section 33 (Offence of fly-tipping), if you are caught fly tipping, you can receive a fine of up to £50,000 and 12-months imprisonment, but for more serious cases it could be an unlimited fine and up to 5- years imprisonment. The

second piece of legislation is Section 34 (Duty of Care offences) which is often used by local authorities and NRW. For example, if you've passed your waste to someone that's not registered, you can be found guilty of a Duty of Care Offence and that could be up to £5,000 for a householder or an unlimited fine for a business. Neil explained that unfortunately, the fines that are issued by the courts are perhaps not as much of a deterrent as we would hope.

29. Welsh Government has introduced a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for fly tipping which is really positive and being used a lot more widely by Local Authorities. One of the benefits of a FPN is that it is an alternative to taking a case through a lengthy court process. A Fly Tipping FPN can be issued between £150 to £400 and is a quicker way of holding someone to account and a Duty of Care FPN is £300. There are various other bits of legislation that can be used by Local Authorities and NRW which include seizing vehicles suspected of being involved in fly tipping, Environmental Protection Act Section 59, Environmental Protection Act Section 108, Criminal Behaviour Orders and Community Protection Notices.
30. Neil outlined some latest statistics regarding fly tipping. There were 42,000 incidents of fly tipping in Wales which was a 6% increase on the previous year and still 20% higher than pre-pandemic levels. More positively, last year 23,000 investigations were carried out by Local Authorities which led to 102 prosecutions (double the previous year) and there was over 1000 FPNs issued.
31. Neil discussed the range of projects and initiatives that Local Authorities and NRW are doing to tackle fly tipping in Wales. Welsh Government are keen for us to increase enforcement and work with Local Authorities to increase the number of prosecutions. We are also sharing guidance and best practise and arranging training. We've organised membership for all Local Authorities to get expert advice for taking cases to court, templates for their legal work, etc. We have also purchased equipment so that we can loan cameras to Local Authorities for surveillance and then we provide support on deployment, camouflage and signage. We are continuing to develop our FlyMapper application and hope to invite more private landowners and land managers to utilise the system so that they can start recording data more accurately. We also run several fly tipping campaigns each year to raise awareness and educate people of the waste Duty of Care for householders and businesses.
32. Dennis recalled the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service saying they were unable to tackle fires close to some urban areas in South Wales because of dumped gas cylinders – it was too dangerous. Dennis mentioned the recent changes NRW have made regarding sheep dip disposal and said it seems counterproductive. Additionally, from 1st April farms are required to segregate all farm waste into different categories like a household – this could be a deterrent from just getting a skip. Dennis said it seems very unfair that a landowner or tenant has to pay for the removal of fly tipped waste. Neil appreciated Dennis raising awareness of some recent/upcoming changes. Changes to waste policy certainly have the potential to impact levels of fly tipping and this is something NRW will monitor. Separate waste collections have already been introduced for quite a range of businesses in Wales. Neil acknowledged the unfairness to farmers having to deal with fly tipping, because their land is being subject to criminal activity. However, it is unlikely that that will change so it is important to find alternative ways we can support farmers and land managers. Neil explained that some Local Authorities have explored whether landowners could take fly tipped material to the local

Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at a reduced cost or free of charge. There is the potential to trial other opportunities by using the FlyMapper system – this might also reduce the risk of any fraud (e.g. accurately capturing fly tipping incidents on this system which could then perhaps be used as a ticket to take that waste to your local site).

33. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru discussed the cost of fly tipping to farmers and landowners. It is very alarming that there were 42,000 incidents in Wales and only 102 prosecutions. More should be done to prosecute the people that are fly tipping.
34. Gemma Haines, FUW mentioned the experience of some FUW members. There have been significant increases in fly tipping in some Local Authority areas, particularly where there have been cuts to the provision of recycling and waste disposal sites (e.g. reduced opening times). One Commons Graziers Association in South Wales has been subject to almost constant fly tipping. The Common is quite near to a waste collection site and there's been a significant spike in the amount of household waste being dumped on the common land as a result. This has been very frustrating because the Grazing Association has had to pick up the costs for removing that waste and these knock-on effects are very unfair. FUW have also received reports from their members around issues related to people living on common land leaving garden waste in green recycling bags for the council to collect. However, livestock have been poisoned from eating those bags. Gemma said this is a very serious issue and requested a meeting with NRW to discuss further. Neil agreed that that is a real issue and said it is one that NRW have proactively campaigned about. Neil mentioned an upcoming project where NRW are working with the Gelligaer and Merthyr Common Ranger. We've previously done some positive work with the Ranger. Gemma asked if she could pass on Neil's contact details to the Grazing Association as they'd be interested in the work that NRW are doing elsewhere, and they'd certainly be very welcoming of any resources to hand out to the public in that area. Neil agreed that Gemma could pass on his contact details.

AP04 17th March: Bronwen Martin, NRW to circulate a copy of the fly tipping presentation along with contact details for Neil Harrison, NRW.

Item 7. Knowledge Exchange Visit

35. Chris R. Thomas, NRW joined the meeting to provide an update and overview of a recent knowledge exchange visit to Ireland. The focus of the visit was to see how sustainable farming can protect and enhance the natural environment, whilst improving farm productivity and profitability.
36. Chris is the Senior Land Management Agricultural Officer for the Four Rivers for LIFE Project. The Four Rivers for LIFE is an EU, Welsh Government, NRW and Bannau Brycheiniog funded project. The project looks at four main SAC rivers (Cleddau, Teifi, Twyi and Usk) to improve water quality and fish passage. Half of the team focuses on in-river works (e.g. removing impediments to fish passage) and the other half of the team focuses on land management and agriculture. Chris showed a map indicating the location of the rivers and the areas involved in this project. The project funding is £9.1 million. Chris discussed the project partners including organisations, farmers, landowners, local communities and contractors. The project aims to improve water quality, fish passage and land management. The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is to

try and get Freshwater Pearl Mussels reintroduced into these four rivers. Freshwater Pearl Mussel is a key species indicator of high-water quality status. This is going to be quite a difficult challenge, and we haven't yet been able to find any viable populations in the four rivers, but we are looking at areas where we could reintroduce them.

37. Chris mentioned some of the land management works within the project. The Woodland Trust have provided 50,000 native broadleaf trees to plant along the riverbanks. We are also aiming to reduce the impact of INNS, fence off rivers to create bigger buffers and also reintroduce Freshwater Pearl Mussels. Six weather stations have been procured by Gelli Aur for the Tywydd Twyi Project, with £40k extra funding from Dwr Cymru. Weather stations have been installed on 6 farms in the Cleddau catchment and a further 5 are in the process of being installed on the Teifi. The local weather station provides on site data for wind speed, air temperature, soil temperature, soil moisture, etc. Which gives the farmers an up to date local 5 day forecast which they then use to inform their decision making. The weather stations also have the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulation dates installed so farmers can see whether they are inside or outside of the closed period for spreading slurry and fertiliser.
38. We're also looking to improve livestock crossings as there are some areas where livestock are still walked through fords. We have considered options such as culverts and bridges.
39. Chris mentioned some of the discussion groups he has been working with, including Agriscop Groups and Biophilic Groups. A regenerative farming trip to Ireland was arranged through an Agriscop Group to look at some of the good work being done there. Chris described the three-day trip to Ireland with 12 farmers from Wales. The trip learnt about their advice, guidance and soil testing. The Irish farmers were funded to undertake certain works looking at sustainable and regenerative methods which has been an overwhelming success. The project had five years funding which has now run out. However, it has made a lot of people realise what is possible, particularly as the farmers were allowed to trial certain things such as reducing nitrogen use, encouraging clover and perhaps more traditional species. Chris described some of the farm visits they experienced during the trip. The trip has hopefully helped the Welsh farmers think about the possibilities and enabled them to look at their own systems and consider what they could potentially do differently. Some of the Irish farmers are interested in a visit to Wales. It is important to try and keep that momentum going and encourage like minded farmers to talk about their experiences.
40. Rachel said she would be interested to know more about the 12 farmers because they have information that would be quite useful to disseminate. They could perhaps feed into a future NFU Cymru county meeting or an event we're arranging. Rachel asked if Chris could share more information. Rachel mentioned that previously, there have been many useful trips to Ireland but reminded the group that the fundamental difference is that those farmers are operating within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy and are continuing to receive direct agri-environment support. The situation in Wales is about to become very different with the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) and the phasing out of the BPS starting in 2026. Therefore, it is not a comparison of like with like in all aspects, the farming systems are often comparable, farming conditions are probably comparable, but the economic context and the policy framework is very different.

41. Rhys asked if Chris will be following up with the 12 farmers to see whether the trip has made a difference in terms of their approach. Chris said the discussion groups are ongoing and is a space for them to discuss their experiences. We also hope to organise a few other events in future.
42. Jon Goldsworthy, NRW said the Teifi Demonstration Project is looking very closely at the Four Rivers for LIFE Project and want to take on some of the learning. We're currently building a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid focusing on the Teifi catchment and have been talking to Chris and the discussion groups about how we can involve them in what we're planning in the catchment. We're also talking to the WWF regarding a UK project that they've done looking at the period farmers experience where yields are reduced as they move to a regenerative approach before things pick back up. We are also looking at the 'theory of change' and how that could be incorporated within the demonstrator project.

AP05 17th March: Bronwen Martin, NRW to circulate a copy of the Knowledge Exchange Visit presentation along with contact details for Chris Thomas, NRW.

Item 7. NRW Updates

43. 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.
44. No questions were raised in respect of the contents within the Written Update paper.

Item 8. Updates from FUW / NFU Cymru / Wales YFC / Confor / CLA / TFA Cymru / Welsh Government

45. **NFU Cymru:** Rachel Lewis-Davies mentioned they have been very busy with the ongoing work regarding the next phase of the SFS. In the wider context, there are concerns about inheritance tax changes and other things. The industry is currently under an extreme amount of pressure.

Rachel noted the earlier discussion around the revised WLMF Terms of Reference and suggested the need to find a better way of sharing information between NRW and stakeholders. Rachel mentioned the changes to the disposal of sheep dip as an example and said it could have been handled far better from an NRW perspective. There was no consultation, and the decision came out of the blue, but it has profound impacts for the sheep sector in Wales. From an NFU Cymru perspective, communication was certainly inadequate in terms of this particular decision.

Hedd Pugh mentioned the escaped racoon dog located near Bala and recalled that NRW was very concerned. Hedd asked if there was any further information about that. NFU Cymru members in the area are becoming concerned that species that should not be in the countryside are getting out. Huwel Manley said he would follow up with the local Environment Team and provide an update after the meeting. In the past when raccoon dogs have gone missing, it can take a while before they are eventually caught.

AP06 17th March: Huwel Manley, NRW to seek an update regarding the escaped racoon dog in North Wales.

46. **FUW:** Gemma Haines agreed with comments regarding the changes to the sheep dip permitting. FUW were disappointed that there was no prior consultation with the industry before that announcement was made. The FUW President sent a letter to Clare Pillman in February, but a response has not been received yet. As an industry and stakeholder group, we should be having these conversations because there are serious welfare repercussions. We would appreciate no further developments or changes without consultation going forward. Michelle Griffiths, NRW was aware that a response was provided but needed to check whether it was to FUW or NFU Cymru.

AP07 17th March: Michelle Griffiths, NRW to confirm whether the response regarding the changes to sheep dip disposal was provided to FUW or NFU Cymru.

Gemma said FUW welcomed recent engagement with the NRW Control of Agricultural Pollution Team Leaders. We've discussed some concerns and cases with them and the discussions we've had have been very beneficial.

Looking ahead, obviously we've got the Control of Agricultural Pollution Review Report due to be published. FUW also continue to focus on the SFS, particularly within the Roundtable discussions. Animal welfare and disease risk also continues to be a concern with ongoing discussions around avian influenza, blue tongue and foot and mouth in Europe.

47. **Wales YFC:** Angharad Davies agreed with comments made by Rachel and Gemma regarding the concerns facing the agricultural industry at the moment. Wales YFC are also in discussions with Welsh Government in respect of the SFS development. Concerns around the changes to sheep dip disposal have been raised by Wales YFC members. Angharad offered support by sharing communications around fly tipping with their members.

48. **Confor:** Elaine Heckley mentioned that Confor are also working on the SFS and are attending the Ministerial Roundtable meetings, Officials Group meetings and are a part of the Carbon Sequestration Panel. Naomi Matheson, Welsh Government has also set up a new group called the Trees and Hedgerow Stakeholder Delivery Group. That group is starting off with the SFS and looking at the trees and hedgerows, but the idea is to continue afterwards and look at tree planting on a Wales wide scale. This is a positive step and Confor supports this approach of having accountability of achieving planting targets in Wales.

Elaine mentioned the extent of wind blow this winter, on both the public and private estates. This is something that we need to make sure is dealt with quickly. Elaine wanted to formally thank NRW for their response to the wind blow following Storm Darragh, particularly in relation to felling licences. It was clear and helpful for the sector and enables us to deal with wind blow quickly. If wind blow isn't dealt with promptly, then it does open up the risks of pests and diseases particularly for spruce and Sitka spruce which is the main crop that has fallen in Wales.

49. **CLA:** An update was not available as Fraser McAuley needed to leave the meeting.

50. **TFA Cymru:** Dennis Matheson said a large part of current work is around seeing how the SFS will actually work for tenant farmers.

Dennis mentioned on going work trying to encourage Powys County Council from selling off their farms. The Council is trialling an approach by splitting the farms up into small plots for growing vegetables. The first one is 38 acres with three vegetable smallholders allocated five acres each. The rest of the land is likely going to be planted with trees and the farmhouse sold off. This is a five-year project which, if it works for the various smallholders will then become a 90-year lease. TFA Cymru are trying to persuade them to just wait to see if this works before they roll out anymore. However, this does mean the loss of viable tenancies to the tenancy sector. Dennis explained the knock-on effects from the changes in the budget; there are landlords now withholding land from letting. Therefore, County Council farms are becoming more and more important.

TFA Cymru are opposing the creation of the proposed new National Park in Northeast Wales. The County Council are also 100% against, along with locals and our local Member of Parliament. We now also have a proposal for a massive energy park on the southern end of this proposed National Park, with 21 turbines, each 230 metres high within a grid line going east. If the National Park is created, then it would probably block the wind farm development – this seems like a chicken or egg situation.

51. **Welsh Government:** Andrew Chambers mentioned that the CoAPR 4-year Review Report is progressing and hopefully the report will be published by the end of the month.
52. Gemma asked about the compliance data that the CoAPR Team have collected and when the next update will be provided. Michelle mentioned that this is the first full year of the Team's regulatory activity. During that time, we've been bringing regular updates to the WLMF Sub Group and we're now compiling the final report from that initial first year. However, going forward it will be better to take that annual view and propose that an annual report is shared with stakeholders for a very consolidated focused session once it's been compiled and then signed off with Welsh Government.

Item 9. Any Other Business

53. Rhys announced that Tim Kirk is retiring from the WLMF. Tim has been a valuable member and we're sad to see him go. Rhys thanked Tim for his dedication and contributions over the years. Tim said he is retiring with great regret and has been a member of this group and its for bearers for around 18 years. It's always been very important that the forestry world understands what else is going on in the rural scene, and this committee is just excellent for that and has given us the ability to put our influence forward. Tim thanked the group and noted that he will keep in touch with Elaine. Rhys wished Tim well for the future.
54. The next WLMF meeting will likely be held in June 2025 (date TBC).
55. No other business was raised.

Close meeting