

Agenda

Title of meeting: NRW Board Public Meeting

Date of meeting: Wednesday 20th May 2026

Time of meeting: 10:30 – 16:05

Time

Item

10:30
(5 mins)

Item 1. Open Meeting

- Welcome
- Declaration of Interests
- Explain conduct of meeting

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev (Chair)

Summary: To NOTE any declarations of interest

10:35
(5 mins)

Item 2. Review Minutes and Action and Decisions Log

2A. Review Minutes from 18th March Public Board Meeting
2B. Review Public Action and Decisions Log

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev (Chair)

Summary: To APPROVE the minutes of the previous meeting and the Action Log

10:40
(10 mins)

Item 3. Update from the Chair

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev (Chair)

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

10:50
(20 mins)

Item 4. Report from the Chief Executive

Sponsor and Presenter: Ceri Davies, Chief Executive

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

Paper ref: 26-05-B01

11:10
(20 mins)

Item 5. Update Report of Committees

Sponsors and Presenters: Committee Chairs

- Evidence Advisory Committee – 12th May (Verbal)
- Finance Committee – 6th May (Verbal)
- Flood Risk Management Committee – 29th April – **26-05-B02**
- Land Estate Committee – 7th May (Verbal)
- Wales Land Management Forum – 9th March – **26-05-B04**
- Wales Water Management Forum – 12th March – Verbal
- National Access Forum for Wales – 7th March – **26-05-B05**

Summary: To NOTE the updates from the Board Committees and NRW Forums, both within and outside and meetings held

11:30
(15 mins)

Item 6. Finance Performance Report

Sponsor: Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Presenter: Mark Collins, Business Finance Team 2 Manager

Summary: To APPROVE end of year Finance Performance Report

Paper Ref: 26-05-B03

11:45
(20 mins)

Item 7. Business Plan Performance Dashboard

Sponsor: Ceri Davies, Chief Executive

Presenters: WBO Leads; Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy and PMO

Summary: To APPROVE the Q4 Business Plan Performance Report.

Paper ref: 26-05-B06

12:05
(60 mins)

Lunch

13:05
(90 mins)

Item 8. Water Quality (WBO3) Deep Dive with Place Focussed Perspective

Sponsor: Lyndsey Rawlinson, Executive Director of Place

Presenter: Sian Williams, Head of North West Wales; Mary Lewis, Head of Natural Resource Management Policy; Becky Favager, Head of Regulation & Permitting; Huwel Manley, Head of South West Wales Operations

Summary: Discussion to include Water Quality, Update on PR24 Implementation, an update on the Green Paper framed around the South West place

**14:35
(10 mins)**

Item 9. How did we do in this meeting?

Sponsor: Neil Sachdev, Chair

Summary: Review of the meeting

**14:45
(5 mins)**

Item 10. AOB

14:50

Close Public Meeting

**15:00
(60 mins)**

Directors' Session

**16:00
(30 mins)**

Photographer Session

A Photographer will be coming to take photos/headshots of the Board and Executive Team

Private Board Meeting Action & Decision Logs

Board Meetings – Action Log										
Action No.	Meeting Category	Meeting Date	Item No	Para No	Paper Sponsor	Action	Owner	Due	Status	Notes/Updates
6	Public	12/02/2026	6	32	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of F&CS	ACTION: The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services to discuss with WG, the option of carrying over committed capital funding to the next financial year.	The Executive Director of F&CS	19/03/2026	Completed	It was agreed that these discussions were ongoing and that the action could now be closed.
11	Public	18/03/2026	8	41	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of F&CS	ACTION: The Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office (PMO) to send the draft WBO4 to the FGC.	Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office	20/05/2026	Completed	Met on 28/04/2026

Board Meetings – Decision Log

Decision No.	Meeting Category	Meeting Date	Item No	Para No	Paper Sponsor	Decision
7	Public	12/01/2026	2	8	Dom Driver, Acting Executive Director of EPP & Acting Executive Director of National Operations	DECISION: The Board approved the recommendation for the National Park Designation Order
8	Public	12/01/2026	3	10	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services	DECISION: The Board approved the IDD Budget.
31	Public	18/03/2026	6	29	Rob Bell, Head of Finance	DECISION: The Board approved the change in forecast for year end to £293m.
32	Public	18/03/2026	7	35	Ceri Davies, Chief Executive Officer	DECISION: The Board approved the Q3 Performance Dashboard.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	20th May 2026
Title of Paper:	Chief Executive's Report (Public Session)
Paper Reference:	26-05-B01
Paper presented by:	Ceri Davies, Chief Executive
Purpose	Information and discussion
Summary	The paper provides the Board with an update on current issues.

Introduction

1. As we settle into the new financial year, I am delighted to welcome two new members to our Leadership Team, both of whom joined us in April. Helen Davies is our Head of People; she joins us from the DVLA and brings strong experience in supporting leadership and organisational culture. Charlotte Brewster, our new Head of Strategic Projects, has over twenty years' experience in project management, including many years on major infrastructure and engineering projects. Both join us at a critical time, as we leverage our new directorate structure and really focus our efforts on delivering our Corporate Plan.
2. To support this, the Executive Team (ET) and Leadership Team (LT) gathered in Aberystwyth during April, for a development session focused on our new fourth Wellbeing Objective and the culture and leadership behaviours required for the successful delivery of our corporate objectives. The session was facilitated for us by JAM Consulting, supported by our Learning & Development team, and was a great opportunity for shared reflection, collaboration and teambuilding.
3. In late March, I had my quarterly meeting with Matthew Edwards, Financial Audit Director at Audit Wales. We discussed the outcome of our recent directorate changes, and some current and emerging risks and issues. I was also pleased to sign an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA), alongside their CEO Rebecca Godfrey. The MoU relates to the work we do for the WRA in collecting and managing landfill disposals tax and continues our commitment to working closely with them and delivering these delegated functions nationally across Wales. We also have a Joint Strategy with the WRA to set out our shared ambitions and areas for collaboration, while recognising the distinct roles we play in protecting the environment and tackling waste crime.
4. ET and I had a follow-up meeting with our counterparts at National Trust Cymru, following our in-person session with them in January. We discussed how we can develop a partnership approach to major nature projects at landscape scale, and how

we can better connect people with nature and mobilise support through engagement. These joint executive sessions are invaluable for building our relationship, sharing learning and generating exciting opportunities to work more closely together in the interests of people and nature in Wales.

5. We have seen work beginning at pace on delivery of recommendations from the 2025 Nuclear Regulatory Review, conducted by John Fingleton. In connection with the establishment of an interim lead regulator model (pending establishment of a Commission for Nuclear Regulation), I attended the first meeting of the Nuclear Regulatory Review Group (NRRG) convened by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) in London, in late March. Our involvement in this group is important given the UK Government's decision to build a new nuclear power station at Wylfa on Anglesey, and the regulatory differences between England and Wales. The initial meeting focused on agreeing terms of reference and urgent priorities for focus. A follow-up workshop in May considered practical matters such as ways of working, information-sharing and communications, and was attended by colleagues who will be working closely with the ONR and other regulators on this project.
6. During April, I had my regular catch-up with Claire Bennett, Director for Environmental Sustainability at Welsh Government (WG), and we held our quarterly Sponsorship Committee meeting with colleagues in our WG Sponsorship team. The agenda covered performance, financial and governance updates, and a discussion and WG support for the next phase of the Self-Assessment Model for Wales, noting our timelines for delivering in each of the agreed focus areas.
7. I also met Rocio Cifuentes, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, for a discussion about how our work supports children's rights and future generations. I have introduced our strengthened People function to the Commissioner's team to work together on our commitments. I have also had further conversations with Usha Ladwa-Thomas of Cardiff University, and her team, who are supporting our anti-racism work and helping us engage with colleagues in the right way. And I met Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner, regarding our new Wellbeing Objective and the constructive feedback provided by his office, which will help to improve alignment with the language and expectations of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
8. I met with Victoria Bond of the Countryside Land and Business Association (CLA), to discuss the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) and some specific issues raised by her members. The CLA are happy to work with us on finding solutions to complex problems. As reported to the last meeting, I met Farmers' Union of Wales and National Farmers' Union Cymru senior leadership in March to discuss current issues and how we work constructively with them. These meetings are part of my regular meeting schedule with these important stakeholders, including at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and Eisteddfod (coming up in July and August respectively).
9. Alongside our Head of Operations for South West Wales, Huwel Manley, I met Martin Nicholls of Swansea Council, to discuss their tidal lagoon project. The Council has recently reached an agreement with a renewable developer for a privately-funded multi-phase project, which will start with construction of a solar farm to power a wider programme of renewable energy, ahead of further ambitious multi-million pound development projects in the area. The project will require environmental advice and input from NRW as it progresses over the years ahead.

10. I have had meetings with Roch Cheroux, CEO of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), and with Chris Walters of Ofwat. These wide-ranging meetings covered Water sector reform and the WG Green Paper on the future of water governance in Wales, a forward look to the delivery of AMP8 (the eighth Asset Management Period, 2025 to 2030) and planning for PR29 (2029 Price Review, for the period 2030 to 2035), as well as matters relating to pollution, incident reporting and enforcement.
11. Also in April, we held a Board Strategic Planning Day at our Bangor office. This was a busy day, informed by a provocation session delivered by Alwen Williams of Ambition North Wales, who helped us consider the role NRW could play in supporting large-scale industrial development and investment in North East Wales. Our agenda included a presentation by Camlas on the political and policy landscape in the approach to the Senedd elections, feedback from our recent Stakeholder Perceptions audit and other perception surveys, and a review of progress against our Corporate Plan priorities. The day provided a valuable space for discussion and resulted in some clear actions.
12. One distinct benefit of such a busy diary is the time I have been able to spend at our offices in Aberystwyth, Bangor, Monmouth and Llandarcy, as well as Cathays Park in Cardiff. It is always good to chat with local colleagues at each office, and if I am fortunate, my visits coincide with a bring-and-share lunch or a cake stall. Holding our Board meetings in our offices around Wales allows us to share our lunchtimes with local colleagues, and I know my ET colleagues and our Chair and Board members also find these opportunities to chat and listen hugely beneficial. Thank you to colleagues who take the time to join to us on these occasions.

Strategic Updates

Embedding Delivery of the Corporate Plan

13. A major priority this year is embedding an outcome-focused approach strengthening the integration of business, financial and strategic workforce planning with service and place planning. We want to be clearer about the long-term changes we seek for nature, climate, pollution and how we work by 2030, and ensure our annual activities and resources align with those outcomes.
14. A new Multi-Year Plan will bridge our Corporate Plan and annual business plans. It will set out the outcomes we aim to achieve by 2030, include a new suite of leading outcome metrics, and help us allocate resources more strategically following budget announcements each autumn. This will allow us to demonstrate both what we have delivered and the impact of our work. We have completed the first step of the Multi-Year Plan with the definition of the outcomes and metrics for all four Wellbeing Objectives (WBOs) and are now focused on understanding the gap between where we are now and where we want to be, and the actions that will get us there.

Additional Wellbeing Objective in the Corporate Plan

15. The scale and complexity of the nature, climate and pollution emergencies go far beyond the remit of any single body. The transition ahead must be shaped by many hands – the decisions of land managers and planners, the innovation of businesses, the commitment of communities and government leadership at every level. For this Corporate Plan, partnership is the foundation on which real progress depends.

16. The role of NRW is to contribute our evidence and our expertise, and work openly, respectfully and purposefully alongside everyone who shares this responsibility, to bring about a change that is fair, just and ensures nobody gets left behind. To strengthen this role, we have introduced the new Wellbeing Objective: *How we work* into our Corporate Plan. The Board has helped us hone this Objective since the substantive discussion in October last year. Rooted in our purpose – the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) – and the sustainable development principle defined in the Future Generations Act, the Objective recognises that delivering for Wales requires an organisation that is equipped, confident and enabling. It is about shaping NRW so that we can better support partners, customers and communities – investing in our people, systems and ways of working so we make better decisions and deliver better outcomes for nature, climate and the minimisation of pollution.
17. Central to this is the experience we create for the people we serve: listening carefully, responding fairly and ensuring our advice and decisions bring clarity and confidence. We want people to feel heard, valued and supported in every interaction with us, because respect, empathy and professionalism must underpin everything we do. Strengthening our organisation is not separate from delivering our other objectives; it is what makes them achievable, now and into the next decade. An updated Corporate Plan will be published on our webpage by the end of May alongside a revised Wellbeing Statement.

Marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Nutrients

18. Following the final Ministerial Nitrates Task Force at the end of March, we have committed to developing pilot Catchment Nutrient Recovery Plans for the priority Lougher and Cleddau catchments in south Wales. The plans will provide nutrient-reduction trajectories for these catchments from planned secure nutrient management actions. The forecast nutrient reductions can be used to apply an integrated approach to assessing development applications such as housing, to bring them forward against a reducing baseline of nutrients levels in the catchment.

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) Salmon Conservation Commitment

19. We have submitted Wales Conservation Commitment Reporting (CCR) targets to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO). These set out how we are addressing climate change impacts in freshwater, pollution and habitat degradation. Following a subsequent interview with the NASCO review group, we have received positive feedback that the actions include goals and tangible outcomes that will benefit Atlantic salmon through improvement of several habitat parameters. We have been asked to provide some additional clarity to the metrics and we will be submitting the final version of the CCR this month. We have also received positive feedback from the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).
20. We have shared with NASCO our emerging approach to prioritising and delivering measures that protect "salmon strongholds", as a way of prioritising measures to halt the decline in this culturally and ecological important species.

Glyndŵr National Park

21. Following our submission of a Designation Order to WG, the Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies MS announced in March that a public local inquiry will be held to further consider the creation of the new Glyndŵr National Park. The inquiry will be led by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and will take careful account of the broad range of views, concerns and objections to the Designation Order submitted during the recent notification period. PEDW's next steps include setting up the inquiry and identifying an appropriate person with the expertise and capacity to lead it. We will be actively involved in the next steps of this important consideration.

Operational Updates

Teifi Fyw / Living Teifi

22. The Teifi Fyw (Living Teifi: People and Nature Together) Project has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant of £1.4 million. With match funding from NRW and WG plus contributions in kind from core delivery partners, this ensures a Project income of over £2 million for the two-year development phase. Subject to a successful Stage 2 application at the end of the development phase, a five-year delivery phase will follow, bringing the total project costs to over £10 million.
23. Through four interconnected delivery strands, the Project aims to respond to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and declining river health, while recognising the deep cultural significance of the Teifi and placing local communities at the heart of decision-making. The development phase will bring together scientific evidence with local history, lived experience and creative expression to ensure restoration work reflects the values of those who live and work in the river catchment. By reconnecting people with nature and piloting new approaches to catchment-wide restoration, Teifi Fyw will set out to transform restoration approaches and develop a flagship model to create lasting change elsewhere in Wales.
24. The Project sits within the wider Teifi Demonstrator Catchment Programme, which has united partners in the catchment since 2023. It is coordinated by NRW in partnership with the West Wales Rivers Trust; the Mining Remediation Authority, Strata Florida Trust, Mentera (Farming Connect), Ceredigion County Council, UNESCO-BRIDGES – University of Wales Trinity St David, and the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwyth University.
25. While there will be little public communication about this Project before the Senedd election, we will keep the momentum going on delivery and have already appointed a Programme Manager. The NLHF 'permission to start' process is underway and recruitment to nine new posts (five employed by NRW) will follow shortly. The Project should start in July.

Merger of Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire PSBs

26. The powers granted in Section 47 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 have been used to merge the separate Public Service Boards (PSBs) of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion into a single PSB for the Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion area. The first meeting of the merged PSB is due to take place in September.

27. We welcome this approach as there is significant overlap in the priority areas of work for both PSBs, as recently seen with the combined development of an NRW-commissioned Climate Change Risk Assessment for Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, but also sufficient flexibility to accommodate localised concerns and opportunities. The merger should also help reduce administrative demands for partners and support some other cross-PSB partners in strengthening their attendance and resourcing of PSB work.
28. While there has been engagement with Pembrokeshire PSB to explore the appetite for a wider merged PSB, there is not currently the same desire though there is a willingness to explore this again in future if circumstances change.

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

29. We continue to support the Deputy First Minister's task and finish groups set up to explore and progress other supplementary options for the supply of water for the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. These groups have recently been refined into a single Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which we attend. The focus is currently on alternative supplementary supply options from the Grwyne Fawr reservoir (an unused DCWW reservoir) and potential transfer to the Canal and River Trust (CRT) of existing unused DCWW abstractions further downstream on the River Lwyd. However, these options will not be in place for this summer.
30. While temporary funding arrangements have been established to support the current interim supply arrangements with releases from the Usk reservoir for periods of low river flow, the importance of improvements to the infrastructure and management of water in the canal system remains key for both permit compliance and supporting canal water levels. We continue to engage with CRT directly and via the TAG on these matters.

Swansea receives Biophilic City Status

31. Swansea has been officially recognised as a Biophilic City, joining an international network that includes San Francisco, Singapore, Vancouver and Oslo. The designation follows a joint application by NRW, Swansea Council and Swansea University, reflecting long-term partnership work to strengthen green and blue infrastructure, support biodiversity and improve wellbeing by embedding nature within urban design. As part of the global Biophilic Cities Network, Swansea will share learning and best practice with cities worldwide, while also showcasing local innovation and leadership in nature-led urban regeneration. The status highlights the city's commitment to integrating nature into everyday urban life for residents, businesses and visitors.
32. Since 2020, more than a hectare of green roofs and walls has been installed in the city centre, with many more planned. These installations capture rainwater, reduce surface flooding, create habitat for pollinators and invertebrates, and improve building performance through cooling and insulation. We support this approach through projects such as the biophilic-designed Biome building and the REPAIR research programme (Retrofitting for the Future), funded with £3 million by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Becoming a Biophilic City recognises Swansea's natural assets and marks further progress on nature recovery, climate action and healthier communities.

Brechfa Windfarm Incident

33. Following the loss of a turbine blade from one of the wind turbines at Brechfa West Windfarm, 27 of the 28 turbines on site are now back in full operation. RWE, the windfarm operator, carried out inspections of all turbines to industry standard and as per Original Equipment Manufacturer recommendation before bringing the turbines back into full operation. They are also now prioritising the installation of a monitoring system on each turbine to ensure a similar issue does not arise in the future.
34. RWE will continue to routinely inspect the turbines every three months until this monitoring system has been installed. The local Land Management team remains in close communication with RWE to help understand timelines for the delivery of the monitoring system and the continuation of three-monthly inspections. An incident review will also be carried out internally and the lessons learned will be shared with the commercial liaison officers and Land Management teams who manage similar sites on the WG Woodland Estate.

Pilot Flood Risk Communications Campaign

35. A pilot communications campaign has taken place to boost flood risk awareness across the Taff catchment and wider South Central Wales. Using a mix of digital, audio and community-based channels, the project aimed to reach as many people as possible who may be vulnerable to flooding. The multi-channel approach included targeted paid adverts on Meta and LinkedIn, and tailored messaging in a range of community languages, such as Arabic, Polish, Bengali and Portuguese, reflecting the diverse population across the region.
36. The campaign also featured a bilingual 30-second Digital Audio Exchange (DAX) audio advert, which ran across radio and podcast platforms alongside posts from key partners including Cardiff Council and Merthyr Tydfil Council. Local County Voluntary Councils were provided with multilingual resources to share through their own networks. The pilot, which ran to the end of March, will be fully evaluated with findings and resources shared once available.

Internal Updates

New Proud Employer Accreditation

37. We have been accredited as an Accomplished Employer in the Proud Employers Accreditation Scheme, assessed against criteria for our leadership, policies and staff network in relation to inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community. Achieving this status indicates the importance we, as an organisation, place on inclusion and that we have made a strong start towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in our workplace. We have laid solid foundations and are taking meaningful steps towards an inclusive workplace. We should all be incredibly pleased of this achievement.

Communications

Corporate Communications

38. During this period, we welcomed new Board members Sarah Albon and Mair Gwynant and marked the departure of Professor Steve Ormerod and Karen Balmer, recognising their contributions through internal and external communications.
39. In March, we supported engagement on the draft Sustainable Growth and Value Strategy, with constructive feedback informing its ongoing development. We also delivered communications for a range of Place-based projects, including river restoration in Cardiff, storm recovery at Brechfa, and consultation on draft Forest Resource Plans for Gwydyr South, Merthyr Vale and the Cynon Valley. We worked proactively with media to provide authoritative commentary on issues affecting communities, including a BBC Radio Wales programme on flooding in Monmouth, highlighting climate change impacts, practical advice for residents and our operational response.
40. Ahead of implementation, we raised awareness of the new automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) parking system at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Newborough, working closely with place-based and customer service teams.
41. In April, we delivered a responsible visiting campaign, alongside seasonal open-water swimming safety advice and site-specific messaging on improvement works and temporary access restrictions in the Waterfall Country. Throughout the period, we raised awareness of new and forthcoming legislation, including the Environment (Wales) Bill, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) legislation and the Beaver (Wales) Order. We also continued to deliver reactive communications where required, including safety-related access restrictions at Brechfa following a wind turbine blade detachment, and responses to pollution and fly-tipping incidents.

Internal Communication and Engagement

42. Changes to internal communications aimed at streamlining activity and reducing the burden on line managers and teams are proving effective, with positive feedback on improvements to the Managers' Monthly Update. We continue to implement actions from our recent review, strengthening forward planning and refining channels to better support teams in focusing on delivery.
43. We have been planning for the forthcoming announcement of the new Wellbeing Objective (covered in paragraph 16 above), aligning this with wider engagement activity linked to the last Ein Llais survey, the Enabling Services Review and Case for Change Lessons Learned. A key element is the development of a central 'hub' to showcase positive interventions aligned to the new Objective, supporting improvements in employee experience, motivation and productivity.

External Affairs and Public Affairs

44. The External Affairs team has continued to make steady progress in laying the foundations for our future approach. In addition to supporting the first "Conversations with NRW" event – which provided valuable insight into how our work is received – we have also received the findings from the Stakeholder and Public Perceptions research and have begun sharing these with ET and the Board, with plans to roll this out more widely across the organisation.
45. We have successfully procured a Stakeholder Relationship Management system and begun onboarding, while the stakeholder toolkit and templates are also close to

completion. Stakeholder mapping continues to be refined and is increasingly being linked to our WBOs. We have worked with Public Affairs to develop a more proactive programme of engagement with Senedd Members ahead of the elections, including planning for outgoing members.

Communities are Resilient to Climate Change

46. Communications during March and April focused on building understanding of climate risk and NRW's role in long-term adaptation, particularly in coastal and flood-prone communities. The launch of the public consultation on the proposed tidal flood risk management scheme for Cardigan provided a key opportunity to explain the evidence base, outline potential approaches and encourage early community engagement. Coverage reinforced our commitment to working with communities and partners to plan for future flood risk.
47. We also supported publication of a report highlighting the role of healthy coastal habitats in reducing flood risk, demonstrating how nature-based solutions can enhance resilience alongside traditional flood defences and strengthening our influence in wider policy and investment discussions. Operational storytelling, including winter works supporting spring habitat recovery on Skomer, illustrated how planned interventions protect nature while reducing long-term climate impacts.

Pollution is Minimised

48. Communications supported pollution prevention and enforcement by promoting compliance, transparency and public accountability. Preventative messaging encouraged landowners and contractors to seek advice before working in rivers, reinforcing the importance of getting it right first time. We also explained complex pollution prevention activity in sensitive environments, including the use of helicopter airlifts to protect rare habitats during essential works, helping to build public understanding of operational decision-making. Enforcement featured strongly, with communications highlighting action on fly-tipping through Fly-tipping Action Wales, illegal waste carrier activity following WG statistics, and prosecutions for illegal cockle fishing.

Nature is Recovering

49. We showcased practical action to protect and restore nature, alongside the partnerships and enforcement needed to deliver results. Media coverage of specialist climbers removing invasive rhododendron from coastal cliffs in North Wales illustrated both the scale of the challenge and the innovative approaches required. We promoted collaborative projects to protect sensitive habitats and species, including a coastal wildlife study to safeguard vulnerable bird populations, and highlighted enforcement action to protect Magor and Undy Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Positive storytelling highlighted NRW's expertise, including recognition of colleagues at Cynrig Hatchery with a St David Award, celebration of Wales' native species, support for the launch of the National Forest Trail, and content marking the International Day of Forests, highlighting the environmental and economic value of forests.

Summary of Complaints, Commendations and Correspondence

50. In March, the Central Correspondence Team dealt with 49 items of correspondence, an increase of 18 items on the previous month. All were answered within the ten or fifteen working days service level agreement (SLA), with only one taking the full fifteen days due to clarification required from the customer. A total of 90% were responded to within ten working days, with 52% of those responded to within five working days or less (up 21% on the month before). The team have managed an increase in demand and at the same time improved performance.
51. Correspondence was received from a range of people and organisations. The main topics for the month of March were our regulation of Kronospan (39%), water quality and water company compliance (14%), visitor centres and parking (12%), and public safety concerns regarding Brechfa Wind Farm (4%).
52. There were 46 new Environmental Information Requests (EIR) requested in the month and 39 completed responses sent out to requests received in previous months. We are seeing a slight increase in requests month on month but are still maintaining an excellent response rate of 93% within the 20 working day SLA set in EIR legislation.
53. We opened 16 new Stage 1 complaints in March and closed 23, all of which were responded to within SLA. There are two ongoing Stage 2 complaints, and no new ones received in this period. Three Ombudsman decision notices were received during the month with none upheld and the decision being 'not to investigate,' evidencing that we are correctly implementing their guidance on complaint handling. Pleasingly, we received seven commendations in March for the organisation and/or individual colleagues.

Forward Look

- Tuesday 26 May – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (Accounts)
- Thursday 4 June – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Thursday 11 June – Protected Areas Committee
- Wednesday 17 June – Board Update Call
- Wednesday 24 June – People Committee
- Thursday 2 July – Finance Committee
- Wednesday 8 July – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Tuesday 14 July – Extraordinary Board Meeting (Annual Report and Accounts)
- Monday 20 – Thursday 23 July – Royal Welsh Agricultural Show
- Wednesday 29 July – July Board Meeting

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	20 th & 21 st May 2026
Title of Paper:	Flood Risk Management Board Report
Paper Reference:	26-05-B02
Paper sponsored by:	Peter Fox, Chair of the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC)
Paper prepared by:	Board Secretariat
Paper presented by:	Peter Fox, Chair of the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC)
Purpose of the paper	Information
Summary	To provide an update on the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC) meeting held on 29 th April 2026.

Background

1. This summary provides an update on matters that in the opinion of the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC) Chair should be brought to the attention of the whole Board following the FRMC meeting held on 29th April 2026.
2. For further detail, Board members can access the agendas, papers, and minutes of committees via the Diligent portal.

Update

Flood Risk Management (FRM) Update Report

3. Updates were provided on the Met Office three-month outlook, the continuing clean-up work from the winter floods, preparedness work for drought and wildfires and the Tan Lan judicial review. The work on integrated catchment management was highlighted along with work on strategic investment plans with an outcome focus. This work aligned to the development of multiyear planning across NRW.
4. The Committee discussed the impacts of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee members' terms ending, with work slowed or paused. Whether Flood had adapted a mixed economy model was also discussed with the importance of having core staff in

place noted, and following a query, it was confirmed that links had been made across NRW for the strategic investment planning work.

Flood Risk Management Capital Programme Update

5. An overview of the 2025-26 Flood Capital Programme year-end budget was presented as well as the 2026-27 Programme overview. Updates were provided on the Preteigne, Chapel Reen, Cardigan and Skenfrith Projects and the key risks were outlined including staff resource issues.
6. FRMC discussed the risks to delivery of the Fleet Replacement Project and suggested a blended approach using leasing and temporary solutions. The issues with staff resource were also discussed as well as whether the skills mix in the team would need to be different given the transition from planning to construction for a number of projects.

Top Communities at Risk and Outcomes

7. The Communities at Risk Register (CaRR) was presented including the list of which areas were in the Programme or in the ten-year pipeline and its use for prioritisation amongst other considerations.
8. The Committee felt assured that a vast majority of areas in the CaRR were under consideration by either NRW or Local Government and raised a concern that there was not a clear connection between them and catchment planning. However, it was explained that this would form part of the next stage in project planning. The need for a joined-up approach across various levels of government, communities and charities was discussed.

How benefits are valued

9. The context of the discount rate mandated by the UK Treasury to determine the cost benefit ratio analysis was explained including the issues with using it and its discord with the Future Generations Act. The framework that NRW had to follow including the 5-stage business case and the economic case were presented. The Green book review update was highlighted and discussion points on how NRW assesses benefits were posed.
10. The Committee suggested that the discount should be reviewed in the Welsh context however the presentation of the justification for change would need careful consideration. Mapping the approach against NRW's risk appetite was suggested as well as the use of social development metrics. It was suggested that NRW should influence WG and advise a review of its guidance. The Committee asked that ET look at how best to do this.

Forward Look and Future Plans for the work of FRMC

11. The context behind the committee restructuring, and the aim to provide more holistic scrutiny across delivery of the Wellbeing Objectives, as well as to address gaps in

oversight was explained. The terms of reference across all the committees were under review and example agendas for the proposed new Strategic Delivery Committee were in development to clarify roles and responsibilities.

12. The Committee raised questions on maintaining effective scrutiny of Flood Risk Management and if there would be oversight of regulatory activities within the new structure. Members of the Committee expressed the need for greater clarity and involvement in the process.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	20 May 2026
Title of Paper:	Finance Performance Report
Paper Reference:	26-05-B03
Paper sponsored by:	Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Paper prepared by:	Rob Bell, Head of Finance; Mark Collins, Business Finance Manager
Paper presented by:	Mark Collins, Business Finance Manager
Purpose of the paper:	Approval (change in forecast) / Discussion (Financial Performance)
Summary	<p>To approve:</p> <p>Change in the latest forecast from £293m to £294.2m.</p> <p>To scrutinise:</p> <p>Financial performance to the end of March 2026.</p>

Background

1. The Finance Performance Report provides detail on progress across the different types of income, expenditure, and programmes. Annex A summarises the key messages in respect of:
 - Change in budget forecast compared to the previous approved forecast (January).
 - Performance to the end of March 2026.

Key Points

2. In overall terms, this was a positive outturn in respect to budget performance. There are many examples across NRW where budgets and programmes were really well managed especially when you consider the workforce related challenges we had throughout the year. For the most part we were able to inform Welsh Government (WG) early enough in the financial year where we could not use the funding. That said, there were budgets where there was too much

optimism bias and realistically, we could have forecasted underspends earlier and we will look to improve in those areas.

3. Income was slightly ahead of profile at the end of March. The main variance was in relation to our commercial income - our timber income was £0.8m more than forecast due to March's despatches being almost double Februarys - although we did expect an increase, this level is unprecedented. Surrenderable energy and NRW estate income were also higher, with each £0.4m above forecast. There was an improvement in our ability to forecast this year, with the energy variance was caused by Quarter 4 performance on windfarms.
4. Expenditure was slightly behind profile. We had already made the decision to reduce budgets this financial year which WG had partly allowed us to use to offset the IR35 liability. Performance against the revised forecast and original budget was very good with 99% and 98% against the respective budgets utilised. The Nature and Climate Emergency (NaCE) Programme, which historically has had an excellent track record of delivery and spend was the main exception, with an underspend of £1.3m but still spent 94% of its forecast. A review has already been undertaken into the reasons behind this and will be shared with the Executive Team (ET).
5. We confirmed our likely underspend position to WG for the year in January and adjusted our forecasts accordingly. Please see the second page of our Report for further detail. Considering the under spend this financial year, we have increased our over-programming for next year, with general revenue and capital over-programming being set at £3m and £1m respectively. We will also be reviewing the levels set for Flood and NaCE capital programmes.
6. The land purchase at Maes Y Gamfa completed before 31 March primarily utilising the funds from the lease surrender at Kilvey Hill.

Risks and opportunities

7. We hold a risk in the Finance and Corporate Services Risk Register for 'in year spend'. This also links to the Strategic Risk "Failure to achieve financial stability". For this financial year, risks of overspend have been mitigated through actions taken by the ET and additional funding from WG.

The wider implications are:

- (a) **Finance:** This Report is about the financial performance of NRW. We hold a risk within the Finance and Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register.
- (b) **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WBFGA):** Every component of the budget contributes to one or many of our Wellbeing Objectives.

Next Steps

8. ET will continue to monitor the principal risks within the budget. This Report is produced every two months for the Board and ET.

Recommendation

9. Board to approve changes to the latest forecast, from £293m to £294.2m.
10. Board to scrutinise financial performance to the end of March 2026.

Index of Annexes

Annex A – Financial Performance Report



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales



NRW Board – May 2026

Financial Performance Report – March 2026

Content and Key Messages

Update will cover:	Messages:
<p>Update on the latest forecast changes as at March 2026, compared to the approved budget as at January 2026 - an increase of £1.2m from £293m to £294.2m.</p>	<p>The £1.2m budget increase from January predominantly relates to an additional £4.4m Welsh Government Grant in Aid, offset by reductions in commercial, charge balances, European & external income of £0.7m, £1.1m & £1.4m respectively.</p>
<p>Financial Performance as at March 2026.</p>	<p>Income The main variance was in relation to our commercial income - our timber income was £0.8m more than forecast due to March's despatches being almost double Februarys - although we did expect an increase, this level is unprecedented. Surrenderable energy and NRW estate income were also higher, with each £0.4m above forecast. There was an improvement in our ability to forecast this year but the energy variance was caused by Quarter 4 performance on windfarms.</p> <p>Expenditure We had already made the decision to reduce budgets this financial year which Welsh Government had partly allowed us to use to offset the IR35 liability. Performance against the revised forecast was largely very good across multiple programmes / areas of spend. We spent 99% of the revised forecast and 98% of the original budget. NaCE - a programme with an excellent track record of delivery and spend - was the only real outlier with an underspend of £1.5m but still spent 94% of its forecast. A "deep dive" has already been undertaken into the reasons for that, which will be shared with the Executive Team.</p>
<p>Update on contingencies and under/over programming.</p>	<p>All over-programming was managed down at the end of the financial year. A lessons learned from this year is not to be as risk averse in 2026-27. We have reduced our levels of over-programming generally over the last 2 financial years partly as a response to the findings in the Local Partnerships review. The general revenue and capital over-programming levels have been set at £3m and £1m respectively for next year and we will review the levels set for flood and NaCE capital.</p>
<p>The main risks and opportunities to our budget this year and return of funding to Welsh Government.</p>	<p>We have summarised on the next page whether there were any further variances against the main categories of funding which either Welsh Government provide or impact Welsh Government on consolidation of NRW results into Welsh Governments. Overall, the outcome was very positive with the only outlier being the NaCE programme. A separate page has been included summarising the outturn on all ring fenced Welsh Government grants and Grant in Aid.</p>
<p>Lessons learned for next financial year</p>	<p>This financial year was complicated by coming out of the case for change and being behind our affordable structure. Areas of focus for next year will be: Being nearer to our affordable structure. Less risk averse over-programming levels. Implementation of our finance strategy. Delivery of finance's innovation plan which incorporates training and improved management information. We will review performance with each director individually as well to help identify where there was optimism bias by budget managers and where behaviours can be improved.</p>
	<p>The individual pages within the report provide further detail on the points raised above.</p>

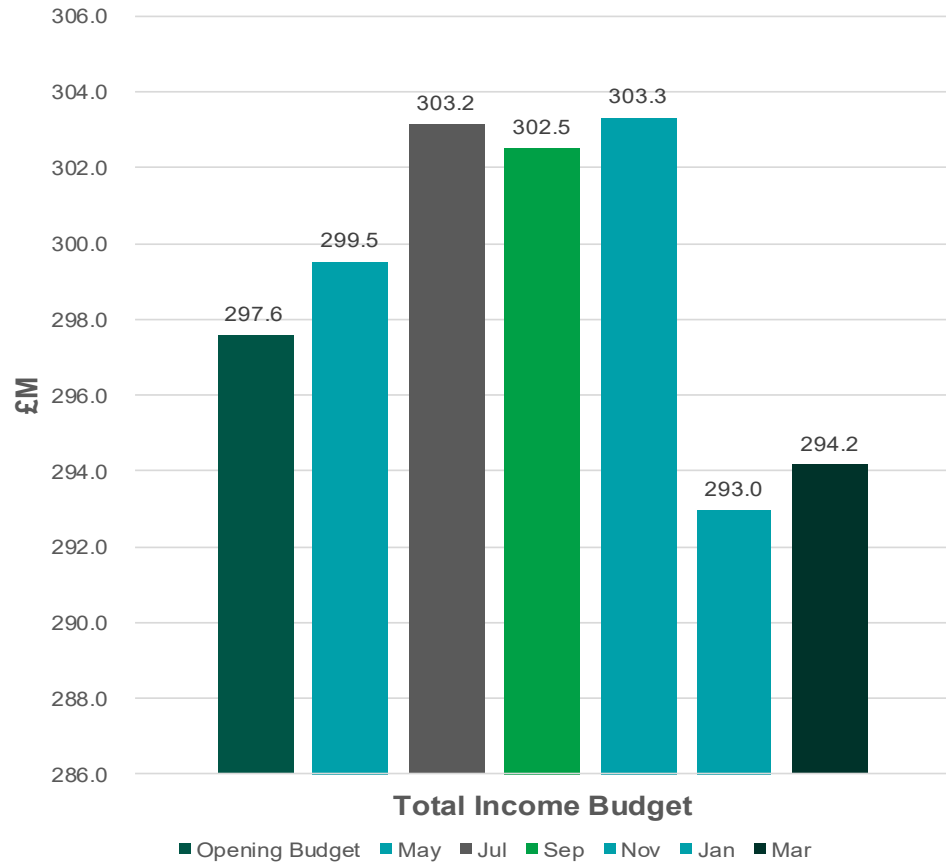
Welsh Government Grants and Grant in Aid Outturn

This table compares further variances to key funding streams (which impacts Welsh Government on consolidation) from that reported in January and shared with Finance Committee in March.

Item	Value - January 2026	Further variances - March 2026	Explanation to further variances
Revenue GiA	£4m	£0m	No further variances, which was a very good result.
Capital GiA	£2m	£0.7m	As explained elsewhere, our primary expenditure variance was in respect to the NaCE programme which was unexpected. £0.6m was funded from GiA.
Receipt from lease surrender at Kilvey Hill	£1.5m	£0m	Receipt was fully utilised in funding the land purchase at Maes y Gamfa.
Capital GiA - Fleet bid	£0.8m	£0m	No further variance.
Capital GiA - Flood	£0.3m	£0.7m	We had made Welsh Government aware of a further reduction in forecast (£0.7m) in March. There were no further variances after that.
Ring Fenced Grants and Grant in Aid	£1.9m	£1m	A further page breaks down the variances. The main variance was in respect to the NaCE programme (£0.7m). In total we spent £47.9m of the revised forecast £49.4m.
Commercial income	-	£1.2m	Both timber (£0.8m) and NRW estate (£0.4m) income were above forecast. As explained elsewhere in the report, both were impossible to forecast in February.
Review of personal use of vehicles	TBD	-	We are currently undertaking a sample of staff use of car/vans to determine whether there is a liability for NRW relating to personal use. It's unlikely that a liability will be recognised in this financial year.
Summary			We have made Welsh Government aware of the emerging variances, which will impact them on consolidation. The UK Government have removed the restrictions on Welsh Government carry over limits for 2025-26 only, which will help if there are any unforeseen underspends or greater income.

Financial Performance – Income Forecast

Income movements through the year



Charges

No change.

Commercial

Overall commercial income has reduced by £0.7m, linked to a reduction in timber income (£0.4m) and the deferment of developer road contributions to next financial year (£0.3m).

European & Other External

European income has been reduced by a further £1.4m linked to the LIFE and Natur am Byth project programmes. This will be offset by an equal and opposite reduction on the expenditure side and be utilised next financial year.

Grant in Aid

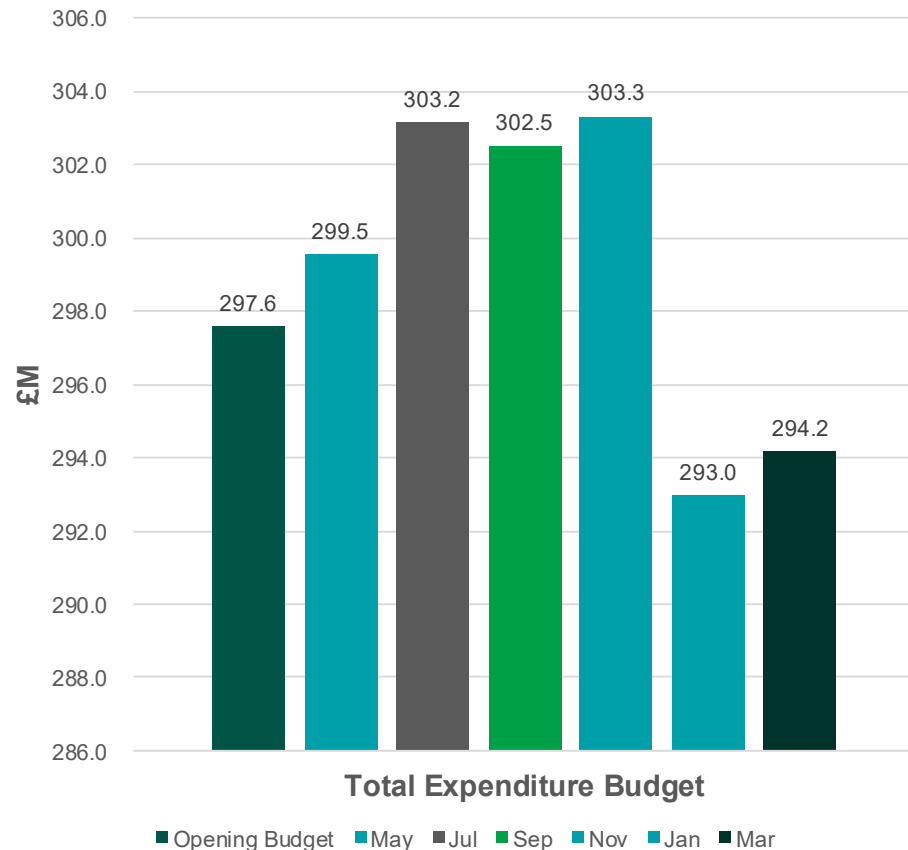
Overall, Grant in Aid (GiA) and Welsh Government grants income has increased by £4.4m. We received additional funding for the advanced pension payment (£6m) along with a contribution towards the pay award (£1.1m). These were offset by reductions within the non-flood, flood and Welsh Government grant capital programmes of £1m, £0.7m and £1m respectively. The Welsh Government grant element is predominantly linked to the Waste Reform Grant.

Use of Balances

Overall the draw on balances has reduced by £1.1m. This is due to a reduction in the water resources capital programme (£0.5m) and reduced charge based activity costs (£0.6m).

Financial Performance – Expenditure Forecast

Expenditure movements through the year



Staff

Staff budgets have increased by £2.3m. This is due to additional funding for the advanced pension payment of £6m, which is offset by the centralisation of all contingency and over programming budgets to non staff (£3.7m).

Non Staff

Non staff budgets have reduced by £0.9m. The centralisation of all contingency and over programming budgets from staff to non staff (£3.7m) is offset by a reduction in the Waste Reform Grant (£0.2m), along with the movement to capital for the Mid Wales land purchase and further investment within our electric vehicle infrastructure, marine and NaCE programmes (totalling £2.5m).

Revenue Projects

Revenue Projects have reduced by £0.4m, primarily due to minor movements within the Welsh Government grants and externally funded project programme.

Capital Projects

Overall capital projects have increased by £0.2m. Funding was transferred from the capital contingency fund, held within non staff for the land purchase in Mid Wales and further investment within our electric vehicle infrastructure, marine and NaCE programmes, totalling £2.5m. These were offset by reductions within several programmes; wind energy (£0.4m), externally funded (£0.6m LiFE & Natur Am Byth), Flood (£0.7m) and Water Resources (£0.5m). The water resources and externally funded reductions will be utilised in future years.

Financial Performance - Income

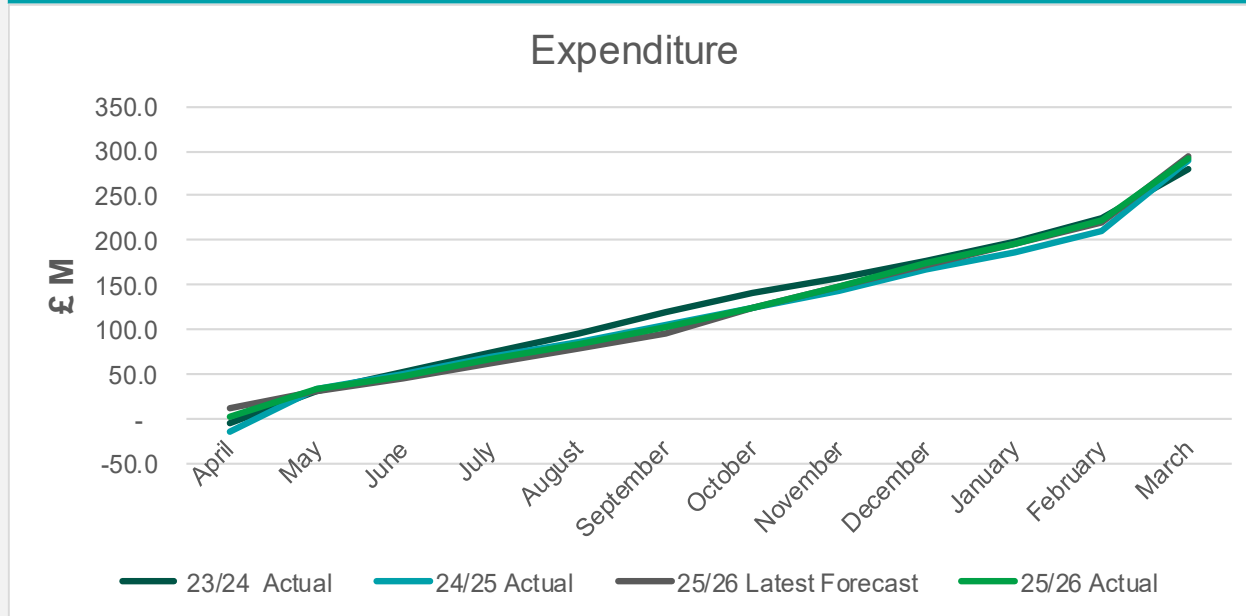
INCOME by Account Type	Actual YTD £m	Approved Forecast YTD £m	Variance YTD £m	Approved Forecast FY £m	Remaining Budget FY %	Original Budget FY £m	Commentary
Charges	46.5	46.4	0.2	46.4	0%	48.4	The year end position is slightly ahead of forecast by £0.2m, with higher than expected receipts for hazardous waste (£0.2m). We will shortly be preparing the detailed analysis of expenditure across all charge regimes, with any surplus/deficit being adjusted against the corresponding charge balances and carried forward to future financial years.
Commercial	56.2	54.6	1.6	54.6	-3%	54.5	Outturn for year is £1.6m above the forecast position of £54.6m (3% variance). Of the £1.6m variance, the majority relates to timber and wind energy income. Timber sales exceeded the forecast by £0.8m. We saw a 100% increase in the volume of timber sold in March, compared to the previous month, which is unprecedented when looking at trends for the past five years. The strong finish to 2025-26 supports the increased projection in volume sales built into the 2026-27 opening budget. In addition, we also received £0.4m more income from the surrenderable wind energy sites, most of which is Pen y Cymoedd royalties being greater than expected due to increased energy generation in Quarter 4.
European & external	4.9	5.0	-0.1	5.0	4%	9.8	The main variance is linked to lottery payments for the Natur am Byth Projects due to our partners being underspent by £0.2m, which subsequently reduced our claim to the Lottery. We also drew down £0.2m less than we forecasted for the LiFE project programme, funding projects by other means, mainly Grant in Aid or WG grants. All the external income is available for use by the programme in future years. We also received additional income above the full year forecast for Natural Flood Management capital programme, to reflect additional costs.
Grant in Aid	186.7	188.0	-1.3	188.0	1%	183.8	The £1.3m reflects lower than anticipated costs across the revenue and capital Welsh Government grants programme, hence a reduction in the corresponding claim to Welsh Government. This was almost entirely in relation to the NaCE programme. Our track record in this programme is excellent so the underspend was unexpected. A thorough deep dive has already been conducted and will be shared with the Executive Team with actions taken to ensure that we avoid this situation again next financial year. The programme still delivered against 96% of its budget.
Use of Balances	-0.0	0.2	-0.2	0.2	111%	1.1	The use of charge balances reflects the estimated position at year end. The draw on balances has reduced throughout the year primarily due to charge funded vacancy savings and reduced water resources abstraction costs. The detailed analysis of expenditure across all charge regimes is currently underway and may change this position slightly when the final accounts are completed in the following months. The March variance reflects a reduction in deferred income for Internal Drainage Districts (IDDs) and charges.
TOTAL: NRW	294.3	294.2	0.1	294.2	0%	297.6	

Financial Performance - Expenditure

EXPENDITURE	Actual	Approved Forecast	Variance	Approved Forecast	Remaining Budget	Original Budget	Commentary
by Account Type	YTD	YTD	YTD	FY	FY	FY	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	%	£m	
Staff	122.3	122.8	0.5	122.8	0%	130.3	An underspend of £0.5m on staff costs at the end of the financial year was in line with our forecasted position, mainly due to the number of vacant posts and a higher than projected recovery of costs through timesheets in March. NRW's staffing level on non-ring fenced posts (responsible for over/underspends on staff costs) currently stands at 98% inclusive of active recruitment, and has been consistently increasing over the last 4 months towards the ceiling, which will result in a more neutral financial position in 2026-27. A neutral position on other staff costs at year end where overspend on other pay costs, training and people support costs were offset by an underspend on travel & subsistence.
Non Staff	99.8	99.2	-0.6	99.2	-1%	93.2	Overall, non staff costs were over spent by £0.6m. There were a number of variances across the Directorates with National Operations, Operations (Place & Service), Finance & Corporate Services (FCS) and Strategy, Policy & Evidence (SPE) underspent by £0.5m, £0.1m, £0.4m, and £0.5m respectively. These were offset by overspend within Communications, Customer and Commercial (CCC) and People, Fleet & Facilities (PFF) of £0.3m & £0.7m, along with the central overprogramming of £1.2m. The National Operations underspend predominantly related to flood and land stewardship costs. Operations (Place and Service) utilised 99.9% of their full year allocation - Land stewardship across Ops & National Ops were within 1% of the £20m budget, an excellent result considering over £6m was still to be utilised at the end of January. The FCS element primarily related to costs within DDaT, with SPE linked to charge based activities and Welsh Government grants. The over spend within CCC almost solely relates to additional wind energy receipts received in the last quarter, leading to a higher payment to Welsh Government. The PFF over spend reflects additional recruitment advertising (£0.2m) and fleet costs (£0.3m) in excess of the full year budget. The advertising costs were factored into our year end forecast when they became apparent in January. The fleet element can be split into two key parts; external vehicle hire (£0.1m) and lease vehicle costs (£0.2m). The vehicle hire costs would normally be redistributed to the relevant business area, but due to reduced staff resource the costs remained centrally within fleet. The lease vehicle element reflects end of lease costs, which are likely to reduce in future years as we move to the more cost effective purchase model. Central over programming increased in the last quarter following our assessment of the likely year end position across GiA and charge funded activities and is reflected in our final GiA claim and use of charge balances.
Revenue Projects	7.6	8.3	0.7	8.3	8%	9.5	Overall revenue projects came within £0.7m (8%) of the full year allocation of £8.3m. This was mainly due to underspend across the NaCE and externally funded programmes. NaCE were unable to reprioritise some of the budget when they became aware that the spend was unlikely to materialise, due to time constraints being close to year end. The underspend on the externally funded programme was due to partners over forecasting spend on the Natur am Byth programme.
Capital Projects	62.4	63.9	1.5	63.9	2%	64.6	The capital project position was underspent by £1.5m (2%). The majority of which relates to the NaCE Programme, which was £1.1m underspent. The main areas of underspend were due to contractors uncompleted work, undelivered laboratory equipment, unclaimed grants and other vacancies. A deep dive has been conducted into both revenue and capital underspends on the NaCE programme. These mainly impacted the Peatlands, Water Quality and National Forest Programme.
TOTAL: NRW	292.0	294.2	2.1	294.2	1%	297.6	

Financial Performance – Expenditure Trends

EXPENDITURE TRENDS



Commentary:

Our year end outturn was £292.0m, which is £3m and £12m more than the respective outturn of the last two years.

Spend profiles remain relatively static over the last three years, with each year seeing an accelerated proportion of spend within the last two months of the financial year.

Financial Performance – Headcount Ceiling

NRW Headcount Target Summary	Headcount ceiling	Headcount ceiling	Variance
	17.04.26	06.03.26	
	(ftes)	(ftes)	
Performance against ceiling			
Non ring fenced posts			
Headcount ceiling	2,086.5	2,041.4	45.1
Staff in post	2,016.1	1,971.7	44.4
Variance	70.4	69.7	0.7
Staffing level	97%	97%	0%
Ring fenced posts			
Headcount ceiling	485.8	493.8	-8.0
Staff in post	371.1	383.5	-12.4
Variance	114.7	110.3	4.4
Staffing level	76%	78%	-1%
Active recruitment	44	54	
Current projected recruitment profile (int / ext)	76%	63%	
Revised vacancies after recruitment	152	146	

Staffing Level			
17.04.26			
	Current	Active Recruitment	Projected
Non ring fenced	97%	1%	98%
Ring fenced	76%	3%	79%

Notes:

- The active recruitment number is taken from the online recruitment system - Kallidus, is based on fte and includes those categories where posting has not yet been actioned.
- This report does not identify if these are being recruited Internal and/or External or if they are Ring fenced or Non ring fenced.
- Projected recruitment profile (76% ext/24% Int) 16.04.26.
- Information has been kept at a high level but the actions that need to be undertaken in each Directorate will depend on the underlying information.

Commentary:

1. The headcount ceiling has increased in April compared to March due to new posts being created, mostly from new budgets.
2. There were a net 32 new starters during the last month, however staffing level remains at 97% for non ring fenced posts (excluding active recruitment) due to the creation of new posts. Slight decrease in the staffing level of ring fenced posts to 76%, following the contracts of a number of staff coming to an end on 31 March 2026.
3. The number of staff now stands at 2,387.2fte, an increase of 32.0fte.
4. There are approximately 44fte of active recruitment (as per Kallidus) from advertising to interview stage. Recruitment profile has changed since March, with 76% projected to be external. Applying this projection to active recruitments would result in an overall staff level of 98% for non ring fenced posts and 79% for ring fenced posts.
5. An additional 39.7fte posts are currently at the requisition stage of the recruitment process awaiting approval.
6. CCC continues to be slightly over their ceiling and have a number of posts in active recruitment.
7. The number of agency staff now employed is 27.
8. Recruitment levels continue to increase with current projections suggesting the staffing levels will be at 98% for non ring fenced posts as a result of current live vacancies. Utilising the same projections for posts currently at the requisition stage of recruitment, the staffing level would increase to 99%, with ring fenced posts increasing to 80%.

Ring fenced Welsh Government grants and Grant in Aid

Grant Description	Directorate	Original Budget	Revised Forecast	Actual	Variance to original Budget	Variance to original Budget	Variance to forecast	Variance to forecast
		£	£	£	£	%	£	%
Capital								
Wales Coast Path	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	1,675,000	1,675,000	1,628,230	46,770	3%	46,770	3%
NRW Waste Funding Strategy	Operations - Place and Service/Strategy Policy & Evidence	787,824	207,000	196,607	591,217	75%	10,393	5%
Coal Tip Safety	National Operations	2,113,951	2,258,948	2,258,948	-144,997	-7%	0	0%
NaCE Water Quality	National Operations & SPE	11,500,000	11,500,000	10,962,557	537,443	5%	537,443	5%
NaCE Peatlands	National Operations	5,220,000	5,220,000	4,871,683	348,317	7%	348,317	7%
NaCE Nature Networks	National Operations	5,130,000	5,130,000	5,478,318	-348,318	-7%	-348,318	-7%
NaCE National Forest	National Operations	560,800	560,800	484,788	76,012	14%	76,012	14%
Reservoir Safety	National Operations	4,456,781	4,456,781	4,402,707	54,074	1%	54,074	1%
Deer Larder on the WGWE	National Operations	600,000	600,000	600,000	0	0%	0	0%
4Rivers for Life	National Operations	850,048	850,048	850,047	1	0%	1	0%
LifeQuake	National Operations	433,548	433,548	433,548	0	0%	0	0%
Natur Am Byth	National Operations	100,000	100,000	100,000	0	0%	0	0%
Capital total		33,427,952	32,992,125	32,267,434	1,160,518	3%	724,692	2%
Revenue								
Air Quality	National Operations	206,890	127,138	116,543	90,347	44%	10,595	8%
MPANM - Welsh Fishing Activities	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	72,543	72,543	72,502	41	0%	41	0%
Improving biosecurity and biodiversity by tackling INNS	Operations - Place and Service	158,000	158,000	153,422	4,578	3%	4,578	3%
Burry Inlet	FCS	75,000	15,411	15,411	59,589	79%	0	0%
Designation National Park NE Wales	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	753,672	753,672	730,642	23,030	3%	23,030	3%
National Forest Liaison Officers	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	500,580	500,580	498,200	2,380	0%	2,380	0%
NRW woodland creation verification (Glastir)	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	1,327,000	1,141,767	1,122,163	204,837	15%	19,604	2%
NRW Waste Strategy Funding	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	3,525,883	3,163,400	3,120,849	405,034	11%	42,551	1%
Coal Tip Safety	National Operations	184,788	184,801	165,353	19,435	11%	19,448	11%
SAC Marine	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	300,000	300,000	210,512	89,488	30%	89,488	30%
Vale of Glamorgan Bathing Waters	Operations - Place and Service	241,000	149,513	132,994	108,006	45%	16,519	11%
Water Company Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan Policy Advisor Post 2024-26.	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	80,000	80,000	80,000	0	0%	0	0%
Wales Biodiversity Partnership	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	100,000	125,000	108,820	-8,820	-9%	16,180	13%
NaCE Peatlands	National Operations	422,000	422,000	375,217	46,783	11%	46,783	11%
NaCE Peatlands - soil evidence	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	20,000	20,000	13,093	6,907	35%	6,907	35%
NaCE Nature Networks	National Operations	870,000	870,000	752,580	117,420	13%	117,420	13%
National Forest	National Operations	431,000	431,000	332,387	98,613	23%	98,613	23%
Reservoir Safety	National Operations	261,875	261,875	244,527	17,348	7%	17,348	7%
Updating NRW's bird datasets on waders and raptors to inform the Woodland Creation Programme (Bird Survey)	Strategy, Policy & Evidence	131,000	131,000	122,866	8,134	6%	8,134	6%
Natur Am Byth	National Operations	100,000	100,000	100,000	0	0%	0	0%
ETS	Operations - Place and Service	10,000	10,000	10,000	0	0%	0	0%
Revenue total		9,771,231	9,017,701	8,478,085	1,293,146	13%	539,616	6%
Other Ring Fenced								
Agri Pollution Regulations		1,580,000	1,532,512	1,442,036	137,964	9%	90,476	6%
Sustainable farming		1,092,625	869,928	845,500	247,125	23%	24,428	3%
Infrastructure		5,000,000	5,000,000	4,864,512	135,488	3%	135,488	3%
		7,672,625	7,402,440	7,152,048	520,577	7%	250,392	4%
Overall total		50,871,808	49,412,266	47,897,566	2,974,242	6%	1,514,700	3%

Financial Performance – Revenue Projects

Revenue Projects by Programme	Actual YTD £m	Approved Forecast YTD £m	Variance YTD £m	Approved Forecast FY £m	Remaining Budget FY %	Original Budget FY £m	Commentary
External Funded	2.9	3.1	0.2	3.1	6%	3.1	The programme consists of Welsh Government grants, Life and Natur am Byth projects. The underspend (£0.2m) consists of Natur am Byth (£0.05m), LiFE (£0.1m) and Welsh Government grants (£0.1m). Similar to the capital position, the Natur Am Byth under spend is due to partners claims coming in less than the forecasts previously provided. The LiFE variance relates to work on the Dee, where we were able to utilising funding from the NaCE Programme. The grants underspend is split across a number of projects.
Internal Funded	1.7	1.9	0.1	1.9	7%	1.6	The underspends are mainly attributed to Reservoir Compliance and Organisational Change projects.
NaCE	1.3	1.5	0.2	1.5	15%	1.6	Overall the programme was underspent by £0.2m. The majority of which relates to land management agreements within the Nature Networks sub programme (£0.1m). The remaining underspend relates to vacancies within Peatlands and National Forest.
NRW 2030	0.9	1.1	0.1	1.1	10%	2.3	The NRW2030 revenue programme started the year at £2.3m, but reduced to £1m during the year due to repointing of workstreams at the time of the Executive Team restructure. The main deliverable related to the disaster recovery project which came within 5% of its £0.9m budget.
Grants	0.7	0.8	0.1	0.8	5%	0.9	The grant programme was only made up of two projects this year; AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and National Trails, both of which came in close to budget.
TOTAL: NRW	7.6	8.3	0.7	8.3	8%	9.5	

Financial Performance – Capital Projects

Capital Projects by Programme	Actual	Approved Forecast	Variance	Approved Forecast	Remaining Budget	Original Budget	Commentary
	YTD £m	YTD £m	YTD £m	FY £m	FY %	FY £m	
NRW 2030	4.8	4.8	0.0	4.8	-0%	6.0	The NRW2030 capital programme started at £6m, however during the year it was decided that the DDaT and people workstream elements will no longer form part of the programme. The reduced programme of £4.8m came in on target .
External Funded	11.7	12.0	0.3	12.0	3%	13.8	The externally funded programme has been managed well throughout the year with regular catch ups to review any predicted variances. The under spend reflected the LiFE sub programme being able to utilise £0.2m of funding from the NaCE Programme along with Natur am Byth, which made up the remaining variance due to the project partners not spending as much as forecast. The LiFE under spend will be utilised in future years.
Flood Risk	16.9	16.9	0.0	16.9	-0%	17.9	Overall the flood programme costs came in line with the full year approved forecast. The initial programme was reduced by £1m (£0.3m January, £0.7m February) due to forecasted under spend and uncertainty on a couple of projects; Flood Warning System, Chapel Reen and Presteigne. The programme would have shown an underspend, however for some of the multi year combined water resources/flood projects, we recognised a higher proportion of flood costs this year. This will free up funding for next financial year within the flood capital programme, however it will also increase costs on the water resources side.
Internal Funded	9.2	9.4	0.2	9.4	2%	3.2	The internally funded programme is predominantly made up of equipment and building improvements costs along with water resources capital programme. The key variance relates to improvements at our Swansea laboratory. The water resources programme was in line with the allocated budget. Due to a delay with certain projects, the initial programme reduced considerably through the year and can be seen by the reduced draw on abstraction charge balances.
NaCE	19.3	20.3	1.1	20.3	5%	20.8	Overall the £20.3m programme was £1.1m underspent at year end. The main areas of underspend was due to contractors uncompleted work, undelivered lab equipment, unclaimed grants and staff vacancies. These mainly impacted the Peatlands, Water Quality and National Forest sub programmes. As mentioned before a deep dive has been conducted into the reasons for the underspend and actions taken to ensure a repeat is avoided in 2026-27.
IFRS 16 Capital Leases Only (non-cash)	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.4	-6%	2.8	Similar to last financial year, a value for money assessment on vehicle acquisitions was under taken, with the purchase of vehicles being the favourable outcome, hence the reduction from the opening budget of £2.8m. All funding was fully utilised.
TOTAL: NRW	62.4	63.9	1.5	63.9	2%	64.6	



NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	20 th May 2026
Title of Paper:	Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Update
Paper Reference:	26-05-B04
Paper sponsored by:	Professor Rhys Jones, WLMF Chair
Paper prepared by:	Nichola Taylor, Specialist Advisor: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)
Paper presented by:	Professor Rhys Jones, WLMF Chair
Purpose of the paper	Information

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

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

[Natural Resources Wales - Wales Land Management Forum \(WLMF\)](#)

Update

9th March 2025 meeting

2. The most recent WLMF meeting was held on Monday 9th March 2025 and had a Nature Recovery & Biodiversity Theme. The meeting included the following discussions and presentations:
 - Actions from previous meetings: White-tailed Eagles & Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations.
 - Species in Peril Report. Sam Bosanquet of NRW, provided a summary of the recently published Species in Peril Report and provided examples of how land management benefits species in peril.
 - Designated Sites Management Plans - Russell De'Ath, NRW provided an update on the Designated Sites Management Plans approach and what to expect from a farm visit.

- Ffermio Bro, Tom Cosson, Welsh Government & Lawrence Harris, Programme Manager, provided an overview of the Ffermio Bro: Farming in Designated Landscapes scheme, including objectives, activities supported and next steps.
 - NRW Updates, an opportunity for WLMF members to ask questions about the written NRW Updates provided ahead of the meeting. The purpose is to provide an update on topical issues and identify scope for further discussion as required. Forum members are asked to suggest topics for future NRW updates.
 - Member updates – A round table discussion for each Forum member to provide an update on key topics from their own organisation.
3. The next WLMF meeting will be held on 29th June 2026 and will be a pollution themed meeting.
 4. Once the meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed by members, they are published on the WLMF page on the NRW website.

Update

8th April 2026

5. The March meeting of the Wales Land Management Forum focused on emerging risks to delivery of land management and biodiversity objectives, alongside progress on Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) implementation and regulatory programmes.
6. Main areas of discussion included:
 - Species reintroduction governance: Strong concern was expressed by land management stakeholders regarding the proposed approach to consultation on the White-tailed Eagle reintroduction. Members emphasised that limited, late-stage consultation would undermine trust, conflict with Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles, and risk opposition from farmers. NRW committed to clarifying the consultation process and timescales by correspondence.
 - Biodiversity risk and delivery: NRW presented the *Species in Peril* report, identifying nearly 3,000 Welsh species at high risk, many dependent on targeted land management. Key messages included the critical role of grazing, veteran trees, and active site management, and the risk that abandonment or under-grazing can drive biodiversity loss.
 - Agricultural pollution regulation: Concerns were raised about inconsistent messaging on inspection and compliance data. NRW confirmed figures are evolving and committed to providing a comprehensive, enforcement report at the June meeting. Pollution will be the Forum's core focus in June.
 - Sustainable Farming Scheme delivery risks (Designated Site Management Plans – UA7): NRW outlined plans to develop management plans for over 4,000 farms with designated sites by 2030. While welcomed, members highlighted risks around

complexity, capacity, and farmer confusion—particularly how bespoke site plans will align with prescriptive SFS optional actions and funding mechanisms.

- Livestock decline and conservation grazing: The continued decline of suckler cow herds was highlighted as a major risk to both environmental delivery and rural resilience. Barriers highlighted by land managers included TB controls, compliance costs, and loss of abattoir infrastructure. Members stressed that under-grazing is now as significant a threat as over-grazing for priority habitats.

7. Main actions and next steps:

- NRW to provide clarity on White-tailed Eagle consultation processes.
- NRW to provide an agricultural pollution enforcement update in June.
- June Forum meeting to focus on pollution.
- Continued development of designated site management planning and process efficiency.
- To establish the level of interest to further explore the opportunities and challenges for Conservation Grazing.

NRW Board Paper

Date of meeting:	20 th May 2026
Title of Paper:	National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) Update
Paper Reference:	26-05-B05
Paper sponsored by:	Lesley Jones, NAFW Chair
Paper prepared by:	Carys Drew, NAFW Secretariat (Team Leader: Outdoor Access and Recreation)
Paper presented by:	Lesley Jones, NAFW Chair
Purpose of the paper	Information

Background

1. The National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) is a non-statutory forum which brings together stakeholders from public, private and third sector organisations with an interest and expertise in outdoor access and recreation in Wales.
2. The NAFW's key purposes are:
 - To help improve the quality and extent of access to the countryside and coast of Wales and extend the opportunities for enjoyment and responsible outdoor recreation to all, with regard to environmental sustainability and education.
 - To work together as a stakeholder network, fostering understanding, and sharing information and good practice; to support the realisation of benefits of outdoor recreation and access in Wales
 - To support NRW in its aim of more people participating in, and benefitting from, outdoor recreation more often
3. NRW provides the Chair (Lesley Jones) and Secretariat (Carys Drew), the Deputy Chair is nominated from the membership (Ruth Rourke, Institute of Public Rights of Way, and Access Management).
4. The NAFW meets three times a year. Forum meetings are open to observers and are held in public but are not public meetings. Where necessary, the Chair may establish working groups to consider issues and report to subsequent meetings, working group meetings will not be held in public.

5. The Secretariat collates written contributions ahead of each meeting, this provides an opportunity for members, NRW and Welsh Government (WG) to share detailed information. The written contributions for each meeting, together with agendas and summary meeting notes are published on the NRW website: [Natural Resources Wales / National Access Forum for Wales](#)

Update

6. The most recent NAFW meeting was held online on 3rd March 2026.
7. The Forum heard from Joe Conran, Lead Specialist Advisor, Outdoor Access & Recreation who reported back on the meeting of the Forum's Sporting and Challenge Events Working Group, established at the previous meeting. The Working Group had met and considered opportunities and benefits; challenges and impacts were identified associated with outdoor sporting and challenge events as well as gaps in the current guidance. Next steps include involving event organisers and farming unions in the work development and to commission a review of the current situation and best practice to inform further development before reporting back.
8. Forum Terms of Reference were reviewed and updates agreed. This included changes to enable NRW to invite non-member organisation to contribute to working groups – reflecting on the experience of the Sporting and Challenge Events Working Group. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed again in July 2029.
9. Libby Davies, Public Affairs Advisor, NRW presented NRW's call for the next Senedd term, members reflected on this and all members were invited to share their organisations' calls for the next Senedd term.
10. Written contributions were circulated in advance of the meeting and members were encouraged to review these and to contact contributors direct with further questions.
11. The Chair invited members to suggest items for inclusion in the Forum forward look.
12. Future meeting dates are planned as follows: 7th July (in person), 24th November 2026 (online).