



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

Date of Meeting: 11th October 2018

Venue: WG Offices, Rhodfa
Padarn,
Aberystwyth
SY23 3UR

Present: Zoe Henderson (NRW Board Member and Chairperson)
Dennis Matheson (Tenant Farmers Association)
Sara Jenkins (Menter a Busnes)
Stephen Bradley (DCWW)
Creighton Harvey (Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation)
Andrew Chambers (Welsh Government)
Jeremy Frost (Welsh Government)
James Dowling (Welsh Government)
Luke Davies (Welsh Government)
Kirsten Hughes (HCC)
Geraint Weber (NRW)
Rob McCall (NRW)
Helen Haider (NRW)
Bob Vaughan (NRW)
Meinir Wigley (NRW)
Marc Williams (NRW)
Brian Pawson (NRW)
Matt Lowe (NRW)

Apologies: Bernard Griffiths (FUW)
Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU)
Rhianne Jones (CLA)
Jamie McCoy (AHDB)

In attendance Ian Roderick (Schumacher Institute)

3. Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

Geraint Weber explained that the proposal to undertake further Root Cause Analysis (RCA) of agricultural pollution was covered under the first recommendation within the WLMF interim report. Everyone's perception of agricultural pollution is different, and the Schumacher Institute have experience in this type of RCA work.

The sub-group discussed the benefit of conducting the RCA via groups of farmers rather only within the WLMF organisations. Existing farming groups such as those formed under the Agrisgôp programme could be particularly helpful. Farming Connect can help gather a cross section of farmers to undertake RCA as several Agrisgôp groups are already committed to reducing agricultural pollution. The WLMF project on RCA is anticipated to be complete by the end of March 2019.

Ian Roderick explained that The Schumacher Institute is a charity and a fellowship comprising of around 130 academics and other specialists experienced in sustainability and systems thinking. The emphasis is on future thinking and resilience building. There is a strong social element to the Institutes work which covers a broad spectrum of subject areas.

Some of the key issues affecting farmers and which may then lead to pollution were summarised during the discussion. These include financial issues and prolonged wet weather, all of which impact upon the decisions that farmers then make. The importance of involving contractors in the investigation of RCA was highlighted e.g. farmers are often restricted to spreading slurry when contractors are available rather than spreading at times when the conditions are most suitable.

Zoe Henderson thought that the situation was analogous to that of the chemicals sector. This was once poor performing, polluting and dangerous but is now a much safer and higher performing sector. The improvements which took place were largely driven by competition.

The sub-group discussed how certain behaviours can become entrenched. For example, cultural issues can drive farmers to make decisions based upon what neighbouring farms are doing within their area without looking further afield.

The metrics underpinning the RCA project need to be established at an early stage. As part of keeping the scope of the project within manageable proportions, it was agreed that the analysis would focus on the root causes of point source pollution incidents rather also looking at diffuse pollution.

AP1 - Circulate RCA project proposal to WLMF sub-group members (Geraint Weber & Ian Roderick)

AP2 – Sara Jenkins to provide additional information on those Agri-sgôp and other Farming Connect discussion groups that could assist with the RCA project.

4. Agri Pollution Statistics Update

Marc Williams shared some preliminary which compared average rainfall with the timing of agri-pollution events. At first glance the graph suggested there are both positive and negative correlations. Further work is needed to establish if there is any real correlation between average rainfall and pollution incidents. This work could link into the RCA e.g. looking at why there are peaks in the number of incidents in March.

AP3: Prepare draft narrative to accompany future releases of updated statistics on agricultural pollution and share with rest of sub-group (Brian Pawson & Meinir Wigley)

The benefit of establishing case studies was discussed such as identifying farmers who had changed their practises due to the WLMFs work.

AP4: Identify suitable case study farmers who can demonstrate that they have made improvements in pollution risk management as a result of the work promoted by the WLMF (Sara Jenkins)

Further work to drill down into the nature of the NRW agri-pollution statistics will take place shortly. The results will be shared with the sub-group. Meinir Wigley explained that HTV have approached NRW as part of a film they are making on agricultural pollution and will therefore have access to the latest agri-pollution statistics.

Suitable metrics need to be developed in order to track progress associated with the work of the WLMF. These could include the numbers of farmers attending targeted agri-pollution events, changes in the agri-pollution statistics, number of farmers adopting Nutrient Management Planning etc.

AP5: Metrics for measuring the impacts of the WLMF's work on agri-pollution to be discussed at a future WLMF sub-group meeting (Brian Pawson, Helen Haider & Marc Williams)

5. Farming Connect Agri-Pollution Delivery Programme

Dates for all of the on-farm targeted agri-pollution events being run by Farming Connect have now been circulated. Two of these have already taken place with 5 farmers taking part in the first and 33 farmers attending the second. Local NRW officers, Farming Connect liaison officers and the Farming Unions have been encouraging farmers to attend the events. An event in the Hirwaun catchment will be held on 12 October. NRW have provided Farming Connect with some of the maps needed to help them target invitations at the right farms, but several more maps are still needed.

AP6: Ensure catchment maps for all waterbodies featuring in the targeted agri-pollution events are forwarded to Farming Connect (Marc Williams)

A clearer understanding is needed as to what outcomes there have been from farmers seeking advice from Farming Connect or attending one of their events. Farming Connect do a follow up visit (after 1 year) to those farms using their advisory service to see what changes have been made as a result of the advice provided. Farming Connect Development Officers follow up on the actions highlighted in the farm reports as part of encouraging farmers to complete them (often by using Farming Connect services).

LANTRA are currently developing an e-learning module for slurry spreading contractors. The content is currently being reviewed and Sarah Hetherington (NRW) will be asked to help with this task. The module should be available to roll out after Christmas 2018.

6. WLMF Sub Group Action Plan

Many of the sub-group members had previously attended WLMF action planning meeting which took place on 8th Oct at the Welsh Government Offices, Aberystwyth)

A further discussion took place on the remaining actions required to take forward the recommendations in the WLMF interim report on agricultural pollution.

AP7: Prepare first draft of WLMF action plan and circulate to sub-group members for further comment (Marc Williams & Brian Pawson)

7. Arrangements for future sub-group meetings

- 7 November (WG offices, Aberystwyth)
- 12 December (FUW offices, Aberystwyth)

AP8: Make arrangements for next three WLMF sub-group meetings (Helen Haider & Marc Williams)

AP9: Any comments from members regarding the draft minutes from 11th October should be sent to Helen Haider/Marc Williams by close of play on 31st October. This will enable the final version of the minutes to be translated and uploaded onto the NRW website.

8. Minutes from meeting on 25 Sept & outstanding action points

Further to Action Point 5 from 25/9: Luke Davies to contact Sara Jenkins if there is an alternative route to provide contact details of farmers and landowners within the 28 identified waterbodies.

9. Update on relevant diary activities

NRW have been approached to help HTV with preparing a Welsh language programme on agricultural pollution. There is an opportunity for other members in the WLMF sub-group to contribute to the development of the programme.

Zoe Henderson has been asked to attend a meeting of the Upper & Middle Dee Steering Group on 13 Nov but is not available on that date.

AP10: Find suitable representative to attend the next Upper and Middle Dee Partnership meeting (Brian Pawson)

Rob McCall will be speaking on regulatory issues at a meeting of Dwr Cymru's Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (IEAP) on 17th October. Arfon Williams (Wales Environment Link) has been involved in the development of the relevant agenda item.

10. AOB

Brian Pawson explained that all of the correspondence from the Chair of the WLMF sub-group (letters to the Cabinet Secretary etc) has previously involved use of the NRW letterhead. This is causing some confusion as to the ultimate source of the letter. The problem could be resolved either by sending letters on plain paper or underneath a WLMF logo. Some discussion then took place on whether the sub-group needed its own logo or whether it would be sufficient to use all the sub-group member logos in combination.

AP11: Forward logos of individual WLMF sub-group members to Meinir Wigley (Sara Jenkins)

Following the WLMF sub-group meeting which took place at Pwllpeiran on September 25th, a letter will be sent to Wales Environment Link (WEL) to thank both Arfon Williams and Stephen Marsh-Smith for their presentations. The letter will also outline the ways in which the WLMF

sub-group and WEL can work together in future.

AP12: Circulate a draft of the WEL response letter to WLMF sub-group for comment (Brian Pawson)

Hafren Dyfrydwy (Severn Dee Water) have contacted NRW asking about they can work with the WLMF sub-group. A holding response has been sent and a representative from Hafren Dyfrdwy would be happy to attend a future meeting of the sub-group and provide a short presentation.

As part of the NFU Cymru-led voluntary initiative on nutrient management, three candidates were recently interviewed for the post of project manager. A suitable candidate has been identified and further information will be available shortly.

A short discussion took place on whether the 'When the Inspector Calls' booklet issued to farmers is a suitable format for presenting key messages from the sub-group. A SAF letter goes out to all farmers twice per year which would be a better opportunity to provide information regarding good practise etc.

AP13: Draft some suitable wording to cover key messages to farmers. Aim for inclusion in the next SAF letter by 25 Oct (Meinir Wigley & Andrew Chambers)
