



Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Agri-Pollution Sub Group (Chair: Zoe Henderson)

Wednesday 23rd October

Welsh Government Offices
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
Aberystwyth
SY23 3UR

1) Welcome & Apologies (Chair)

Apologies:

Chair noted apologies received from:
Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU
Mathew Lowe, NRW
Stephen Marsh-Smith
Kirsten Hughes, Hybu Cig Cymru
James Ruggieri, Hybu Cig Cymru
Sarah Hetherington, NRW

Present:

Zoe Henderson, NRW
Marc Williams, NRW
Nichola Salter, NRW
Bob Vaughan, NRW
Geri Mills, NRW
Aled Jones, FUW
Ceri Davies, FUW
Lorna Davies, NFU
Denis Matheson, Tenant Farmers Association
Kate Snow, United Utilities
David Jones, DWR Cymru
Andrew Chambers, WG
Creighton Harvey, Carmarthenshire Fishermen's Federation
Betsan Jones, WG
Keith Owen, Kebek
Sara Jenkins, Menter a Busnes
Lee Jones, Menter a Busnes
Sophie, Welsh Water via Skype
Spencer Conlon, WG

Meinir Wigley, NRW via Skype item 4 only
Agricultural Contractors, item 6 and 7
Jill Hewitt, Item 7 only

Declaration of Interest

No interest raised in respect of the Agenda items to be considered

2) Minutes from meeting on 23rd September & outstanding action points

Minutes from the meeting held on 23rd September were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

Review of Action Log:

May AP2: Kate Snow to share information with Kevin Thomas, Lantra

May AP6: Update from Sara Jenkins to confirm that the pilot training is due to run mid November in Gelli Aur.

August AP6: Chair/Geri Mills to review draft letter regarding planning review.

Bob Vaughan/Geri Mills to review outstanding actions and update ahead of next meeting.

3) Agricultural Regulation Update – timelines and next steps

Andrew Chambers provided the following update:

Transitional period discussion/Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

ADAS are currently reviewing the responses received via the consultation to the draft RIA with a response due back to WG before the end of the month. WG confirmed intention to hold a meeting of the Regulation Sub Group early November to discuss the development of guidance and proposed Communications relating to the proposed new Regulations and transitional periods.

Action Point Oct 01: Andrew Chambers to circulate proposed dates for a Regulation Sub Group meeting before the end of the week.

The Group sought the following points of clarification

- The proposed Regulations due to come in January 2020 will affect COGAP, the industry will require further guidance – WG confirmed that this will be revised over time with an addendum created to the Code of Good Agricultural Practice.
- All information supplied by the stakeholders will be reviewed by the Minister ahead of her final decision.
- Regulatory impact assessment will be completed for the Minister to consider ahead of her decision expected the end of November 2019.
- Sara Jenkins sought early notice of the decision to enable Menter a Busnes to arrange meeting dates with farmers also allowing for front line staff to receive training on the revised Regulations.

The Group noted a need for farmers to have sufficient infrastructure in place to meet the requirement of the new legislation with transition periods and exceptions being clearly explained within the legislation and guidance.

NVZ Closed periods:

Following a recent period of wet weather farmers have been facing and reporting difficulties slurry spreading ahead of the NVZ closed period. WG confirmed that they are working with NRW to ensure that an appropriate response is made to those farmers who identify concerns. NRW confirmed that cases are reviewed on a case by case basis depending on the level of risk identified from a potential pollution incident with responses made immediately.

The Group noted that whilst there is an expectation on farmers to manage slurry spreading within the closed periods this can be difficult if the weather has been dry with 3 to 4 cuts of silage made.

WG confirmed that they continue to discuss the issue of closed periods with the Minister.

The group discussed the removal of slurry away from farms who have reached maximum slurry store capacity but are unable to spread due to the weather and closed periods. This can take time and be costly, it was also noted that should the Ministers decision impact the whole of Wales that this will not be an option in the future.

The Group concluded that farmers would benefit from additional training, support from the Diary Project and Farming Connect in order to implement longer term solutions.

4) Sub Group Communication Plan (Meinir Wigley via skype)

Meinir Wigley joined the group to review the Sub Group Communication plan highlighting that the plan is 2 years old. Meinir sought clarification in respect of the current relevance of the objectives and messages and identified a need for the group to consider the ownership of the plan.

The Group concluded

- a need to update the plan to reflect Regulation changes and include information from each stakeholder.
- A need to review the Campaign objectives
- A need to gather backdated evidence to demonstrate developments since the Group was formed, creating a baseline of evidence from all group members
- A further workshop session to be held at the November Sub Group meeting led by Meinir Wigley.

Action Point Oct 02: Meinir Wigley to draft a list of questions for the Group to consider ahead of the Workshop Session to be held on 13th November. Secretariat to note Agenda item for November.

6) The Role of the Agricultural Contractor – Agri Pollution

Andrew Chambers welcomed the agricultural contractors to the meeting to share their perspective on how the agricultural contractor can help with the reduction of agri pollution. The Contractors raised the following points:

- A need to take a tougher approach with farmers and contractors to remove
-

inappropriate slurry spreading

- A need to work with farmers and contractors to identify issues and solutions
- Make exclusion zones mandatory and monitored with spreading technology
- Remove closed periods and maximise the use of available technology to track the spreading area and quantity (flow monitoring), weather app, with the printing of this information to be mandatory as part of the farm assurance scheme/cross compliance
- License/permit farm contractors who spread slurry and penalise by removing the license/permit if the spreading does not meet policy standards rather than a monetary fine which was thought to be ineffective
- Encourage the testing of soils and slurry – penalise farmers for the over use of nutrients
- Stop dirty water runoff into slurry storage
- Promote a message of compliance
- Solutions should run alongside on farm infrastructure solutions.

The Group Thanked the Contractors and welcomed their perspective as positive.

7) **The Considerate Contractor** –

Jill Hewitt joined the meeting via Skype and gave a presentation on the National Association of Agricultural Contractors Considerate Contractor Scheme. The Scheme, currently voluntary for agricultural contractors, is essentially an assurance scheme aimed at proving the professionalism of contractors. The generic module which covers the spreading of nutrients is not extensively used and would need updating.

The discussion highlighted the need for a strong motivation or compulsion for the scheme to be widely implemented, for example a mandatory scheme or essential as part of farm assurance. It was noted that the scheme is mandatory for feed and milling contractors, introduced successfully.

NAAC estimate that 70% of slurry is spread by contractors.

The Group thanked Jill for her useful presentation which promoted valuable discussion.

Action Point Oct 04: Considerate Contractor presentation to be shared with the Group.

8) **Voluntary approach to Nutrient Management Update**

Lorna Davies made a presentation to the group covering the following points:

- Draft water standard update – project set to finish end of December 2019
- Funding – where does the project go next – Deliverables still to be achieved
- Operator event in December.
- Update on Water Quality sampling kits

Lorna confirmed that sampling kits are being sourced via Fresh Water a global citizen science project. Consideration is currently being given to a project led by NFU Cymru and Cardiff University which will supply water testing kits to farmers who will submit data.

The kits supplied are £25 per membership with guidance currently being developed to widen the advice to an agricultural context. Lorna confirmed that the project lead can be wider than NFU Cymru members and Cardiff University, the lead will be able to view all the data submitted so will need to be a trusted source for farmers.

The ability for farmers and farmers groups to measure water quality in relation to their farming activities is increasingly seen as a key part of bringing about significant change.

9) Overview of Farming Connect Advisory Service Reports

Keith Owen provided an overview of the purpose and effectiveness of his on-farm visits which identify suitable controls for slurry management via infrastructure development. The Group noted the level of trust between Farming Connect and farmers which has developed over time. Keith identified a need for nutrient management plans to be in place at all farms which promote the use of slurry as a fertilizer. In addition he stressed the need for a farm infrastructure plan to change nutrient management and to ensure grants are targeted at the right solutions.

Keith noted that he encourages all farmers to email the report produced following his visit to NRW to encourage an open conversation between the farmers and the regulator.

The Chair noted a need to return to this discussion following the decision by the Minister.

10) Farming Connect Agri-Pollution Delivery Programme – update on recent events

Sara Jenkins provided the following update:

Advisory service Registrations – Just over 10,500 farm businesses now registered with around 4,630 applications approved for the advisory service now. Most of the requests for the advisory service are for nutrient and technical grassland advice.

Sara Jenkins referred to the information circulated via email on 22nd October regarding Clinics. The focus on clinics this year has been soil, grasslands and infrastructure with the option of 1 to 1 advice with a grassland advisor following a soil test. The clinics also remind farmers about the availability of the advisory service which is 80% funded for 1 to 1 advice and 100% funded if 3 or more farmers seek advice together providing that they have a business plan in place.

Further Events are planned for
4th November, Ffrostrisol
7th November, Llanwrst
12th November, Hafod y Hendre, RWAS, Builth Wells.

Work has been underway with Nichola Salter, NRW to develop case studies which will be available on the website shortly.

Menter a Busnes will be attending the Wales Dairy Event, Carmarthen on 29th October 2019.

Demonstration Sites – projects are currently being confirmed with events to start on farms from Spring 2020. Funding is £7,500 in total over the 3 years. With a 2nd project funded from year 2 onwards totalling a further £2,500 which is not for capital works.

Training:

The BASIS courses and the Safe use and application of Slurry courses are 80% funded. Registered individuals need to apply for the funding by 5pm on Friday 1st of November

Completed the last round of sustainable farming roadshows.

The Group noted the update provided.

11) Arrangements for future sub-group meetings

- 13th November 2019 (NFU Cymru Office, Builth Wells)
- 16th December 2019 (WG Offices, Merthyr. Followed by site visit to Llwynon Water Treatment Works)
- Monday 20th January 2020, WG Offices, Aberystwyth

The Group noted the forthcoming meetings as planned.

12) Update on relevant diary activities (All)

Creighton Harvey confirmed that he has been asked to join the Fisheries Forum chaired by NRW Board Member, Steve Ormerod. The Chair confirmed that Steve Ormerod has been invited to attend an Agri Sub Group meeting. Bob Vaughan confirmed that he would also attend the next Fisheries Forum.

13) AoB (All)

Brexit Planning: The Group discussed issues associated with no deal Brexit planning and having sufficient spare parts available for water/slurry pumps. The Group identified a need for key players to stock pile parts as a key part of resilience planning.

Challenges and Choices consultation is due to end on 22nd November. Marc Williams will share a web link with the group which seeks stakeholder views on options currently in place, presentation with more information to also be shared with group.

Action Point Oct 04: Marc Williams to share more information with the group on the Challenges and Choices consultation.

Gelli Aur – Project slurry Marc Williams confirmed that he had met with John Owen from the project which is demonstrating a 99% reduction in nitrates, phosphours and suspended solids through treatment, leaflets available.

The Chair closed the meeting.
