



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

Wednesday 13th November

NFU Building
Royal Welsh Showground
Builth Wells
Powys

1) Welcome & Apologies (Chair)

1a Apologies received from:
Kate Snow, United Utilities
Lorna Davis, NFU
Bob Vaughan, NRW
Sarah Hetherington, NRW
Michelle Van-Velzen, NRW

1b Introductions

Confirmed attendance:
Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)
James Dowling, WG
James Ruggeri, HCC
Denis Matheson, Tenant Farmers Association
Nichola Salter, NRW
Sara Jenkins, Menter Busnes
Lee Price, Menter Busnes
Danielle Hitt, Welsh Water
David Jones, Welsh Water
Sophie Straiton, Welsh Water
Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU
Aled Jones, FUW
Creighton Harvey
Marc Williams, NRW
Andrew Chambers, WG
Spencer Conlon, WG
Matt Lowe, NRW
Spencer Conlon, WG
Sophie Straiton, Welsh Water
Marc Williams, NRW
Geri Mills, NRW

1c Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest made in respect of Agenda Items.

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

Chair reviewed the draft minutes for accuracy with the following inclusions agreed by the Group:

The Role of the Agricultural Contractor

1. *Many farmers were not testing their slurry and were using it as a waste product.*
2. *Some farmers were spreading slurry in the period immediately before heavy rain with a view to it washing off. In support of this the agricultural contractor described refusing a contract to spread in anticipation of heavy rain only for another contractor to do the work. The agricultural contractor examined a nearby stream after the application to find it heavily contaminated with slurry.*
3. *Some farmers were not prepared to adapt to a changing climate.*
4. *Some fields were being repeatedly spread with slurry. Contractors would say that they are spreading on a whole farm basis when they were spreading on one field. This was due to there being insufficient storage or insufficient land upon which to spread.*
5. *They were of the opinion that regulation was required to create a level playing field for all farmers and contractors.*

The Considerate Contractor

1. *Jill Hewitt stated that contractors should not be under pressure to spread in inappropriate conditions.*
2. *The agricultural contractors were asked if they had any comment on Jill Hewitt's presentation. The agricultural contractor commented that any scheme should not be voluntary but should be mandatory. There should be a note to state that Jill Hewitt's slides have since been supplied to members of the sub-group.*

Overview of Farming Connect Advisory Services

He gave practical advice on how to reduce volume which in many cases would avoid the need for more storage. He stated that in the period of just over a year only one of a hundred inspections was SSAFO compliant. He also stated that inexperience amongst dairy officers had led to naivety on farm inspections. He did not intend this as a criticism of well-meaning dairy officers but as a statement of the present position which would improve with time.

He stated that his role was to put farmers in charge of their slurry and to stop slurry being in charge of the farmer.

3) Sub Group Communication Plan

Meinir Wigley, NRW led a workshop to review the Communications plan based on feedback received via email from group members. A draft plan to be presented back to the group at a future meeting.

Meinir Wigley confirmed that NRW is currently recruiting several Communication Officers, one of whom will be working with the WLMF Sub Group in future.

Action Point: AP Nov 01 Secretariat to liaise with Meinir Wigley to represent to the Group at a future meeting.

4) Agricultural Contractor – follow up from presentation and discussion at October Meeting

The group reflected on the presentations given at the October meeting from the Agricultural contractor and the National Association of Agricultural Contractors (NAAC), noting the following points

- a need to promote nutrient management
- the NAAC still referred to slurry as waste management than a possible nutrient
- a need to promote the joint liability for the agricultural contractor as well has the farmer when slurry causes a pollution incident (shared blame)
- a need for NAAC to become more active in Wales or Wales to support a similar scheme
- a need to encourage contractors to make use of NRW resources when they need to seek advice on slurry spreading

Action Point: AP Nov 02 Andrew Chambers to liaise with Agricultural Contractors with regards anonymity within the October minutes.

6) Diary Project Data

Matt Lowe explained the Chair had requested that the Group view a short presentation which Matt had previously presented to the NRW Leadership team. The presentation provided an update from the Diary Project and detailed the issues found during farm visits followed by the reactive and proactive work undertaken following each visit.

Reviewing the Diary Project delivery, Matt Lowe confirmed that the project had struggled to secure resource due to short term temporary contracts. The pending new Water Regulations due in January 2020 had also presented challenges in respect of the advice the Dairy officers were able to give to farmers. The Project has visited around 500 farms to date with 296 pieces of data input to the database. Farm visits have been prioritised by catchment area. The Group were asked to note that the data is based on the information provided by farmers especially in respect of the depth of slurry pits.

Marc Williams asked the group to note that all structures in place prior to 1991 are exempt under the current SAFO regulations, these structures only fall out of SAFO regulations if they are considered a pollution risk.

Matt Lowe explained that all farm structures are expected to perform for 20 years with maintenance checks.

The Chair noted that the Diary Farm visiting officers were an important team who are trained, leading communication with farmers with an urgent discussion needed to consider extending funding for these roles. The Group discussed the funding opportunities for the project,

Nichola Salter confirmed that she is currently inputting to the NRW Regulatory Service plan which will be presented to senior members of NRW, this will detail funding considerations. Nichola Salter explained that NRW has several agricultural officers in place across Wales, particularly in North Wales however due to Organisational Design, this resource is limited. NRW is currently working on a training plan for staff members involved with agricultural and is searching for training providers.

The Chair concluded that the Group fully supports the need to seek additional funding for the Diary Farm Officers and welcomed Nichola Salter to provide further information on training for NRW staff involved with Agricultural at a future meeting.

7) Agriculture pollution statistics

Marc Williams, NRW gave a presentation detailing information on the reported incidents. Marc confirmed that the recruitment of a technical person to support the WLMF is ongoing, this role will then be responsible for updates to the pollution statistics.

Marc Williams confirmed that the data presented included information up to Monday 11th November, detailing 58 incidents taken from the WIRS NRW Database. The group compared the data from previous years, noting the decrease in reported incidents from 2018 to date. Marc Williams explained that further analysis of the data will be undertaken when resources and the involvement of a statistician allows.

AP Nov 03 Marc Williams to share presentation with Group.

8) Arrangements for future sub-group meetings

The Group noted the dates and venues for next meetings.

- 16th December 2019 (WG Offices, Merthyr. Followed by site visit to Llwynon Water Treatment Works)
- Monday 20th January 2020, WG Offices, Aberystwyth

9) Update on relevant diary activities

The following diary activities were noted:

Chair to speak at a Women in Farming, North Wales Group event in early in 2020.

Hybu Cig Cymru Annual Conference Thursday 14th November at the Royal Welsh Showground.

Dwr Cymru will be speaking at the Drinking Water Quality Conference on 27th November, Birmingham about the Catskills Trip

Matt Lowe and Nichola Salter will be speaking to FAWL Assessors early December.

Creighton Harvey confirmed that Tony Loizou will be speaking at the NFU staff conference at Lion Quays Hotel, Oswestry on Friday 15th November 2019.

NRW and Menter Business/Farming Connect confirmed that they will be present at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair on Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th November.

Denis Matheson confirmed that he had attended a Water Forum meeting in Abergavenny which was mainly focused on pollution from mines. Denis sought clarification on the figures released by NRW that sheep consume 5 gallons of water a day. Marc Williams confirmed that figures are in place for farm animal water consumption which will be circulated to the group.

AP Nov 04 Marc Williams to share figures with the Group.

10) Regulation Sub Group Meeting –

Confirming the background Spencer Conlon confirmed that ADAS had been commissioned to complete the RIA (Regulation impact assessment) for the proposed new Water Regulation 2020. Following an opportunity for stakeholders to present additional evidence ADAS have now revised the RIA which was received by Welsh Government late in the previous week. Welsh Government had planned to hold a discussion at the Regulation Task and Finish group meeting planned for today however having been informed that a key stakeholder would not be attending only a regulation update will be provided to this Group.

Welsh Government will shortly be providing advice to the Minister which will include the RIA and the additional evidence presented by stakeholders. Discussions are ongoing with a senior Welsh Government Official expected to contact Senior Officials of the Farming Unions shortly. Following that discussion Welsh Government will then decide on holding further meetings to discuss. Following this a further update will be given to the WLMF Agri Sub Group.

Spencer Conlon confirmed that at this time no further meetings of the Task and Finish Regulation group were required. Welsh Government confirmed that at present it would not be able to pre-empt the decision of the Minister and therefore were not able to provide any further information for Farmers.

Denis Matheson raised an issue with the recent model clauses that were passed through the Senedd during October. Spencer Conlon confirmed that Welsh Government would review based on the information provided by Denis Matheson and contact Denis Matheson to discuss further.

11) AoB

James Dowling, Welsh Government confirmed that he had secured another role with Welsh Government, the Chair congratulated James on his new posting and thanked him for his valued input and support for the past 3 years.

The Meeting was closed.
