



Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

Minutes

Title of meeting: Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

Location: Welsh Government Building, Aberystwyth

Date of Meeting: 10th February 2020

Present:

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Ruth Jenkins, NRW

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Bob Vaughan, NRW via skype

Sarah Hetherington, NRW via skype

Marc Williams, NRW

Aled Jones, FUW

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU

Hedd Pugh, NFU

Geraint Davies, NRW

Anthony Geddes, Confor via skype

Mark Alexander, WG

John Browne, NRW

Geri Mills, NRW

Russell De'Ath, NRW via skype

Nichola Taylor, NRW via skype

Tim Kirk, Confor

Additional Attendees Present:

Clive Walmsley, NRW via skype (Item 5)

Secretariat(s):

Marc Williams (WLMF Agri-Pollution Co-ordinator, NRW)

Apologies:

Dominic Driver, NRW

Martyn P Evans, NRW

Elliott Rillie, CLA

Ceri Davies, NRW

Huwel Manley, NRW

Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

1. Zoe Henderson welcomed all to the meeting noting apologies.
2. The Chair extended a welcome to Mark Alexander as a permanent member for the Forum from Welsh Government (WG). Mark Alexander thanked the Forum for the invitation to become a standing representative from WG confirming that he was taking the opportunity to develop contacts with other policy leads
3. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.

Item 2 Minutes from the last meeting and any matters arising

4. The Group reviewed the minutes from the December 2019 Meeting and approved as a true record, subject to the following minor amendments:
 - Item 8 para 2 amendment to conservation.
 - Item 9 para 3 amendment to contact.
5. The Chair reviewed the Action Log, and the following comments were made:
 - May AP05: Discharged, Mark Alexander now a standing member of the Forum.
 - May AP10: Carried forward.
 - Sept AP02: Bob Vaughan to review and send organogram to the Forum.
 - Sept AP05: Chair reviewed and discharged noting the difficult and challenging times currently faced by farmers.

6. The Forum further discussed Sept AP05 in respect of Woodland Creation in Wales, noting that:

- A nature and climate emergency are in place therefore there is a need for all to adapt and mitigate.
- DPJ Foundation training undertaken in NRW to help NRW staff identify mental health issues for farmers.
- Mark Alexander confirmed that a rural community's group is in place which he chairs, with funding via an EU transition fund. A portal which will hold all the policy and regulatory information to be launched.
- Public Health Wales have undertaken a review of mental health issues, which reviews the need to understand roles when considering and supporting people with mental health issues. It was noted that this review was completed in conjunction with WG.
- A need for the Forum to consider how it brings people together to consider and solve issue around environmental issues, providing resources which would see more rural communities and farmers came together.
- NRW Area Statements, due for launch in April 2020 will be pivotal in drawing communities together.
- The depth, level and tone of engagement with the farming sector will be key to success, there is a need to present to farmers that they can solve problems by themselves delivering solutions.
- Engagement links to the delivery of SMNR (Sustainable Management of Natural Resources) and delivery against the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act Wales.
- When considering Woodland Creation there is a need to consider large scale and smaller scale planting schemes, supported by the necessary amount of Glastir Funding to match the applications made.
- There is a need to review the funding available and regulations in place within Wales for Woodland Creation in order to attract Woodland Creation opportunities.

In conclusion the Chair noted that there was a need to discuss Woodland Creation opportunities and barriers to woodland creation in more detail. The Forum agreed that a Task and Finish Group of the Forum to be organised by Dominic Driver leading for NRW.

AP February 01: Dominic Driver to organise a Task and Finish Group involving Forum members in order to identify the barriers to woodland creation reporting back recommendations to the WLMF.

Item 3 WLMF Governance

7. The Forum undertook its annual review of the Terms of Reference for the group noting the need to include Welsh Government as a Forum member.
8. The Forum discussed stakeholder engagement with the Chair concluding that the soon to be appointed Director for Customer and Commercial will be asked to review and develop stakeholder engagement. The Forum discussed the inclusion of other members to the group and concluded that it was important to ensure that the group continues to add value and provides a point of difference to other stakeholder group discussions.
9. The Forum agreed the amendment to the Terms of Reference and confirmed next review in February 2021.

Item 4 NRW Update

10. **Policy Update – National Forest:** Ruth Jenkins, NRW provided an update on the Ministers proposal for a National Forest. Confirming that the proposal is still developing the funding proposal for the £4.5 million allocated to the Scheme which will be spread across a range of outcomes made up of improving existing woodlands, community engagement, new woodland creation and biodiversity. The Scheme will sit within the context of the climate change committee report and support the nature emergency. The group noted the challenges presented by the Tenant Farmers Association, woodland creation is not possible on tenanted farms due to tenancy requirements.

NFU highlighted a recent ERAMMP event held in Cardiff, attended by Confor and FUW which discussed the release of an emergency information pack to support the National Forest.

AP February 02: Mark Alexander to seek more information with regards the emergency information pack, when this will become available and the information it is likely to contain.

Ruth Jenkins explained that the ERAMMP is a modelling tool which will develop opportunities based on data and information. This will support the Area Statement work that NRW is currently delivering across Wales, supporting with decisions and aiming to provide information which is accessible for farmers.

11. **Policy Update – Glastir:** Ruth Jenkins confirmed that a further expression of interest window is open. NRW are working with WG to review the lessons learnt from previous schemes. The Forum noted the concerns raised by FUW in respect of the delayed letters to participants in the last schemes. Ruth highlighted the need for preapplication work to be submitted early. The Forum noted that there was a need for WG to consider the inclusion of hedgerows in applications.
12. **Area Statements:** Russell and Nichola confirmed that development work is continuing at pace with a view to launching the Area Statements on the NRW website early April 2020. Each Area Statement will contain a snapshot to date with themes emerging to start a stakeholder engagement journey in each place or area. This engagement will present an opportunity for sharing challenges, innovation and working together.

NRW are developing a separate data portal to bring together evidence which will be used to discuss change options moving forward.

Dennis Matheson noted that he had not received an invite to a local event.

AP February 03: Russell De'Ath to ask the local area statement team to contact Dennis to share dates for future engagement events.

13. **General licences:** Ruth Jenkins confirmed an update on general licences, with bird licences about to be presented for full licence review. A meeting to be held with Stakeholders on 20th February 2020. The Forum noted that a legal challenge is in place against NRW with NRW continuing with a general review. Ruth Jenkins asked for Forum members to share any issues caused by the temporary ban to be shared via email with NRW.

Item 5 NRW Climate Emergency Plan

14. The Chair welcomed Clive Walmsley (NRW) to the meeting to follow up on the presentation given at the December 2019 Forum meeting. Clive noted the following points:

- A Climate emergency was declared by Welsh Government in April 2019 in response to the Climate Change Committee recommendation for a 95% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050.
- In response NRW explored its role concluding a need to scope out actions for NRW to undertake in order to support the WG declaration, including:
 - Peatland restoration – aim to restore around 3,000 hectares on the Welsh Government woodland estate.
 - Carbon positive project – focusing on reducing emissions
 - Woodland creation potential – looking at acquiring additional land for planting in order to compensate for the woodland lost for wind energy creation
 - Renewal energy – NRW looking at options for self-supply
 - Increasing the fleet of NRW to include low carbon vehicles and electric vehicles
 - Scoping study for heating buildings moving to a low carbon heat source
 - Procurement – NRW has identified 59% emissions from procurement, NRW looking at how carbon emission considerations can be built into the procurement system
 - Give consideration of carbon into our response service in terms of planning and regulatory role
 - Challenge other parts of the organisations to also consider carbon within its work tasks

15. NRW noted that it recognised that it has a wealth of evidence of impacts on the natural environment which will also be identified in the SoNaRR. Internally NRW noted that key to change will be staff engagement to bring about behaviour change.
16. Having outlined the top themes, Clive went on to focus on land management change:
- Peatland restoration – NRW are developing a programme with an internal group starting work. A capital sum of £1.5 has been allocated to the work
 - Woodlands – NRW is starting to consider its woodland management and restocking in terms of carbon management
 - NRW are working collaboratively across the UK, engaging with Net Zero UK, with an emphasis of the importance for land management
17. Reflecting on the Net Zero summit meeting held in October 2019 where it was agreed that all bodies would work together, noting that the work is not singularly focused on tree planting but encompasses the roles of all ecosystems.
18. Dennis Matheson noted that the TFA are currently drafting a response to the Clean Air Consultation, highlighting a suggestion in that consultation that an Agricultural Sector group be developed, the Forum noted the overlap with the suggestion and the terms for the Forum.
19. In conclusion the Chair thanked Clive for the informative session noting that there are considerable opportunities for shared innovation and learning across Forum stakeholders.

Item 6 NFU Cymru Update – Net Zero

20. Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru) confirmed that the NFU President launched the ambition for British farmers in January 2019. Clarifying that the ambition was for British (England and Wales) farmers to strive for net zero across agricultural production by 2040. Following the launch, a steering group was created and is being Chaired by the NFU Wales President.
21. Behind NFU Presidents statement development work has been undertaken led by a team of experts in Stoneleigh with a focus on 3 keys areas:
- Strand 1:
1. Boosting our productively, production efficiency
 2. Focus on fertilisers
 3. Reduce emissions from livestock
 4. Improve animal health and welfare
 5. Precision farming
 6. How we manage soils

7. Energy efficiently
8. Genetics
9. Future technology
10. Anaerobic digestion

Strand 2: Woodlands, soils, increase woodland planting, peatlands and wetlands.

Strand 3: renewables – bio economy more generally

22. Rachel confirmed that key scientific evidence supports the work of each strand with a focus that is not about reducing agricultural outputs. The Forum noted that every farm across England and Wales is different, with each able to make a different contribution to Net zero. Rachel explained that a key challenge identified is identifying the appropriate mechanism for capturing data.
23. Rachel confirmed that Dr Ceris Jones is providing advice and evidence.

AP February 04: The Chair extended an invitation for Dr Ceris Jones to present a future meeting of the Forum.

24. Rachel confirmed that the ambition is fully supported by the President with many farmers already expressing support and interest. Key to the success of the ambition will be ensuring that a measure of the current position is taken, and changes reflected in those measurements.
25. Mark Alexander welcomed the commitment demonstrated by the NFU with the first 2 actions being echoed in a recent report from the Land Use Committee. Rachel explained that NFU intend to develop an enabling framework for farmers to encourage changes in behaviours.
26. The Chair thanked Rachel for the informative presentation.

Item 7 Update from Confor/NFU/FUW/YFC/TFA

27. Round table discussion for each Forum member to provide an update on key topics from their own organisation.
28. TFA: Dennis Matheson provided an update on the Agricultural Bill. Proposed changes to tenancy legislation will come back to the Welsh Assembly in 2024.
29. Confor: Tim Kirk raised concern around pests and diseases in the UK, with concern expressed with regards to the Central European Spruce beetle and Ash Die back making a plea to Welsh Government to include rural networks within Brexit preparations.

AP February 05: Mark Alexander to speak to colleagues in Welsh Government with regards to funding for farmers removing Ash trees impacted by Ash Die Back.

30. NFU Cymru: Hedd Pugh sought additional information in respect of a project to release beavers in the Dyfi Valley.

AP February 06: Ruth Jenkins to seek further information for the group.

31. Welsh Government: Mark Alexander noted the following updates from Welsh Government:

- Brexit is a focus for arranging exit arrangements with CAP payments not covered by the EU deal.
- UK Agriculture Bill provides continuity of powers with a white paper to be brought forward with further conversations to be held at the Forum.
- Common Land: WG are currently looking to digitise registers (maps and records) with an electronic register of common rights in Wales to be developed. Consultation is imminent.
- WG are working with Defra regarding trade and to ensure the Welsh voice is heard.

32. The Chair thanked them for all of their updates.

Item 8 Fora Updates

33. The Chair confirmed that minutes from each of the Forum Groups are available on line.

AP February 07a: Secretariat to check if draft minutes from each Forum can be shared with the Group.

AP February 07b: Secretariat to recontact Steve Ormerod with regards to attending a future meeting of the Forum.

Item 9 Details of upcoming meetings

34. The Chair confirmed that the next meeting dates are:

- Monday 11th May 2020
- Wednesday 9th September 2020

Item 10 AOB

35. The Chair asked all members to submit items for future agendas.

Close meeting