

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution

Minutes

Title of meeting:

Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Date of Meeting: 19th April 2021

Present:

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Creighton Harvey, CFF

Bob Vaughan, NRW

Sarah Jones, Dwr Cymru

Marc Williams, NRW

James Ruggeri, HCC

Edward Davies, NRW

Bernard Griffiths, FUW

Chris Mills, WEL

Spencer Conlon, WG

Andrew Chambers, WG

Nichola Salter, NRW

Shane Thomas, CFF

Jamie McCoy, AHDB

Geraint Hamer, WG

Katy Simmons, NRW

Einir Williams, FC

Fraser McAuley, CLA

Kate Snow, United Utilities

Ruth Johnston, NRW

Matthew Walters, WG

Additional Attendees Present:

None

Secretariat:

Bronwen Martin, NRW

Apologies:

Delyth Lewis-Jones, AHDB

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru

Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

1. Zoe Henderson welcomed all to the Microsoft Teams meeting and noted apologies. Please note that the meeting is being recorded for the purpose of capturing the minutes and the digital file will be deleted once the meeting minutes have been completed.
2. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.
 - NB: All members of the group have completed declaration of interest forms already but should also declare if they have an interest in anything on the agenda.

Item 2 Review of Minutes and Actions

3. The Chair confirmed that once the meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed by the group, they will be published on the NRW for the public to access. Therefore, it is important that the minutes are an accurate record of the meetings.
4. The group reviewed the previous meeting minutes from 5th March 2021 and 22nd March 2021. No comments or suggested amendments were received from the group.
5. Ed Davies, NRW suggested that if members want to email any amendments, changes or comments across, they will be actioned.
6. Bronwen Martin, NRW shared the Action Log spreadsheet for the group to review the outstanding actions from previous meetings. The following comments were made:
 - AP March 04: All members to submit any proposals on Earned Autonomy to Welsh Government.

- *The Chair suggested that this is a topic that the Sub Group should revisit and perhaps it can be added to the agenda for a future meeting. Ed Davies, NRW said that it would be valuable to hear some of the proposals that the members have put forward.*
 - AP March 05: Meinir to link up with Farming Connect and any other Sub Group members to discuss the communications plan for the implementation of the regulations.
 - *Katy Simmonds, NRW said that now the communications plan has been shared NRW can review it and see how it can be coordinated together.*
 - AP 03 (22nd March): Nichola Salter, NRW to circulate NRW internal guidance to the group for information once signed off internally.
 - *Nichola Salter, NRW said that she can share the guidance and clarifications that have been developed on the different phases of the regulations once signed off internally. This information is directly based on the presentation that Spencer gave, with some additional technical details.*
 - AP 05 (22nd March): Bob Vaughan, NRW to share guidance with the group that states new slurry stores are considered phosphate neutral developments.
 - *Bob Vaughan, NRW advised that this is being checked internally to make sure the protocol is right.*
7. Chris Mills, WEL suggested that a projected date for completion of actions should be incorporated into the spreadsheet to help track them.

Item 3 Matters Arising

8. The Chair mentioned that she is concerned that the 'one-stop-shop' approach to access information regarding The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 has not yet been established. The Chair asked whether the group think it is clear enough for farmers to find the right information and whether it is clearly accessed from the Welsh Government website or the Farming Connect website.

Sarah Hetherington, NRW said that NRW are currently working on digital resources for agriculture on the NRW webpages which will link to different things like the Welsh Government Website or the Farming Connect website. However, before this is published it needs to be worked through internal governance.

Einir Williams, Farming Connect said that the Farm Community Network (FCN) formally the Farm Crisis Network, have an excellent 'one-stop-shop' style website called [FarmWell Wales](#), that signposts farmers to different avenues of advice and support. The website also provides emotional support for farmers, regulatory support, grant funding and support through Farming Connect.

9. The Chair asked Spencer whether version control can be considered for the Welsh Government's FAQs documents for The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. The Chair suggested including a creation date on

the document for when people print it off. Spencer Conlon, Welsh Government agreed that a date can be added to the document.

10. Dennis Matheson, TFA said that he had read through the guidance notes and the FAQ documents. Dennis recalled that Spencer said that there would be information regarding tenant farmers added to the FAQ document but currently the only mention of tenant farmers is that they must comply like all other farmers. Dennis asked Spencer to clarify whether there will be specific information available for tenant farmers. Spencer Conlon, Welsh Government confirmed that information will be made available for tenant farmers within the FAQs, but the information is currently in draft as the points are being checked by legal services. Spencer said that this update to the FAQs can then be circulated to the Sub Group as soon as they are available.

AP April 01: Spencer Conlon, Welsh Government to share the update to the FAQ document regarding tenant farmers.

The chair asked when this might be available. Spencer said he would aim for it to be available before the next Sub Group meeting.

11. The Chair asked the group whether organisations have had any feedback from their members regarding the regulations.
12. Creighton Harvey, CFF said that there is a fair amount of apathy amongst anglers, but some have been more concerned with getting out and fishing on 1st April. Others are very concerned with the regulations and it is disappointing that NRW's stance is still unknown. Creighton said that it is going to be frustrating because this time of year he would normally have one or two incidents to report and he anticipates that he may have some interesting conversations on the phone. Nichola Salter, NRW responded and said that interim guidance went out to NRW staff on the evening before 1st April 2021. The information was sent out to all incident management staff and all those on the WIRS rota, which explains how to deal with incidents. NRW staff have received guidance but what is being developed is the guidance for the regulations as they come in with the phased approach. Nichola explained that if Creighton phoned NRW to report an incident, NRW staff should know what to do. Creighton thanked Nichola for the update and said that this was the first time this has been clarified clearly to him. Creighton suggested that there is a communication problem because had he known this was the situation, he could have circulated information particularly to people in Carmarthenshire, telling them that guidelines have been given to NRW staff. Creighton mentioned that it would be helpful if that guidance could be published so that people know what they are doing when they report incidents. Nichola said that she would have to check if the internal information is suitable to go out externally because a lot of it contains internal links to guidance.

AP April 02: Nicola Salter and Bob Vaughan, NRW to meet to discuss the internal guidance issued to NRW staff and share what information they can with the group.

Creighton said that CFF try to help NRW as much as they can and mentioned the recent milk pollution incident which occurred in the River Dulais. CFF were contacted by NRW and asked to communicate with all of their member clubs within the organisation, to make sure everyone knew that NRW had been out to the incident and that there may be difficulties in the river because there might have been a dam

released authorised from the Llyn Brianne. CFF were very grateful for this communication and would welcome more updates on things that are happening and would be happy to inform their member organisations and anglers within Carmarthenshire. Creighton said that CFF try to help but if they do not have the information, they cannot share it. Bob Vaughan, NRW said that there has been a lot happening and NRW will try to get some information out because the support is valued.

13. Chris Mills, WEL suggested that it is not just Carmarthenshire anglers who need to know what the NRW response is in relation to the regulations, but it is people right across Wales; therefore, a mechanism needs to be found to update everyone. Chris mentioned that NRW and Welsh Government may be very busy dealing with this, but communication is one of the most important aspects. It is not good enough to say that it has been a terribly busy time, so people have not got around to communicating. Chris noted that communication is vital to managing this situation whether it is for the farming community or other communities which are affected by this.

Spencer Conlon, Welsh Government said that everyone in the Sub Group should communicate the key messages to try and calm some of the panic, not just Welsh Government and NRW. Everyone in the group should be aware of the measures and when they are coming in.

Chris Mills, WEL agreed that all members should be communicating the facts but said that if the group are not aware of what the NRW response is, it cannot be communicated more widely.

14. Jamie McCoy, AHDB mentioned that AHDB recently offered a webinar for Dairy Farmers in Wales with Keith Owen and Chris Duller presenting. The presentation covered the bare bones of what the regulations are and highlighted the things people may need to start thinking about over the coming months. Jamie said that the types of questions received during the webinar session were quite telling and suggested that the reality is that some farmers do not necessarily understand what is involved and what is coming, yet. Amongst farmers there is an element of panic and disbelief that this is happening. Jamie acknowledged that this is probably not what the Sub Group wants to hear but this is the reality of where farmers are at, especially when the front page of the Farmers Guardian says there is legal action being taken and when there is a recent TV programme about the water companies. Jamie suggested that there is still a huge amount of work to be done to communicate what the regulations mean already and what they will mean in the coming months and years, because some farmers are not quite as realistic about it all at this stage.

Jamie mentioned that the AHDB Dairy webinar was aimed at Welsh Dairy farmers and a recording of the event can be found on YouTube ([AHDB Dairy Webinar - New Water Resources Regulation in Wales](#)). The webinar had in the region of 100 people listen live and AHDB are working on a FAQ page based on the questions which were submitted by farmers on the day, which will be published on the AHDB Dairy website.

15. Dennis Matheson, TFA said that most of the new regulations are covered by cross compliance and is set out in the rules for this year by RPW. Dennis mentioned that farmers really do not know what they should do, even though it has been in the farming press. Dennis said that from a tenant's point of view, some landlords are burying their heads in the sand over the regulations, so there must be some guidance available for

tenant farmers. It is very worrying that the regulations started to come in from 1st April 2021 and we still do not know what tenant farmers are supposed to do. Dennis suggested that perhaps the only way this can be done is if every farmer in Wales with livestock is visited under the Dairy Project and has a plan drawn up, so that everyone knows what to do.

16. Bernard Griffiths, FUW said that people are just beginning to realise the scale of change coming their way by going from 2.7% to 100% of farmers being affected. Bernard suggested that people should not be surprised with the level of apathy and lack of knowledge around the regulations. Bernard suggested that listening to the conversations in this Sub Group meeting, it is apparent that organisations are struggling with messages and communications simply because of the volume of change. Bernard said that some FUW members have their heads in the sand, others are in total despair and some are leaving the dairy sector altogether. Bernard said the reality is not good and it is more than farmers just being concerned, they are truly very worried.
17. The Chair mentioned that the Welsh Government communications draft was sent out to the Sub Group members just before the meeting this morning and asked Andrew Chambers and Spencer Conlon what they were hoping for today. Spencer said that they did not anticipate discussing it at this meeting but are happy to take any comments. Spencer suggested that the members could take it away and feedback any comments on the content, any omissions and make suggested changes. Spencer said it is a living document which will be adapted and changed as time goes on. The document also provides some information on guidance for specific sectors for example sheep, dairy etc. and contains a mixture of things that have been done, are going to do be done and things that are being considered.

AP April 03: Sub Group members to review the Welsh Government communications draft and feedback any comments and suggestions to Spencer Conlon, Welsh Government.

Spencer mentioned that there was also an action point from the last meeting for Welsh Government to look into a Stakeholder Pack. Spencer said that it would be helpful to understand what information would be useful to include in the Stakeholder Pack. Spencer asked the group to help establish what information is needed so that Welsh Government can produce a helpful resource for the industry to use. Spencer suggested that this is a document from Welsh Government and supported by Farming Connect but as time progresses all of the Sub Group members should help communicate messages.

AP April 04: Sub Group members to make suggestions for the contents of the proposed Stakeholder Pack for Welsh Government to consider and collate.

18. Fraser McAuley, CLA asked Dennis what specific aspect of the regulations which came in on 1st April are posing a problem for tenant farmers more than other farmers, because the CLA have tenants within their membership and are willing to help or liaise with the TFA. Dennis said that right now, tenants do not need to do very much. However, if the regulations require a new slurry store which will likely be the case for most tenants, they will need to start discussing this with their landlords now to see what their position is, other ways they are not likely to get their new slurry store by August

2024 as it takes a very long time. Dennis mentioned that another big concern is the short length of farm business tenancies, which comprise half of the tenancies in Wales with an average of 3.2 years. In this case, it is doubtful that any landlord or tenant will spend £50,000 on a new slurry store. Dennis concluded that even though this aspect of the regulation has not yet come in, tenants will have to start thinking about it now.

19. Eimir Williams, Farming Connect said that later in the meeting she will be covering the parts of the Communication Plan that Farming Connect are already working on and the parts which have been approved for delivery.

Item 4 Sewer Overflow Statement

20. The Chair mentioned that this item was added to the agenda due to the BBC Panorama documentary which was aired on 12th April 2021. The group is very aware that there are many other areas which pollute our waters and NRW, Welsh Government and many others are working on those issues. Sewer overflows have become a very topical subject; however, it should not distract from the Sub Group's work on agricultural pollution. Zoe said that an NRW briefing note has been compiled and will be sent out to the Sub Group members following the meeting.
21. Bob Vaughan, NRW explained that urban sewerage goes into a combined sewer including the dirty water from households and rainwater in most cases. In bad weather events, the sewers become surcharged with rainwater (clean water going into a dirty water system), which can cause problems. If the pressure in the system increases dramatically it could cause the water to back up into houses and homes at lower level if there were no pressure releasers within the system like Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). Effectively, the water builds up within in the pipes and fills up the chambers which are located at certain points and eventually will overflow if the amount of water in the pipe increases over a certain level. The system is designed to do that, and the diluted polluted water then discharges into surface water courses which would also be high due to rainwater. Bob explained that this is a system that has been around for decades but as the frequency of storms increase and the climate changes, the over spills are happening perhaps more frequently than before. There has been a huge investment over the last 40 or 50 years to try to control the CSOs. Historically, the locations of CSOs were often unknown because they were built over such a long period of time. However, the vast majority will be consented so that they are only allowed to spill a certain number of times a year and only when it's raining. Bob stated that if CSOs are discharging at other times it means that there is a problem within the system.

Bob said that the Panorama programme identified where there were failures in the system. NRW have been working closely with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and other water companies across Wales like United Utilities in the North East and Seven Trent. Organisations have been investing in these CSOs to make sure they know where they are, have been operating correctly, know how often they spill and do not have too many problems from them. Bob acknowledged that as a consequence of the Panorama programme, it has highlighted that there are further investments still needed to be made and NRW and the water companies are working hard to try and address this challenge. For some of the CSOs it is a matter of a maintenance issue and we will need to go out there to sort them. Most of the CSO issues identified are self-reported, so rather than NRW going out to find them, the water companies have notified to say there are problems with certain sites and then NRW monitor them.

Bob gave an overview of a graph which showed the substantiated pollution incidents impacting surface water by sector from 2018-2021. The graph showed that agriculture and the water industries had the highest number of substantiated pollution incidents. Bob said that NRW are putting in equal effort to try and reduce incidents from all of the industries represented on the graph.

The NRW briefing note gives a background of the CSO system. Bob said that NRW have also been working with DCWW on projects to try and remove rainwater from the system which increases the capacity of the sewer.

22. Ruth Johnston, NRW noted that partnership working is the only way to deliver work to address the need to remove surface water from sewers. Not having surface water in the foul sewer is the best outcome for everyone including the water companies as it means there is less variability in the flows being treated so the performance of the treatment system is more reliable.
23. Chris Mills, WEL suggested that the graph may be slightly misleading because incidents are one thing and their environmental impact are another thing. Chris said he enquired with NRW a little while ago as to what the environmental impact of CSOs is. Chris explained that the best way of looking at the environmental impact of CSOs is to look at the causes of WFD failures which should be looked at alongside the incident graph. Chris mentioned that the degree of environmental impact caused by CSOs is not yet clear. There is a high dilution effect so under normal circumstances if they are discharging as they are consented to do, then generally the environmental impact is relatively low. Chris said that this is not to be confused with the aesthetic, because the documentary showed photographs of fish swimming around within unpleasant sanitary products etc.

Chris mentioned that NRW must address the fact that this is a consented process and there is clear evidence to suggest DCWW are not always in compliance with their CSO permits in terms of discharges from sewage treatment works. Chris suggested that NRW will be challenged to answer to what degree they are aware of this situation and if they are aware it is important that they are honest and outline what actions were taken. Solutions to these problems are not overnight solutions and requires the long process of getting investments for sewage treatment works. Chris mentioned that it was portrayed that NRW is not in control of its own regulatory process, but he acknowledged that NRW was not invited to participate in the documentary.

Bob Vaughan, NRW confirmed that NRW was not involved with the documentary but will be providing a response to the programme.

Chris mentioned that the documentary did not mention that the substantial investment that is required comes from every water charge payer, which is the reality check and could cost billions.

24. Sarah Jones, DCWW said she would share links for the group to access additional information regarding CSOs to add more context from Dŵr Cymru's point of view:

- Dŵr Cymru CSO Statement – 12 April 2021:

<https://corporate.dwrcymru.com/en/news-media/2021/combined-storm-overflow-statement>

- More information on CSOs from Dŵr Cymru:

<https://www.dwrcymru.com/en/our-services/wastewater/combined-storm-overflows>

Sarah said that DCWW are aware of the potential impacts of their operations on the environment and they take their environmental performance very seriously. Sarah mentioned that from a regulatory point of view, there is an enormous amount of cross-organisational work which goes on between DCWW Waste Team and NRW.

Sarah advised that the DCWW wastewater network has over 380 wastewater assets across Wales and over 370,000 kilometres of sewers, which go around all the communities they serve. There is a historic sewage network of combined sewers which makes it complicated and an enormous task. The weather is also a huge factor and we have certainly seen extreme weather patterns over the last 12-months, where 2020 was the third wettest year on record with nine named storms throughout that year. Sarah explained that the systems were not designed to deal with these types of intense weather events and therefore it is almost inevitable that there will be increased frequency of some of the CSOs have operated. DCWW are always investing to try and meet these challenges of climate change. The CSOs operate and are designed to be permitted and DCWW recognise that with changing environmental legislation and customer expectation more is needed to be done and DCWW are up for the challenge. However, there is significant additional funding required and will take a long time to deliver, for example to retrofit all the network will be an enormous long-term undertaking to remove the CSOs and could potentially cost between £9-14 billion. Sarah said that DCWW are already heavily investing and since 2015 they have invested £1.8 million to improve monitoring of the CSOs. DCWW have added thousands more monitors since 2017 and over 90% of the CSOs have spill monitors, which is well above the industry average. DCWW acknowledge that there are more areas and to be done to improve and are working on these.

25. Bernard Griffiths, FUW declared that prior to the meeting he had sent an email requesting a response from the water companies to give context on the CSOs and Sarah has done that in her discussion. Bernard mentioned that the problems in the agricultural sector are similar in the utilities industry, where the problems are only going to be resolved through investment over a long period of time. For example, investing in more slurry storage on farms and investing in the development of the CSO network.

Bernard said that there is currently a multi-sector approach on how the utilities companies work with the agricultural sector to get rid of sewage sludge. However, now that the NVZ regulations are coming in and there will be nitrogen limits imposed on farmers, what are the utilities plan to do when they cannot discharge the sewage sludge as easy as they can currently.

Sarah Jones, DCWW said that there is a Biosolids Team within DCWW and would encourage any farmers with concerns regarding this, to talk to their contact within that team. This is heavily regulated so each farmer which is a part of the landbank would have a contact to talk to. Sarah suggested that she could invite a Biosolids team member to a future meeting to give a presentation about biosolids and what DCWW are doing.

AP April 05: Sarah Jones, DCWW to invite a Biosolids team member to a future meeting to give a presentation.

Bernard mentioned that he is interested to know what the possible problems are that the new regulations pose for the water utility companies if they are not able to dispose of the solids as they normally would have. Bernard explained that the current state is that 97% of farms would be able to take on some sewage sludge but in the future they will be limited by the 170kg/ha of nitrogen limit and will therefore have to prioritise their own on-farm manures. Bernard asked whether this will pose a problem for the utility companies, as FUW feel that this is a multi-sector issue.

Bernard mentioned that the graph showing the substantiated pollution incidents suggests that the number of incidents from the Agricultural sector have been decreasing over the period from 2018-2021 compared to those from the Water Industries, but yet the agricultural sector has been struck with huge new regulations affecting every farmer in Wales.

26. Elizabeth Franks, Hafren Dyfrdwr asked Bernard whether his query request was specifically for DCWW or whether he wanted a full Wales wide picture. Elizabeth offered to respond and pull some information together from Hafren Dyfrdwr as they cover a large percentage of the Powys area. Bernard confirmed that the request was sent to the Secretary of the Sub Group for it to be included on the meeting agenda for all water utilities and other group members to comment on.

AP April 06: Bronwen Martin, NRW to share email request from Bernard Griffiths, FUW with Elizabeth Franks, Hafren Dyfrdwr.

AP April 07: Elizabeth Franks, Hafren Dyfrdwr to review the email request from Bernard Griffiths, FUW and provide any additional detail.

AP April 08: Sarah Jones, DCWW to send Bronwen Martin, NRW the website links with additional information regarding CSOs, for them to be circulated to the group and included in the meeting minutes.

27. Kate Snow, United Utilities clarified that United Utilities do not have any sewer assets in Wales.

28. The Chair thanked the group for the valuable and interesting discussion on CSOs.

Item 5 Terms of Reference and Email Preference

29. The Chair noted that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the WLMF Sub Group require updating and suggested that they can be reviewed and updated by the next meeting. The group were asked for any feedback and comments.

30. The Chair mentioned that a number of the Sub Group's 'Objectives' require reviewing.
31. Elizabeth Franks, Hafren Dyfrdwr noted that the current ToR refer to the River Basin Liaison Panels, which no longer exist.
32. Dennis Matheson, TFA recalled that the list of members outlined in the ToR is currently out of date. The Chair agreed that membership of the Sub Group has altered since the last review and this will be reflected in the update.
33. Marc Williams, NRW suggested that the ToR could be re-drafted and then circulate it to the members for review before the next meeting.

AP April 09: NRW to re-draft the Terms of Reference document and distribute it to the members for review prior to the next Sub Group meeting.

34. Marc Williams, NRW explained that membership of the Sub Group has altered since the implementation of the GDPR under the Data Protection Act 2018, therefore the group were asked to confirm whether they are happy to share email addresses with the other Sub Group members or whether they would prefer the blind copy function to be applied to group emails going forward.
35. No objections were received regarding sharing email addressed within the group.

Item 6 Farming Connect Update

36. The Chair handed over to Einir Williams, Farming Connect to provide an update on the longer-term communication plan regarding The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021.
37. Einir shared a presentation with the group which outlined the Farming Connect support and communications plan. Einir gave an overview of what Farming Connect have got planned, including:

- **Fact Sheets:**

- 'Advice and Guidance on the Agri-Pollution Regulations' (hard copy sent to all RPW registered farmers)
- 3 Initial Factsheets:
 1. Overview of Regulations
 2. Measures from 01/04/2021 in more detail
 3. Advice and Guidance to Front Line staff (stakeholders welcome to share)

(more in development)

- **Webinars:**

- e.g. slurry storage capacity, nitrogen loading, risk maps, record keeping etc.

- **Surgeries:**

- Hour long One-to-one session (fully funded)

38. Einir mentioned that the existing skills programme includes:

- E-learning
- e.g. Farm Nutrient Management, Farmyard Composting, Reducing Agri-Pollution, Slurry Management etc.
- Accredited Training Courses
- 80% Funded – “The safe use and application of slurry”
- ICT Training
- One to one mentored support
- ICT Workshop
- Workshops on digital tools such as AHDB slurry Wizard

39. Einir described the more practical support that Farming Connect provide including:

- Mentoring – peer-to-peer support
- Demonstration Network - Key messages & Best Practice
- Advisory Service:
- 80% Funding one-to-one, 100% Funding in groups. Topics include:
 1. Nutrient Management Planning
 2. Nitrogen Management Planning
 3. Manure Management Planning
 4. Infrastructure (slurry and silage storage)

40. Einir outlined the ongoing Farming Connect provision which includes:

- CPD for Farming Connect Staff
- CPD for delivery framework consultants
- Farming Connect Technical Publication

41. Einir mentioned there are some elements which are under discussion, including:

- Workshops/Seminars/Events

- Possible topics include:

1. Risk Maps
2. Nutrient Planning
3. Construction of new stores
4. Tenancy issues
 - Online Nitrogen Calculator

42. Einir concluded by assuring the members that this is not the final plan and that Farming Connect are open to suggestions and ideas.

43. The Chair thanked Einir for the presentation and asked the members whether they had any questions, comments or suggestions.

44. Bernard Griffiths, FUW noted that under the seminar list there was a topic regarding 'construction of new stores' but recommended that 'extending existing stores' should also be included as this is often very difficult for farmers, rather than building from new. Einir said that Farming Connect will be co-working with Stakeholders to develop this area by taking their ideas and views onboard.

45. Ed Davies, NRW suggested that when Farming Connect have factsheets and organised events available then they should make the Sub Group members aware so that everyone can help signpost farmers to the Farming Connect website to access this information. This will help get the information to a wider audience and hopefully people will feel less concerned and know that support is available.

AP April 10: Farming Connect to provide details of upcoming organised events and factsheets to Ed Davies / Bronwen Martin, NRW so that this information can be shared with the Sub Group organisations and then circulated to their members.

46. Sarah Hetherington, NRW agreed that sharing the information will help but consistent messages are also important to prevent any conflicting information being circulated. Sarah asked whether the group thinks the information in the presentation covers everything that is needed and suggested that perhaps having some time for the group to have a think and provide some feedback would be helpful. Sarah acknowledged that silence in a meeting does not always mean that people agree with something.

The Chair agreed and encouraged the members to respectfully challenge and question things that the group share, in order to gain further clarity or greater understanding of topics.

AP April 11: The group to review the information in the Farming Connect longer term communication plan and provide any feedback or comments to Einir Williams, Farming Connect.

47. Sarah Jones, DCWW queried whether the Stakeholder Pack could help get the consistent messages out. The information within the Stakeholder Pack could then be used over and over without the information being misunderstood. Sarah mentioned that

Einir's presentation was great but asked how farmers will be able to find that information themselves. Einir said that Farming Connect will use the same channels that they always do including social media, 'What's on' emails to registered customers and the support services on the Farming Connect website.

Sarah Jones, DCWW suggested that based on the reality that was discussed earlier in the meeting, perhaps there is opportunity to change things up a little to ease the panic in the industry and reach more people. Sarah recommended spending a little more budget on advertising in different places than usual to try to reach more people. Einir acknowledged Sarah's suggestion and agreed this could possibly reach those that Farming Connect are not currently engaging with like non-members. Einir mentioned that Farming Connect have about 11,000 registered businesses as members but that number is short of the total farming businesses in Wales and Farming Connect are only permitted to directly contact those that are registered members. Einir asked for the members of the Sub Group to help Farming Connect reach those farmers which they are not currently engaging with.

Bernard Griffiths, FUW wondered that given many farmers spend numerous hours in the cab, how much information is shared through Radio Cymru, Radio Wales etc. Einir Williams, Farming Connect said that Farming Connect regularly release Press Notices to Welsh Press but are at their mercy in terms of what they print. Einir said she is willing to look into targeting those media outlets that Bernard suggested.

Katy Simmonds, NRW asked whether all of the Farming Connect training and webinars would be open to farmers who are not Farming Connect members. Einir advised that farmers will need to register in order to be able to attend Farming Connect events and training but noted that the registration process is very easy and there is no charge.

48. The Chair said that this meeting has a common theme of organisations collaboratively working to help share information. Zoe suggested that perhaps WEL can also help share messages as many of their organisations also work with farmers.
49. Nichola Salter, NRW asked that all of the Sub Group members check what they are saying and refer to regulations with the correct title and check definitions of the regulations because a lot of people including consultants and advisors are not reading the guidance. Nichola advised that everyone in the group should read the guidance, look at the phased implementation stages, look at the definitions, look at the flow diagrams in Annex 1 and use the correct terms when producing communications.
50. Sarah Hetherington, NRW recalled that a proactive approach was used for the Priority Catchment work with Menter-a-busnes where Welsh Government helped to send letters out to all farm businesses which were registered with Welsh Government not just those engaged with Farming Connect. Sarah suggested that a similar postcard scheme could be adopted for this Farming Connect work. Einir said that the first factsheet which signposts farmers to the different avenues of help is going to go out to all RPW customers and is a huge help in reaching more widely.
51. Creighton Harvey, CFF proposed that one barrier to communication is that some of the farming unions are still in campaigning mode, with potential judicial proceedings about to take place. Creighton advised that campaigning should not take any part in that process because that is a matter for a judge who will consider what is put before them.

Currently some of the negative messages regarding the regulations are still being put out there and farmers are being frightened by that. People need to realise that if you are going down the judicial review route then campaigning will not do any good, because the judge will consider the evidence not the campaign.

52. Katy Simmons, NRW asked whether the information in the Farming Connect Factsheets can be or has been reviewed by NRW prior to them being published. Eimir confirmed that the content of the Factsheets is reviewed by the Welsh Government Policy Team to get approved prior to printing and publishing.

Item 7 Recap of ongoing projects

53. The Chair invited members to share updates on existing ongoing projects that their organisations are working on in relation to agricultural pollution.

54. Ed Davies, NRW briefly recapped some of the ongoing work that NRW are involved with, including:

- Review of the Water Standards
- Nutrient Loading Project
- Sediment pollution risk mapping
- River Dee LIFE project
- Restart circulating a WLMF Sub Group Newsletter

55. Fraser McAuley, CLA mentioned that the CLA have produced a Water Strategy and are willing to share details shortly.

AP April 12: Fraser McAuley, CLA to share details of the CLA Water Strategy.

Fraser said that the CLA have recently hosted a series of member focussed webinars and are looking to hosting one in May regarding the regulations. Fraser said he has been speaking to a colleague in the Midlands region who is conducting a survey for people in Herefordshire in the Wye catchment and the work they are doing in terms of mitigating runoff and pollution into the River Wye. This work is in conjunction with NFU and is to try and combat against this area becoming a water protection zone in the future. Fraser said this work is currently being developed and can feedback in future meetings.

Nichola Salter, NRW asked whether the Wye work in England is through Farm Herefordshire or whether the farming unions are conducting it. Fraser said that it was initially established by Farm Herefordshire but there was not a huge amount of demonstrations from the unions about what people were doing, so this is a way of highlighting some of the good things happening.

56. Dennis Matheson, TFA said the TFA are working on finding solutions to tenant's problems in complying with the new regulations and participating in the forthcoming SFS scheme. Dennis mentioned that he met with Marc Williams and Bob Vaughan,

NRW to discuss the Clean Air Plan. Dennis noted that he has had a discussion regarding the Tan Lan Embankment and the flood defences in the Conwy and the subsequent tenancy issues in this area.

Item 8 Farming Connect Catchments for 2021

57. Ed Davies, NRW advised that the list of Farming Connect Catchments for 2021 have been decided and were outlined in the Update Paper which was circulated prior to the meeting. These chosen catchments are based on the scoring system and feedback received. Ed said that due to Covid there is likely to be virtual events but hopefully there may be an opportunity for face-to-face events later on.

58. Einir Williams, Farming Connect sent though two Farming Connect Engagement Reports ahead of the meeting; one for 2018 events and the other for the first 5 events in 2019 (the report for the rest of the events will follow by the next WLMF meeting). Einir gave a brief overview of the reports and explained the content, including:

- Total = number of businesses registered in that catchment which engaged a certain amount of times
- Advisory = number of businesses in that catchment which used the advisory service
- Skills = number of individuals which participated in skills training in that catchment
- Events = number of individuals which participated in events in that catchment

Einir mentioned that Farming Connect carry out evaluations for everything including how the event, advisory or skills training went, has the participant learnt something new and if so what was it, has the participant changed their farming practices and if not what are the barriers to changing their practices.

Ed asked Einir how easy is it to analyse this feedback and information to help identify commonalities and understand the barriers to change so that they can be removed where possible. Einir said that it is probably possible to assess it but most often the main barrier to change is cost, particularly with the Nutrient Management Planning.

59. Sarah Hetherington, NRW mentioned that embedding messages is key. Some people engage for different things like Nutrient Management Planning advice or Infrastructure advice. Sarah said that some people come for livestock advice and wondered whether they are getting the messages that this group are wanting to promote. Sarah explained that changing management of livestock will also impact other decisions, like manure management planning; so are these future messages embedded within the Farming Connect advice. Einir said she is confident that the key messages are embedded within the technical advice on livestock, manure management plans, soil management plans and nutrient management etc. because the consultants are subject to ongoing CPD in order to stay on the Farming Connect framework.

60. Chris Mills, WEL asked what the baseline is and what needs to change. This project seems to rely on quite a passive approach and relies on farmers coming forward. There

is a high probability that those people who most need to come forward, are not coming forward so how far is this approach going to get the project. Einir acknowledged that there is a part of the industry which Farming Connect have not been engaging with but would welcome them with open arms. Einir recommended that this is where Farming Connect rely on the support of the stakeholders to help communicate with those farmers who are hard to reach.

Nichola Salter, NRW said that NRW often direct those hard to reach farmers towards the Farming Connect services.

61. Sarah Hetherington, NRW gave a background of some previous work undertaken with Farming Connect where a baseline survey was produced which included set questions regarding awareness of water issues. The questionnaire showed more engagement and awareness around the areas of concern which this group focusses on.
62. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that engagement with farmers often works best using the 'carrot' approach rather than the 'stick' approach. For example, previously, for farmers to qualify for the farm business grant they had to attend an evening session and consequently they turned up in their droves.

Item 9 Any Other Business

63. The Chair informed the group that NRW are looking for three new Board Members and asked the members to encourage any good candidates to apply. The closing date for applications is the end of April 2021.
64. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that there was an action from a previous meeting for Marc Williams, NRW and Chris Mills, WEL to meet and discuss alternative ways to analyse incident data. Bernard asked if this meeting has been conducted and whether there is any feedback to share. Marc Williams, NRW said that the meeting was held a few weeks ago with Chris Mills, WEL, Ed Davies, NRW and Caroline Orr, Afonydd Cymru.

AP April 13: Marc Williams, NRW to provide a summary of the meeting regarding possible alternative methods of analysing incident data.

65. The next Sub Group meeting is scheduled for 17th May 2021.

Close meeting