



# Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

## Minutes

**Title of meeting:** Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF)

**Location:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**Present:**

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Bob Vaughan, NRW

Ruth Jenkins, NRW

Dom Driver, NRW

Marc Williams, NRW

Sarah Hetherington, NRW

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru

Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru

Anthony Geddes, Confor

Mared Jones, Wales YFC

Martyn Evans, NRW

John Browne, NRW

Bernard Griffiths, FUW

Simon Bareham, NRW

Fraser McAuley, CLA

**Additional Attendees Present:**

Dr Ceris Jones, NFU (Item 3)

Clive Walmsley, NRW (Item 4)

Jon Westlake, Welsh Government (Item 6)

Emelia Bevan, Welsh Government

Dr George Fisher, Coleg Cambria

**Secretariat(s):**

Bronwen Martin, NRW

**Apologies:**

Tim Kirk, Confor

Mark Alexander, Welsh Government

**Item 1 Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest**

1. The Chair welcomed all to the Microsoft Teams meeting noting apologies.
2. The Chair welcomed Mared Jones (Wales YFC Temporary Director) and Dr George Fisher (Coleg Cambria) to the meeting
3. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.
4. The group were reminded that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of capturing the minutes and the digital file will be deleted once the meeting minutes have been compiled.

**Item 2 Minutes from the last meeting and any matters arising**

5. The Group reviewed the minutes from the March 2020 meeting and approved as a true record. The meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed they will be published on the NRW website
6. Bronwen Martin, NRW shared her screen and the group reviewed the Action Log. The following comments were made:
  - Feb AP02: 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
  - Mark Alexander, WG was not able to join the meeting today. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru noted that this has been a long-standing action point which was about a rapid evidence review which the ERAMMP team were meant to be undertaking regarding tree planting in Wales. Rachel said she

initially brought this up, but the request has lost the point of its message now and suggested that the action point is closed.

- Dec AP03: Share information on NRW positions regarding future scheme developments to the members - refers to the positions that were being developed to feed into Welsh Government as part of the development of the Agricultural White Paper and the Sustainable Farming Scheme
- Bob Vaughan, NRW said that NRW are still providing a lot of information to Welsh Government as they develop the SFS. Bob suggested that a workshop could be organised for the WLMF members to run through some of the joint views and gather some ideas. Ruth Jenkins, NRW agreed that there is an opportunity to have a collective meeting with Welsh Government and have a session at one of these meetings. Ruth asked whether NRW have shared the consultation response with the WLMF members. Bob said yes, this information has been shared.
- Dec AP07: Add Sustainable Drainage to the agenda for the next meeting.
  - Bronwen Martin, NRW said that the Update Paper mentioned that a Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) workshop is proposed as a joint session with members of the Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) and the Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF) to attend. Any suggestions to help inform the content and structure for the proposed session including case studies, please provide any comments to Bronwen. More details will be provided shortly. Provisionally, this workshop is anticipated to take place after the summer in perhaps September time. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru said she pleased to see that this piece of work is being taken forward. Rachel asked how the workshop will fit with the Welsh Government's review of the regulations, can it inform Welsh Government's review and can it be made sure that there is an integrated approach. Bob Vaughan, NRW agreed with Rachel's comments and reassured Rachel that the appropriate people from Welsh Government's Water Branch are invited to the workshop.
- Dec AP08: Zoe Henderson and Chris Blake to brief Sir David Henshaw of the report and could this be a priority under Green Recovery.
  - Zoe said that an update has been given to Sir David Henshaw. Green Recovery will be added to the agenda for the September meeting.
- March AP02: Bob Vaughan, NRW and Tim Kirk, Confor to discuss 'unmanaged woodland' and see what can be done
  - John Browne, NRW mentioned that there are plans with Welsh Government for grants and funding to be available for this. The SFS should also address this. John will contact Tim Kirk and discuss this topic.
- March AP 03: Huwel Manley, NRW to connect Anthony Geddes, Confor with the Mid Wales Area Statement team to help develop this and trial forestry resource.

- Anthony Geddes, Confor said that there is a platform for this, and the action can be closed, and any updates can be provided as and when.
- March AP06: Bob Vaughan, NRW to talk to Sarah Williams and provide an update on Green Recovery to the group at the June meeting
  - Bob said he has been in contact with Sarah, but an update is not available yet. Marc Williams, NRW said he has also contacted Sarah to let her know that Green Recovery will be added to the agenda for September and perhaps Sir David Henshaw could be invited to the meeting.
- March AP09: Bob Vaughan to find out a timeframe for the phosphate work and share with the group.
  - Bob said this work is still on going with a lot of progress. Ruth Jenkins, NRW suggested a more detailed update on the project can be given in the NRW Updates (Item 8). Ruth mentioned that there are a number of work packages set up, a project has been set up, an oversight group which has been set up by Welsh Government, meetings with developers and working with a sub group of the oversight group which is specifically looking at planning and planning issues. Ruth mentioned that there is an update in the guidance which is publicly available on the NRW website.
- March AP12: Bob Vaughan, NRW and Anthony Geddes to discuss the Woodland Creation document with John Travis and get engagement on how far the document can be taken.
  - Bob and Anthony said they are yet to meet with John but will feedback at the September meeting.

7. The Chair asked the members if they have anything, they would like to bring up regarding the information in the Update Paper. Zoe mentioned that the Update Paper included a summary of the WLMF Survey responses and thanked the group for their feedback, thoughts and ideas on how to move the WLMF forward. Zoe said that she would like to come back the survey responses at the next meeting and suggested the group could consider whether to expand the membership of the WLMF to include other organisations.

8. No other comments were received regarding the content of the Update Paper.

### **Item 3 NFU Net Zero Presentation**

9. The Chair welcomed Dr Ceris Jones from NFU to the meeting and thanked her for agreeing to present to the group. Zoe also thanked Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru for helping arrange for Ceris to join the meeting.

10. The Chair handed over to Dr Ceris Jones, NFU to discuss the role of agriculture in reducing emissions and achieving Net Zero.

[NFU Achieving net zero: meeting the climate change challenge](#)

11. Dr Ceris Jones, NFU thanked the group for the invitation to present at the meeting. Ceris began by giving a brief overview of the presentation by answering some questions including what 'Net Zero' means, what it looks like, can we get there, how can it be put in practice and what can others do to help achieve Net Zero.
12. Ceris said that there is often some confusion about what Net Zero is. Net Zero is about balance; trying to balance the emissions from British Farming, reducing emissions and utilising the capability to store carbon in lots of different ways. By reaching the Net Zero 2040 goal, we can also make a significant contribution to helping the UK reach its own economy wide target.
13. Ceris mentioned that emissions from agriculture are very different from other sectors of the economy and the NFU have tried to build some of that thinking into the goal and make use of the fact that our emissions are much more cyclical than other sectors.
14. Ceris explained that the NFU Net Zero goal relies on activities, actions and policies across three pillars:
  - Pillar 1 - perhaps the most important one which is about agriculture committing to reducing its own emissions, this will be done by:
    - Boosting productivity and reducing emissions
  - Pillar 2 - improve, maintain and long-term:
    - Carbon storage: sector's ability to store on farm through soil, hedges or trees
  - Pillar 3 - take carbon out of circulation for as long as possible:
    - Renewables and the bioeconomy
15. Ceris mentioned that these things are great in theory, but they are tricky in practice. How farmers put these pieces together will not be the same for every farm business, as they are all so different. This is a business of marginal gains and certainly in productivity, there is no one measure which would deliver largescale reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, a mix in these measures will be needed as appropriate for the farming system to deliver the goal. Importantly, it is not about reducing our ability to produce food.
16. Ceris used a graph to explain how we can get to the goal. The graph showed two bars; one indicating the emissions from UK agriculture in 2017 and the other indicating how the goal will be achieved by the three pillars. Pillar one of productivity improvements helps deliver roughly a quarter of the goal, Pillar two of storing carbon on farmland also helps deliver roughly a quarter of the goal and Pillar Three of bioeconomy-based measures helps deliver roughly half of the goal. Ceris said that it is important to note that this is proof of concept as it shows in theory, we can get to Net Zero. It is also important to recognise that this is based on what we know now, and as new technology and science comes along, the balance between the three pillars is likely to change with time. It is not an expectation that every farm will get to Net Zero, but it is only by working together across the sector that the goal will be achieved.

17. Ceris mentioned that NFU have an active Net Zero steering group which has been doing lots of work thinking about relevant policy and how we can help our members. It is astounding that how many farmers want to know what they can do and where they are starting from. Some of the steering group members have been testing the range of freely available on-farm calculators to try and point other members in the right direction, understand which calculators might be better for some sectors than others and pointing out some of the pitfalls in the calculators.
18. Ceris said that there is also a Science Advisory Panel of national and internationally renowned experts who have agreed to help us on our journey.
19. Ceris said that a booklet of 26 Net Zero case studies was published last year which included examples across England and Wales, in different sectors and at different scales. The NFU have tried to answer some simple questions about what farmers are doing and what hurdles have overcome. Importantly it is a journey, so the booklet includes information about what these farmers intend on doing next.
20. NFU have been encouraging farmers to get involved through a campaign called '#pledge2040' and an online map where members can pledge their farm to the map and let us know what they are already doing and what they intend on doing. NFU want recognition for farmers for what they are currently doing and highlight that farmers also want to do more.
21. Ceris concluded by saying that NFU has been clear in that they cannot do this alone and it will rely on everyone playing their part. Policy also has a part to play and should be across all government departments. Research and development can help find solutions for farmers in 10-15 years' time. The supply chain and consumers need to be pulling in the same direction. There is a huge opportunity because attitudes are changing, and farmers want to know where they are starting from and what can they do. It is important to having a conversation about how we can all play our part and work together to create the conditions to support the goal. There are two consistent messages received from farmers include confidence and capital and the question we should all be asking is how we can help farmers overcome these hurdles.
22. Zoe thanked Ceris for the excellent presentation and for clearly highlighting the challenges.

## **Item 4 NRW and Climate Change Presentation**

23. The Chair handed over to Clive Walmsley, NRW to present the challenges of Climate Change from an NRW perspective.
24. Clive began by mentioning that NRW manages about 7% of the land area of Wales and is therefore a significant land manager in Wales. Clive said he will discuss how NRW went about understanding their net carbon status, the National Peatland Action Program and the Woodland Creation Program.
25. Clive said that in 2015/2016 NRW began trying to understand the carbon status of NRW's Estate and potential for decarbonisation. The Carbon Positive Project was created to calculate NRW's Carbon Status which involved looking at two main areas;

emissions as an organisation including activities and management and looking at carbon sequestration on the estate.

26. In order to estimate carbon stocks and sequestration on the NRW estate, a clear understanding of the different habitats was required. NRW manages around 143,000 hectares and the vast majority is woodland (around 80%).

27. Clive said that it was broken down to focus on key habitats:

- Woodlands
- Bogs and fens
- All habitats on deep peat soils

28. NRW commissioned work to produce estimates based on the best available emissions and sequestration data:

- Forest Research – CARBINE woodland carbon model
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology – peatland condition and emissions mapping

29. The NRW woodland estate comprises:

- >108,000 hectares of commercial forest (Welsh Government woodland estate leased and managed by NRW)
- 1600 hectares of non-commercial woodland on nature reserves

30. Clive explained that by using the Woodland Carbon Model, it was possible to project over time the likely carbon stocks and sequestration.

31. Regarding Peatland:

- Used the Wales unified peat map developed by CEH for Welsh Government (deep peat >40cm)
- Total area: 11,345 hectares on the NRW owned and managed estate
- Deep peat by habitat type:
  - 50.6% conifer plantation
  - 9.1% blanket bog
  - 6.7% mosaic habitat
  - 5.8% wet modified bog
  - 5.2% raised bog

32. CEH calculated the annual emissions from Peatlands:

- NRW peats emit 99,653 t CO<sub>2</sub>e/year
  - Near natural blanket and raised bogs are net sequesters
  - Current science suggests all other peat habitats are net emitters

33. Restoration scenarios were explored:

- 4 restoration scenarios modelled
- Even if all peat habitats were rewetted and reverted to near- natural condition the estate would still be a net emitter

34. NRW's net carbon status:

- Our net carbon status is the balance of our emissions and sequestration
- We emit less carbon from our operations than is captured annually (our sequestration) by habitats on the estate – this gives us a net carbon positive status

35. Clive mentioned that the National Peatland Action Programme has been established for just over a year. This programme supports the restoration of peatland habitats not just on the estate but the whole of Wales in terms of peatland action. Roughly a third of peatland in Wales is in a near natural condition and are likely to sequester carbon. A third is semi natural. About a third of peatland in Wales are modified which is responsible for about three quarters of peatland greenhouse gas emissions.

[National Peatlands Action Programme, 2020-2025](#)

36. The National Peatland Action Programme comprises:

- Five-year programme with annual funding settlements
- 6 priority action themes
- 3 major cross-cutting themes
- 600-800 ha restoration per £1M / year – emphasis in year 1 on afforested peatlands and eroded/draind peatlands.
- 6 staff
- Key emphasis on partnership working through Area Statement process and NRW's grant support process.

37. Clive gave an overview of the National Peatlands Action Programme including the Peatland restoration delivery programme 2020-2021 and project locations.

38. Clive briefly discussed NRW's Woodland Creation Programme and mentioned that the key to this programme is getting the 'Right tree, right place, for the right reason'.



39. There are a number of elements to the Woodland Creation Programme including:

- Alternative Funding
- Regulation Review
- Extending the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
- Plant!
- Glastir verification service
- National Forest
- Urban trees and Green Infrastructure

40. Clive discussed the carbon in Welsh seas and intertidal habitats ('blue carbon') and highlighted where the stocks of carbon are and areas for potential carbon sequestration.

41. Clive concluded with the following key points:

- Understanding organisational habitat stock is key to understanding the emissions, sequestration and opportunities for better management or land use change.
- Protecting, restoring and rewetting all peatlands a key priority with the National Peatland Action Programme (NRW) able to offer some support.
- Woodland creation is the main opportunity in terms of land use change to store carbon ensuring getting the right tree in the right place.
- Where relevant, maintaining and restoring inter-tidal habitats needs to consider too. Considerable potential for enhancing blue carbon.
- Other habitats provide lesser potential but can contribute e.g. urban street trees, hedgerows, etc.
- Managing or creating habitats provide multiple benefits for biodiversity, communities and the wellbeing of individuals – important that it's not all about carbon.

42. Zoe thanked Clive for his interesting presentation which represents a tremendous amount of work NRW are doing.

## **Item 5 Confor Climate Change Presentation**

43. The Chair handed over to Anthony Geddes to discuss the work Confor are doing to support their members combat climate change.

44. Anthony shared a presentation with the group discussing climate change mitigation from the forestry industry perspective.

45. Anthony mentioned that the forestry industry is multi-faceted as is Confor. There are many purposes and benefits of modern forestry, including:

- Boosting the economy
- Soaking up carbon
- Creating rural jobs
- Good for farming
- Reducing flood risk
- Places to roam
- Homes for wildlife

46. Confor is known as a 'seed to sawmill' organisation and membership includes businesses and individuals in every sector of the forest industry. Roughly 85% of the Glastir woodland planners are members, along with the majority of sawmill in Wales. Over a third of Welsh forest owners are also members as well as most of the medium and largescale nurseries in Wales.

47. Sustainable forestry and sustainable timber use are at the heart of the Confor organisation, with climate change mitigation and sustainable management of natural resources heavily embedded in the work they do. However, the biggest challenge they currently face is the sustainable use of natural resources.

48. Anthony outlined the following figures:

- The UK remains a major importer of timber; 80% of the overall UK timber consumption is imported and 60% of UK construction materials is imported
- Global demand for timber is set to rise threefold in the next 20 years
- Timber prices have tripled in 5 years (they have almost doubled in the last 12-months)
- Currently, the USA is buying timber from Finland and Scandinavia after falling out with its partners in Canada
- Russia is shutting down its export of timber with the recent ban on sawn material and current negotiations for a ban on exporting unprocessed material
- The UK is heavily timber dependant and continues to place increasing demand on limited resources.

49. The presentation showed a diagram which indicated four axis (Single Purpose, Conservation, Multipurpose and Utility) with overlapping beneficial outcomes (Green Gold, Wild Woodlands, Native Networks and Woodland Culture).

50. Anthony explained that before a tree is planted, land availability should be addressed, and we should understand how it can be aligned with the sustainable future of Welsh farming. Confor have taken the view that before they plant a tree, they need to recognise how large-scale change, development and creation is going to work. Confor are looking at forestry and landownership by drawing upon models established elsewhere in the world and developing a series of potential paths for those who want to plant.
51. Anthony outlined other factors to consider including availability of trees to plant, physical numbers, plant health and plant origin. Once these factors like land availability and plant availability have been considered, we then have to focus on the creation of healthy managed multipurpose woodlands.
52. Confor have been involved with climate change mitigation for as long as it has been established but are now actively involved in things like climate change agreements which were issued in about 2008 and have been renewed since.
53. Confor was one of the first groups to look at the industry they represent and acknowledge that we need to be more proactive.
54. Confor has developed a programme called 'Wood CO<sub>2</sub>st Less' with their daughter company Wood for Good. This has been really effective and has undertaken a few different projects including a Carbon Project. The Carbon Project will analyse a lifecycle database and provide updated carbon information on wood products.
55. Anthony summarised the benefits of timber use including:
- Stores CO<sub>2</sub>
  - Renewable, reusable and recyclable
  - Biodegradable
  - Workable
  - Attractive
  - Readily substitutes more harmful products/materials
56. Confor also undertakes a number of other activities. Confor are working towards the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) with Wood for Good along with a variety of other stakeholders to represent the forestry sector and its ability to provide solutions to problems presented by climate change.
57. Confor lead an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on forestry and tree planting in Westminster, which works to ensure forestry and wood industries can benefit the UK now and in the future. The APPG works to secure the future supply of timber and woodlands and ensure that they are managed responsibly and sustainably.
58. A successful forestry industry and wood processing sector is positive for the economy, but it must also be positive for the environment, biodiversity, recreation and health.

Given the value of timber, the volume of consumption and the current international market; it could be suggested that the future is under threat.

59. Anthony said that in Wales, Confor host the Cross Parliamentary Group which tries to increase the understanding of woodlands, forestry and timber within the Assembly. Topics discussed have included tree planting, the Westminster manifesto pledge to see how it can be effectively and fairly delivered in Wales.
60. Anthony concluded by outlining that the work that Confor does is multifaceted and stretches globally, nationally and locally.
61. The Chair thanked Anthony for his presentation and sharing the many levels of Confor's work.

## **Item 6 Welsh Government Presentation**

62. Zoe handed over to Jon Westlake to present the Welsh Government's climate change plans for the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) to help the sector reach net zero.
63. Jon said he would briefly talk about the background and then discuss some more of the detail.
64. Jon said that Welsh Government have a range of targets that they have to address in many aspects of life. For the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) there is a whole range of targets and objectives which are derived from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Paris Accord and Welsh Governments recent commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050.
65. Over the last three or so years, a lot of policy analysis has been done and we have realised that a systems change is needed to address the climate change issues associated with agriculture. The reason for this is that over the last 40 or 50 years the big drive for agricultural policy within government has been intensification; cheap food and food security. In many instances this has resulted in the production of externalities that do not feature in a farm business plan like high levels of nitrate and phosphate in some of the most valuable water courses, the generation of ammonia that has a potential significant effect on public health and carbon emissions.
66. Roughly of the 13% of Wales' emissions that are associated with agriculture, we are talking about a lot of methane, losses from eroded or damaged peatland and organic soils and other emissions like the use of tractors and other energy inefficient machinery and equipment and those from largescale cooling in dairy.
67. Jon explained that for Welsh Government, this poses some significant policy questions. Theoretically, it would be possible to regulate for all of this, but it would be an extremely difficult process and it is better to incentivise wherever possible. Although this is on the assumption that there is a set of baseline regulations above which we can provide additionality through funding.
68. Jon said that in the case of the proposed SFS, it was apparent early on that farming has the possibility to produce a whole set of different outcomes but because farming is a set of integrated actions across a range of land, in effect when you pull one lever it

opens many gates. Therefore, the integrated nature of agriculture means that whatever is proposed in the SFS scheme will have a range of potential effects, one of which can be climate change mitigation.

69. In terms of mitigation, roughly half of the emissions are related to methane and livestock. There are some technical solutions which we can adopt relating to genomics and using different types of feed which will help us to bring those emissions down. Jon mentioned that as long as livestock farming remains a significant part of agriculture in Wales, there will be associated enteric emissions. So how do we tackle this in the context of Net Zero?
70. Jon said that we also need to address the emissions which are associated with peat and lowland organic soils and it was good to hear Clive discussing NRW's peat programme. Jon mentioned that Welsh Government intend to support Welsh farmers to restore peatland on their farms to a favourable condition. In different locations this incentivisation may be more significant than others.
71. Emissions from artificial fertiliser is quite a significant element of the remaining agricultural emissions. Welsh Government would like farmers to undertake Nutrient Management planning on a field by field basis and only applying any form of fertiliser to a degree necessary to grow whatever it is in that field. Jon suggested that if this is implemented properly in a large enough area of Wales, it will result in a significant reduction in artificial fertiliser use.
72. Jon said that alongside this and as part of the same approach, Welsh Government would also like to see a much more diverse range of swards across livestock farms in Wales with a significant proportion of nitrogen fixing legumes within them as well as a range of other species of plant. Jon explained that there are a few reasons for this:
- Nitrogen fixing:
    - The opportunity to substitute to a certain extent artificial fertiliser
    - Proposing a land sharing approach rather than land sparing
  - Adopting a more diverse sward approach:
    - Largely native plants will result in an uptake in biodiversity
    - Bring down some emissions
73. Regarding sequestration opportunities, there is a very significant tree planting target here in Wales. In the short term, by 2030 the UK CCC says we need an extra 43,000ha of trees. Welsh Government would possibly like to see more agroforestry introduced on farmland in Wales and integrating those trees with the agricultural operation. As part of the biosecurity approach, we would like to have perimeter hedges that are sufficiently wide enough to prevent, cows in particular, from engaging in social contact with their neighbours. Veterinary colleagues suggest that this could be a helpful approach in terms of reducing the transmission of disease from farm to farm but it is also good biosecurity method and is has a benefit of carbon sequestration as well.

74. Regarding opportunities for tree planting in the wider environment, Welsh Government are talking to the Brecon Beacons National Park for example about reinforcing existing woodland and reintroducing woodland to areas where it once was as part of their landscape change programme. We will have to accept that with the scale of action that the UK CCC require, there will be landscape change. Forestry policy colleagues are talking to NRW and others about how all of this might work and how we integrate change into the existing landscape.
75. Welsh Government are focussing on peatland/saltmarsh/lowland/fen/organic soil restoration and will need to talk to a whole range of farmers about how we might make that happen and how we might pay for it.
76. The current approach is to pay for the delivery of outputs rather than the cost of input, which is fairer to farmers and creates a market for agricultural products. Welsh Government are currently in the process of establishing values for all of the outcomes which they seek.
77. In terms of the system change and how that might work, Welsh Government are very clear that they will need to provide substantial support and advisory service or a knowledge transfer and innovation service. As this is potentially a very big change and a long-term change, Welsh Government recognise that they will need to support farmers as they travel through this change period. Jon explained that the ambition is to have the Agricultural Bill in place with a transitional period where the current income support payment system is tapered down, and the new scheme introduced in its place.
78. Jon clarified that all of this is still in the proposal stage until they finish the economic analysis of the proposals they are putting forward, which is likely to take some time due to complexity of it all.
79. Zoe thanked Jon for talking to the group and for summarising what is a massive subject.

## **Item 7 Climate Change Panel Discussion**

80. The Chair welcomed the group to question the panellists.
81. John Browne, NRW mentioned that at previous WLMF meeting it was suggested that there are a number of carbon calculators available. John asked Ceris through the work the NFU and the working group are doing, whether a range or a specific carbon calculator will be recommended to get some consistency in the process. Ceris said that generally members would want to see a single unified calculator but that is a huge and expensive job, not only for its construction but for its continual update. In the absence of anything driven by policy, the market has filled the gap. Ceris said they are working with the developers of the three main calculators to try and improve what is already available and to provide feedback that members have already provided. Ceris suggested that possibly there is a role for policy to create a better standard or framework in which calculators operate. Jon mentioned that carbon calculation will be an integral part of the early appraisal undertaken on a farm for the proposed SFS. The reason for this is so that a conversation can be had with individual farmers regarding moving towards Net Zero, what their current footprint is, how they can reduce it and what the likely economic benefits will be for doing so.

Ceris mentioned that DEFRA is possibly going to commission a research project to compare the different calculators to see if the differences are consistent and try to get some transparency in the process. Ceris mentioned that there are also some more simple introductory calculators available like the AHDB online system which can help farmers.

Sarah Hetherington, NRW said that reviewing calculators was looked at as part of the Climate Smart Agriculture and adaptation which was funded by Welsh Government. Sarah asked Jon whether the things he is planning builds on the work undertaken. Jon said they have talked with Bangor University about the calculator they have developed but it is very technical and not very user friendly.

Dr George Fisher, Coleg Cambria said that having some consistency with calculators is important. Calculators will not be static and will always need to progress according to the latest research and thinking, for example we are all debating the global warming potential of methane. George asked how do you handle these calculator developments at a farm/NFU/government level, do we need a forum to agree and capture how these calculators develop. Jon suggested that constant policy review may become 'the norm' because as things change, we are going to have to recalibrate what we seek from farmers in return for the money that government provides. If new and improved models come along, we will have to appraise and decide whether to stick to what we have or look for something new. This will be an ever-changing process with the inventory also changing over time. Having a single calculator will help simplify the scheme design and help simplify the reporting requirement but it is always better to have better data. Ceris agreed with Jon's comments regarding the new calculators that come along. Ceris said that a single national calculator could work but we may struggle with the international comparison and guidelines.

Anthony Geddes, Confor mentioned that the domestic budget is a third smaller than it was in 2018 and asked Jon where we will realistically see those gaps and what is the current conversation about creating opportunity for private sector investment such as opportunity for land sharing, productivity and carbon. Jon explained there are some initial thoughts which are by no means policy. Jon mentioned the accumulative cost over time for the current model for tree planting is very significant. The purpose of the support provided to farming is about the integrated response. DEFRA and Welsh Government policy colleagues are looking at whether there is an opportunity to bring woodland planting into the replacement for the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). This would be an interesting idea, but it would take some time and effort to make it happen.

82. Zoe asked Dr George Fisher to provide more information about the project that Coleg Cambria is working on. George said that Coleg Cambria is at the very start of setting up a Net Zero Farm Project based at Llysfasi Campus. The funding is part of the Growth Deal funding which is administered by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB). There are two main elements to the project in terms of developing facilities:

- A new build at the college: a centre to cater for education, knowledge exchange and innovation regarding all things linked to Net Zero farming
- The farm at Llysfasi: dairy unit, sheep (upland and lowland) and beef

George mentioned that the current timescale is to start the development in the middle of 2022, so that it is opened in September 2023. The vision is for a Net Zero North Wales and supporting this vision through knowledge exchange not only with the current farmers and land managers but also with the next generation. George said they would like to demonstrate and trial different approaches and technologies. The three pillars of this project align with what Ceris said earlier on, but particularly regarding confidence and information to help farmers reach the Net Zero target. George said that a survey is currently being developed and he would like to forward it to members of the WLMF when it is published in a few weeks' time.

Zoe thanked George for joining the meeting and introducing the project to the group.

83. Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that all of the calculators are only going to be as efficient as the data which is fed into them. The current BPS scheme in Wales gathers a whole wealth of information for every holding in Wales and wondered what plans there are to use this information for the new SFS going forwards. Jon said that where that data can be used it will, but it is subject to GDPR conditions. Jon explained that whatever system is developed it must be able to feed back into the system we have around BPS, particularly for mapping and landholding. The White Paper outlined that we are very interested in building in some of the remote sensing opportunities and be able to map them onto our existing terrestrial databases.
84. Dennis Matheson, TFA said that George Eustice's carbon tax on imports is not a good idea as there would also be a carbon tax for 'home produced' things. Therefore, it would be better to pay people for low carbon produces with an incentive. As far as tenants are concerned, the main carbon capture is trees and as mentioned trees are a problem for tenants. Even if a tenant plants a tree with permission, the landlord is likely to find a way to get any payments back. Although, hedgerows are a possibility for tenant farmers. Tenants may also have an opportunity for extensively managed livestock in the uplands (e.g. managed grassland). Dennis reminded the group that there was a study conducted by HCC and Bangor University which showed that extensively grazed upland in the UK had a carbon footprint of only a quarter of the world average for that setting. Dennis suggested that any advice and support for rolling out these systems is not dependant on farmers belonging to the new scheme, because if tenant farmers cannot enter into the SFS they also will not have access to the grants or the advice. Dennis also mentioned that changes to tenancy law are unlikely to happen and initially thought that agri-forestry might be a way around having to get permission to plant trees however, Dennis has since found out that many tenancy agreements include a clause that states the tenant cannot grow anything for more than one year. Dennis said that if tenancy laws are not going to be changed, there needs to be other things included in the SFS which tenants can access.

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru said that if tenant farmers are unable to access the new Sustainable Farming Scheme, then the scheme design will have failed. Tenant farmers must be able to access the SFS on equal terms. Jon agreed with Rachel's comments but said that Welsh Government are working hard with the TFA and lawyers to make sure this is not the case.

Dennis mentioned that tree planting statistics get published next week. Tree planting also needs to be looked at from a worldwide perspective. If trees are planted at the envisaged scale, it will take a lot of agricultural land out of production. Jon said there



are lots of arguments about off-shoring agricultural production and off-shoring other things. As mentioned earlier on by Anthony, we currently off shore most of our carbon issues in the construction sector by importing timber from overseas. We will have to balance things out. Jon mentioned that there was one area which Dennis did not mention is soil carbon or soil organic matter and the proposed scheme includes looking after soil health and soil quality.

## Item 8 NRW Update

85. Bob Vaughan, NRW provided an update on topical issues. Prior to the meeting, an Updates Paper was sent to members with some brief information.

86. **WLMF Survey:** A summary of the survey responses was provided in the Update Paper. It was suggested that this topic is added to the next meeting agenda for the group to discuss how they would like to move the group forward and work collaboratively to deliver actions.

**AP June 01: Bronwen Martin, NRW to add the WLMF Survey responses to the September meeting agenda.**

87. **Fora Updates:**

- [Wales Land Management Forum \(WLMF\) Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution](#)
- [Wales Water Management Forum \(WWMF\)](#)
- [Wales Fisheries Forum](#)
- Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG)
- [National Access Forum for Wales](#)

Bob mentioned that there are a few members who also attend some of these fora meetings. Bob asked whether the group would like to engage with some of the other fora which do not have as much contact with the WLMF. Bernard Griffiths, FUW asked if there is any information from the Access to Inland Water Group which has become increasingly important recently. Bernard mentioned that is a Sub Group of the National Access Forum. Bob said that more details and information regarding this group can be provided. Bernard asked whether a short summary can be provided regarding what the group is about and what they are currently dealing with.

**AP June 02: Bronwen Martin, NRW to source an update on the Access to Inland Water Group.**

88. **Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS):** A joint workshop session is proposed to discuss SuDS, with both the members of the Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) and Wales Water Management Forum (WWMF) to attend. Including members of both Fora in this session would ensure that a joined-up approach to the topic is taken and prevent any duplication of discussion.

Any suggestions are welcome to help inform the content and structure for the proposed session including case studies. More information will be shared shortly.

**AP June 03: Members to provide any suggestions for the proposed SuDS workshop and email them to Bronwen Martin, NRW.**

89. **Larch Statutory Plant Health Notice:** The update paper included brief information regarding 'What must I do if my larch is served with a Statutory Plant Health Notice?'

More information on tree health can be found on the following websites: Welsh Government ([Phytophthora ramorum Strategy for Wales](#)); NRW ([Tree Health in Wales](#)); Forest Research ([Ramorum disease](#)); and GOV.UK ([Prevent the Introduction and Spread of Tree Pests and Diseases](#)).

Zoe asked what a member of the public should do if they see an ash tree with what they suspect is ash dieback. John Browne, NRW said that ash dieback is an endemic disease which is windborne and is everywhere, but it is not notifiable. The biggest issue if you are a landowner is just being aware of it and the different progression stages of the disease, so if someone sees it, they should talk to the local landowner. Bob said that NRW has had meetings Local Authorities and Welsh Government about taking this forward as it is a big issue. John said that Welsh Government advice on the management of Ash and ash dieback is about 75% complete, from what he heard from Chris Jones and this is the guidance that people will have access to see what steps they should take as a landowner.

Dominic Driver, NRW mentioned that sadly if you spot an Ash tree, it is likely that it will have ash dieback. Dominic said that the [Natural Resources Wales website](#) advises that people can use the [Forest Research Tree Alert Tool](#). If anyone identifies a dangerous tree it is worth reporting to NRW.

90. **SoNaRR:** The second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR2020) for Wales was published in two phases from December 2020. The full report was launched in March 2021, following our first WLMF meeting of the year which was held on 1st March. The [State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\) for Wales 2020](#) and all of the chapters including the technical evidence and assessment of evidence needs are on the NRW website.

91. **Beavers:** Bob mentioned that NRW have decided to grant the licence for the release into the enclosure of up to 6 beavers at Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve. In reaching this decision we have considered all relevant matters and legal requirements, and that the licence will ensure that the appropriate level of environmental protection is provided.

Further information can be found on the NRW website - [Enclosure of Eurasian Beaver at Cors Dyfi - Decision Document](#).

Dennis Matheson, TFA mentioned that there is a project which involves riparian planting and releasing beavers in Scotland or Northumberland. Bob said the beavers at Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve have been released into an enclosure.

92. **SAC Rivers:** A project has been set up in NRW for the SAC rivers water quality issue. Delivering the SAC Rivers project, investigating and tackling phosphate pollution for rivers including the Wye, Usk, Cleddau, lower Teifi and the Dee, is part of the NRW Corporate Plan for 2021-22. A Project Board has been set up with Ceri Davies as the Senior Responsible officer and Ruth Jenkins as the Project Executive. Rhian Thomas is now the Project Manager.

Three workstreams have been set up to undertake the work required:

- Workstream 1 (Lead: Gideon Carpenter) is working on providing advice and position statements.
- Workstream 2 (Lead: Sue Hearn) is on the water quality standards and compliance assessments.
- Workstream 3 (Lead: TBC) is on water quality improvements. We also link in with a fourth workstream (Lead: Helen Wilkinson) on monitoring on evidence.

There is also a Senior User Group with representatives across the relevant functions in NRW and geographic areas that meets regularly. The Welsh Government Oversight Group met for the first time at the end of May.

NRW has published updated Advice to planning authorities at the end of May which is available on our web site. This gives advice for planning authorities regarding developments that may increase phosphorus in river SACs and are subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) - [Natural Resources Wales / Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting phosphorus sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation](#).

Bob mentioned that there is work ongoing behind the scene regarding source apportionment and an update can be provided at a future meeting.

93. **Colliery Spoil Tips:** Bob mentioned that internally there is a lot of work ongoing with Welsh Government, Coal Authority and Local Authorities on the problems that resulted from the floods of 2020 and then again last winter. There were slips at two or three major colliery waste sites and other types of waste sites. NRW have been working with the Coal Authority to establish standard risk assessments. The interest for NRW is the impact that these slips may create but also because of the number of tips located on Welsh Government Woodland Estate sites. Currently, NRW has reassessed all of the NRW managed sites and the Coal Authority has assessed all of the sites across South Wales and a report will be published in the near future with a common risk assessment of all of those sites and identifies which of the sites work will be undertaken on.

Welsh Government asked the Law Commission to look at the legislation around tips and a consultation is due to be launched shortly on changes which may be needed to make the operation and management of these sites more effective in future.

## Item 9 Update from other WLMF Members

94. **FUW:** Bernard Griffiths mentioned that the FUW have been lobbying MPs regarding the Australia/UK trade deal. FUW representatives attended a DEFRA stakeholder meeting to discuss the fertiliser policy development which fits in with lots of the discussions at today's meeting. Bernard said it is worrying that people are pushing for whole-farm

solutions. If there is a road where all farmers will be pushed down, it will mean that the premium for niche farmers will disappear.

95. **NFU Cymru:** Rachel Lewis-Davies mentioned that the context that Welsh farming is currently operating in is very worrying. NFU Cymru is in the process of working to develop a policy position on tree planning which should be available in the coming weeks. This is about farmers being the solution to some of the targets that Welsh Government and UK CCC is establishing. It is about how trees can be integrated effectively into the farming system rather than replacing them. Unfortunately, we have already seen the loss of farms to tree planning wholesale from investors from outside of Wales who have no interest in the land or the community. Rachel mentioned that NFU Cymru are trying to build links with NRW and would like to request an updated list of regional contacts. Martyn Evans said that Gavin Bown has recently been appointed as Head of Mid Wales Operations and Sian Williams and Martin Cox now job share the Head of North West Operations role. Martyn said they are in the process of updating the chart and could circulate it to the group.

**AP June 04: Bronwen Martin, NRW to provide an updated list of NRW regional contacts to Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru.**

96. **Confor:** Anthony Geddes mentioned that Confor will be circulating dates for the Cross-Party Parliamentary Group (CPPG) in the Senedd shortly. Anthony said he would be interested in connecting with Rachel to discuss the paper NFU Cymru are developing regarding the policy position on tree planning. Anthony said that Confor recognise there are historic failures in tree planting and that absentee landowner was a very significant factor. This is a piece of work that Confor are trying to find sensible alternative methods and ways to engage with landowners and communities to ensure they remain involved and viable parties.
97. **CLA:** Fraser McAuley mentioned that CLA are trying to set something up in the Senedd which will focus on rural productivity and an update can be given at a future meeting once it progresses. Fraser said that CLA are hosting a meeting with DEFRA and Welsh Government at one of their members' farm which will hopefully be at the start of next month and he will provide a brief summary to the group following the meeting. In relation to COP26, the CLA are collating information from their members regarding climate change and will provide a document of case studies.
98. **TFA:** Dennis Matheson mentioned that the TFA Cymru are working with Welsh Government regarding tenancy law and access to schemes. The TFA are still waiting for the FAQ document to be published with information for tenant farmers regarding the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

Dennis mentioned that he has obtained the details for NRW contacts who are involved with access. Dennis intends on contacting these people to discuss the issue of scrambler bikes within the countryside. Martyn Evans, NRW mentioned that NRW are working with the South Wales Police and the Fire and Rescue Services around campaigns to stop and slow down illegal off-roading. Martyn suggested that Dennis should talk to the police but perhaps start with Gill Wells in Mid Wales because she will be working with the local Land and Assets Manager, who in turn will be in contact with the police there. Zoe suggested perhaps this topic could be added to the agenda for

the next meeting. Martyn agreed and said that a representative from the police could be invited along with NRW's Land and Assets Manager for Mid Wales.

**AP June 05: Bronwen Martin, NRW to add illegal off-roading to the agenda for the next meeting.**

Dennis said he asked who the new Environment Minister for Welsh Government; Julie James MS for Climate Change and Lee Waters is the Deputy Climate Change Minister whilst Lesley Griffiths remains as the Rural Affairs Minister.

Dennis mentioned that growing crops suitable for rewetting peatland in the fens is known as 'paludiculture' and was not sure if any members had heard of this before.

## **Item 10 WLMF & Area Statement Workshop**

99. Marc Williams, NRW gave a brief overview to the proposed Workshop. Marc said that there has been a lot of work ongoing behind the scene with the Area Statement Leads in preparation for the workshop.
100. Marc mentioned that NRW have received some concerns about the length of the workshop. Unfortunately, with the current restrictions, meeting face-to-face in June will not be possible. We can explore shortening the workshop duration to 1 hour and a half or two hours maximum. If we want to explore the option of having the event face-to-face then it would have to be at a later date, but it is unsure when that would be currently. Marc said we want to get as much as possible out of the event so it is up to members to decide how they would prefer the event to take place.
101. Bernard Griffiths, FUW suggested to push the event down the line and have it as an in-person meeting. This would suit their organisation due to the current pressures they are under.
102. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru said she appreciates all of the work that has gone into the event. Rachel said that an hour or an hour and a half is about the maximum time they have felt is feasible for virtual events. Rachel suggested that the timing of the event in June is not really the best time and agreed with Bernard for the event to be postponed until it can be held in person.
103. Dennis Matheson, TFA said it is essential for more farmers to come to the event. Marc said this event is more for the representatives of the organisations to attend.
104. Martyn Evans said that the work already done in preparation will not be wasted. It does sound sensible to have the event at a later date so that it can be held in person and replicated in a similar way to the previous event. Martyn suggested maybe September time if the situation allows.
105. Marc said that we would have to look at the restrictions and the NRW policy for meeting. We can review it and provide an update on the situation.
106. Zoe asked restrictions and policy allowing, would September be a convenient time for members. Rachel agreed that later in the summer would be better. Marc confirmed

that attendance of multiple representatives from the WLMF organisations would be ideal.

107. Bob Vaughan, NRW suggested that the itinerary and information can be sent out ahead of time so that everyone is aware of the objectives. Marc agreed and said that he would like to give people plenty of time to think about the subject, questions, theme and the breakout groups.
108. Rachel asked about the projects which was mentioned in correspondence. Marc confirmed that this was in reference to possible case studies or speakers who could provide an introduction related to the theme at the event.
109. Zoe suggested that if the Area Statement team are looking for answers to specific questions then perhaps, they could organise a short meeting or contact members via email. Marc said he would raise this the team. Rachel volunteered to participate in a short discussion regarding this event or Area Statement questions.

## **Item 11 Any Other Business**

110. The next WLMF meeting will be held on Monday 6th September 2021.
111. Zoe thanked everyone for participating and for all of the guests who joined the meeting.

## **Close meeting**