



# 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> March 2022

**Present:**

Zoe Henderson, NRW (Chair)

Ruth Jenkins, NRW

Marc Williams, NRW

Sarah Hetherington, NRW

Dennis Matheson, TFA

Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru

Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru

Anthony Geddes, Confor

Martyn Evans, NRW

John Browne, NRW

Bernard Griffiths, FUW

Tim Kirk, Confor

Andrew Chambers, Welsh Government

**Additional Attendees Present:**

Miriam Jones-Walers, NRW (Item 3)

Eifion Jones, NRW (Item 3)

Keith Davies, NRW (Item 4)

Rhianne Jones, NRW (Item 5)

Evelyn Over, NRW (Item 5)

**Secretariat(s):**

Bronwen Martin, NRW

**Apologies:**

Bob Vaughan, NRW

Vicky Jones, Welsh Government

Fraser McAuley, CLA

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

1. The Chair welcomed all to the first meeting of 2022 and noted apologies.
2. No declarations of interest were raised in respect of Agenda items to be considered.
3. 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**

4. Once the meeting minutes have been reviewed and formally agreed they will be translated and published on the NRW website. The Group reviewed the minutes from the November 2021 meeting. There were a few clarifications pointed out which will be included. The minutes were approved as a true record.
5. There were no outstanding actions to discuss.

***AP March 01: Bronwen Martin, NRW to circulate the response to Dennis Matheson's trail hunting query.***

6. The Chair asked the members if they have anything to discuss regarding the information in the Update Paper. No comments were received.

## **Item 3 Commemorative Woodland site at Brownhill**

7. The Chair welcomed Miriam Jones-Walters, NRW to the meeting to provide an overview and update regarding the Commemorative Woodland site at Brownhill.
8. Miriam is a Specialist Advisor, Land Stewardship within NRW's Estates Planning team. Miriam said that the Commemorative Woodland Project is part of a wider programme called 'Maintaining the area of woodland on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate'.

9. In 2019, Welsh Government declared a climate emergency and outlined targets for woodland creation in Wales – around 43,000 hectares of woodland by 2030 and 180,000 by 2050 to help Wales meet the carbon emission reduction targets. NRW contribute to this in a number of ways but the primary way of achieving these targets is by farmers and land managers creating woodland. As land managers for the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, NRW feel that the land that they manage contributes to the national effort for woodland creation. NRW has also committed to compensate for the woodland cover lost on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.
10. Miriam shared a graph indicating the trends/forecast of woodland area on the NRW managed estate from 2013 to 2043.
11. Miriam gave an overview of how NRW will reach the targets. Purchasing farmland is one way that NRW are doing this, but it is only one element. NRW does already have some areas of unplanted land within ownership or management control that they will look at for suitability of planting. NRW are also looking to work with others or public bodies and look at other public land that might be suitable for woodland planting. Where NRW does buy land, they are transparent and try not to be aggressive competitors in the market. Miriam described the NRW approach to purchasing land. Firstly, they make sure that they could create woodland on that land in line with the UK Forestry Standard and secondly, they consider what objectives could be achieved (e.g., timber production, multiple benefits etc).
12. Last year, NRW worked with Welsh Government on the Commemorative Woodland Project. The First Minister wanted to do something positive and create a lasting memorial for those people that have sadly lost their lives to COVID-19 and also create a symbol of the way the people of Wales have coped with the crisis. Miriam mentioned that one of the things that has been evident throughout is how important safe, accessible green spaces are to everyone, so a woodland is a really fitting memorial.
13. The Brownhill site is approximately 94 hectares and was chosen for a number of reasons including good accessibility. There are also a range of things the site could deliver in terms of creating woodland. Miriam showed some maps of the site which indicated each of the 3 lots that NRW bought and described the difference between each of them.
14. Miriam mentioned that NRW are consulting on the plans for the site at the moment but will likely include public access, a car park, and benches. There is a consultation event at the local village hall for the local community to engage with, along with an open consultation on Citizen Space regarding the plans for the rest of the site. Miriam showed some photos demonstrating what some of the land currently looks like.
15. John Browne, NRW asked about the management of the site. Obviously, there is a focus on woodland creation, but ultimately it is about how you manage this site thereafter that is important for a medium to long term land use change such as woodland creation. Beyond the initial contact with key stakeholders, residents, and neighbours, what sort of things will NRW do to ensure the long-term management of the site. Miriam said the programme has been set up to establish the woodland and in forestry terms it is five years, although it takes a lot longer than that in reality for woodland to establish. Essentially, it will be looked after by a project team for five years and then it will become part of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and be

managed by the local area teams. This is part of the consultation, and the project team will be speaking to local communities. Miriam said NRW hope there is interest in being involved in long-term management, but it likely depends on exactly what those designs look like in the end.

16. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru asked who makes the decision to buy the land and does it go to the NRW Board before the purchase is sanctioned. Miriam said the overall programme has been to the NRW Board in terms of what the ambition is and the project team will continue to share information with the Board throughout. We have got approval for 350 hectares of new woodland creation to compensate for renewable energy developments, but it will go to the NRW Board to discuss how that goes forward in the future. Miriam said regarding the decisions on a site-by-site basis, we have an internal process within NRW which is essentially a business case where we consult with various teams to build up a case about whether we want to buy this land, what will be the objectives be, what are the constraints, what are the opportunities etc.
17. Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru asked whether the approach following discussions with the First Minister around a commemorative woodland for COVID-19 was subject to public consultation. Miriam said no, this was an initiative. Rachel suggested that some communities may feel that they would like to have something commemorative in their area instead of just 3 or 4 sites across Wales.

Rachel asked whether it would be possible for NRW to share their policy on land acquisition. Miriam said yes, we can share our sort of approach to the land we buy.

***AP March 02: Bronwen Martin, NRW to share information from Miriam Jones-Walters, NRW about NRW's approach to buying land.***

Rachel asked if Miriam had any statistics on what proportion of the Tywi catchment is already owned by or already part of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and afforested. Miriam said she did not have those off the top of her head.

18. Zoe asked whether the commemorative woodland would cover the whole 94 hectares, or it is just site six. Zoe recalled that the permanent grazing area would then be used to create the woodland and the car park. Miriam said the area at the bottom of the site is 15 hectares and plans are bit further ahead for that area. It will be a native broadleaf woodland and has better existing access and is better setup for creating an amenity woodland. Miriam said they are not defining areas for 'commemorative' or 'not commemorative', but there is a lot of work to do on plans for the remaining areas.
19. Anthony Geddes, Confor acknowledged that a huge amount of work is being undertaken to create this site. Anthony mentioned the guidance for Glastir Woodland Creation type programmes and queried whether NRW are delivering this for £2000 for the plan and less than £5000 for all of the environmental survey work and planning work because that is what the private sector had to do. Anthony asked if and how this fits in with the National Forest as there seems to be duplication and raised concerns about using limited resources involved in 'pet projects'. Miriam said we do lose woodland area on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and so the starting point is that it is important that we compensate and contribute positively to the national tree planting effort. Miriam said the scale of that in terms of national effort is very small and regarding resources within NRW, Miriam leads the programme with one other full-time

person, and it is funded by option fee from renewable energy developments along with some other funding streams.

20. Regarding the consultation, Martyn Evans, NRW mentioned that NRW have written to the local MSs, MPs, some of the key counsellors and leaders and the Chief Executive of Carmarthenshire County Council with some follow up calls as well. There is a community engagement event this Wednesday at the community hall. NRW have indicated what we think is possible at this site but there is an open consultation.
21. Ruth Jenkins, NRW recalled that Rachel said many other communities may not think the 3 or 4 sites meet the need for their community. Welsh Government are also doing other things and supporting individual and community tree planting through other projects. Ruth asked whether Rachel felt that there was a missed opportunity to link some of those things and asked whether people are voicing suggestions or opportunities to do things at different scales within communities in terms of commemorating families that have been impacted through COVID-19. Rachel said she does not presume to know what people or communities would want in respective parts of Wales but suggested that is why an early consultation process is important.
22. Ruth mentioned that we need to be careful not to conflate sort of different issues. There are lots of different outcomes that can be achieved through woodland creation. The commemoration aspect is achieving particular outcomes for Wales.
23. Dennis Matheson, TFA mentioned concern regarding Welsh Government buying land for woodland which will be in competition with private equity groups that will be aggressively buying land for the same purpose at inflated prices. This could encourage land owners to sell off bits of land which is a threat to tenancies because there is no safeguard.

## Item 4 National Park Designation

24. Keith Davies, NRW joined the meeting to provide a brief overview of the National Park designation process.
25. Keith began by offering to arrange a bespoke discussion with any of the WLMF members organisations over the coming weeks and months.

***AP March 03: Bronwen Martin, NRW to share Keith Davies, NRW contact details with the members.***

26. The [Welsh Government: Programme for Government 2021-2026](#) included the commitment to designate a new National Park to cover the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley. NRW is the designating authority and is responsible for the designation process. If the evidence determines that it merits being designated as a National Park, then Welsh Ministers are responsible for agreeing and amending the Designation Order which is made at the end of that process.
27. Designating a new National Park is a once in a generation law process that involves a substantive area of work which will include engaging with stakeholders and communities. NRW have been undertaking the pre-commencement work and making sure that internal governance is in place so that the NRW Board and other teams can

make decisions during various stages of the process. Stakeholder groups will also be formed at a senior and technical level so that there is input and engagement from those who will be affected by the proposal.

28. NRW have also been refreshing and updating the guidance for undertaking a new landscape designation which will be made available in due course.
29. As part of the early stages, NRW have been meeting with the relevant Local Authorities on an informal basis to introduce them to the work and the process.
30. Keith showed some maps indicating the location and extent of the designations.
31. Keith summarised the criteria which would need to be satisfied:
  - Does the area as a whole enclosed within the proposed boundary meet the criteria and purpose of designation as a National Park set out in the 1949 Act?

See in particular Section 5(2) which defines National Parks as:

- Extensive tracts of country
- Of natural beauty
- Which afford opportunities for open-air recreation, having regard to their character and position in relation to centres of population

And for those reasons it is especially desirable to designate to:

Conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage; and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities.

32. Keith concluded by giving an overview of the designation process which he demonstrated by using a step-by-step diagram.
33. Rachel asked whether there was a broad timescale for the consultation stages as it would be useful for NFU Cymru to note in their work programme when they would need to engage with their members on the consultations. Keith said he could provide an indicative forward timetable and welcomed an in-person meeting to discuss how local members can be involved and engaged with to support the process.

Rachel noted that this decision seems to have already pre-empted in the Welsh Government Programme for Government so there is a clear steer that Welsh Government want this to happen. Rachel questioned whether there was any point in gathering evidence, consulting, and engaging when the decision already appears to have been made. Keith said that NRW can only proceed along the various stages of the designation process if the evidence actually supports the case. NRW will be running a process to collect the information and the evidence on the views of different stakeholders and will then need to come to a judgment at the various stages of the process whether or not to proceed through the formal designation as a National Park. Ultimately, it cannot be designated if the evidence does not substantiate the case for it being a National Park.

34. Anthony asked what would be the earliest point that people could engage in the design process. It would be important to understand what NRW's remit is and what they are trying to curate, promote or develop in these areas. Keith said there are criteria which NRW have to consider including the evidence, but also bring in the wider forces for change which deals with the opportunities in terms of future land use and land management. NRW welcomes any conversations at the various stages of the process to discuss how you and your members would want to engage.
35. Tim Kirk, Confor mentioned that some people in Wales are struggling to deal with the various designations and then hear of the bureaucratic need to establish another National Park. Tim questioned whether another National Park is really needed. Anthony said hopefully that is a question which goes into the consultation process and people can get a response. Indeed, it does not preclude people managing land appropriately whether it is designated or not designated. Anthony said there are some bigger challenges things like Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), mandatory exclusions, Glastir Scheme and other potential sensitivities.

## **Item 5 Presentation: NRW contribution to the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)**

36. Rhianne Jones, NRW joined the meeting to provide a summary of the ongoing internal NRW work contributing to the Welsh Government Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).
37. NRW's interest in this is around our duty to deliver Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR). About 90% of the land is going to be potentially affected by this new policy. NRW will have to work closely with private owners, farmers and land managers to deliver this across Wales. Rhianne summarised some of the drivers, nudges, and outcomes regarding the delivery framework for land NRW does not manage.
38. To achieve SMNR we need to influence NRW Grants, Flood Risk Fund and Welsh Government Capex for Water Issues. The potential SFS pot of money to support sustainable land management and SMNR is around £250m.
39. NRW set up its own internal EU exit program and have been running a project for the last two years looking at this topic. The internal SFS engagement project set up a new way of working using a matrix. The purpose of this was to make sure that NRW was drawing together broad knowledge in a very targeted and integrated way. It is structured around having a core group of members and then that core group is the direct conduit into relevant teams in Welsh Government. There is also a technical group underpinning that, which draws from all the relevant areas of interest in terms of policy, operations, or regulation. All areas of the business that have an interest in this area of work then sit in the technical group and are there to represent their views and input their technical expertise. When Welsh Government come to NRW with specific questions it means that we can go back to them with a single voice from NRW.
40. The interlinked matrix way of working is proving very efficient and effective because it is highlighting lots of areas where there are crossovers in terms of the different interests for one policy team. The whole project is being run under an 'official sensitive' barrier

which means NRW can have some quite challenging and early initial conversations with Welsh government

41. Over the last 18 months, NRW been delivering an entire scheme of internal deep dive and workshops with all the different ecosystem services areas and policy areas of interest across NRW. Welsh Government have also joined in with those conversations. NRW have shared remarks and a broader depth of knowledge with Welsh Government and have got some of those early conversations happening behind the scenes. An output of the internal collaboration included developing a centralised data set which has been called 'SFS intervention spreadsheet'.
42. At this point in time, NRW have got a very detailed but still high-level picture of potentially the types of things that the scheme could be looking at in terms of how to deliver Sustainable Land Management and SMNR. That is then being tested in terms of all the different policy areas and business areas in NRW.
43. Rhianne said NRW want to talk to external stakeholders with the intention of starting to have those early discussions and start sharing some of our thinking. Detailed discussions about your own areas of concern and seeing where there are areas of commonality will also be important.
44. Rhianne said this work has now been shared with Welsh Government and gave an outline of some of the Welsh Government/NRW timescales. Rhianne gave an overview of NRW's SFS project timetable including internal and external facing actions.
45. Dennis said it is good that there is cooperation between different departments and Welsh Government. Dennis recalled seeing papers from a stakeholder meeting in February where there was a presentation from Keith Watts, Welsh Government on the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Dennis mentioned that there is a project is developing to have the 'status of soils' as one of the payments for public goods in the Sustainable Farming Scheme. It is proposing that a Nutrient Management Plan as a public good for which you will be paid but this is already included in the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations. Dennis asked whether Welsh Government are now saying that they want Nutrient Management Plans to be a public good that you get paid for, rather than a Regulation where you get penalised if you do not do it. As far as tenants are concerned, TFA was not invited, but they are proposing a five-year contract to improve soils which will immediately cut out most of farm business tenancies in Wales. Rhianne said at the moment one of the key areas of interest for NRW is the fact that we do not actually have any baseline regulation around soils or a cohesive picture around soil management. So, it is a gap that has been identified. Soil is tied into things like climate change, soil health and Nutrient Management Planning. NRW have asked Welsh Government to identify it as a key priority for the scheme, but people are grappling with exactly how soil should be treated.

## Item 6 NRW Updates

46. The Chair mentioned that an Update Paper was circulated to members prior to the meeting which included links to further information. Zoe asked if there were any feedback or comments regarding the items in the document.



47. In addition to the topics covered in the Update Paper, Ruth Jenkins, mentioned the Coastal Path 10-year Anniversary. NRW are working with Welsh Government who have set up a small group alongside the 10-year anniversary of the Coast Path to do a review of the Coastal Path and look at the future opportunities. There is a very short timescale for this work.

***AP March 04: Bronwen Martin, NRW to circulate information regarding the Coastal Path Review.***

48. Zoe mentioned that Rachel had suggested Beaver reintroductions as a topic, but we could not get anybody to attend to provide an update due to annual leave. If there are any specific questions that people want to dive into then these can be passed on for the team to look into and provide a response. Rachel said it was disappointing that nobody was available to speak to us today. Rachel said she has gone back to Bronwen and asked for a specific meeting because this is an area of very significant concern with the likelihood of an application coming forward for reintroduction in the Dyfi. It was more than just understanding the application process, but also to have a discussion with NRW about their policy position and the potential difficulties that might arise not within the lifetime of a project, but beyond that sort of 10-15 years away (like escapes or population increase) and whether lessons can be learnt from experiences in Scotland. It was suggested that perhaps NRW could explore setting up a separate workshop to look at this and invite colleagues from NatureScot to hear their perspective. Ruth said Sarah Woods on holiday this week, which is why she could not attend but would like to have that conversation. Ruth said at the moment, NRW are not currently in receipt of any live application but understand that this is more than just the application process.

49. Rachel mentioned that the Update Paper references the Fisheries Forum with an offer to share the papers or the minutes of those meetings. Rachel said she would be glad to receive the most recent minutes if possible.

***AP March 05: Bronwen Martin to circulate the latest meeting minutes for the Wales Fisheries Forum.***

50. Martyn Evans, NRW mentioned that the funding for the Dairy Project has been extended by Welsh Government. Martyn gave a brief overview of some of the upcoming Welsh Government funded programmes including Nature Networks. Martyn suggested that a future WLMF meeting could include an item to summarise the upcoming programmes.

51. Anthony mentioned the NRW website update for woodland creation and asked for the contact details of the person leading that within NRW.

***AP March 06: Marc Williams, NRW to ask colleagues who is leading on the NRW website update for Woodland Creation and liaise with Anthony Geddes, Confor.***

## **Item 5 Update from FUW / NFU Cymru / Wales YFC / Confor / CLA / TFA / Welsh Government**

52. **FUW:** Bernard Griffiths, FUW mentioned that FUW have responded to a number of consultations including the second homes consultation, digital tracking of waste

consultation and the Coastal Path review. FUW have also been attending the Agriculture (Wales) Bill Forestry Provision Sub Group meetings.

53. **NFU Cymru:** Rachel Lewis-Davies said NFU Cymru have been doing many of the same things mentioned by Bernard. Rachel mentioned the line of sight to the forthcoming Agriculture (Wales) Bill and the Sustainable Farming Scheme and look forward to seeing more about the structure of the future scheme and the actions that Welsh Government are proposing. NFU Cymru are doing all they can to continue to promote their vision for future policy, which is based around three cornerstones of productivity, environmental measures underpinned by that sustainability payment, which is so necessary to support farm businesses in Wales and they have organised an event with a specific focus on tenant farming. NFU Cymru were very pleased to have the Minister speak at that event in early February and as a result of that, they called for Welsh Government to set up a group to look specifically at tenancy issues. Rachel mentioned that NFU Cymru do not believe current proposals sufficiently addressed the concerns that tenant farmers are going to be afforded equal access to a future scheme. The key way around that would be to have a set of universal actions that all farmers in Wales can deliver on an annual basis in return for payment. NFU Cymru are also starting a piece of work on common land in the context of the future scheme as well. The Growing Together campaign is continuing.
54. **Confor:** Anthony Geddes mentioned Confor are working with the Industrial Strategy Financing Group and the deep dive. From a direct control point of view, Confor are taking steps to address concerns about stakeholder engagement on afforestation right across agents and forestry surveying firms. Anthony said Confor are also looking at their programme and the opportunities for the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. This will look at land management and stakeholder engagement. Confor are open to feedback on specific things, but it would also be good to touch on topics from a political point of view.
55. **TFA:** Dennis Matheson said that England has set up a working group under Baroness Rock to look at all tenancy matters and come up with solutions, so tenants do not miss out on their environmental land management schemes. Dennis is also liaising with Welsh Government regarding tree planting targets because there seems to be a discrepancy in figures quoted. Dennis said he attended the Northeast Area Statement meeting last week, which was a good meeting and provided an update on things that are going on. However, Dennis recalled that he was the only farmer there which was disappointing. Dennis mentioned that he has recently experienced a bad case of dog worrying and emphasised the importance of getting messages across to the public within the Welsh Government plan to increase public access.
56. **Welsh Government:** Andrew Chambers, Welsh Government gave a brief overview of the upcoming work programme on ammonia emissions. Welsh Government propose this work programme will be taken forward in consultation with the WLMF Sub Group on Agricultural Pollution, subject to the WLMF's agreement. Zoe agreed that the WLMF Sub Group is the most appropriate to take it forward.

## Item 6 WLMF & Area Statements Workshops Feedback

57. Bronwen Martin, NRW mentioned that a series of short, themed Area Statement workshops have been held over the last few months. This is an opportunity to briefly

discuss the sessions which have been held to date and gather some verbal feedback from those who attended.

58. Over the last few months NRW have arranged a series of themed 2-hour workshop sessions which have comprised of a mixture of project talks, videos, and discussions. Each themed session has been supported by the People and Places teams from each of the 6 terrestrial Area Statements. Each Area Statement outlines the key challenges facing that particular locality, what we can all do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations. By highlighting some of the key challenges across the different Area Statements, we also wanted to identify what similar issues and challenges are experienced elsewhere in Wales and whether there are opportunities to replicate projects, schemes, and ideas in other areas.
59. So far, NRW have conducted four out of the five sessions, including Farm woodland, trees, and hedgerows (Mid Wales Area), common land (south west Area), healthy hillsides (South Central Area) and natural flood management (NE & NW Areas). Food networks (South East) is the final themed session in this series and will be scheduled in due course.
60. Once all five sessions have been conducted NRW will be circulating a short questionnaire to attendees in order to gain further feedback from each of the sessions you have attended but for now, we would like to have a brief discussion about your experience of attending these sessions. Bronwen asked the group to share some insights like:
- Which session or sessions you found particularly interesting or valuable?
  - Did you think the discussions were helpful and in depth enough?
  - What important points did you take away from the sessions?
  - Are there any particular things you thought stood out (e.g., any of the project talks or videos which were shared)?
  - Whether you have shared any of the post-workshop information with your colleagues or members?
  - Were there other examples of things on the ground which could or should have been shared or discussed?
61. Zoe said it is important to think about how the information could be cascaded.
62. Dennis said he has attended all of the sessions and found them very good. However, in Dennis' experience, local Area Statement groups do not have good attendance from farmers or farming representatives. Zoe said perhaps there needs to be better communication for those meetings.
63. Hedd Pugh, NFU Cymru said he attended the workshops. Hedd suggested that the timings can be a challenge for farmers to attend and this should be considered for future events. Hedd also mentioned that an in-person meeting would also be good.

## Item 7 Any Other Business

64. John Brown, NRW gave a brief update on the work of the Agriculture (Wales) Bill Forestry Provision Sub Group.
65. Bernard said that FUW attended the LANTRA awards ceremony which was a very enjoyable evening and was good to see the quality of young people coming into the industry. Dai Jones was presented with the Lifetime Award and a week later there was some sad news that he had passed away. Bernard noted that Dai was such a character and did so much for agriculture and rural communities over the decades in Wales.
66. Hedd said a lot of members are concerned in the Dyfi Valley about beaver reintroductions and asked whether NRW monitors the situation to make sure that people keep to the rules and regulations of the licences. Martyn said yes if it is subject to a species licence and any particular conditions. NRW would also follow up any reports which seem contrary to that.
67. The next WLMF meeting will be held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022. There was a suggestion about having this meeting in-person, but more information will follow.

## Close meeting