

# WWMF DRAFT Minutes

**Title of meeting: Wales Water Management Forum**

**Location: Virtual via Skype**

**Date of Meeting: 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Present WWMF Members:**

**Attendees Present:** Professor Steve Ormerod (CHAIR), Ceri Davies (NRW), Ceri Jones (NRW), Mark Squire (NRW), Rhian Thomas (NRW), Tony Harrington (DCWW), Phil Stone (Canoe Wales), Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU), Bob Gilchrist (CCW), Kim Waters (Afonydd Cymru for WEL), Dennis Matheson (TFA Cymru), Eifiona Williams (WG), Peter Birch (C&RT), Marcus O’Kane (SvT)

**Apologies:** Liz Franks (HD), Sian Williams (NRW), Anthony Geddes (Confor), Luke Davies (WG Marine and Fisheries Division), Aled Jones (FUW), Emyr Williams (Snowdonia National Park Authority, representing the 3 National Parks), Dave Throup (Environment Agency), Carl Banton (Coal Authority), Jean-Francois Dulong (WLGA), Kristian James (Public Health Wales), Bethan Evans (Ofwat)

**Secretariat: Ceri Jones**

**Note:**

## Item 1 Open meeting

As Chair, Professor Steve Ormerod opened the meeting setting out logistics for holding the Forum in this new virtual format. Kim Waters was welcomed as the new representative for Afonydd Cymru for WEL alongside a tribute to the late Stephen Marsh-Smith for his work and contributions made for the health and quality of our rivers over a very long time and will be truly missed.

## Item 2 Review minutes and action log

Agreed minutes and actions from the last meeting, no actions were carried over. A final version will be made available on the NRW website page for WWMF

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/water/wales-water-management-forum/?lang=en>

Comments (points of accuracy) were fed back on the SUDs item from the previous meeting that, from an agricultural perspective, SUDs is not working effectively and that a review is urgently needed. The planned review has been on hold following the impacts of Storm Dennis earlier in the year and current Covid restrictions. WG do plan to pick this up.

**ACTION: RLD to work with WG on this matter and CJ to reflect point raised in the minutes from the previous meeting**

## **Item 3 Update Paper**

An overview with some key highlights was provided from the Update paper, WWMF focused on:

### **River Wye Update**

Some broad discussion around the Wye. Work is ongoing to evaluate the situation including interpretation of data and evidence and looking at long-term trends. Overall a complex area and further detail will be shared as this becomes available. A comment was raised on an earlier press release from NRW indicating that phosphates are declining in the Wye, this is very confusing and making it difficult to establish what is happening.

**ACTION: MS to share the scope of the work**

**ACTION: MS to confirm forms of P included in the scope**

### **Plastics and marine litter update**

Some broad discussion around the impacts of plastics and the current approach to tackle this issue. Interest from a research perspective, including any reporting and assessment in freshwaters together with details on standards that would be used.

UKWIR has developed a standard which Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water are using in their research. There has also been some useful R&D done on tyre wear and just how important this is as a source. Tyre dust and particles are considered to be an underestimated sources of flux at the nanoscale, but there is little evidence on whether this is problematic or not.

**ACTION: MC will take questions back to NRW colleagues re: standards**

### **WLMF and WLMF sub-group and Wales Fishery Forum connections**

Marc Williams (NRW lead for WLMF) provided a verbal update, the last meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> September and included an update on the Sustainable Farming and our Land, how best to share information, an update on SoNARR and the ammonia screening consultation. Next meeting is December.

The Subgroup for Agricultural pollution has had several meetings. Main focus is to move forward with the priority recommendations highlighted by group in June.

The wider connections of WWMF were also considered such as the National Access Forum and Marine group to ensure these networks can be effective across the various

forums. Often the same subject matters come up so it's important to maintain connections. There was a suggestion that there may be opportunities to bring these bring groups together rather than have separate conversations.

A comment was raised about the Clean Air consultation and that we want to integrate particulate pollution work and how important it is that we work together.

## **Item 4 Consideration of ubiquitous Persistent, Bioaccumulative and Toxic chemicals (uPBTs) in river basin planning**

Mark Charlesworth (NRW) presented.

Discussion Points:

- Does this come under the generic popular term “Forever chemicals”? NRW has a monitoring programme to identify the presence of a wide range of chemicals, results are just starting to come through, the ones that NRW regulate are defined by the EU. As a consequence of EU Exit we may need to identify chemicals ourselves so NRW's emerging contaminants project is in place to inform consideration of future regulation.
- How do we compare with other “first world” countries. - Evidence for this comparison is not at hand. Compared to England, in terms of biota monitoring of uPBTs, based on Mercury it is likely that less of our freshwater bodies would fail compared to England, considering industrial history. The way that numbers [of chemicals] are calculated is not straightforward. third party data has been used for risk assessments.
- There was support that uPBTs need to be controlled at source with as controlling these in the environment and the costs could be disproportionate or controls technically unfeasible. NRW clearly need adequate resources to monitor but also recommend controls which can then be enacted in Welsh Legislation. The producer responsibility principle is also key here as producers should fund the work to clean up the pollution caused by their manufacture, sale and use. Comment added in relation to these principles being included in the new Environment Act.
- Mercury - have we banned mercury? Several years ago action was taken to prevent it entering the Waste Water Treatment System. Have we banned the use of mercury now in dental amalgams? Comment that The European Parliament agreed on 14 March 2017 to the final version of its Regulation on Mercury. The Regulation is the EU's instrument to ratify the Minamata Treaty of 2013 which prescribes a phase-down of the use of dental amalgam for environmental reasons.
- The water industry has and continues to monitor for many of these chemicals through the CIP (Chemicals in the Environment Programme) which monitors effluents at WWTWs. This data is all made available to regulators, to help us all understand where our priorities should be and also as to what financial and carbon costs would be involved if we chose to provide additional treatment to reduce levels further.
- One out all out principle was raised and how it hides progress where there has been investment and progress in improving ecological status. EurEau the water industry trade body is having a debate with the Commission on one out all out - with the view to not replacing it but adding to it so that Countries can also display data and analysis to illustrate the progress we are making. The EU are keen to not amend

but adapt the legislation to show progress and to support implementation rather than new legislation. In terms of legislation, once we know what will happen after the 31<sup>st</sup> Dec there may be scope to amend, but this depends on the settlement including how we follow environmental standards.

- Data and evidence must be presented. NRW has put effort into fact sheets for chemicals at risk to communicate this to stakeholders. Any comments on fact sheets welcome, these were shared with the papers for the meeting.
- Classification for final RBMPs is ongoing and aiming to produce this in 2021.
- Sheep scab is becoming problem. Are there any instances of sheep dip in rivers? Some sheep dip chemicals are picked up so NRW would have to go back to the data. New standard introduced for one chemical, so would need to look at data and report back.

**ACTION: MC consider discussion points and provide update for the next WWMF meeting**

## Item 5 River Basin Management Plans

Rhian Thomas (NRW) provided an update on the work for the RBMPs. WG also advised that the RBMP Ministerial Guidance which sets out how we produce the plans could be made available to WWMF if they would be interested, this will not be a formal external consultation and will be limited to the WWMF members.

Discussion Points:

- Setting of alternative objectives is key and is this ambitious enough.
- Of all the measures when added up, do we have circa 70% compliance.
- It seem very unfair to fail the Directive because we have flood defences in place, surely such waters should be heavily modified.
- Is there a matrix of identifying waterbodies.
- When do we think the 440 waterbodies could reach good or better, is that beyond 2039.
- Are we underplaying alternate objectives and designations of HMWBs – have we got the designations right which do allow alternative measures to be used? We can review the WB network every cycle, so that would be part of the draft consultation, according to rules set there are minor changes, but this does affect a few that were not previously HMWB. A WB can be a long stretch of river; the flood defence is only part of that.
- Illustrating the impact of investment to resolve problems is important, or there would be no sense of value of making investments, unless we capture benefits in the data used. Some individual elements are important communication tools.
- How can we show the immense amount of work that goes in to maintaining standards? There is a measure of improvement but also need to show how we stop deterioration.
- Challenge ourselves that we are not overly strictly interpreting things and with the EU Exit a conversation to be had regarding earlier classifications to better demonstrate work and efforts.

**ACTION: CJ to circulate the RBMP Ministerial Guidance to WWMF members only**

**ACTION: All – pick up discussion points through the formal consultation which will commence 22 December 2020 for a six month period**

## **Item 6 Water Resources West Update Marcus O’Kane (Severn Trent Water)**

Marcus O’Kane (Severn Trent Water updated on progress and high-level timetable for Water Resources West. They are producing a long-term multi-sector adaptive water resource plan, There will be a launch event on 16<sup>th</sup> October and the next stakeholder event is the 13<sup>th</sup> November. Idealstream was discussed which is a forum for stakeholders to share ideas and discuss the future of water across our regions.

## **Item 7 Any other business**

The following AOB were highlighted:

- Storm Dennis and Ciara – Review of the February 2020 Storms has been undertaken and the report will be published end of October on NRW’s webpage.
- There is a National Access Forum, Access to Water sub group and the outcomes of the sub-group discussions, and associated conclusions and recommendations are to be reported by March 2021. This sub group has been set up to give priority to inland water issues and treat access to water separately as part of the **Welsh Government Access Reform Programme**. With members engaging openly and working co-operatively to find a pragmatic solution for Wales.
- Point raised that at last NE Area Statement meeting there was no consideration of tenants to comply with new requirements, there must be better liaison or no progress will be made.

**Close meeting @ 13:00 and next meeting 3rd March 2021**