

Confirmed Minutes

Title of meeting: **NRW Board Meeting – Public Session**
All Attendees via Teams

Date of meeting: 20th May 2021

Present Board Members: Sir David Henshaw, (Chair)
Clare Pillman, Chief Executive
Prof Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chair
Catherine Brown
Julia Cherrett
Geraint Davies
Howard Davies
Dr Elizabeth Haywood
Zoë Henderson
Dr Rosie Plummer
Prof Peter Rigby

Present Executive Team Members: Prys Davies, Executive Director of Corporate Strategy and Development
Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting
Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Gareth O'Shea, Executive Director of Operations
Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial

Additional Attendees Present: Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance & Board Secretary (All items)
Mike Evans, Head of South Wales Central Operations Item 8
Aneurin Cox, Operations Manager Land and Assets Item 8
Andy Robinson, Team Leader, People and Places South Central Item 8
Tim England, Operations Manager (Flood and Water Management) Item 8
Scott Squires, Projects and Programme Delivery Manager Item 8
Fiona Abbott, Team Leader, Radioactivity and Industry Policy Item 8

Observers: Sue Nolan, Assistant to the Head of South Wales Central Operations Item 8
Mark Petherick, Team Leader and Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive
Gareth Wardell
Huw Thomas – 9.30 to 11.30

Declarations: Dr Rosie Plummer – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Board Member; Member of Welsh Mills Society
Howard Davies – Chief Executive of the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Apologies: Karen Balmer

Secretariat: Natalie Williams
Jocelyn Benger
Rhiannon Spencer

Item 1. Open Meeting

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Declarations of interest were made during the course of the meeting as noted above.

Item 2. Review Minutes and Action Log

2A. Review Minutes from Public 24th March meeting

2. The minutes from the public March meeting were reviewed and agreed subject to minor amendments.

2B. Review Public Action Log

3. The action log was reviewed and agreed and updates were provided.

Item 3: Update from the Chair

4. The Chair reflected on the recent elections and change in ministerial portfolios and welcomed the emphasis placed by the First Minister and new Welsh Government (WG) on the climate and environment. The Chair and Chief Executive had written to the two new Ministers for Climate Change and work would continue with Lesley Griffiths on Rural Affairs. The Chair had also written to the new Ministers on behalf of the Green Recovery Group.
5. The recruitment process for the new Board members had been a successful campaign with more than 130 applications received and interviews scheduled for the next month.
6. The recent BBC Panorama programme regarding river pollution had been considered at internal meetings. It was proposed that a water summit should be held involving Ofwat, the water companies and WG on the issues raised and this would be discussed further at the Board meeting in July.

Item 4: Chief Executive's Report

7. The Chief Executive provided an overview of the results of the recent WG elections and the outcomes relevant to NRW were presented. The Chair and Chief Executive would be writing to Vaughan Gething on the Green and Just Recovery and working to continue relationships in this area. The creation of the new Climate Change Ministry was discussed. Lesley Griffiths would continue to lead on crucial items for NRW and the farming sector.
8. The Labour manifesto was shared. Important legislation such as the Clean Air Act, a ban on single use plastics and the Agriculture Bill were expected. The creation of a new

National Park was being considered and it was noted that this would be a major piece of work for NRW. This designation would be welcomed but the condition of habitats would need to remain the focus of work.

9. The level of ambition and desire to make a difference was welcomed and an early approach to Ministers was planned. Funding would be key to delivering on the ambitions. The Programme for Government would be published in early June and work would take place to align the Business Plan with WG plans. Engagement would continue over the next month and a date had been secured in October for an event in the Senedd to time with the UN Climate Change Conference (COP) and 2050 Vision work.
10. The areas of focus for the coming year were noted as the Agriculture Bill and water quality. The Climate and Nature Emergencies were noted as linked and emphasis placed on considering them together as part of the same issue. Targets and achieving the right action plan for Nature Recovery would be needed with a good evidence base provided by SoNaRR.
11. Flooding had been an important election issue. In 2020/21, the total budget for flood risk management had been spent along with the additional funding received to protect a further 720 properties. Additional revenue funding for flood of £1.25m for this financial year alongside a £17m capital fund from WG would enable the preparation and construction of projects across Wales to move forward in addressing the ten key areas identified in the Flood Review. There was a need to discuss the clear recommendations from the Flood Review with Ministers and set the direction of conversations with communities affected by flooding to develop resilience.
12. The commitment to a new National Forest and improvements to woodland was welcomed and the Regulation team had been strengthened to deal with the increased funding for Glastir projects. The importance of investment in peatland restoration and blue carbon as methods of carbon capture in addition to trees would continue to be highlighted with WG. The pressure on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE) for its multiple benefits ranging from recreation to the foundation economy and challenges around the balance going forward were noted.
13. Board members discussed the Chief Executive's Report. It was confirmed that work on the Business Plan would be ongoing as soon as the Programme for Government and Remit Letter were received and an update would be provided in September. It was noted that prioritisation of the actions would be key, although funding confirmation was likely to be confirmed at a later date.
14. The increases in budget for Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission were noted and the value of cross border working was highlighted. NRW's role in the creation of the new National Park (NP) was queried and it was clarified that NRW acted as principal advisor to WG on NPs and it was considered that this would provide an opportunity to generate debate on habitat restoration and condition. The lack of resource to support the development of a new NP would be raised with WG.
15. The proposed designation of inland waters for recreation and the possible conflict of marine renewables were raised as potential issues in relation to quality of habitats. It was confirmed that there was no information yet on the scale of designation. The subject of water quality was due to be considered at the next Board meeting and it was confirmed that discussions had been commenced with WG on water policy.

16. The Government focus and commitment on delivery and the implications for NRW and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) was recognised. The difficulties faced by some organisations in submitting funding applications was discussed and the report on recommendations for improvements to the process produced by the Green Recovery Group was noted. Collaborative support was recognised as key in working to support successful delivery.
17. Areas of potential duplication of function were discussed and it was agreed that this should be considered further and the outcome of the Baseline Review would facilitate this discussion.

Item 5: Update Reports of Committees

18. The report from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) held on 22nd April 2021 was taken as read and the Chair of ARAC welcomed any questions or comments. The Audit report on the inspection and management of colliery spoil tips was discussed and it was agreed that this report should be shared with the full Board for information. The Leadership Development programme performance and monitoring, and its links into workforce planning were queried. The Chief Executive confirmed that a new programme supported by Academi Wales was in progress, which would be supplemented by group learning and building on compliance culture and accountability. The Executive Director of Corporate Strategy and Development would provide a summary on this to Board members and its fit with workforce planning and staffing development.

ACTION: The Chief Executive to share the Audit report to ARAC on the inspection and management of colliery spoil tips with the Board.

ACTION: The Executive Director of Corporate Strategy and Development to provide a summary to Board members on the Leadership Development programme and its fit with workforce planning and staffing development.

19. The Finance Committee (FC) report on meetings held on 20th and 29th April 2021 was taken as read. The Chair of the FC confirmed that the Terms of Reference were in the progress of being agreed to incorporate the two Task & Finish Groups but Timber would be kept under review and a formal note on assurance requested. Catherine Brown thanked FC and the Finance team and noted the progress made on spend and forecast and requested information on plans relating to the area of value for money. It was confirmed that this would become a core part of the Terms of Reference and that the Baseline Review and work on the Three Lines of Defence would ensure this was covered.
20. The Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC) report from 23rd April 2021 was taken as read. The Chair of FRMC highlighted that the Flood Recovery and Review Implementation Programme was due to go through the internal audit process in Quarter 2. The final budget spend for the Flood Capital Programme was confirmed as £13.5m. Planning approval had recently been received for the Llyn Tegid flood scheme. The Toddbrook Report had been published and included 15 headline recommendations for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). FRMC would review the report by September and incorporate some of the recommendations into NRW's biannual report on reservoir safety.

Item 6: Annual Review of Terms of Reference

Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

21. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary presented the item and noted that following a significant review of the Terms of Reference last year, minimal changes were proposed for this year. Changes were highlighted to the Board regarding the wording relating to the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR), quoracy for Board Committees, and cyber security.
22. Board members welcomed the professional approach to Board governance and acknowledged the progress made in this area. The change in the wording relating to SMNR within the Board Committee Terms of Reference was discussed and it was agreed that this should be amended slightly for additional clarity whilst remaining within the legal framework. The Terms of Reference would also need to be updated to reflect the recent changes in WG ministerial arrangements.

APPROVED: The Terms of Reference for the Board, Board Committees and Executive Team were approved subject to minor amendments.

Item 7: Changes to the Statutory and Legal Scheme of Delegation

Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

23. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary presented the paper and highlighted the changes requested by the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Business Board to delegate authority for sign-off of consultation responses based on a three-level risk approach.
24. The Board considered and approved the changes.

APPROVED: The Board approved the changes to the Statutory and Legal Scheme of Delegation requested by the NRM Business Board.

Item 8. Place Presentation

Presenters: Mike Evans, Head of South Wales Central Operations

Aneurin Cox, Operations Manager Land and Assets, Andy Robinson, Team Leader, People and Places South Central, Tim England, Operations Manager (Flood and Water Management), Scott Squires, Projects and Programme Delivery Manager, Fiona Abbott, Team Leader, Radioactivity and Industry Policy

25. The Executive Director of Operations welcomed the South Wales Central Team and introduced the item, highlighting the uniqueness and diversity of the area. The Head of South Wales Central opened the presentation noting that although only 6% of the area of Wales, South Wales Central incorporated 29% of the population. The Area Statement focused on building a bridge between the urban and natural environment but pressures from flooding and population were highlighted and the focus by WG on the growth agenda was challenged and debate had been created to move discussions towards prioritising the environment.
26. Team members presented an overview of the issues and challenges in the area. The topics included: flood risk management and projects in densely populated areas and the management of public and political expectation; land and asset management particularly in relation to woodland and neighbour engagement both positive and negative; the challenge of regulating and maintaining water quality in heavily populated and industrial

areas; working with partners to connect people with places and create a healthy and resilient environment.

27. Board members thanked the team for an engaging and informative presentation. Discussion took place around some of the key issues relating to flooding and development of land. It was recognised that difficult conversations would be needed with communities and political partners on building resilience and engagement with the outcome of the Flood Report. It was agreed that the Board appetite for challenge on future land development schemes should be included for discussion at a future Board meeting.

ACTION: Secretariat to add Board appetite for challenge on future land development schemes to the Board forward look for discussion at a future Board meeting.

28. The contrast between the effects of plastic pollution in some rivers and ecosystem recovery in others was noted. The challenge to effectively communicate the success of schemes to promote change was discussed. The diversity of the population was considered and the importance of working with partners on education and building relationships with different communities was noted. Effective communication, education and engagement were key themes of discussion by Board members and it was noted that the education budget may need to be revisited. The use of an evidence-based approach using a variety of methods for communication and engagement was considered.

29. It was noted that the Place presentations had produced themes that could be applied across the organisation particularly around education and engagement with communities. It was agreed that there should be reflection within the Operations Team and an item brought to a future meeting for the Board to consider the developing themes from the Place presentations.

ACTION: The Operations Team to bring an item to a future Board meeting for Board members to consider the developing themes from the Place presentations.

- Board meeting closed -

Item 10. Public Q&A Session

30. The Chair invited questions from the public.

31. Gareth Wardell made observations on the limitations of the ability of NRW to meet targets set by Welsh Government without the necessary funding in place. Mr Wardell also gave the opinion that NRW would only make progress on the Climate and Nature Emergencies when Government scaled up to a massive reduction in the consumption of high carbon inputs into goods and services, in particular, by targeting high income earners.

- Public Meeting closed -