

Confirmed Minutes

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| Title of meeting: | NRW Board Meeting – Public Session Gladstone’s Library, Hawarden, Flintshire and Microsoft Teams |
| Date of meeting: | 22 nd September 2022 |
| Present Board Members: | Sir David Henshaw, Chair Clare Pillman, Chief Executive Prof Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chair Karen Balmer Julia Cherrett Geraint Davies Zoë Henderson Prof Calvin Jones Mark McKenna Dr Rosie Plummer Prof Peter Rigby (via Teams) |
| Present Executive Team Members: | Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting Prys Davies, Executive Director of Corporate Strategy and Development Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial Gareth O’Shea, Executive Director of Operations |
| Additional Attendees Present: | Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance & Board Secretary (All items) Charlotte Morgan, Wellbeing, Health and Safety Manager, Item 6 (Teams) Caroline Hawkins, Corporate Planning, Performance & Strategic Assessment Manager, Item 7 (Teams) Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office, Item 7 Ieuan Williams, Senior Specialist Surveyor, Item 8 Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship, Items 8 and 9 Chris Collins, Head of Knowledge and Evidence, Item 11 Alun Attwood, Manager, Monitoring and Reporting, Item 11 |
| NRW Observers: | Lyndsey Rawlinson, Head of Operations North East Wales (all items) Kate Evans, Public Affairs and Private Secretary (all items) Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy & PMO (all items) Victoria Painter, Governance and Risk Manager (all items) |
| Public Observers: | Kim Waters, Welsh Rivers Union Rachel Evans, Countryside Alliance Dr Rachel Hodson, Plant Health & Environmental Protection Branch, Welsh Government |

Cledan Evans, Plant Health & Environmental Protection Branch, Welsh Government
Additional members of the public

- Declarations:**
- Dr Rosie Plummer – Member of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority where planning responsibility includes the Cleddau SAC river catchment, flood vulnerable zones, and remit for over 80 specific site designations within its overall landscape designation. Plantlife Trustee – Plantlife is a collaborator on the Natur am Byth project.
 - Prof Steve Ormerod – Member of two Welsh Wildlife Trusts (no influence on policy); Vice President of RSPB (no influence on policy); Fellow of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (no influence on policy); Scientific research interest in water quality through Cardiff University
 - Zoe Henderson – Member (no influence over policy): Countryside Alliance; Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust; North Wales Wildlife Trust
 - Clare Pillman – Home within the boundaries of the proposed new National Park (relates to agenda item 6)
 - Sir David Henshaw – Home within the boundaries of the proposed new National Park (relates to agenda item 6)
 - Prof Calvin Jones – Steering Committee Member for Skyline
 - Geraint Davies – Member (no influence over policy): RSPB Cymru; National Trust; National Farmers Union of Wales; Farmers Union of Wales; Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
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Apologies: Catherine Brown

Secretariat: Jocelyn Benger
Natalie Williams
Andrea Bennett

Item 1. Open Meeting

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Declarations of interest and apologies were made as noted above. The Chair had attended the Queen's funeral on Monday and extended condolences on behalf of NRW on Her Majesty's passing. It was explained that the papers had been published late due to the pause on external communications during the period of national mourning.
2. The conduct of the meeting was explained. Alternative options were being considered for enhancing public engagement with the Board as it was recognised that the public Q&A session following the public Board meeting was limiting. An item on this issue was included on the agenda.
3. The Board were asked to raise any issues on the papers for review by correspondence papers. No comments were raised.

Item 2. Review Minutes and Action Log

2A. Review Minutes from Public 14th July meeting

4. The minutes from the public meeting on 14th July were reviewed and agreed.

2B. Review Public Action Log

5. The action log was reviewed and noted.
6. The Executive Director of Operations proposed that Action 2 should be closed as the immediate action had been dealt with, and this issue was included within the performance measures. The closure of this action was agreed.
7. It was highlighted that there had been an omission in publishing the confirmed versions of the Board minutes on the website. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary apologised for the omission and confirmed that this would be reviewed and resolved.

Item 3: Update from the Chair

8. A workshop for the Board had taken place on the strategic agenda. The new Corporate Plan was being developed through this active and engaging process and had resulted in rich conversations on the climate and nature challenges. The new Corporate Plan would be published in due course.
9. The Chair gave a brief update on discussions that were taking place across a broad range of issues.

Item 4: Report from the Chief Executive

10. The Chief Executive provided an update to the written report.
11. Drought had been declared across the whole of Wales earlier this month, which had brought in a series of measures. Despite the recent rainfall, conditions remained very dry, with low reservoir levels. NRW continued to work with water companies and others who abstracted water. There were concerns that if there were to be a dry winter then next year would begin with very depleted water levels. The drought had led to a number of dry weather and surface water events, and NRW teams had been dealing with pollution and surface water flooding issues.
12. An update was provided on Avian flu. There had been reports of the decimation of some key species, and NRW were working closely with the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (eNGOs), and others.
13. Two Conferences of the Parties (COPs) were due to take place this autumn in Egypt and Montreal. NRW were working with sister organisations in England and Scotland in preparation for this and would attend an event in London on 23rd November. This would bring together the statutory nature conservation bodies with the aim of continuing the momentum from the previous COP around the message on Nature Positive.
14. There would be a gathering with the First Minister and others to discuss the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in Wales. NRW were ensuring that staff were signposted towards support and advice on this issue.
15. Notification had been received from Welsh Government (WG) on amendments to ministerial responsibilities. There would be changes to the Ministry of Climate Change portfolio, notably that Lesley Griffiths would be taking over responsibility for a number of key areas for NRW and these were shared with the Board. Digital responsibility would be transferring to Vaughan Gethin and Lee Waters would currently be focusing on transport. Julie James would continue to lead on NRW.

16. Prof Steve Ormerod provided an additional update on the Avian flu situation in Wales. There were indications from colonies that thousands of birds had been impacted and the distribution of dead birds from this incident meant that the public are very aware of the serious situation. Scientific activity, such as bird ringing, was restricted, although this did result in some difficulties with monitoring the situation. The Joint Nature Conservation Council (JNCC) were monitoring reports from all four UK nations. Additional information was also provided on the drought situation. There was some scientific evidence that there could be multi-year periods of dryness, therefore it would be critical to continue to manage water resources. The drought had revealed some interesting data following scientific investigations on the quantities of pharmaceuticals in rivers and their impact on water quality.

Item 5: Update Reports of Committees

17. The Chair noted that this was Catherine Brown's last Board meeting and thanked her on behalf of the Board for all her hard work as a Board member and Committee Chair.
18. Dr Rosie Plummer on behalf of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) updated the Board on the meeting held on 8th September. The minutes of meeting would be circulated to all Board members. The £2.6m expenditure on the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) that was not commissioned, and the material overspend and overrun on the Sands of LIFE project were both scrutinised by ARAC. ARAC were concerned that frontline staff and middle management faced challenging situations without adequate support and oversight by Leadership and Executive Teams. Further reflections and learning from these projects were identified for the Executive Team (ET) to take forward and share with the Board.
19. ARAC also undertook a deep dive on the compliance risk and concluded that the current controls did not justify a reduction in the current risk level. ARAC were not confident that the planned controls would reduce the current risk level if implemented. Further work was requested to ensure a more robust approach to managing this risk. A number of Internal Audit reports were received and noted. ARAC emphasised that Internal Audit were responsible for the opinions in their own reports and made their own assessment of organisational risk. ARAC also emphasised that management were expected to focus on the clarity of their responses. Everyone acknowledged this was Catherine Brown's final ARAC meeting and expressed their appreciation for her work as Chair of ARAC and wished her well for the future. A closed session was then held with the Head of Internal Audit.
20. Peter Rigby as the Chair of the Evidence Advisory Committee (EAC) updated the Board on work since the meeting held on 7th June.
21. Sir David Henshaw as the Chair of the Finance Committee (FC) updated the Board on the meeting held on 15th September. This had been a very full meeting, including some challenging discussions. The current spend and future budget had been reviewed and the Strategic Review of Charging was scrutinised. The Corporate Plan was discussed. A new Chair of FC would be appointed once the new Board members were in post.
22. Julia Cherrett as the Interim Chair of the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC) updated the Board on work since the meeting held on 1st July. FRMC had the opportunity to review the Flood Warning System Project paper which had been considered at the private Board session yesterday. A meeting was planned with the Chair of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee. The next meeting would take place in October.

23. Julia Cherrett as the Chair of the People and Remuneration Committee (PaRC) updated the Board on the meeting held on 13th September. An overview of the new Transformation Programme had been provided, including a deep dive into attraction and retention and employee engagement. PaRC had been pleased to see all the arrangements that had been put in place to drive forward the changes. The Annual Complaints Report was reviewed. There had been a slight increase in complaints but complaints to the Ombudsman were declining and more complaints were being resolved earlier. An action was taken to provide feedback to the Board on lessons learnt on complaints. It was suggested that this could be included as part of the Performance Dashboard going forward. The Management Information was reviewed including staff numbers. Further work would need to take place on the approach to Fixed Term Appointments (FTAs). It was noted that absence remained below the benchmark. The Wellbeing, Health and Safety update was provided. The Capability and Values Risk was reviewed.
24. Dr Rosie Plummer as the Chair of the Protected Areas Committee (PrAC) updated the Board on work since the meeting held on 21st June. The details were included in the paper. The next meeting would take place on 6th October. The change in Ministerial responsibility for the potential new national park designation was noted.
25. Zoe Henderson as the Chair of the Wales Land Management Forum (WLMF) updated the Board on the meeting held on 5th September. The paper was taken as read. The meeting of the sub-group on 19th September had been cancelled due to the Queen's funeral. A sub-group, led by Chris Mills of Afonydd Cymru had been looking at alternative measures within the legislation for the water regulations on how this could be improved to do better for farmers and the environment. A report by the sub-group would be presented to the October WLMF meeting.

Item 6: Wellbeing, Health and Safety Quarter 1 Report

Presenter: Charlotte Morgan, Wellbeing, Health and Safety Manager

26. The Executive Director of Corporate Strategy and Development introduced the item. The Wellbeing, Health and Safety (WHS) Q1 Report had been discussed by PaRC at their recent meeting. The Report included an update on the two fatalities that had sadly occurred on the NRW Estate. More work had been done on the data and it now included a trend analysis. An organisational push was needed on active monitoring. PaRC had recommended that the impact of learning and development courses should be reviewed alongside the focus on course attendance.
27. The Wellbeing, Health and Safety Manager gave an overview of the two Serious Incident Reviews (SIRs). One incident, which involved forestry work, had been finalised and was with the Leadership Team member for comments. The other incident, which occurred at Newborough car park, included three actions. Two had been completed, and the other was a longer-term action around the maintenance of the car park. A summary of the ongoing situation with the two fatalities was provided. Two RIDDOR reportable incidents had occurred: a precautionary report had been sent to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) regarding diving equipment; the other involved an incident with a horse injuring an NRW contractor on 3rd party land. The Corporate Health Standard re-accreditation of the silver award would be taking place in December. NRW had signed up to the Menopause Workplace Pledge.
28. Board members considered the content of the Report. The incidents involving the members of the public were discussed. It was clarified that an SIR process was always opened in the sad cases of fatalities but was normally paused during official

investigations. The learning would then take place after this had been completed. However, it was confirmed that any urgent work required in these cases would not be paused.

29. Board members were pleased to see the increased Management Information, and asked about the learning from this, particularly around trends and Near Misses. The WHS Manager explained that guidance had been put out for managers on the definitions of Incidents and Near Misses, so it was expected that an increase in reports would be seen if the guidance had been effective. Reporting by contractors was considered and guidance was also available to them. It was confirmed that reporting was included in their agreements with NRW.
30. The incident with the dive equipment was discussed. The Executive Director of Operations confirmed that this had been picked up during an inspection and was therefore seen as a positive example, which the HSE would be cascading across the UK.

APPROVED: The Wellbeing, Health and Safety Q1 Report

Item 7: Business Plan Performance Dashboard Quarter 1 Report

Presenter: Clare Pillman, Chief Executive

Attendees: Caroline Hawkins, Corporate Planning, Performance & Strategic Assessment Manager, Sarah Williams, Head of Corporate Strategy and Programme Management Office; Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship

31. The Chief Executive presented the Business Plan Performance Dashboard Quarter 1 Report to the end of June. The overall Red Amber Green (RAG) status of the Performance Dashboard measures was one Red, one not applicable, six Amber, and 23 Green. The Internal Performance measures included one Red, five Amber, and five Green.
32. The Red Performance Dashboard measure related to compliance breaches as part of regulatory work. The measure tracked follow up for compliance breaches within six months. Three of the 13 Category 1 and 2 breaches that had been identified for further compliance work remained ongoing and these had been prioritised to ensure that operators were taking appropriate action to return to compliance. Performance was at 91% with a target of 95%, and the team were confident of achieving Green by year end.
33. The measure noted as not applicable (N/A) was explained. This measure related to support to WG on the Agriculture Bill. A timetable had been set in the Performance Measure, but this had not taken account of the delay in WG moving forward, with the publication delayed until autumn. More details would be shared on this in November.
34. Six measures were Amber on Q1. The measure 'maintaining flood risk assets in high-risk locations at target condition' was explained. This reported at 97.9% with 75 below required condition. An Audit had recently taken place in this area and a report would be provided to ARAC and FRMC. The UKWAS Corrective Action Requests (CARs) had moved to Amber as there was not yet full confidence that the actions taken would take effect. Staff were preparing for the audit in the autumn and expected to be Green by Q3. The delivery of programmes to review statutory water quality requirements had been delayed due to Covid and was still catching up. A revised project plan was in place and WG were aware of the completion dates. It was expected to be Green by year end. Work was ongoing on the Flood Review recommendations, which was looking to close the

programme and move to Business As Usual (BAU), but progress would continue to be tracked by FRMC.

35. The Internal Performance measures were presented. Health and Safety Active Monitoring was noted as Red, and the actions being taken were highlighted in the WHS Report. Discussions had taken place at PaRC on Sgwr, which was rated as Amber. This was expected to be Green by year end. Payment performance was Amber, which was slightly below but expected to be Green at year end.
36. The Head of Land Stewardship joined the meeting to clarify the delay in the UKWAS CARs. It was explained that there had been one major CAR relating to an out of date policy which had been closed within days. There was one minor CAR relating to an out of date first aid kit and the CAR concerned strengthening the processes around first aid kits. This had now been closed and the UKWAS audit in November would take place with no open CARs. The Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting (EPP) highlighted that the goal was to achieve no major or minor CARs and therefore the rating was currently Amber.
37. Julia Cherrett as the interim Chair of FRMC confirmed that the closure reports on the implementation of the Flood Review recommendations would be monitored by the Flood Business Board with oversight from FRMC. The robust approach to ensuring that the actions were properly embedded had led to the measure reporting as Amber.
38. The Chair recommended that a trend report should be included on the Performance Measures to allow for comparison across the years. It was also requested that progress tracking on the Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme should be included within the report.

APPROVED: The Business Plan Performance Dashboard Quarter 1 Report.

Item 8: Trail-hunting Decision Review

Presenters: Ieuan Williams, Senior Specialist Surveyor; Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship

39. The Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting introduced the item. It was highlighted that when the Board first decided to suspend trail-hunting on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE), the lack of confidence in robust oversight of the activity following the conviction of the then Director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association (MFHA) had been only one of several factors that had been taken into account. The Executive Team (ET) had reviewed the details of the appeal and the result of the court case, and had concluded that the resource requirements to ensure oversight of the activity and the Minister's views on trail-hunting remained significant factors. ET had considered the strategic position and context and recommended that a review should not take place while work on the development of a new recreation strategy was progressing. The recreation framework and strategy would include all recreational activities on the NRW Estate and would be developed in collaboration with stakeholders. Endorsement by the Board was therefore sought for this decision.
40. The Chair gave the context to the governance around the discussion and noted NRW's responsibilities to the landowner of the Estate.
41. There was a robust debate about the recommendation. The need for a recreation strategy was recognised but it would be important to phase this against the new Corporate Plan to ensure that they were in tandem and integrated. Board members queried whether there would be a need to review all recreation-based decisions, such as

the decision on motorsports, when the recreation strategy was in place. It was clarified that previous decisions would not be re-visited, but any new proposals that were presented would be reviewed under the new strategy, which would be subject to consultation with stakeholders. Concerns were expressed about the potential time required to develop the strategy. It was suggested that an interim position could be sought while the recreation strategy was being developed.

42. There was some support amongst Board members for a reversal of the decision to stop permitting trail hunting, as it was suggested that the decision would not have been taken if the original court case had not returned a guilty verdict. Concerns were expressed that the Board was not well-placed to understand the issues facing rural community life, although this was strongly rebuffed. The role of the NRW Estate in supporting the wellbeing of rural Wales was highlighted and the current pressures on the rural and farming community were described. It was highlighted that there was no evidence of illegal hunting having occurred and it was suggested that discussions should take place with the organisations involved on how to ensure that no illegal hunting would take place in the future.
43. The importance of evidence for the decision was discussed, particularly in view of NRW's role as an evidence-based organisation. The need for further evidence on this issue was considered, particularly with regard to making difficult resource decisions objectively. There would be a need to consider quantitative versus qualitative evidence and to be clear on how the evidence base was to be undertaken. It was agreed that this should form an important part of the recreation strategy and framework. It was also agreed that clear guidance would be needed from Welsh Government and the Minister on their preferred approach to trail hunting. The Chair confirmed that he would raise the question with the Minister at their next meeting.
44. Board members noted the letters received by the Board from interested parties and queried the work and engagement that had taken place with these groups to date. The Head of Land Stewardship confirmed that no substantive discussions had taken place yet as a steer from the Board was required prior to these taking place. The Chair confirmed that he would be happy to meet with those who had written in on this issue.
45. The Board agreed that a recreation strategy would be necessary in order to take future decisions against an agreed framework and evidence base, moving forward via the new NRW Land Estate Committee. Although a range of different opinions were expressed in the debate, the Board agreed collectively to endorse the Executive Team's decision not to review the position on trail-hunting while the recreation strategy was still being developed. It was agreed that a full timeline for the development of the recreation strategy should be brought to the next Board meeting in November.

ACTION: A full timeline for the development of the Recreation Strategy to be brought to the November Board meeting.

ENDORSED: The Executive Team's decision not to seek that the Board review its previous decision to stop permitting trail hunting on the NRW Estate.

Item 9: Proposed NRW Land Estate Committee

Presenter: Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

Attendees: Victoria Painter, Governance and Risk Manager; Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship

46. The Executive Director of Operations introduced the item. The Board had agreed at the last meeting to create an NRW Land Estate Committee (NRWLEC). It was proposed that Prof Calvin Jones would act as Chair with the Executive Director of Operations as ET sponsor.
47. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary noted that at the time of drafting of the paper, it had been hoped that the first meeting would take place in October but this would now be arranged as soon as possible once the membership was confirmed.
48. The Chair confirmed that the new Board members were awaited to join the Committee but invited volunteers from the current Board membership to serve on the Committee. The following Board members expressed an interest in a role on the Committee: Geraint Davies, Dr Rosie Plummer, Prof Steve Ormerod.
49. Board members noted that the balance of membership would be crucial. It was recommended that the Terms of Reference needed some refining in order to clarify its role in providing assurance support to the Board and to clarify the remit for the work across the NRWLEC and PrAC. It was suggested that a diagram could be produced to map the fit across the fora that were considering these types of areas.

APPROVED: The proposed governance arrangements for the new NRW Land Estate Committee

Item 10: Proposed Changes to the Statutory and Legal Scheme (SaLS)

Presenter: Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

50. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary introduced the item and provided more detail on the proposed changes to the Statutory and Legal Scheme (SaLS). The first amendment involved the Land Stewardship Business Board. The wording had been amended to reflect the needs of Commercial activities and a new line had been added to incorporate the needs of the Land Stewardship activities. This would give clarity on the roles and responsibilities around the sale and acquisition of land and clarify the differences between the Commercial and Land Stewardship approaches. The Governance approval route was described as noted in the paper.
51. The second proposed amendment was described. This was a new line from the Regulatory Business Board (REGBB) and had no precedent. They had developed a new Operational Guidance Note (OGN) around withdrawing deployments, which had come through from the REGBB Waste Sub-Group. The two new lines were proposed to clarify the alignment with other processes.
52. The Board approved the proposed changes to the SaLS.

APPROVED: The proposed change to the Statutory and Legal Scheme (SaLS) from the Land Stewardship and Regulatory Business Boards

Item 11: Required Evidence Base for Water Quality improvements in Wales and Evidence Strategic Update

Presenters: Chris Collins, Head of Knowledge and Evidence; Alun Attwood, Manager, Monitoring and Reporting

53. The Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting introduced the item.

54. The Head of Knowledge and Evidence gave a presentation to consider what the water quality evidence base would look like and how the evidence gap could be filled with the limited available resource. New technologies and ways of working were described and the importance of developing work with partners was highlighted. The work on data analytics was shared and the data trend from the 1990s on phosphorus levels in rivers across Wales was explained. The use of new technology for water sampling was described. The current sentinel approach to monitoring and the work involved in moving towards a more agile method was explained. The capital investment on funding sensors in the Wye to monitor in real time was described. The range of issues that could be monitored was shared, although it was explained that there were difficulties with measuring phosphorus with the current technology.
55. The approach being taken to mitigate data scarcity was shared. A heat map of citizen scientist data was presented and the use of this data was described. It was noted that there were some challenges on geographic distribution and quality of data. Work was taking place with the Rivers Trust on the Usk and a similar approach would be considered on the Wye.
56. The Executive Director of EPP explained that the focus of the Board discussion would be on monitoring in view of the tight resources, the use of technological developments, the approach to sharing evidence for the use by others, and working with partners and others, such as citizen scientists and universities, to develop a collective approach to the issues.
57. The Chair highlighted the First Minister's summit on water quality and the work being undertaken by a range of parties to bring together a joined-up programme. The financial challenges were recognised but there was a need to achieve one version of the truth. There would be a need to move beyond the current focus on fault and blame towards everyone working together with a collective responsibility.
58. It was suggested that NRW could take a role in facilitating and enabling collective effort on the issue to harness and engage across the spectrum to develop a single platform. It was noted that things had moved forward rapidly in the last year in terms of engagement and there was now a need to move to concrete terms of actions.
59. The importance of citizen science was discussed. The scope for harnessing the input from committed amateurs in the same way as the Met Office and the breadth of opportunities with the universities were highlighted. The issue of quality assurance of citizen science data was noted. The Head of Knowledge and Evidence described some of the current collaborative work that was taking place and explained that funding had been agreed for a citizen science coordinator. The value of involving groups such as farmers and fishermen in citizen science was highlighted. The Head of Knowledge and Evidence described the work taking place with fishermen on the Wye and agreed that it would be good to take forward with other groups. The Towy app developed by Coleg Gelli Aur was described, and it was recommended that this should be considered by the team, along with data from the Dee LIFE project and its work with farmers. The Head of Knowledge and Evidence agreed to pick up on this.
60. The interpretation of the data was discussed. It was recognised that there would be a need to get better at understanding the biological impact from the collected data. The shift from sentinel to agile monitoring could enable more targeted and analysed monitoring, although it was noted that the Environment Agency (EA) had experienced some criticism in the move to this approach due to the perceived reduction in monitored. It was queried whether it would be possible to forecast trends from the current data in a

similar way to climate change data. The Manager, Monitoring and Reporting, explained that this approach would need to be developed. It was recognised that NRW would need to develop and enable its data analytical capability.

61. The Chair described the ongoing work with the water companies and the approach to working together on the issue. There would be a need to develop actions to take forward and build a coalition of partners, using NRW's power as a convener. A vision of what improved data would provide in terms of water quality would need to be developed, for example in measuring the effectiveness of interventions. The publication and dissemination of data would need to be improved and developed towards a user-centric approach. It was emphasised that water quality was an urgent issue and improved data collection would direct targeted action.

Item 12: Public Engagement and Transparency at Board Meetings

Presenter: Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

62. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary provided a presentation. It was noted that the current hybrid model of Board meetings was very different to pre-Covid model, and the importance of improved engagement was highlighted, especially with the new Corporate Plan. There was a need to find a way to balance the opportunity for engagement and decision-making in public. It was considered that the current model did not put the customer first and the plan for developing the proposals was shared. This would include considering how others approached this successfully. The next steps were shared which would include a public consultation and reaching out to the members of the public who regularly attended Board meetings. Proposals would be brought to the Board for approval in November.
63. The Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial highlighted the NRW Engagement Strategy. Working through the medium of Welsh was noted as another layer to be considered. The potential of considering international approaches was discussed. Board members discussed the work that was being carried out on Natur a Ni and the raised the importance of broadening the reach, for example, to the younger generation. The work of youth Boards was described and it was highlighted that from an equality and diversity perspective, it would be important to increase engagement with young people. It was suggested that an associate or trainee Board member type role could be considered.

Item 13: Board Forward Look

Presenter: Colette Fletcher, Head of Governance and Board Secretary

64. The Head of Governance and Board Secretary shared the Board Forward Look document and provided an overview.
65. The Digital Strategy plan item could be expanded to allow the Board to consider the Transformation Programme more widely. The item on the new National Park Designation would not be ready for November's meeting and would be moved forward to January.

Item 14: AOB

66. The Board Terms of Reference had been circulated for comments in advance of the meeting. The Board approved the Board Terms of Reference.

APPROVED: The Board Terms of Reference

- Board meeting closed –

Public Q&A

67. The Board took questions from Mr Kim Waters from the Welsh Rivers Union on water quality issues, specifically relating to the Wye and the Usk.

- Meeting closed –