

MINUTES
PWSCG (40) Meeting
10:00 – 15:00 Wednesday 26th April 2017
BEIS, Room 5K, 1 Victoria Street

Attendees

Wyn Williams (WW)	PWSCG Chair
Denise Harker (DH)	PWSCG Independent Member
Sarah Jackson (SJ)	PWSCG Secretariat
Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat
Paul Hadley (PH)	BEIS
Alessia Morris (AM)	Scottish Government
Jonathan McKee (JM)	Northern Irish Government
Richard Hewitt (RH)	Highways England
Colin Hord (CH)	CAA
Nathan Travis (NT)	H&W Fire & Rescue Service
Ian Houlton (IH)	LGA
Carol Holt (CH)	Environment Agency
George Tabcart (GT)	MOD
André Cocuccio (AC)	MCA
Ben Fletcher (BF)	Cabinet Office
Angie Bone (AB)	PHE
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Mel Harrowsmith (MH)	Met Office
Lynne Armstrong (LA)	Met Office

Actions

	Owner	Action	Date
1	Richard Orrell	Develop a costed proposal for the possible expansion of the Wow Schools project	For October PWSCG
2	Derrick Ryall/Richard Orrell	Prepare a matrix showing the relative fit to PWS and costs/ savings of continuing/stopping existing and potential new PWS services and capability to include WoW schools, Air Quality forecasting and any recommendations from the Active Travel review	For October PWSCG
3	Derrick Ryall	Update PWSCG on any impact of staff change from the MO exit scheme and IR 35 changes	October PWSCG
4	Secretariat	Agree a date and hold the first Reach PAG meeting	By 30th June
5	Mel Harrowsmith/Lynne Armstrong	Check contact lists used for MO surveys to avoid asking the same contacts numerous times.	Before next major survey
6	Secretariat	Send signed WW letter to Rob Varley (MO CEO) to confirm performance measures met for FY 2016/17	By 15 May
7	Richard Orrell	Introduce a new milestone to define the scope of the PWS to be delivered by March 2018	By 31st May
8	Secretariat	Circulate invites for agreed PWSCG national meetings and liaise with Wales to agree a date.	Ongoing
9	Secretariat	Draft a reply to Martin Jones (UKGEOS Project)	Complete

1. Welcome & Introductions

WW welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Paul Furlong (Highways England), Tracy Goode (Wales), Charlie Hall (Herts Police) Kate Henman (DCLG). New attendees at their first PWSCG included Richard Hewitt standing in for Paul Furlong, Carol Holt (EA) and Angie Bone (PHE).

2. Minutes & actions from last meeting

PR updated the group on progress since the last meeting. Progress had been made against all actions required in the timeframe. Two actions are carried over due in October on the costed proposal for the WoW Schools project and preparing a matrix for the cost/savings for PWS going forward. Jenny Shellens will be attending for DCLG at the next meeting.

The minutes of the January meeting were cleared by the group and will be published online once Purdah has ended.

3. PWSCG Chair's Update

WW referred to the Chairman's report which summarised his activity since the January meeting. WW held discussions with the MO PWS team in early March to discuss the development of the CSA for the next FY. The key priorities remain largely unchanged, a series of national capability milestones have been introduced to reflect the dates of planned upgrades to the forecast models. WW attended the PAG meeting at the end of March which reviewed international observations and science and technology with both areas delivering well, meaning the performance measures in those areas were met.

GT enquired about the current voluntary exit scheme being run by the MO and what impact this may have on staff resourcing in relation to the PWS. Although this is an internal matter for the MO to manage, DR informed the group that the MO are aware of the risks posed to the level of skill and experience in the organisation and that combined with the recent IR 35 changes affecting contractors the MO are actively managing the situation and that there would be instances where staff would be retained due to their skill and experience. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the October meeting on the staff resourcing and the impact of changes that may affect the PWS.

4. Update from BEIS

PH introduced himself to the group as the Deputy Director at BEIS who will now oversee the PWS contract. PH previously covered this role in 2013-14 so is not new to the area and also has responsibility for the sponsorship of the MO making sure it continues to run effectively as an organisation. PH informed the group about the recent organisational change within the Business and Science Group including the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The biggest priorities of the Department up until the General Election was announced were the Industrial Strategy, Brexit and establishing UKRI. The group were reminded of the commencement of Purdah and the impacts this has on Government work in particular on policy announcements. PH spoke about the importance of this group in keeping the pressure on the MO to ensure that the PWS delivers a value for money service.

5. Independent Member's Report

DH updated the group on the engagement with broadcasters since the last meeting. DH and PR met with STV due to the logistics of them not being able to attend the MARG meeting and subsequently with ITV. The meetings uncovered some concerns from the broadcasters which primarily can be linked to the roll out of the new visual cortex graphics package delivered by the MO supplier Presentation Cartography. There had been issues around communications, in particular linked to the release of upgrades which had not gone as smoothly as planned. The overall sense was that due to the popularity and rapid roll-out of the PWMS there needed to be greater focus on upgrade release and change management procedures. DH and PR held follow up meetings and teleconference with the relevant MO leads and a plan of action was drawn up by MO to make the necessary changes ahead of future upgrades which has been sent to the relevant broadcasters.

6. Secretariat update and evidence gathering

SJ updated the group on the evidence gathering activity for air pollution and the results generated so far from the online questionnaire that was published in March. The MO currently provides an air quality forecast under the PWS and this survey forms part of the evidence gathering process to inform a PWSCG decision about whether the PWS should continue to fund air quality modelling in the future. The intention is to help the secretariat and MO to understand how air pollution forecasts are used, the frequency of use and what people want from them. DR informed the group that the MO has made some changes behind the scenes as to how the Air Quality modelling is being produced which has delivered some efficiency savings.

PR updated the group on the evidence gathering work on 'Active Travel' which aims to better understand the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and also expanded to cover motorcyclists as vulnerable road users. This questionnaire was launched recently and will be published more widely after Purdah. The group were reminded about the secretariat consultation plan that was agreed last September and that future areas of evidence gathering activity will look at data services.

A proposal was put forward to create a 'Reach' PAG to provide the means for interested members of PWSCG with a greater interest in the MO wider reach activity under PWS to better scrutinise and measure progress. Volunteers were sought with AB, CH and NT confirming their interest in joining. A date would be found in the next couple of months for the first meeting.

16/17 Deliverables and Performance

7. Summary of Responder Survey

MH provided a summary of the recent responder survey, 1377 responses were received this year with a headline satisfaction score of 92% with the NSWWS (2%+ on the previous year). The key results show that there has been a decrease in the number of responders saying there are too many warnings issued which is a positive although it is recognised that a quiet year weather wise may have an impact on this score. There has been an overall increase in the use of hazard manager to access warning information which is a positive and indicates the improvements made to the service last year were beneficial. TV is still an important channel in terms of reach and access to warnings. There is an overall satisfaction score of 90% for the service provided by the

MO Advisors with an overall satisfaction score of 87% with the Public Weather Service. The group discussed the links to Resilience Direct as some around the table are users of both services. Uptake and use of Resilience Direct does vary across the regions of the UK according to members of this group. BF informed the group that there will be more assistance provided to increase the uptake and use of RD amongst the civil contingency community.

8. Milestone review

SJ updated the group on two milestones that have been reached within the year, these were PWS Milestone 4b – delivering a step change in content and forecast accuracy milestone 10. The group had reviewed the papers on both setting out the action taken to meet these milestones and were content to sign them off as met.

9. Met Office Annual Report: Review of the year

DR provided a summary presentation reviewing the past year both in terms of the weather experienced and the achievements of the PWS. Weather wise it has been relatively quiet compared to previous years. There were four named storms over the winter period with feedback indicating that 90% found the warnings useful. There were substantially fewer warnings issued 311 compared to 674 the previous year indicating the overall more benign weather experienced. Key areas of challenged focussed on the need to better forecast detailed thunderstorm location and intensity. There were also incidents of fog which has a particular impact on the aviation sector so more progress on that weather type was noted as an area to focus on.

The group were informed about the completed installation of the new Cray High Performance Computer (HPC) that was achieved three months ahead of schedule. This will deliver processing capacity that is 15 times faster than the previous computer. The radar upgrades have been completed at 13 out the 15 planned sites. DR spoke about a new source of wind data coming from aircraft Mode S sensors with six sites installed to receive this information covering the UK. The group were reminded of the improvements that were delivered by the major model upgrade PS38 in November 2016 which delivered benefits including a larger UK domain, UK runs out to 5 days, a new global wave model and better representation of shower formation.

On reach and engagement there continues to be increased uptake of the App which has seen a number of upgrades and additional content added since its launch. The MO has continued to increase the content it offers over a number of social media channels with 474m views of MO content. DR spoke about the delivery of the Public Weather Media Service (PWMS) that was launched in July 2016. The service has seen a wide uptake with broadcasters with particular benefits realised in the delivery of the Presenter tool and the improved Visual cortex graphics package.

10. PWSCG Annual Report and FY 16/17 sign off

The Group confirmed they were content with the report summarising the work of the PWSCG over the year which will be published on the PWSCG webpages. WW confirmed with the group that he is content with the MO delivery of the PWS over the last year and that he approves the letter to be sent to Rob Varley the MO CEO to confirm that the MO has met the performance standards set out in the Customer Supplier Agreement for 2016/17.

11. Updates to the CSA including PPMs and Milestones

DR updated the group on the continuing priorities in the CSA. The main ones being a focus on improving accuracy both actual and perceived, increasing reach and engagement and being able to deliver the £10m savings by 2019 as agreed in the CSR settlement in 2015. DR highlighted the areas of change such as the move to adapting to an 'agile' approach to development in particular in relation to online digital content. There would be more emphasis on third party reach and a refresh to the CSA style to pull together PPMs, Milestones and Indicators.

The group discussed some of the targets in the CSA in particular on the stretch target for PPM1 where warnings should provide good or excellent guidance. The current target of 70% has been in place for a few years with a stretch of 80%. The group agreed that it would be more useful to have a stepped approach to the target in this area and agreed to the target increasing over the next few years starting at 72% for this year then, 74% and 76% for the succeeding years.

The group also discussed whether a new milestone should be introduced to define the scope including capabilities and services that are required after the Transformation & Efficiency Programme has completed. The group agreed to add this milestone into the CSA.

12. PWSCG Milestone sponsors and Secretariat Operating plan

SJ proposed the milestone sponsors for the coming FY 2017/18 which were agreed by the group.

The Secretariat operating plan sets out the core functions and duties of the Secretariat and resourcing was noted by the group.

13. Introduction from Public Health England

Dr Angie Bone was invited to present to the group to provide an oversight of her work and responsibilities and a general introduction to the work of PHE. The presentation was very well received and sparked a number of questions from the group.

The work of this group and the areas of responsibility for PHE are clearly linked to the potential for extreme weather events and other natural hazards that have the potential to cause adverse impacts on human health. In particular, cold weather, heatwaves and flooding events are of particular focus for PHE. In addition to the background and introduction to PHE activity the group were given a detailed account of how different the different weather types impact on the nation's health including the relationship between extreme temperatures and mortality rates. PHE also informed the group that they are looking to review their existing cold weather alert system and that is something that the MO will be working with them on. AB spoke about the challenges around climate change which is one of the greatest global threats to public health.

14. A year in the life of the Advisors

MH delivered a presentation to give the group a flavour of the activity and work that the MO advisors typically deliver during the year. The advisors are involved in a wide variety of activity from active responses during severe weather events, community and resilience engagement, risk assessments and training exercises. A number of training sessions were delivered covering the NSWWS, Hazard Manager and broader Met Office services. Important simulation exercises were conducted with a notable example relating to the emergency plan for Heysham Nuclear Power Station. Representation was made at the international level with an Advisor attending the World Meteorological Organisation event in South Africa with 10 other nations. A huge amount of work has been undertaken within the MO as part of the Impact Information Group bringing together colleagues from across the MO with an interest in weather impacts. The work has looked at weather and forecast impact information usage, verification of NSWWS and models and science and model developments which can help drive improvements in the NSWWS output and model accuracy. The group recognised the valuable work the advisors carry out which greatly enhances the MO reputation.

15. AOB

The group were informed that the Secretariat had been contacted about the UKGEOS work that Captain Martin Jones is undertaking on behalf of Defra. It was the view of this group that the engagement with that project would be for the MO as a whole to engage with rather than specifically through the PWSCG. A reply would be drafted accordingly.

Future PWSCG Meeting dates and locations:

PAG – Reach – 25 May 2017, London
Scotland PWSCG – 6th June 2017, Edinburgh
PAG – 6th September, Met Office, Exeter
PWSCG 11th October 2017 – BEIS or a PWSCG to host
N. Ireland PWSCG – 7th November 2017, Belfast
PWSCG - 24th January 2018, London or Exeter
PWSCG - 25th April 2018