

MINUTES
PWSCG (39) Meeting
10:00 – 15:30 Wednesday 25th January 2017
 BEIS Conference Centre, 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
Alessia Morris (AM)	Scottish Government
Tracy Goode (TG)	Welsh Government
Jonathan McKee (JM)	Northern Irish Government
Paul Furlong (PF)	Highways England
Colin Hord (CH)	CAA
Nathan Travis (NT)	CFOA
Ian Hault (IH)	LGA
Craig Woolhouse (CW)	Environment Agency
George Tabcart (GT)	MOD
André Cocuccio (AC)	MCA
Andrew Colenutt (ACn)	MCA
Ben Fletcher (BF)	Cabinet Office
Kate Henman (KH)	DCLG
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Mel Harrowsmith (MH)	Met Office
Lynne Armstrong (LA)	Met Office
Phil Evans (PE)	Met Office
Rob Varley	Met Office

Actions

	Owner	Action	Date
1	Secretariat	Liaise with Kate Henman at DCLG to ensure their future participation at PWSCG meetings	By April PWSCG
2	Secretariat	Next PAG (31 March) to receive an update on any plans to change the UK obs network density as a consequence of T&E	31 March
3	Mel Harrowsmith	Share the details of the training opportunities for Emergency Responders	When ready
4	Richard Orrell	Develop a costed proposal for the possible expansion of the Wow Schools project	For October PWSCG
5	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
6	Secretariat & Derrick Ryall/Richard Orrell	Review existing metrics and indicators to ensure they continue to provide a meaningful measurement of progress. In particular consider revising science indicator 4 and introducing a metric for heavy rainfall.	For April PWSCG
7	All	Review the proposals for the changes set out in the Service Review paper and provide comments to the Secretariat	By 28th Feb
8	Secretariat	Circulate the 18 key objectives from the corporate plan to PWSCG	By mid Feb
9	Secretariat	To send out invites for future meetings and liaise with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to agree dates for 2017 National meetings.	By 28th Feb

1. Welcome & Introductions

WW welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Keith Hodgkinson (BEIS) and Charlie Hall (NPCC). New attendees at their first PWSCG included Jonathan McKee (N. Ireland), Kate Henman (DCLG) and Andrew Colenutt (MCA)

2. Minutes & actions from last meeting

PR updated the group on progress since the last meeting. Progress had been made against all actions. The Secretariat will liaise with Kate Henman to secure the continued representation of DCLG at this group.

The minutes of the September meeting were cleared by the group and will be published online.

3. PWSCG Chair's Update

WW updated the group on his activity since the last meeting. He had written to the BBC to seek assurances that the change in forecast provider would not diminish their commitment to broadcasting severe weather warnings. Assurances were provided and the Met Office and BBC are continuing discussions. He also met with RV to discuss the wider implications of the loss of the BBC contract and sought assurances that the Met Office continues to operate cost effectively. The priority is ensuring sure the National Severe Weather Warning Service remains the authoritative source of information with respect to weather which poses a risk to property, infrastructure and life. It is essential that the change of BBC weather provider does not result in emergency responders, government officials or the public receiving conflicting information in such circumstances.

WW updated the group on the Welsh PWSCG held in November. These Devolved Government meetings are extremely useful to inform the customer group of issues faced by particular areas of the UK. The group heard about the challenges in tackling grass fires, the activities of the Brecon Mountain service and the Welsh Government's flooding consultation.

WW attended the Met Office Science & Advisory Council (MOSAC) which provided an opportunity to hear more about the Met Office's science plans, the group has a particular interest in forecast accuracy metrics. The meeting also provided an opportunity for WW to meet the Met Office's new Chief Scientist Steven Belcher.

WW attended the Interdepartmental Met Office Steering Group (IMOSG) where updates were given on the plans to deliver the Transformation and Efficiency Programme and Met Office Corporate Plan. PWSCG will continue to exert pressure on the Met Office to deliver the transformation and efficiency PWS requires and keep IMOSG appraised of progress.

4. Report on Special PAG

WW summarised the items discussed at the last PAG which included an update on progress to improve the global skilful forecast range and measurements of UK site specific forecasts. The savings required as part of the spending review will be met through a combination of the T&E programme and a review into services provided by the PWS.

5. Report on Media and Reach sub-Group & Cycling Workshop

DH provided an update on her activity as the Independent Member and the recent meeting of the Media and Reach sub-Group. There was good attendance at the meeting from broadcasters and generally positive feedback on the items discussed namely the next generation NSWWS, Storm Naming and the Public Weather Media Service (PWMS). The broadcasters provided a useful insight in terms of what they believe works best for communicating to the general public and offered suggestions to help improve the next generation NSWWS. There was a lively discussion on the storm naming initiative. The broadcasters are keen to play a part in the development of services and welcome the opportunity to do this collectively through the MARG meetings.

DH spoke about the engagement that has taken place with cycling organisations to better understand their needs and identify if there is any additional information the Met Office could usefully and affordably provide within the scope of the PWS. The outcome was that while weather does have a significant impact on cycling, this is of lesser importance than other hazards such as traffic and road conditions. Additional evidence gathering will be conducted as part of a review of 'active travel' which will be presented at a future PWSCG.

6. Report on Public Perception Survey

LA provided an overview of the finding from the public perception survey that was conducted in the autumn. The survey aims to measure performance against two KPIs on accuracy and usefulness. It assesses usage of weather forecasts amongst the general public, levels of satisfaction and the channels people use to access forecasts.

The headline messages are that forecasts are generally felt to be accurate and useful with this year's scores consistent with recent years. Digital media usage is continuing to grow and there is now only a small gap between levels of TV and digital media usage to access weather forecasts. Use of TV has continued to decline, but at a reducing rate.

The expansion in the number of channels people use to access weather information means the Met Office will need to consider greater partnership working in the future to maintain a sufficient level of 'reach'. Points of strength for the Met Office include ranking as the most trusted provider but there is still scope for improvement on issues such as 'perception of accuracy'.

7. Report on BEIS

In KH's absence SJ provided a brief update on activity within BEIS. The new Industrial Strategy Green Paper, one of the Department's priorities, has now been launched and a consultation opened:

https://beisgovuk.citizenspace.com/strategy/industrial-strategy/?utm_campaign=gov&utm_source=internal-beis&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=internal

Work is underway to put in place the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) which will be one mechanism for allocating some of the additional funds announced.

Alex Chisholm the Permanent Secretary at BEIS recently visited the Met Office. As part of the visit he was given a presentation about the Public Weather Service which was very well received.

8. Performance 2016/17 - Met Office quarterly summary

DR provided a summary of the notable weather seen over the last few months. Overall it has been a benign autumn compared to the previous year. Three storms have been named during this season so far with far fewer warnings in the period October to December compared to the same period in 2015.

The discussion focussed on the handling of the recent period of foggy weather and the snow event on the 12/13 January. Fog is notoriously difficult to predict due its local nature and the complexity of conditions that need to align for it to form. Accuracy in predicting fog is crucial for the aviation industry as airports have to make decisions about runway capacity for take-off and landing slots as increased time is required between aircraft. This can result in airlines having to cancel flight. The performance of forecasts and guidance for this period was mixed. It is an area where model upgrades will provide some improvements but human judgement will continue to remain essential. A question was raised about whether T&E would result in changes to the density of the observing systems critical to forecast fog. The Observations Team would be asked to provide an update on this issue at the next PWS Assurance Group meeting.

The snow event on 12/13th January was discussed with the group taking the view that this was a well communicated warning with ample notice period that allowed mitigation to be put in place.

National Capability

The group were informed of the excellent progress with the installation of the High Performance Computer (HPC) which was installed 3 months ahead of schedule. This has seen improvements feeding through into forecasts with the improved representation of showers of particular note. A new global wave height model is delivering a 2 day improvement in forecast skill with a 3 day forecast now having the same level of error as the previous 1 day forecast.

The group were also informed about the Met Office National Meteorological Library and Archive service which has received accreditation from the National Archive. This is a very positive outcome and means the service is on a par with archives such as the V&A and Imperial War Museum in terms of the service it provides and standard of preservation of its collections.

Digital and Social media

The group were informed about the latest updates to the App which includes daily snapshots and eagerly awaited new interactive radar map. Use of social media channels continues to expand with the first Facebook live broadcast in January.

9. Milestone Updates

NSWWS

MH provided an overview of the progress to develop the next generation NSWWS to improve the communication of severe weather impacts. The plan is for a comprehensive service and offering more than a 'pdf' approach to communicating warnings including greater use of social media, Apps, web etc. The group discussed the key elements to the new service on the underpinning capability, warnings manager, digital design, language, number of warnings issued.'

DH raised a point that the broadcasters had mentioned which referred to warnings covering large parts of the sea which can make the maps more confusing. MH confirmed that work was underway into tackling that issue. GT raised the point that although NSWWS doesn't officially cover the sea it can be very useful to marine users. Other priorities for the new system include streamlining the internal process required to get warnings issued, introducing a replacement for the warnings manager tool in October 2017, improving the ability of the Chief Meteorologist to preview warnings before they are published and changing the background mapping.

On language, the aim is to improve user understanding of warnings content and the associated likelihood and impacts especially amongst the general public. For impacts that arise as a consequence of the weather such as flooding the Met Office will be working closely with partners for their contributions on the appropriate text to convey the expected impacts and advice to follow.

JM informed the group about work taking place in Northern Ireland with Schools and Head Teachers to help them to make better informed decisions about when there is a need to close schools for example.

The group were informed about the training being rolled out both to the Media Services team at the Met Office and to Emergency Responders. AM is keen for those responders and contingency colleagues in Scotland to be involved in the training.

The next steps will be to continue with the work on simplifying language and impacts in warnings, visual design updates to the web in late spring, testing the datafeed for third parties in summer 2017 and integration in autumn 2017. The final completion date for the next generation NSWWS is March 2018.

WoW schools

RO provided a summary of the progress and achievements from the pilot project. The main activity has been conducting the final interviews with the pilot schools, completing the review of UK curricula and consideration of business models to support the expansion of the initiative. It was agreed that the primary benefit of the initiative comes from reach and engagement with younger people as opposed to data collection which could be a secondary benefit but should not be a barrier for take-up

The group discussed the merits of the project and recognise the value it could bring. It was felt that additional resource would be needed to take the project to the next level and in order for the PWSCG to be able to take a balanced decision in line with other priorities a costed proposal was requested to be presented at the October PWSCG with an outline plan of feasibility, costs and activities.

10. Milestone Reports

The group agreed that the Chemet (M6a) and interim comms plan for short notice severe weather warnings (M1c) milestones had been met.

11. Health Services

SJ updated the group on the evidence gathering regarding the current Air Quality forecast that is underpinned by modelling that is currently paid for by the PWS. The group agreed that there was a need to review this service but that it had to be considered alongside other priorities. The Group requested a matrix showing the relative fit to PWS and costs/ savings of continuing/stopping existing and potential new PWS services and capability including WoW schools, Air Quality forecasting and any

recommendations from the Active Travel review. This should be presented to the October PWSCG.

Air Quality is being looked at under the Secretariat's current consultation plan and will be reported on at the April PWSCG, an In Depth Review of air quality forecast modelling will report to the March PAG.

Hot and Cold Temperature Advisory Service

MH provided an overview of the work stemming from the responder workshops looking at whether the PWS should provide a hot and cold temperature service. The evidence gathering has shown that there is a very mixed picture with no clear solution presenting itself. The group discussed the findings of the paper, and were in agreement that the communications programme on hot and cold should be continued. They would review the success of the hot and cold temperature campaigns together with any additional information collected on impacts by March 2019.

12. Forward look 2017/18

Draft Milestones and PPMs for the next CSA and Service Review

DR updated the group on the proposals set out as part of the service review which is a key milestone to help deliver the savings required under the CSR settlement.

Milestones by theme

The group agreed with the outline shape of the programme of work which DR presented. It was highlighted that there was currently no metric to measure extreme rainfall and progress in improving its prediction. There was also discussion about the suitability of the existing science indicator 4 which measures forecast skill for low cloud and fog. It was noted that in addition to the metrics and indicators which PWS uses to review performance, metrics are in place to support the contracts the Met Office has with wider Government and Commercial customers.

WW was content that if necessary to review some of the metrics but did not want to see an increase in the total number. The Met Office and Secretariat were asked to review existing metrics and indicators to ensure they continue to provide a meaningful measurement of progress. In particular they should consider revising science indicator 4 and introducing a metric for heavy rainfall. In deciding whether new metrics and indicators are required consideration should be given to monitoring already in place for other contracts.

On the theme of civil contingencies, a question was raised regarding integration of the Hazard Manager system with the Resilience Direct tool. MH is a member of the RD steering Group and informed the group that the planned introduction of new Chemet and NSWWS GIS layers will allow these products to be available in RD. Use of RD varies considerably amongst Local Authorities and across the different nations, it is important that PWS continues to provide a solution which meets the needs of all UK responders.

National capability - Science

Over the next year two major model upgrades will be happening. One aims to improve the global resolution and hourly UK data (PS39) and the other will introduce a major physics upgrade and improvements to the ensemble model (PS40)

CW enquired about the level of engagement with stakeholders around these changes to ensure they are ready and able to make use of the improved information at the earliest opportunity e.g. using the UK hourly update. DR stated that it is the specialist users that take the bulk data and the potential impact would be on those taking raw model output. The MO will ensure that adequate communication is made ahead of the changes.

The group were asked to review the proposals for the changes set out in the Service Review paper and provide comments to the Secretariat by the end of February. The service review will be discussed further at the October PWSCG meeting.

13. Met Office Corporate Plan

The CEO of the Met Office Rob Varley was invited to provide an update on the Met Office's new Corporate Plan. The plan sets out the strategic objectives and reaffirms the key purpose of the organisation. Their role is to support UK Government and to work at the forefront of weather and climate science for protection, prosperity and well-being. The purpose is underpinned by 18 key objectives and the group requested to have sight of those to better understand the key priorities of the organisation. RV spoke about the T&E plans which are being developed to allow for the continued delivery of the services and world leading capability. The plan will assist the organisation in delivering the T&E programme but the Met Office will continue to deliver the social and economic benefits that were outlined in the General Review.

A key focus for the T&E programme is on the IT infrastructure that requires a great deal of overhaul and streamlining. IT is being looked at in a strategic way to meet the demands of the digital age and to keep it aligned with policy decisions that may have a bearing on future IT requirements and capability. The first phase of IT projects is underway. There was some discussion in the group and questions posed about the timeline to deliver the T&E programme as it had taken a while to get the programme plan into shape. RV is confident that the Met Office are on track to deliver the savings PWS requires on the necessary timescales as certain elements of the work have been going on alongside the work to define and plan the T&E programme.. RV believed that the changes to user's services would be modest and within the norms of evolutionary changes that occur overtime.

WW noted that the T&E programme and the review of PWS services are closely linked and that decisions to change or remove services as part of the PWS service review will need to take account of the plans T&E is set to deliver.

14. Dates for future meetings

The Secretariat proposed dates for the UK PWSCG meetings for FY 2017/18 and will agree these if the group are content they do not clash with any other major events.

The Devolved Administrations were asked to come back to the Secretariat with proposed dates when they wish to hold their meetings.

The offer for a PWSCG member to host the October meeting was put out to the group following on from previous successful meetings being held at Heathrow and the MCA.

15. AOB

The Secretariat has received a request from Public Health England to join the group. The group felt that this was a sensible idea to have the health sector represented within this forum.

Future PWSCG Meeting dates and locations:

PWSCG 40th Meeting, BEIS, 26th April 2017

Proposed dates for 2017/18

11th October 2017

24th January 2018

25th April 2018