

PWSCG (34) Meeting
11:00 – 16:00 Wednesday 21 October 2015
 Compass Centre, Heathrow Airport

In Attendance:

Wyn Williams (WW)	PWSCG Chair
Denise Harker (DH)	PWSCG Independent Member
Mike Gray (MG)	PWSCG Secretariat
Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat
Keith Hodgkinson (KH)	BIS
John Irvine (JI)	Northern Ireland Executive
Nathan Travis (NT)	Chief Fire Officers Association
Steve Barnes (SB)	Civil Contingencies Secretariat
Paul Furlong (PF)	Highways England
Colin Hord (CH)	Civil Aviation Authority
Martin Jones (MJ)	MOD
Ian Hault (IH)	Local Government Association
Andre Cocuccio (AC)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Phil Evans (PE)	Met Office
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Mel Harrowsmith (MH)	Met Office
Colin Seddon (CS)	Met Office
Wendy Barnes (WB)	Met Office (Observer)
Anna Jenkins (AJ)	BIS (Observer)
Suzanne Jones (SJ)	BIS (Observer)

Apologies:

Charlie Hall	Association of Chief Police Officers
Dane Marsh	Welsh Government
Tracy Goode	Welsh Government
Alessia Morris	Scottish Government
George Tabcart	MOD
Patricia Abbott	DCLG
Craig Woolhouse	Environment Agency
Andy Wells	CAA

Agenda item	Discussion, Decisions and Actions
1	Welcome & Introductions The Secretariat opened the meeting due to the delayed arrival of a few members. Introductions were made including welcoming the observers from BIS and Met Office Non-Exec Director.
2	Minutes and Actions The group approved the minutes of the July meeting and noted the progress to complete the actions. The General Review of the Met Office has yet to be published and the action to share it with this group will be carried forward.

3	Reports
3.1	<p>PWSCG Chair's Update – WW</p> <p>WW gave a short update on activities since the last meeting. Focus of the work has been on four key areas, namely the Spending Review, the Interdepartmental Met Office Strategy Group, BBC, and the PWSCG Assurance Group (PAG). WW had been kept informed of progress on the Spending review and ensuring that the PWSCG arguments were being put forward.</p> <p>WW had been invited to sit as an observer on the newly created Interdepartmental Met Office Strategy Group (IMOSG). The IMOSG provides a cross government steer on the Met Office work as a whole so is wider than just the focus of the PWSCG. WW had reviewed departmental requirements to ensure the PWS requirements were captured. The next IMOSG meeting is scheduled for November.</p> <p>WW has written to Ministers and the Chairman of the BBC Trust outlining the PWS concerns arising from the BBC's decision to deselect the Met Office from its tender process.</p> <p>WW provided a report on the PAG meeting held in September. The report of the PAG is attached as an Annex to these minutes.</p> <p>The PWSCG were content with the two recommendations from the PAG to task the Met Office with developing proposals on how it will recover the reach of PWS outputs following the BBC's decision and for an additional meeting of the PAG before the next PWSCG meeting to discuss the consequences of the Spending Review. .</p> <p>Action: Members of the PWSCG are invited to attend the additional meeting of the PAG scheduled for the 16 December which will be used to start planning and further developing SR scenarios post spending review.</p>
3.2	<p>Update on Spending Review – KH</p> <p>KH updated the PWSCG on progress on the Spending Review within BIS. As BIS is the largest unprotected department, it is inevitable that we will have to do things differently going forward. Although the SR announcement is on 25 November, the PWS settlement may not be confirmed until later. A question was raised about seeking support from other Government Departments for the PWS and it was stated that this type of backing and support was sought and put forward as part of the case that was made for the PWS.</p>
3.3	<p>NSWWS Responder Workshops – MH</p> <p>MH gave an overview of the outcomes from the workshops held over the summer and pulled out key points from her report. The workshops were extremely helpful in providing concrete ideas for improvements the</p>

	<p>NSWWS and confirming that only minor changes were needed as the service is operating very effectively. The report contains a list of recommendations for consideration and accompanying measures of success for these improvements. SB noted that it might be prudent to wait until the outcome of the spending review before the full scope of these recommendations is approved. It was therefore agreed to review the recommendations in principle and to confirm their affordability at the January meeting. A question was asked about the prioritisation of these recommendations and how this would be achieved. WW informed the group that it would be for the PAG to provide that level of steer and would do so after the outcome of the spending review and would report back the PWSCG on that issue.</p> <p>The presentation of this report and update met the stretch target for milestone <i>M1a: Test the concept of a next generation warnings service with both the Responder Community and the Public, presenting proposals and an outline implementation plan to the PWSCG January 2016 meeting.</i></p> <p>The group agreed that this has been met.</p>
3.4	<p>Update on PWS Reach and the BBC</p> <p>PE updated the group on the latest position on the ongoing dialogue between the Met Office and BBC regarding the issue of broadcasting weather warnings.</p> <p>Met Office are continuing their dialogue with the BBC in terms of getting the desired level of assurance and commitment about how they would manage the broadcasting of Met Office warnings in relation to a forecast supplied by another provider. The BBC has agreed to provide clarity about how they will make this work.</p> <p>SB provided an update from the Cabinet Office civil contingencies perspective. They joined the discussion early on and have been speaking with the BBC. The BBC have verbally agreed to continue broadcasting severe weather warnings and other warnings outside of the NSWWS such as air quality, pollen, flooding and volcanic eruption but have not provided this commitment in writing yet. Further meetings are planned.</p>
4	15/16 Performance
4.1	<p>Met Office quarterly summary</p> <p>DR presented a summary of the main weather events and how these were covered by the PWS over the summer months.</p> <p>The group were informed about the careful handling of messages that were put out by the Met Office in respect of ex hurricane Joaquin in order to accurately convey the uncertainty surrounding the possible storm track. Members of the PWSCG had noted in the media that they saw there was a clear explanation of the probability surrounding the possible storm track</p>

	<p>which they felt was a positive outcome. The MO blog was mentioned as a channel that had a positive outcome on managing the messages.</p> <p>DR informed the group about the challenges of forecasting high pressure systems and in particular in relation to levels of cloud cover over the north sea and how this can progress inland.</p> <p>The group were also updated on the aspects of improving forecasts with the increasing rollout of the HPC having a positive effect long term. There are expected forecast improvements in the short term as the roll out of the HPC continues. There is also work ongoing looking at how to better merge current observations with the short term model forecast to provide an improvement to the 3-6 hour forecast, this need for 'nowcasting' was a theme that also emerged from the responder workshops.</p> <p>The group were also informed of the recently announced storm naming system that the Met Office has introduced. Evidence shows that naming storms gives better outcomes in terms of getting the message out there to the general public and makes it easier to hook a weather story angle to broadcaster reporting. This is positive if a greater level of awareness is achieved across the general public in terms of severe weather warnings.</p> <p>There was discussion on the evolving El Nino event and the potential impact/affect this could have on weather in the UK. It was noted that not all of the conditions that have accompanied some previous El Nino events are present at the moment so there is still some uncertainty about what we can expect.</p> <p>There was some discussion which highlighted the balance that needs to be struck in terms of potential winter impacts and confidence of these occurring.</p> <p>Action: MG to seek feedback from some PWSCG members on their seasonal forecasting requirements.</p>
4.2	<p>Update on Milestones Development of the Public Weather Media Service (PWMS)</p> <p>CS explained the current status of this project which included an update on the interest of broadcasters taking the service which has been very positive overall.</p> <p>SB raised a question about international forecast data being included in the PWMS. Met Office confirmed that the focus at present is on the UK. A prototype and demos of the PWMS are planned for January and the anticipated go live date is scheduled for July 2016.</p> <p>To note: The group were satisfied that Milestone 2a was met. Milestone 2a: <i>PWSCG endorsement of implementation plan for a Public Weather Media Service (31 Oct 15)</i></p> <p>Action: Met Office to look into the question posed by SB on the international element being included within the PWMS.</p>

	<p>Action: AC to speak to the Met Office about more detail on the marine forecast element of the PWMS.</p> <p>Media and Reach sub-Group (MARG)</p> <p>WW referred to the paper prepared by PR about the establishment of this sub-Group that will be chaired by DH and will specifically focus on the issue of reach and providing assurance to the PWSCG that the PWMS is delivering for the users of the service. WW noted that Liz Howell BBC is willing to play a part in this sub-Group.</p> <p>The group confirmed they were content with the proposal to establish the MARG.</p> <p>Action: Two volunteers from the PWSCG are sought for the group and members are invited to put their names forward to the Secretariat within two weeks.</p>
4.3	<p>MS3a – Update to iPhone and Android, MS5 – Weather Observations from Schools and Hazard Manager</p> <p>RO provided the group with a progress update on these work areas. Work is progressing very well with the updated App content. There is a strong push to secure a release close to Christmas to capture new users who may be downloading Apps during the holiday period. However it is too early to judge whether this will be immediately before Christmas or soon after in the New Year.</p> <p>The schools project is also progressing well and the scheme has got off to a promising start with weather recording equipment now installed at the first pilot school.</p> <p>The group agreed milestone 5a had been met. <i>M5a: Scope and begin implementation of a schools based pilot project to provide weather observations and reports of weather impacts.</i></p> <p>On Hazard Manager the work to switch over to version 2 is on track. A significant component (Hydromet module) has been completed and work is underway on the other modules such as FireMet and CHEMET.</p> <p>At the end of January 2016 all the PWS content and the vast majority of other services will be available on Hazard Manager 2 and most users will have transitioned over. Fall back to the original version of Hazard Manager will be retained for resilience purposes. The aim is to switch off the original version by Spring 2016. It was agreed that two non-PWS components (Blue Tongue and Rivers Agency Northern Ireland) would be delivered beyond January 2016 but by April 2016 to mitigate risk during the Winter period.</p>
4.4	<p>Secretariat report on Met Office performance</p> <p>MG provided some highlights of performance since the last meeting. On PPM1, warnings accuracy, there was only one missed event in July and one poor assessment for August. These do not reflect the quality of the</p>

	<p>warnings overall. It was noted by the group that challenges remain regarding the temporal and spatial accuracy in forecasting of convective activity. Overall performance was better this summer than the previous year.</p> <p>Close scrutiny is being paid to the forecast accuracy PPM and a detailed report will be presented at the January meeting.</p>
5	<p>Updated Terms of Reference for the PWSCG</p> <p>MG explained the reason for updating the ToR so they offer more flexibility on the frequency of meetings and introduced more generalised references that should negate the need to have to update the ToR so frequently.</p> <p>The group were asked to consider the membership, should the ToRs contain a list of Members and others appointed by the Chairman? Also it should be clear about who makes up the core membership such as members and observers especially when voting on matters.</p> <p>Action: The group are asked to provide any further comments on the draft ToRs to MG within the next week.</p>

Future PWSCG Meeting dates and locations:

PAG 4th Meeting, Met Office, Exeter, 16th December 2015
PWSCG 36th Meeting, BIS, 27th January 2016
PWSCG 37th Meeting, BIS, 27th April 2016

Summary of Actions

Action	Owner
Action: Members of the PWSCG are invited to attend the December meeting of the PAG which will be used to start planning and further developing SR scenarios post spending review.	All
Action: MG to seek feedback from some PWSCG members on their seasonal forecasting requirements.	Mike Gray
Action: Met Office to look into the question posed by SB on the international element being included within the PWMS.	Colin Seddon
Action: AC to speak to the Met Office about more detail on the marine forecast element of the PWMS.	Andre Cocuccio
Action: Two volunteers from the PWSCG are sought for the group and members are invited to put their names forward to the Secretariat within two weeks.	All
Action: The group are asked to provide any	All

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Annex: Report to the PWSCG of the 3rd Meeting of the PWS Assurance Group

The meeting took place at the Met Office, Exeter, on 15th September 2015. PAG members present were Wyn Williams, Denise Harker, Ian Hoult, George Tabcart, Andy Wells and Mike Gray.

The PAG reviewed three areas in this meeting:

- International Commitments;
- Technology; and
- Science, in particular, recent and future changes to operational models

The PAG received an update on progress with WMO, EUMETSAT, ECMWF and EUMETNET. The recent WMO Congress was very successful, with the UK achieving all of its objectives, including an acceptable budget settlement and the election of the Met Office CE to WMO Executive Council. EUMETSAT has successfully launched the last of its current series of geostationary satellites and Member States have now unanimously approved the next generation polar satellite series. The Met Office has committed to support ECMWF's Future Accommodation project, and is carefully reviewing ECMWF's proposed future strategy. The PAG re-emphasised the importance of the next generation satellites to the PWS.

The Met Office Exec Head of Technology presented an overview of the technology area to the PAG. The PAG noted that **THE COST OF MET OFFICE IT HAS REMAINED BROADLY THE SAME IN THE MET OFFICE FOR THE LAST 8 YEARS WHILST THE CAPABILITY HAS INCREASED, SO DELIVERING MORE WITH THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY.** Met Office IT infrastructure includes High Performance Computing (HPC), desktops, big data networks, mainframe, large web presence and data storage. The new HPC will bring new challenges around data volumes and the PAG was pleased to note that solutions were being developed to address this challenge. The PAG noted that recruitment and retention due to pay levels and retaining expertise for legacy systems within an aging workforce were two current concerns for the Technology area.

The Science Director briefed the PAG on recent model changes and how the Met Office planned to exploit the new HPC. The latest model change had detrimentally affected sunshine forecasts in one model configuration, but this problem had now been fixed and further work was planned to improve the model's handling of low cloud in certain high pressure conditions. The PAG was satisfied with the Met Office's processes for evaluating and approving model changes in that they gave the right balance between thorough testing and rapid implementation, and agreed that efficiency would be increased if research effort could be concentrated on a single (the best) model configuration. The PAG was satisfied that the plans for exploiting the new HPC would deliver rapid improvements to forecast accuracy.

The PAG reviewed the PWSCG Risk Register and considered in some depth the risks around PWS reach following the loss of the BBC contract, and the

spending review. The Secretariat reported the positive outcomes of the two in-depth reviews conducted to date on the Voluntary Co-Operation Programme, and the Library and Archive.

Observations, recommendations and actions arising from the day's discussions were as follows:

1. The PWSCG Chairman suggested that the PWSCG should put an action on the Met Office to develop proposals on how it will recover reach.
2. The PWSCG Chairman proposed that the PAG should meet again between the October and January PWSCGs to discuss the impacts of the spending review on the PWS.
3. The PAG was interested to know how the performance of the Library and Archive compared to other national meteorological services' libraries.