

MINUTES
PWSCG (42) Meeting
10:45 – 15:30 Wednesday 24th January 2018
 Conference Room 2, Met Office, FitzRoy Road, Exeter

Attendees

Wyn Williams (WW)	PWSCG Chair
Denise Harker (DH)	PWSCG Independent Member
Sarah Jackson (SJ)	PWSCG Secretariat
Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat
Ian Houlth (IH)	LGA
Richard Hewitt (RH)	Highways England
George Tabcart (GT)	MOD
Tom Waite (TW)	PHE
Lindy Woodage (LW)	Devon & Cornwall Police
Fiona Mair (FM)	CCS (By Telephone)
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Mel Harrowsmith (MH)	Met Office
Lynne Armstrong (LA)	Met Office
Iain Forsyth (IF)	Met Office
Nick Jobling (NJ)	Met Office

Actions

	Owner	Action	Date
1	Secretariat	Request Met Office upload October minutes onto website	Complete
2	Secretariat and Met Office PWS	At the Autumn PWSCG revisit the issue of any potential cost saving scenarios which could impact on the PWS	On agenda for Autumn PWSCG
3	Secretariat	Speak to the Met Office representative on the Met Office EA joint steering group to raise the issue of a lack of hydrological-meteorological guidance being provided at local resilience fora.	By 1 March
4	Mel Harrowsmith	Provide an update at the April PWSCG on the activity of the task team assessing the performance against the PPM 1 metric for weather warnings	25 April
5	Lynne Armstrong	Publish a summary report of the Public Perception Survey work on the Met Office website	Complete
6	Secretariat	Agree dates for PWSCG meetings for FY 2018/19	To send round with minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions

WW welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Paul Hadley, BEIS, Charlie Hall who will be represented by Lindy Woodage, Alessia Morris from Scottish Government who has taken up a new role. Tracy Goode, Welsh Government, Jonathan McKee Northern Ireland Government, Colin Hord CAA, Nathan Travis Fire and Rescue, Carol Holt EA, Jenny Shellans DCLG. Thomas Waite attended his first meeting replacing Angie Bone as the PHE member.

2. Minutes & actions from last meeting

PR updated the group on progress since the last meeting. Progress made across all areas. The Welsh PWSCG will be taking place on Thursday 1st February in Cardiff. The minutes for the October meeting were approved by the group without comment and will be uploaded to the Met Office website.

3. Update on IT hall incident

Iain Forsythe updated the group on the incident that affected the IT hall the previous day, caused by a load balancing unit overheating. The resulting impact led to a loss of data feeds due to power outage in the network room. However the business continuity process performed well. Priority was given to maintaining services that were safety critical such as civil aviation. Safety protocols were followed with global aviation services being handed over to Washington as a precautionary back up. Critical services were maintained but some data feeds were impacted. By midday the vast majority of capability was restored. Customers were kept up to date on the issue and the timeline for restoration of services. GT thanked the team for getting services restored in good time, and noted the need to make there is resilience in capability as the Met Office migrates to cloud based systems.

There will be a full investigation into the cause and remedial action taken to minimise the chances of such an event occurring in the future.

4. Update on Transformation and Efficiency

Nick Jobling, the Chief Financial Officer provided a verbal update on the latest position on the T&E programme. Overall the message is that the programme is in a much better place than a few months ago. NJ spoke about the confidence they now have in meeting the cost reductions required, not all of which will be delivered by T&E. NJ informed the group about plans to change the Facilities Management contract which will help close the gap in terms of the savings required in FY 19/20. A decision on changing the FM contract will go to the Met Office board on 30th January and to Cabinet Office for approval.

The technology strand of T&E continues to make solid progress with the introduction of data being provided through an Amazon cloud solution and acceleration of the work on the SurfaceNet project.

On the people and process strand work has moved forward significantly although it was acknowledged that Met Office was behind the curve in plans for delivering this aspect. Support from Ernst and Young in December has meant the Board could make a decision on taking this work to the next stage. The next sprint in the work will see a full delivery plan presented to the Met Office Board in March setting out how the people and process strand will be implemented in FY 18/19.

NJ spoke of the maturing confidence in this work which was welcomed by the group. DH enquired about the confidence Met Office had in the E&Y work and their analysis. NJ confirmed that the work had been carried out jointly and that analysis was being carried out by senior leaders within the organisation and that it wasn't solely an E&Y piece of work. DH enquired about the potential gap in savings to be found in FY 19/20. NJ said that the figures indicate that the gap will be less than £5m and that this was discussed at the November Board meeting. NJ said that the potential savings that

could be realised from tendering a new FM contract would help to close the gap. Overall the PWSCG feel they have more confidence in the delivery of T&E based on this latest update and the work that has clarified plans for implementation since its last meeting.

5. PWSCG Chair's Update

WW summarised his activity since the October meeting which included attending the PWSCG in Northern Ireland including constructive conversations about the response to the Derry floods in August and ex Hurricane Ophelia. The Met Office science advisory group meeting was held in November which WW attended as an observer. Attendance at PAG-Reach in December and will be attending the Interdepartmental Met Office Strategy Group on 25th January. WW met with Paul Hadley the DD at BEIS with policy responsibility for the PWS contract to update him on recent activity.

6. Independent Member's Update

DH provided a short summary of her engagement activity since the last meeting which included attendance at PAG-Reach and the readout of results from the latest Public Perception Survey which will provide useful input for engagement with broadcasters to help better understand the needs of the public. DH informed the group that the next MARG meeting will be held on 7th February where key topics for discussion will be on the next generation NSWWS and the Storm Naming initiative. DH spoke about some recent correspondence with broadcasters on these matters which the MARG meeting will provide a useful opportunity to delve into issues in more depth and seek the broadcaster's views and suggestions on communicating complex weather situations.

7. Met Office Update

DR provided the group with a summary of the weather experienced since October last year, noting the complexity and challenge of putting out warnings when there are a number of different weather types occurring at the same time. DR spoke of the important renewal of the radar network that was completed which future proofs the network for the next 25 years. The benefits to be realised from this upgrade include being able to measure precipitation up to 250km away, dual polarisation technology that can differentiate between different precipitation types with 5 times more data being received from this new radar network. LW enquired as to whether this upgrade would help with forecasting difficult convective events. DR explained that it would especially in terms of analysing the vertical profiles of rainfall.

DR informed the group of the next model upgrade PS 40 which will see benefits such as improved gust diagnostics, improvements in sea surface temperatures, and trial of the new UK 5 day 1.5km ensemble. DR updated the group on Reach activity and the changeover of the BBC contract which is expected to occur in February and that the BBC have signed up to the NSWWS. Met Office direct reach continues to grow with 4.6m downloads of the App with a high 4.5* online rating. DR spoke about the strong performance across social media with Met Office making good use of a number of different platforms. Indirect reach has seen very strong growth with a 234% increase between April and October 2017 in terms of news and media content views.

8. Future PWS Plans

DR spoke about ensuring the Met Office remains a global leader and that the next series of model upgrades offers huge potential for forecast accuracy improvements. Overall the PWS is in a good place, they have delivered a solid response to the potential loss of reach from the BBC contract and have transformed their own direct reach in response. DR spoke about areas that require further attention where there is still a lag in terms of expectations around accuracy and demand. There is a challenge to perform better with short notice forecasts such as Coverack and Fog events. DR reminded the group of the challenges ahead such as meeting the cost savings required from the comprehensive spending review and the delivery of the T&E programme. DR reinforced the point that the current strategy until 2020 remains valid. On warnings the focus will be to ensure the next generation system 'beds in' and that further accuracy improvements are achieved in order to meet the 2020 target of 80% of warnings to give good/excellent guidance. Improvements on forecasting short notice events will continue to feature as well as the storm naming initiative.

On civil contingencies, work will continue on Chemet to introduce GIS mapping layers and migration of Hazard Manager to a cloud based hosting service. DR updated the group on activity that will benefit the public such as delivering a new mobile responsive website, continuous improvements to the App and drive reach and engagement through social media to name a few. DR spoke about improving access to Met Office data such as converging wholesale and DataPoint making more data accessible. DR spoke about the next steps including updating the Customer Supplier Agreement (CSA).

Views were invited from the group. Overall it was deemed positive that there are no major cuts and that the plans show an evolution rather than revolution.

JS raised a concern that at Local Resilience Fora no one is providing hydrological-meteorological guidance and that from her perspective this is a gap. The role is fulfilled by the FFC at COBR meetings. The Secretariat took an action to raise this with the Met Office representative on the Met Office / EA Joint Steering Group.

The group also agreed that it would be useful to revisit any potential cut scenarios that may impact on PWS at the autumn meeting. The group endorsed the approach being taken to planning for 2018/19.

Performance 2016/17

9. Severe weather subjective verifications

MH provided the group with an update on the verification of warnings and role of the Met Office and Secretariat in that process. All amber and red warnings are routinely assessed first by Met Office and then by the Secretariat to reach a final decision on the score awarded. Scoring takes account of variables such as the accuracy of the area covered, the timing and the impacts experienced. The results for warnings verified since the last meeting were discussed and two case studies were presented Ex-Ophelia which was judged to have provided excellent guidance and an amber snow warning for 29 December which was judged to have provided poor guidance.

Performance measure 1 which specifies that 72% of amber and red warnings provide good or excellent guidance is currently at risk of not being met. MH explained that there may be issues with the way the metric is formulated for example the small sample size and variations in the predictability of the weather. The Customer Group

was pleased to hear that a task team has been established to investigate recent performance further and propose how it could be improved.

MH also provided an update on the Next Generation NSWWS which is expected to be delivered by the end of March and will enable 7 day warnings, warnings for thunderstorms and lightning as well as improving the systems used to issue the warnings.

10. Secretariat Update

PR gave a brief overview of the PAG-Reach meeting which had taken place in December and LA presented an overview of the Public Perception Survey and surveys assessing the public view of the usefulness of recent amber warnings. A summary of both will be provided for the PWSCG web pages.

SJ highlighted two resilience issues which have occurred recently, firstly reduced availability of web delivery systems during the snow which affected London on 10 December, including the availability of site specific forecasts via the app and access to Hazard Manager. Secondly on 2 January an erroneous push notification was issued to app users cancelling the amber warning for Storm Eleanor. The March PAG meeting will focus on these issues in more detail and in particular the actions which have been taken to prevent them recurring.

Future PWSCG Meeting dates and locations:

PWSCG - 25th April 2018 London

Dates to be agreed

October 2018

January 2019