

**MINUTES**  
**PWSCG (49) Meeting**  
**09:30 – 12:30 Wednesday 29 April 2020**  
**Virtual meeting due to COVID-19**

**Attendees**

Duncan Potts (DP)	PWSCG Chair
Claire Tindall (CT)	National Police Chiefs Council
Nathan Travis (NT)	National Fire Chiefs Council
Tracey Goode (TG)	Welsh Government
Jonathan McKee (JM)	Northern Ireland
Clare Dinnis (CD)	Environment Agency
Paul Furlong (PF)	Highways England
Denise Harker (DH)	Independent Member
David Gibbs (DG)	Civil Aviation Authority
Tammy Newey (TN)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
James Partington (JP)	BEIS
Emer O’Connell (EO)	Public Health England
Chris Money (CM)	MOD
Sarah Davies (SD)	PWSCG Secretariat (BEIS)
Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat (BEIS)
Merton Murrell (MM)	PWSCG Secretariat (BEIS)
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Mike Gray (MG)	Met Office
Lisa Martin (LM)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Will Lang (WL)	Met Office
Alex Bailey (AB)	Met Office
Alison Wood (AW)	Met Office

**Actions**

	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Secretariat	Correct the entry in the January minutes to refer to Highways England not Highways Agency	Complete
2.	Secretariat	Consider contacting Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to gather feedback on Met Office performance when reviewing warnings and notable weather events	Action for next subjective verification
3.	Secretariat	Consider the future risks to Met Office output from COVID-19 at the next PAG meeting	Date for PAG tbc
4.	Secretariat	To look at ‘architecture’ of the links between national and local organisations to ensure all links are made	By 30 Jun

	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
5.	Secretariat	Consider how to assess responder satisfaction so that advisors are not 'marking their own homework'	By 30 Jun
6.	Will Lang	Provide the feedback and evidence of responders through the LRF and NRW that demonstrate the satisfaction of the warning service in Wales to Tracy Goode.	By 31 May
7.	Lisa Martin	Ensure the invite to responder workshops/panel and the work to review messaging of warnings goes to all PWSCG members	When dates agreed
8.	Met Office	Investigate if there has been any reduction in forecasting capability in the west of N. Ireland in particular during the warning period Jan-Mar 2020	By 30 Jun
9.	Met Office	Met Office to consider how a 'whole systems' response works in relation to flooding and the warnings from the FFC and NSWWS	When reviewing warnings
10.	Met Office	An updated Finance report as part of a Finance 'deep dive' to be presented at the next PAG	Date for PAG tbc
11.	All PWSCG	Members to ensure they are prepared to input into the development of the next CSA by ensuring they are clear about the outputs they wish to see included as customers	By Autumn PWSCG ready for next CSR
12.	Lisa Martin	Circulate the link to the schools education package to all PWSCG members	To be circulated with minutes
13.	Secretariat	Upload the annual report and other annually published documents to the PWS web pages	By 31 <sup>st</sup> May

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

In-camera session (No Met Office staff present)

Notes in full version.

## **2. Main PWSCG Meeting including Met Office colleagues**

The minutes were agreed subject to changing the reference to Highways Agency to Highways England. The update to actions was provided and noted.

## **3. BEIS Update**

JP provided the BEIS update.

The overwhelming focus of the department has been in the effort to support the work to fight Coronavirus. Support for businesses across various sectors has been a priority including launching grants and loans to various businesses and handling of economic shocks. The department is very busy, with knock-on effects on resource, but this has not adversely impacted support for PWS or wider Met Office sponsorship activity. On COVID-19, the impact on Partner Organisations is being monitored; BEIS is getting regular feedback. As funding issues emerge, options are being explored to move work to the right to ease them. Following the Budget announcement, BEIS Finance are working on this year's allocations/budgets. Work is also underway to develop a R&D strategy. Negotiations continuing with EU.

## **4. Chair's Report**

DP informed the group that he would like to continue with face to face visits as soon as possible. He has written to the Met Office to support their current efforts, and also to inform them that the PWSCG will want to be involved with any Met Office prioritisation that maybe required as a result of COVID-19 impacts.

## **5. Independent Member Report**

DH summarised her activity over the previous months. Certain meetings such as the Media and Reach sub-Group were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions but there were no indications of any major problems with broadcasters. DH cited that her main concern is understanding the financial impact on Met Office from COVID-19. With CAA funding reduced, how will the Met Office handle that shortfall and what are the risks to output going forward and service levels. DH enquired about Met Office capability during this time especially if there is a severe weather event(s).

## **6. Met Office update**

DR informed the group that the Met Office transition to remote working had gone smoothly. It has been going well with no significant reduction in quality or range of services. DR summarised a range of changes and impacts experienced by the organisation. The biggest impact has been on the staff with almost all employees now working at home. This has affected certain production areas such as studio output and a reduction in the weather related content being produced. Small dips in observations have occurred, but that has primarily been down to the inability to fix or service kit located in areas where travel is restricted and social distances measures make it complicated. More substantial reductions in the quantity of observations from aircraft are a concern and the Met Office is exploring a number of options to reduce the potential impact. Met Office are already working with

agencies to establish ways to overcome these obstacles. The current impacts on forecast accuracy are within normal variability.

The largest financial risk so far stems from the reduction in income from the CAA due to the cessation of almost all commercial passenger flights. Other knock on effects include the slowing down of some of the development work and also shifting resource to support BEIS and UK government on the COVID-19 effort. Other key projects such as the Supercomputer procurement are progressing well and to timeline albeit without any visits to potential suppliers as part of the procurement process.

DR noted that with all this current uncertainty and the potential impact it may have on future budgets that the PWSCG may need to engage with the PWS team if a prioritisation exercise is required.

Met Office are also providing COVID-19 modelling support activities. The project is up and running to ensure Met Office data, computing resources and expertise are as responsive as possible to govt/research requests and opportunities. website for data is here: <https://covid19response.informaticslab.co.uk/hub/login>

DP noted the potential long term risk posed by the shortfall in aviation funding and the possible need for the PWSCG to stand ready to advise on any prioritisation of activity when the time comes. DP enquired about what was being done to overcome the current obstacles to fixing observation equipment. DR explained that they were actively looking at all the options to be able to access those sites and carry out the work to get the equipment fixed.

DG provided an update on behalf of CAA. They have agreed with Met Office to suspend some specialist aviation products (mainly leisure related) to help Met Office be more flexible with resources and maintain the focus on the public weather service. As part of the review into current services the CAA has agreed that the Met Office Civil Contingency Aircraft (MOCCA) contract will not be renewed. Reinroduce products when lockdown restrictions are eased.

TG enquired about the prioritisation of services and whether additional input was required from the Welsh responder community. It was confirmed that PWSCG services are currently being protected

## **7. Severe Weather**

WL provided the group with a summary of the weather events experienced since the last meeting with a key focus on storms Ciara and Dennis. WL reminded the group that at the January meeting it was looking possible that that targets for warnings would be missed. However, February turned out to be a very active month weather wise. There were three named storms and it was the wettest February on record since 1862. WL spoke about that period being categorised in terms of some of the worst flooding in northern England. Overall the Met Office was assessed as performing strongly on warnings with some impressive lead times for Ciara issued 6 days in advance. One missed Amber warning for rain was noted during that period something that CD at Environment Agency welcomed had been identified and reflected in the performance assessments.

Some members of the group enquired about how the assessments on performance were conducted and the evidence used to come a decision and in particular for Wales. WL explained that evidence is gathered from responders through the local resilience forums including Natural Resources Wales. It was agreed that WL would report back to the PWSCG with the evidence collected.

EO fed back that the accurate forecasting was very helpful for the COVID-19 repatriation response and with the additional incident management functions they had to set up for COVID-19.

CD spoke about recognising the importance and difference between the weather and the impact of the weather. The events in February demonstrated the importance about the continuum of warnings and the continuum of public action from when the weather event happens to when the impact takes place. This has always been a particular issue when faced with flooding incidents. WL noted that they were taking on board lots of feedback on the complexity of warnings and that they would be reviewing the work in this area. EO supported the point about the complexity of the warnings; it was difficult to communicate the message onward. EO indicated she would like to be included in any future discussions on this point.

JM provided some local feedback for storm Ciara where there were low impacts experience in the west of N. Ireland. JM requested that the forecast for the west of N Ireland should be looked into as there was a clear underestimate of the amount of rainfall. A full debrief for the seasons events in N. Ireland is planned for 2 June and would be an opportunity for the Met Office to be involved. WL noted that he would look at subjective verification assessment and factoring in near misses.

DP summarised the discussion and noted that there was a need to look at things from a 'system response' view taking in the broader context as is the case with the Flood Forecasting Centre. The other action points noted were to take a systematic look at the continuum of warnings and impacts and for SD to arrange a finance deep dive for PAG group including Met Office and BEIS. The group agreed the PWSCG Annual report should be uploaded to the website.

## **8. Secretariat Report on Performance**

PWSCG Assurance Group – PAG

SD summarised the work of the PAG who met virtually at the end of March. DH noted that the Finance report that was presented to them was light in detail and that a more detailed update and deep dive should take place at the next PAG meeting. DH noted that as the situation with coronavirus evolves BEIS will need to provide some guidance and support to the Met Office on what will happen if a reduced funding scenario arises.

PWSCG Annual Report

PR presented a draft PWSCG Annual Report that has been expanded on the previous year's version. The new report contains two case studies that highlight the PWS in action to bring to life why the PWS is so important. PR encouraged other members to provide details of case studies they would like to share so they could be included.

## **9. Delivery in 2019/2020 and Milestone Sign Off**

MG provided a summary on performance and delivery over the last year. The overall message is that it has been a successful year in delivery of the PWS. Performance measures have been met. There was a particular focus to drive improvements in the maximum temperature forecast which was achieved with a swift introduction to changes to the model in the autumn. All the work to deliver the enthusiasts area on the website was achieved in year with just a short delay into FY 2020/21 due to COVID-19. It was launched on the website and went live on 28 April <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/maps-and-charts/enthusiast>

The group agreed that this milestone had been met in year, taking into account the short delay into April before it could go live on the website.

Other achievements included significant progress at the Met Office in managing data and making it available and more accessible. Roadmaps are in place so there is a clear plan to facilitate data accessibility.

Other key achievements include exceeding the warnings target with 79% of warnings providing good or excellent guidance against a target of 75% for the year. Met Office achieved an average increase in both direct and indirect Reach of PWS outputs. On the international theme, the Met Office has secured UK appointments at the WMO helping to increase UK influence internationally.

The group welcomed the summary on performance and approved all the milestone reports circulated with the papers and that 13 of the 14 milestones had been delivered.

The group followed up with a number of questions. DH asked who the Nowcasting briefing tool was intended for? WL explained that the prototype was developed with EA responders in England but that the results will be made available to others in the UK. WL informed the group that the prototype was on hold at the moment. It will become available to responders. Plans about its use are still under consideration and it may become available to Media partners, but training is likely to be required.

TN enquired about the remit of Civil Contingency Advisors and whether their area of responsibility is just on the land or do they cover the 12 [nautical mile territorial sea](#) that is covered by the Civil Contingency Act? It was noted that CCAs covered where events occur and what the LRF's are interested in and this will cover the areas under coastguard responsibility in some cases. An action was noted to think further about the remit of CCAs/Met Office in coastal areas.

TG enquired about the evidence used to sign off the CSA PPM3. TG has some concerns about making sure that the Welsh community is happy with the CCAs especially as it hadn't been possible to hold a Welsh PWSCG meeting. TG spoke about previous points raised in Wales about the heat health alerts and the disparity with England as it was felt that not all the points had been addressed. It was noted that at the October PWSCG meeting in 2019 the Met Office did present on the plans to investigate what could be developed with regards to a heat warning service.

DP noted that there appears to be an architecture issue in terms of the way evidence is gathered and fed back and requested that action is taken to address this. An action was taken to think about the connections between advisors/PWSCG and how the assessment of Met Office performance relates to responder satisfaction so that the advisors are not marking their own homework. The secretariat will look at architecture of all the links between national orgs (eg MCA, PHE), and the local ones so that the assessment is made taking a balance of evidence from users of the PWS services.

TN acknowledged that the MCA do not engage as much as they should in providing feedback and would work with the secretariat to make sure the appropriate level of feedback is gathered.

LM informed the group that there are also responder panels that Met Office would welcome all responder representation, this is a way to feedback to the Met Office and ensure ongoing collaboration, in addition to the workshops they are planning. It was agreed that LM would send the responder panels' link to all PWSCG members. DP sought some additional information on the reach report which LM provided.

DP asked for additional detail on the nowcasting PPM. The capability that has been put in place has huge potential and it is up to the PWSCG to ensure this capability is used to best effect and developed into an end to end solution.

#### **10. Customer Supplier Agreement for 2020/21**

SD summarised what had been updated in the CSA for this FY. Overall, there were not any significant changes as this was only a 1 year CSA to align with the 1 year funding allocation. The plan is to produce a greatly revised CSA for future years that will align to a future Spending Review settlement. For clarity, there has been a slight change to the layout with the introduction of a separate technical annex that contains the tables of the milestones, PPMs and metrics. The documents have been circulated to PWSCG members for review and comments sought prior to this meeting.

CD suggested that partnership working should be much more explicit in the CSA. The principle of working collaboratively together to produce the outputs. Section 1.8 covering principles should be expanded to include the collaborative working point.

DP noted that the CSA is very complex and detailed. The products that the Met Office deliver should be what the users and public need. DP wants this clearer in the next CSA that is developed. DR supported the idea to produce a clearer more succinct CSA that sets out the ask of the Met Office. It was also agreed that PWSCG members need to be more proactive in what they want included in the next CSA and the evidence to support items being included as part of the PWS.

#### **11. Schools programme**

LM provided an update on the schools programme as members have previously been very supportive and were interested to hear of the latest developments. The suite of materials that has been produced is now reaching many parts of the UK. DH was very impressed with the schools content and level of engagement with the schools programme. LM was asked to circulate the link to the school resources to PWSCG members.

#### **12. AOB**

The group were informed that MG will be moving roles as AW is returning from maternity leave and will be replacing MG as the Met Office PWS lead. DP offered his sincere thanks to MG for all his hard work over the last year in delivering the PWS and supporting the work of the PWSCG. The group endorsed DP's comments and wished MG well in his next role.

#### **13. Closing in-camera session (No Met Office staff)**

Notes in full version

#### **Future Meetings**

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020**