

PWSCG (37) Meeting

11:00 – 16:00 Wednesday 28th September 2016

MCA Maritime Operations Centre, Fareham, Hampshire

Minutes

Wyn Williams (WW)	PWSCG Chair
Denise Harker (DH)	PWSCG Independent Member
Sarah Jackson (SJ)	PWSCG Secretariat
Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat
Keith Hodgkinson (KH)	BEIS
Paul Furlong (PF)	Highways England
Alessia Morris (AM)	Scottish Government
Andy Wells (AW)	CAA
Nathan Travis (NT)	CFOA
George Merrick (GM)	Environment Agency
George Tabcart (GT)	MOD
André Cocuccio (AC)	MCA
Paula English (PE)	MCA
Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Mel Harrowsmith (MH)	Met Office
Lynne Armstrong (LA)	Met Office
Nigel Gait (NG)	Met Office
Nick Ashton (NA)	Met Office
Sarah Fysh (SF)	Met Office

Actions

	Owner	Action	Date
1	Secretariat	Engage with DCLG over their future participation at PWSCG	By 31 Dec ahead of next PWSCG
2	Secretariat	Arrange for April minutes to be published on the MO website	By 31 Oct
3	Secretariat	Circulate the note from the Scottish PWSCG to members of this group	With minutes
4	Wyn Williams	Write to BBC to seek reassurances given about the NSWWS	By 31 Oct
5	Secretariat	Circulate the MO update slides presented by DR to the PWSCG	With minutes
6	Secretariat/MO PWS Team	Ensure PAG review the progress being made against the metrics that are showing signs of plateauing at their December meeting and further reporting back at January PWSCG	By 30th Nov ahead of PAG

	Owner	Action	Date
7	George Tabcart	Provide a contact at JOMOC for MO to discuss the ongoing use and need for pressure charts	By 31 st Oct
8	MO PWS Team	Prepare an update for the next PWSCG on the costs associated with the services being identified for rationalisation to meet the spending review savings	Update ready for January PWSCG
9	Mel Harrowsmith	Provide a report to the PWSCG on the findings from the recent Chemet and Heat workshops	By 31 Oct

1. Welcome and Introductions

WW opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Tracy Goode (Welsh Gov), Charlie Hall (NPCC), Craig Woolhouse (EA), Ben Fletcher (CO), John Irvine (N Ireland)

SJ informed the group that Trish Abbot who was the representative from DCLG has moved on and that there isn't an immediate replacement for her. DCLG have requested that they remain copied into PWSCG correspondence. The Secretariat will engage with the team at DCLG to seek their continued participation in this group.

2. Minutes and actions

The group were content with the minutes from the previous meeting and these will be published on the Met Office website.

PR updated the group on the progress to meet the actions from the April meeting. All actions have been completed.

3. Reports

WW updated the group on his recent activity which included participation at the Interdepartmental Met Office Strategy Group (IMOSG) where WW stressed to the Met Office the importance for them to deliver the Transformation and Efficiency programme. WW attended PWSCG meetings in both Northern Ireland and Scotland to hear first-hand from a range of responders who rely on the PWS. The secretariat will circulate a note of the Scottish PWSCG meeting prepared by Alessia's team. WW chaired the PWS Assurance Group (PAG) meeting in early September and was encouraged by the MO plans that have been implemented to ensure that there will not be a repeat of the erroneous test warnings that were broadcast by mistake in the summer. The PAG focussed on the rate of improvement reported on both the raw model and post-processed outputs with a request that the secretariat undertake an in depth review to look into the slower rate of improvement seen recently. The biggest discussion item at PAG was on the Transformation & Efficiency programme. The PAG have more confidence now in the delivery of certain aspects of the T&E programme such as the plans relating to National Capability, however more work is required on any changes required to service provision and corporate services to meet the

required reductions. WW updated the group on the issue of the loss of the BBC contract including the recent announcement about their new supplier. WW will write to the BBC to remind them of the assurances they gave earlier in the year in relation to NSWWS.

4. Media and Reach sub-Group (MARG)

DH summarised the progress and engagement with broadcasters at the recent MARG meeting held on 13th September. Although there was a reduced turnout from participants at the last minute the meeting provided a much needed steer on initial perceptions of the PWMS and a gauge into the appetite for further take up of the service. On PWMS, there were no major concerns expressed. The broadcasters are in different stages in terms of their experience with the service with some having recently signed up, others actively engaged in user testing and others still considering options. Positive feedback received from those who have looked at the data supply so far. The group were content with the revisions to the name our storms initiative and recognise the value it provides to them aiding communication to a wider audience. The session on communicating heat provided MO with a helpful broadcaster insight into what they believe could work for audiences with some ideas about how any heat advisory service could work in practice. MO will follow up the ideas put forward with the relevant organisations such as PHE.

5. Update from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

KH provided an update from a Government perspective on the changes that have taken place within BEIS (formerly the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, BIS) and more widely across Government and the Civil Service. The summer proved to be a time of great change which this group will be aware of due to the EU referendum and the resulting changes of Ministers and a new PM. Jo Johnson remains a BEIS minister and retains the responsibility for PWS. The Department has a new Secretary of State, Greg Clark. The Machinery of Government changes are underway and for BEIS this means the amalgamation of the former departments of BIS and the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) with the aim to complete that process by March 2017. The MO now has key customers brought together in one department as climate change policy and the customer function of PWS are within the same department. GT reported that at the recent IMOSG there was a useful presentation given by Sarah Honour on the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction (HCCP) and enquired how the merger of DECC and BIS may impact arrangements there and whether there would be the need for rationalisation. SJ noted that on the MO sponsorship side Paul Hadley remains the Deputy Director with responsibility for MO at BEIS and has close links with the HCCP. Within BEIS there had been an immediate need to focus on policy such as Hinkley Point and developing the Industrial Strategy.

The group were informed that the process for reappointing WW and DH for a further term with the PWSCG had been successfully completed. This was noted as a very good outcome as others had found it much harder to seek reappointments, so this was testament to their hard work and dedication and the results they have achieved with this group.

SJ gave her views on where she believed any changes or impacts could be felt on the PWS as a result of the decision to leave the EU. Overall there is probably only a small direct impact compared to other policy areas. Many of the international organisations where the MO represents UK interests are not solely EU creations and the UK is a member in its own

right. There are a number of international subscriptions that will be impacted by the recent exchange rate fluctuations but currency exchange rate risks were always present and there are mechanisms in place to manage those. In recent years the rates have been in the UK's favour which had resulted in £2m as an unexpected bonus. Other wider questions that have been raised link to current uncertainties around the status of non-UK nationals who may be working in scientific roles at the MO.

6. Met Office performance update

DR provided a comprehensive review of the activity undertaken by the PWS team over the summer months and a summary of the weather conditions experienced. Headline messages were that it has been an unexceptional summer in meteorological terms. There were few warnings issued and those that were tended to be for convective rainfall events. There was a wet start for a period in June then overall some short periods of heat reaching a max of 34 degrees. The temperature for the period was +0.6°C above the long term average. A persistent challenge especially for the summer months is the ability to forecast convective heavy thundery outbreaks. This challenge was apparent in a missed warning for a severe thundery downpour in north-west Kent on 25th June which led to substantial flash flooding.

DR spoke about the improvements to National Capability both in terms of making greater use of the High Performance Computer (HPC) and model upgrades. The upgrade in March 2016 is probably the biggest model improvement implemented in a decade. The model improvements are in a large part down to increased observations feeding into the model including feeds from satellites. In November there will be another upgrade to model runs which will better exploit the HPC. The group discussed the impact on model outputs when you have a wide spread in the parameters being fed into the model in the first place. DR explained that when there is a wide variation in the data fed into the model this will impact on the degree of confidence that can be achieved over a longer timescale. The variable results can make it harder to convey the probabilistic nature of that forecast. DH enquired about forecasters' consideration of other Met Service model outputs when these highly variable scenarios occur. DR informed the group that the Chief Forecaster would look at other Met Service Models such as the US, French, Japanese and ECMWF outputs but it was worth noting that no one else runs such a high resolution model over the UK.

DR informed the group that progress against some of the accuracy metrics such as days 1,3,5 rain and sun are not showing the same rate of improvement that has been sustained over recent years. Although it is very early to tell for sure if there is any sustained plateauing the MO are looking into this emerging trend in more detail to check whether there is any substantial reason behind this change. The PAG will refer back to the issue in December and report back at the next PWSCG at the end of January. DR went on to speak about the positive developments such as the new radar network which will become fully operational in 2017. This will provide benefits in being able to analyse precipitation type and therefore provide much greater accuracy for distinguishing between rain and snow in a weather system. The Doppler wind radar will deliver improvements in assessing the speed of movement of the particles in the weather system. DR also noted that with the investment in the radar network the MO are pressing to be included as a mandatory organisation to be consulted with for large infrastructure projects as there are risks that a development in the wrong place would inhibit the functioning of the radar network.

On reach and engagement DR spoke about the successful launch of the Public Weather Media Service (PWMS) and highlighted the additions being made to that service that include a new 'Presenter' tool to replace the media briefing service and plans to implement an API approach to data dissemination for July 2017. MH spoke about recent social media highlights including communications issued about heat and any lessons learned from the social media approach will be taken into account for the communications plan being developed for cold weather.

DR summarised the position on the 'name our storms' initiative and the changes that are being implemented for the continuation of the pilot which starts again on 1st October and will run for 12 months. Changes include the consideration of flooding alongside wind events and the focus to be on naming for amber and red to ensure the right balance of naming.

In other news, PF was pleased to announce that Highways England have signed a new contract with the Met Office for their weather services.

7. Update on milestones

RO updated the group on the plans to provide a mountain weather forecast service in collaboration with Sport Scotland and the Mountain Weather Information Service (MWIS). Research was commissioned by Sport Scotland in 2015 with findings indicating that the services are well used by the public and businesses with insights that can be applied to other mountainous parts of the UK. The opportunity is to co-create a product that is more resilient than the current offer. The Met Office is revising their service but the collaboration is likely to be with Sport Scotland in the first instance as there remain some challenges with MWIS over the creation and production of the forecast.

8. PWS Service review

RO provided an update on the review into PWS services which are required as a result of last year's comprehensive spending review. The review carried out to date has identified areas that are not catalogued and some are old services meeting niche requirements or are based on legacy technology. There are also some services provided internationally that will be of use to fewer UK citizens than the UK services but do provide a reputational benefit. The group discussed the issues in depth. One view was that in terms of some of the international services, the benefit is perhaps more direct in the support of the business of UK Government rather than the general public. GT believed that some of the international service output is used by the Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre (JOMOC) WW felt that in order to provide a meaningful steer in terms of the priorities it would be crucial for the MO to provide a clearer breakdown of the costs associated with each service. AM suggested it may be prudent for the MO to map the other sources of information that exist that help support these international services. There was discussion on one particular service, the production of surface pressure charts. There is a belief that there may be better alternatives to the charts but they do remain popular within certain user groups such as the aviation sector. GT would provide the relevant contact at JOMOC so MO could better understand their use of pressure charts.

The view of the group was that it was the right thing for the MO to review these services in light of the savings that need to be achieved. It was agreed that the MO would do further work to provide the costings around the services and also what real alternatives may now

exist including options for more automation as a solution. The MO has been asked to provide an update on this matter at the January PWSCG.

9. Next generation National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS)

MH provided an update to the group summarising the improvements being planned for the NSWWS. Highlights include the inclusion of additional warnings types e.g. thunderstorms, work on more effective communication of risk and the most appropriate language to convey warning message. Ideas are being developed into how to handle short notice weather events and small area update requirements. Technical work is underway for the new warnings creation tool. Public research is being carried out by Navigator a qualitative research company, and will be looking in depth at the public's awareness and response to severe weather warnings and hot weather and health warnings for heat. The report into this work is due at the end of October.

MH spoke about the recent Chemet and Heat workshops which have been held with responder communities around the country. The post workshop analysis is underway and a recommendations paper will be presented to the PWSCG by 31st October. The overall feedback shows there is appetite for 'something' to be provided in relation to heat which people view as a stand-alone issue, but more detailed analysis of the workshop outputs are required to develop a proposal. Evidence gathering is also required to look into the information and services required to effectively communicate about extreme cold and the group agreed with the plan to conduct the workshops at the end of the winter season when experiences of cold weather are fresh in people's minds. MH spoke about recent engagement activity having presented at a cold weather seminar and the contacts they have established with Public Health England (PHE) in respect of the heat health watch service and the options there may be to disseminate information through social media such as mumsnet.

MH provided an update on Hazard Manager following the successful migration to version 2 of the system earlier this year. There is now a roadmap in place until 2020 to ensure a continual evolution and improvement to the service. A number of additional services will be introduced during 2017 including the three month outlook, health watch alerts, NSWWS impact tables and consideration being given for a Weather Observation Website (WOW) impacts reporting page. MH spoke about opportunities to increase the membership of hazard manager and will be meeting the Business Enterprise Resilience Group (BERG) to discuss whether the service would be suitable for them. There is the potential to expand membership to include community leaders such as flood wardens and parish councillors.

10. Increasing digital reach

SF presented to the group the MO plans to deliver a significant step change in the content they offer. There will be a big increase in the amount of content being produced by the MO and that will be across a range of channels such as audio interviews, live and video content etc. A new editorial board is in place meeting daily to provide a strategic view and an editorial focus on the content output. The new visual cortex graphics package has been launched providing the latest technological advances in displaying weather. Additional training and up skilling has been delivered to the digital team in particular on animation meaning the MO is now less reliant on external contractors. Investment is being put into the

weather studio to ensure this meets the latest broadcast standard requirements. There is interest from external parties, the Australian Met Service is visiting to learn from the MO approach and the RNLI are impressed with the changes in planned content delivery. A new service for the British Forces Broadcasting Services (BFBS) is going live in the next few days.

The group felt this was a very positive plan of action and believe it will help the MO to achieve a more agile and responsive delivery of services.

11. Consultation plan

PR provided a summary of the consultation/evidence gathering plans that the secretariat are proposing to focus on both for the remainder of the current FY and longer term over the course of the current CSA. The group were content with the suggestion for the secretariat to look into active travel, air quality and coastal activities over the course of this FY and to report back at the April PWSCG.

12. AOB

WW wanted to record his thanks to John Irvine (N. Ireland) who is stepping down after 4 years of service on the PWSCG and to Trish Abbott for her valued contributions in her time representing DCLG. The group wish them well for the future. Thanks were given to the MCA and colleagues at HM Coastguard for hosting the meeting and the very informative tour of the Operations Centre.

Future PWSCG Meeting dates and locations:

PWSCG Wales – Tuesday 8 November 2016 – Cardiff

PAG – Exeter – December – date tbc

PWSCG – Wednesday 25 January 2017 – BEIS, 1 Vic St, London

PWSCG – Wednesday 26 April 2017– BEIS, 1 Vic St, London