

**CCW**  
**Minutes of the Committee for Wales**  
**10:00 on Tuesday 16 February 2021**  
**By tele/video conference**

**Present:-**

**Committee:-** Emma Clancy  
David Heath  
Rob Light  
Rhodri Williams, Chair

**CCWater:-** Karen Gibbs, Senior Policy Manager  
Mike Keil, Head of Policy and Research  
Phil Marshall, Deputy Chief Executive  
Lia Moutselou, Senior Policy Manager  
Alison Townsend, Board Secretary

**Speakers:-** Rebecca Clark, Green Squirrel Community Interest Company  
Marina Lois, Grangetown resident  
Ian Titherington, Cardiff City Council (Greener Grangetown project)

**Delegates:-** In addition to the participants set out above there were approximately 20 stakeholders present at the meeting.

**1/20 Welcome and apologies for absence**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new Committee for Wales and explained the background to its creation and its role. There were no apologies for absence.

**2/20 Declarations of interest**

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**3/20 Connecting people and communities with environmental challenges**

3.1 The Chair explained that people had a growing interest in their natural environment and in moving to a more sustainable pattern of water management. The meeting would hear from three speakers each with a direct experience/involvement in this type of change.

Green Squirrel Community Interest Company, Railway Gardens, Cardiff

- 3.2 The Committee received a presentation that outlined the work that the Green Squirrel Community Interest Group had led to acquire a site in Cardiff to create a community garden. The Committee heard about work to engage with the local community to develop proposals for the use of the land and to design a sustainable drainage scheme for the site and how that engagement had continued through the periods of Covid-19 lockdown. ARUP and Atkins had provided professional engineering support to the group through their social responsibility schemes.

#### Cardiff City Council – Greener Grangetown Project

- 3.3 The Committee received a short presentation from Cardiff City Council (CCC) that provided an overview of the Greener Grangetown project completed in Cardiff. CCC explained that the project was not a response to flooding problems but to deal with rainwater in a more sustainable manner. The Committee heard how partnership working had been fundamental to the success of the project and that CCC had worked closely with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and Natural Resources Wales on the scheme. CCC had also taken a new approach to its consultation with local residents and avoided using technical engineering terms in order to help residents understand the proposals; the outcome was that residents helped CCC to develop and improve the scheme and some elements suggested by residents were now being used across the UK.

- 3.4 CCC explained how the scheme had created ‘rain gardens’ that filtered water from the roads and removed toxic matters including hydrocarbons and micro plastics before they entered the sewer network. Resident parking spaces had been lost to the rain gardens which had been a concern for residents during the consultation. The Committee noted that DCWW had looked at the success of the rain gardens and had found that the water leaving them was significantly cleaner than that entering the system normally.

#### Grangetown Resident

- 3.4 The Committee briefly heard from a resident of a road within the Greener Grangetown scheme on the consultation process from the resident’s point of view. The Committee heard that the initial consultation had been excellent and had generated a high number of responses; an number of areas for improvement were suggested:-

- residents often felt that they received pushback when tricky questions were asked rather than having their concerns addressed fully;
- the use of a liaison officer was positive but giving them more authority to solve issues would have added value;
- residents were not aware of the process to feedback on any post project issue and a single point of contact would be helpful; and
- more detail on the impact of the scheme, for example that water would drain more slowly, would have helped manage residents’ expectations.

The Committee noted that regardless of the issues noted above the scheme had improved the look of the area, reduced the speed of cars, brought the community together and was a positive change.

## Discussion

3.5 The Chair thanked the presenters and opened the meeting for discussion:-

- responsibilities for the maintenance of the Greener Grangetown scheme particularly the rain gardens. The Committee noted that legislation to mandate maintenance had been enacted in Wales and that there were statutory mechanisms to hold developers to account for maintenance; the role that designing low maintenance schemes played in this was noted;
- if catchment management plans were in place for the three rivers that ran into Cardiff. The Committee noted that there were no catchment management plans currently in place and that upland management was the primary issue. The Committee heard about the mega catchment project in the Brecon Beacons to improve land management and manage flows upstream so that flood prevention measures were not needed in urban areas;
- if the impact of the Grangetown project in flooding had been modelled. CCC explained that the scheme had not been developed to respond to flooding but to improve the flows of water into the sewer system. The impact on flows into the sewer network had been modelled and CCC indicated that the reduction in flow had been greater than had been expected. Similar schemes were being considered for flood management but were not always the most appropriate solution;
- DCWW recognised that the three speakers had all been passionate about the schemes discussed and that identifying these individuals and groups was the key to successful engagement;
- the Committee heard about pre and post project research carried out in Grangetown. Many of the comments received had been from residents of roads adjacent to the scheme who now wanted a similar scheme;
- how the wider benefits of similar schemes to the wider community, such as road safety, can be communicated and understood to gain support and investment. CCC briefly explained the whole life cost/benefit tool that it used and recognised that more could be done to promote the benefits of these type of scheme; and
- Hafren Dyfrdwy (HD) briefly explained how it was consulted by developers and recognised that it could do more to engage with communities and would give further thought to this.

3.7 The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion and noted the benefits of good communication and collaborative working were clear from the projects discussed.

## **4/20 CCW Affordability Review: update**

4.1 The Committee and delegates were briefly updated on CCW's current affordability review. CCW explained that it had been asked by Defra and Welsh Government to carry out a review of water affordability and report on this by spring 2021. CCW recognised that the sector had made improvements in this area in recent years but

there were still customers that struggled with their water bills and these problems were likely to increase as the impact of Covid-19 was felt.

4.2 CCW gave a brief overview of the review process and indicated that the aim was to report in late April 2021. CCW was asked about the status the recommendations had and indicated that the report would be addressed to Ministers and the decision on which recommendations to implement was for them; it was intended that the recommendations would be practical and the majority of them could be implemented without legislative change. The Committee Chair indicated that he also chaired the Steering Group for the project. He hoped that the work would bring practical solutions and make a real difference.

## **5/20 Covid-19 – what have we learned?**

5.1 The Chair explained that CCW was keen to understand what learning and good practice companies had taken from previous lockdowns and applied in the current lockdown including changes that might be taken forward permanently. Matters raised included:-

- DCWW had been working closely with Welsh Government on arrangements for data sharing including for the new 'Jigsaw' platform that was scheduled to go live in April. Most DCWW staff had been moved to remote working within three weeks of the first lockdown starting and it was hoped that the opportunities brought by the shift to digital during the pandemic, for example a track your engineer tool, would become embedded in the long term. The Committee also heard that DCWW's education programme had moved online during the pandemic and an increase in online contact had been seen generally.
- HD indicated that it had worked hard to keep staff in its offices with social distancing. It had closed its 'hatch' for customers during the pandemic but found alternative ways to support the customers that used it. HD had also rolled social tariff customers over into the next year so removing the pressure to reapply at a difficult time;

5.2 The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and noted that the future would inevitably be different and so the challenges would continue across the industry.

## **6/20 Other Business**

### Retiring Committee Members

6.1 The Chair noted that this was the last Committee meeting David Heath would attend before he left the CCW Board at the end of February 2021. The Chair thanked David for his work with CCW.

## **7/20 Next meeting**

7.1 The Chair explained that the date for the next Committee meeting would be set shortly.

**The meeting closed at 12:30**