

CCW
Minutes of the Committee for Wales
10:30 on Friday 23 September 2022
By video conference

Present:-

Committee:- Bev Keogh
Rob Light
Lisa Tennant
Rhodri Williams, Chair

CCW:- Amanda Caton, Executive Head of Business Services
Alison Townsend, Board Secretary

Speakers:- Gail Davies Walsh, Afonydd Cymru
Mike Keil, CCW
Alun Shurmer, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Steve Wilson, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Rebecca Wyn Kelly, River Arth Community Group

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

1/22 Welcome and apologies for absence

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated that Welsh/English simultaneous translation was available for those delegates that wanted to participate in Welsh.

1.2 Apologies for absence had been received from Emma Clancy.

2/22 Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3/22 Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 25 March 2022 as a true record.

4/22 Discussion: Environmental Transparency

4.1 The Chair introduced the discussion topic “Environmental Transparency” and noted the increasing focus on this matter.

4.2 The Committee initially heard from two speakers on the subject of environmental transparency:-

- Mike Keil, CCW Mike gave a brief introduction to the topic and made reference to the current focus on transparency around Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) discharges and argued that transparency should be wider and include eg river quality, water resources, sustainability and carbon emissions. Mike went on to explore the benefits of transparency including how it can drive innovation, inform debate and build trust in those providing a service. The Committee noted that CCW’s Water Matters tracker showed that trust in water companies was at an eight year low in Wales. Low levels of trust also impacted the willingness of customers to contact their company for help, this type of contact was increasingly important in the current cost of living crisis. Because people used water in different ways and for different purposes the need to listen and understand their needs was crucial when designing systems to provide information.
- Gail Davies Walsh, Afonydd Cymru Gail acknowledged that there had been a lot of discussion around CSO discharges in recent months and went on to look at the range of data that was in the public domain on this topic and how it was published and used. The Committee noted that a number of organisations were responsible for different aspects of environmental data, some data was reused/published by third party organisations, data was usually historic in nature, often refreshed at different timescales and difficult to find. Gail emphasised that data needed to be accessible for everyone, transparent and up to date with relevant contextual information to support the publications to enable people to understand the data. The Committee noted that behaviours were often influenced by individual’s perception of the problem and who was to blame for it; better information would help drive behaviour change but any solution would require collaboration.

4.3 The Chair thanked the presenters and opened a discussion that included:-

- recognising that environmental data was currently published in a number of different places, if the speakers had a view on where information should be located. It was suggested that a single location for all data was not necessarily the solution but the data that was published should be easy to locate and be supported by relevant explanatory/contextual information.
- how the sector could establish what information customers wanted to receive if and if regulators had a role in this area. There was a recognition that the sector held a lot of data and understanding the audience’s requirements were key to achieving the benefits of transparency that had been explored in the presentations. There was a recognition that customers had different needs and it would be a challenge to satisfy everyone. The Committee heard how TfL had opened its travel information data to enable third parties to develop solutions to

the presentation of the data and it was suggested a similar approach could be appropriate for some environmental data. The Committee encouraged the sector to look as widely as possible for examples of best practice including different countries and sectors to obtain the broadest view.

4.4 The Committee heard from two further speakers:-

- Rebecca Wyn-Kelly, River Arth Community Group The Committee heard how Rebecca had used her art practice to engage with the community around the River Arth and how a piece of artwork had been developed showing CSO spillages along the river pictorially. The Committee heard how a gentle approach involving the use of imagination and ancestry had helped engage people that might not usually be able to connect with environmental data.
- Alun Shurmer/Steve Wilson Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) Alun reflected that the previous presentation had drawn out the importance of water resources to local communities and explain that there was a lot of environmental information available to customers. Alun suggested that the use of comparative measures can help drive improvement and went on to review the 2021 Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA) published by the EA. It was suggested that the use of a single platform for the EPA built trust in the information it provided. The Board heard how the summer 2022 drought had provided the opportunity for water companies to engage with water consumers at both a general/national level and at a more targeted levels to suit the topic; while awareness had been high there was more work to do and DCWW was looking at good practice from other organisations.

4.5 The Chair thanked the presenters and opened a discussion that included:-

- if there were any organisations that were seen as leaders in this area. It was suggested there was a need to look outside of the sector/region to identify good practice that could be adapted. Looking internationally Sydney Water had run effective campaigns on the value of water over a number of years;
- what the River Arth Community Group had learned from its activities and if there was any information it would like to be available. The Committee was advised that the group had found it difficult to get information; a clear point for real time information would be helpful; and
- given a Wales dimension to the subject of environmental transparency was evident from the discussion, how CCW took on board these nuances in its work. CCW emphasised that the meeting had been a listening session to drawn out good practice for both CCW and the sector. CCW was listening and talking to companies across England and Wales and in other sectors to identify that best practice.

4.6 The Chair thanked everyone present for joining the meeting and contributing to the discussion.

5/22 Questions for CCW

5.1 There were no questions for CCW.

6/22 Other Business

6.1 There were no other items of business for the Committee.

7/22 Next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee for Wales would be at 10:30 on Friday 10 March 2023.

The meeting closed at 12:30