

## NOTE TO FILE

JBA Project Code	2022s0229
Contract	Natural Flood Management Review
Client	Welsh Government
Day, Date and Time	15th July 2022
Author	Eleanor Pearson
Reviewer / Sign-off	Rachelle Ngai
Subject	Outcomes from the Celebrating Rural Wales event

## 1 Objectives

JBA Consulting were asked by Welsh Government to attend and host workshops at the Celebrating Rural Wales event, held on the 9th and 10th June 2022 in Builth Wells, Powys.

The workshops aimed to gain feedback from local stakeholders as to the "Future of Natural Flood Management". The workshops aimed to target four key areas relating to the wider project review:

1. Suitability of the NFM potential area maps
2. Refinement of the NFM potential area maps with other constraints and multi-benefits
3. Preferred NFM types
4. Barriers and Enablers to NFM delivery

Groups were asked to rotate between activities relating to the four topics, there was no particular order in which participants rotated around the topics. Notes and wider discussions were collated by both the participants themselves and the facilitators of each topic. The following sections summarise the outcomes from each topic.

## 2 Workshop outcomes

### 2.1 Attendees

Over the two days around 30 people attended, with a widespread and diverse representation, most organisations were represented by individuals or at the most 3 people.

A formal record of those attending was not made, however discussions throughout the two sessions were wide ranging with contributions from all those present at a fairly consistent level.

- Representatives from landowner groups (Country Land and Business Association (CLA))
- Farmers' Union Wales (Deputy President)
- Natural Resources Wales (Land management)
- Brecon Beacons National Park (Land engagement)
- Consultancies (ADAS - soil management)
- Rural Payments Wales (Tir Gofal, Glasdir)
- NGOs (Wye and Usk Foundation, Afonydd Cymru, PlantLife, National Trust, Wildlife Trust)
- Academics (Bangor University)
- Individual landowners (one or two)
- Local town council leader (Llandeilo)
- Community Partnerships (Partneriaeth Pennal/Pennal 2050)

### 2.2 Suitability of the NFM potential area maps

For this activity, participants were asked where they worked or lived, and the potential area maps and the draft priority areas were brought up in their area. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on both.

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### Feedback included:

- Greater consideration to soil improvements and infiltration as a type of NFM
- Compaction from sheep is an issue, with positive feedback regarding soil improvement measures as a type of NFM to include within the maps
- Introduction of herbal-lay seen to reduce run-off suggesting the need to re-name the catchment woodland potential to "infiltration improvements"
- Focus on "farm-scale"
- Consideration of greater future resilience (to climate change) in both determining priority areas and the types of NFM
- Highlight the need for the right NFM in the right place - include larger floodplain reconnection where suitable, and "right tree in the right place".
- One person discussed they wanted to see dredging, although it transpired that the frequent flooding issue was surface water related which might benefit from a range of upstream catchment measures and drainage infrastructure improvement.
- Inaccuracies of woodland potential layer (showing potential for woodland when woodland already existed at Ilston nr. Swansea) explained in terms of need to use national data which could be updated.
- The draft priority maps flagged up a priority catchment, under investigation, a single property has known flood problems.
- National Trust – looking at the potential areas for NFM maps near Llansteffan gave a strong correlation with where they were implementing NFM – very positive compared with the previous

### 2.3 Refinement of NFM potential area maps

For this activity, participants were asked what constraints and/or multi-benefits were important to them and whether these should be used to refine the potential area maps. Participants were also shown some example maps (which included Multiple Index of Deprivation and Woodland Opportunities) and asked if and how they would use them.

When asked "What else should we be considering when looking to prioritise catchments for NFM?", participants answered (now grouped by topic area):

- Protecting critical infrastructure
- Urban areas and influence of NFM on these receptors
- Combination of hard and soft engineering
- SuDS in villages and small towns
- Drains and road flow pathways
- Different land management practices
- Quality of agricultural land
- Agricultural intensity

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- Grassland types
- Water quality (e.g. phosphates)
- Soil erosion (e.g. bank erosion)
- Topography (slope)
- Biodiversity
- Pollinators
- Habitat improvements
- Tourism
- Archaeological features
- Education

The ability to differentiate between land management practices, quality of agricultural land and consequentially the most effective NFM type was the most frequently mentioned within the groups. The importance of understanding this at as finer scale (i.e. less than field-scale) as possible was highlighted to both make the NFM as effective as possible and for the greatest receptiveness to potential NFM.

When participants were asked "If such maps were available, if and how would you use them?", open discussion was encouraged, and outcomes included:

- Don't re-invent the wheel, instead, update and upgrade the RPW datasets and maps.
- Google Earth (particularly the satellite imagery through time) is regularly used by stakeholders and thought to provide a lot of the necessary information they want. It would be preferred if maps were overlaid on satellite imagery.
- Do they need to be publicly available? Google Earth will likely be enough for most.
- There needs to be a collective place for all data to highlight benefits for a range of factors.
- Make language on maps simple and mean what the map is showing.
- Ground truth the maps to understand the combined effects.
- There was an overall sense of a need to collate existing datasets together in one place from a lot of the participants.

### 2.4 Preferred types of NFM

For this activity, participants were asked to vote on their preferred NFM type (listed below). Each participant was given five votes, which they could spread over five types or add all to the same type. NFM types in the workshop were randomly listed, for the purpose of this note, they have been ranked from most to least popular.

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Votes were as follows:

NFM Type	Number of Votes
Soil and land management	18
Headwater drainage	12
Cross-slope woodlands and hedgerows	11
River restoration (biodiversity)	10
Leaky barriers	8
Floodplain restoration	6
Riparian woodlands	5
Using Sustainable Drainage Systems	4
Offline storage	3
Run-off pathways	2
Floodplain woodlands	1
Managed realignment	1
Sand dunes	1
Floodplain Meadows	1
Salt marsh mudflats	
Beach management	

Discussion during the voting provided some insight into the preference of some measure types over others. Points included:

- Queries over need for impoundment licences - *lowering popularity of offline storage?*
- Measures which assist soil quality thought to be beneficial - *raising popularity of soil and land management?*
- Concerns around existing land use and management with river restoration regarding pollution - *lowering popularity of river restoration?*
- Concerns around removing high quality productive land, with negative opinions about woodland, particularly on the floodplain. Meadows were a more palatable alternative - *lowering popularity of floodplain woodland?*
- Contentiousness of particular measures, soil measures thought to be less contentious - *lowering popularity of wider land use change measures e.g. woodland, raising popularity of soil and land management?*

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### 2.5 Barriers and enablers to NFM delivery

For this activity, participants were encouraged to openly discuss barriers and enablers to NFM delivery. Outcomes were as follows:

#### Enablers

- A constructive 'learning' partnership with WG rather than the current Glasdir based relationship of enforcement and penalties for minor infringements i.e. outcome based measures.
- Making sure that Farming Connect are fully aware of NFM able to advise on it and are positive about it to their customers. Make them the one-stop-shop for all aspects of advice on NFM, rather than the farmer having to seek advice from NRW, Planning Officers and others if they wish to do this work.
- For tenant farmers – a simple mechanism for getting their landlords consent for NFM works on their holding.
- Enable community groups to work together with landowners and farmers to help themselves (with payment) to deliver small tactical schemes to help communities e.g. small scale post flood dredging of new shingle banks within clearly understood limited constraints.
- Encouragement and incentives for groups of farmers/landowners to work together cooperatively to produce NFM schemes.
- Incentivisation by retailers e.g. Waitrose recently announced scheme where farmers who undertake certain 'good works' as part of their activities will be eligible for an accreditation which will give them higher prices for their goods. This could include NFM.
- Payments for ecosystem services as part of the deal in Internal Drainage Board areas for NFM.
- A change in mindset in the agri community to seeing NFM as a positive land use and something they can be proud to be producing with worthwhile examples to demonstrate this.
- NFM being a topic covered by agricultural colleges in a positive and practical manner.
- Young Farmers Club (YFC) having information and understanding of NFM via talks and opportunities to learn.
- Social media influences in the agri world on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram featuring NFM issues and being positive about them.
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning amongst farmers, farm visits and positive anecdotes about NFM (e.g., Comments made by FUW Members in Ysbyty Ifan).



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### Barriers

- Lack of visibility of certain NFM types (e.g. soil management) reducing the likelihood of inclusion in implementation - people like features they can see.
- Beavers being included as a NFM option, real concerns about impact on their flood banks from burrowing activity.
- Unreliable river modelling which isn't ground-truthed leads to bad decisions on NFM.
- Rural Payments Wales are too inflexible and the fear (of financial penalties) they cause amongst farmers stifles innovation in NFM and other areas.
- Restrictions in farm tenancy agreements leading to lack of interest in longer term schemes and activities. National Trust raised as they, as a landlord, have experience of this.
- SAC rivers have 'draconian' protection with NRW applying the precautionary principle to consenting activities meaning almost impossible to undertake any shoal dredging and other small activities - could be addressed in post BREXIT review of legislation.
- Need for more flexibility on dredging generally, less black/white from NRW.
- Schedule 1 (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) birds and European Protected Species constraints on forestry operations in Wales lead to large scale felling in sub optimal seasons prone to high rainfall. England have more flexible arrangements which lead to less high-risk (of sediment pollution) felling operations where much of a harvested woodland can be felled and extracted in optimal rainfall conditions.