

MINUTES
PWSCG (50) Meeting
10:00 – 16:00 Wednesday 14th October 2020
Virtual meeting due to COVID-19

Attendees

PWSCG Members		BEIS and Met Office	
Duncan Potts (DP)	PWSCG Chair	Sarah Davies (SD)	PWSCG Secretariat (BEIS)
Denise Harker (DH)	Independent Member	Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat (BEIS)
Jonathan McKee (JM)	Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland	Derrick Ryall (DR)	Met Office
Paul Furlong (PF)	Highways England	Lisa Martin (LM)	Met Office
David Gibbs (DG)	Civil Aviation Authority	Richard Orrell (RO)	Met Office
Tammy Newey (TN)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Will Lang (WL)	Met Office
Emer O'Connell (EO)	Public Health England	Alison Wood (AW)	Met Office
Mark Vartan (MV)	MOD	Alex Bailey (AB)	Met Office
Joe Tretton (JT)	MOD (Observer)	Ruth Steele	Met Office
Clare Dinnis (CD)	Environment Agency	Paul Davies	Met Office
Kirsty Tock (KT)	National Police Chiefs Council	Allison Semple	Met Office
Jim Kerr (JK)	Scottish Government	Brian Scofield	Met Office
Will Hall (WH)	Cabinet Office	Ellie Tones	Met Office
James Partington (JP)	BEIS	Ian Cameron	Met Office
Apologies			
Nathan Travis (NT)	National Fire Chiefs Council		
Tracey Goode (TG)	Welsh Government		
Ian Hault	LGA		
Jenny Shellens	MHCLG		

Carried over actions

	Owner	Action	Date	Update
1.	Will Lang	Report back on the CCCCC at the next meeting	By April 29th	MO checking current situation. Secretariat will include an update when next correspondence goes out.

	Owner	Action	Date	Update
2.	Duncan Potts	Look into how MO funding flows and how it works with what it is contracted to deliver.	By 29 th April	Complete - Deep Dive held with Andrew McKean in MO Finance

Actions

	Owner	Action	Date
1.	Secretariat to discuss with PWS Team	Report back on outsourcing website development and how the governance arrangements work	
2.	Secretariat	Correct the reference in the April minutes so that the offshore limit refers to nautical miles not Kilometres	Complete
3.	Secretariat	Review the actions from the January meeting to ensure that those carried forward have subsequently been completed. Review actions on a monthly basis with the MO PWS Team.	In line with finalising draft of Oct Minutes
4.	Secretariat (Sponsor Lead)	Encourage specific members of the PWSCG and IMOSG to write in with letters of support to back the HPC investment.	By 31 Oct
5.	Will Lang	Details of responder workshops to be sent to Kirsty Tock.	Complete?
6.	Emer O'Connell	Provide a summary of the findings into the health impacts from this summer's heatwave	When available
7.	Secretariat	Discuss with MO PWS team about ensuring the right amount of PWS time and resource is spent on marketing and comms in order to support the 'Reach' objectives.	Review ahead of next PAG Reach
8.	Secretariat to speak to Dan Childs	Suggest that a new risk is included on the Met Office risk register to mitigate against the chance of data being shared to unintended users as part of the data roadmap	By 31 Oct
9.	Ian Cameron	Provide TN at MCA with further information about access to data/services for Coastguards in terms of sea state and sea temperature parameters	By 31 Oct

	Owner	Action	Date
10.	Alison Wood	Take forward option 3 to progress the work related to the 'Enthusiasts Site'	Ongoing

Main PWSCG Meeting including Met Office colleagues

1. Welcome and Introductions

DP welcomed attendees and noted that apologies had been received from TG. There were a couple of other members who could only attend part of the meeting including NT, JM, CD, JP, JK, EO, PF.

SD informed the group that this was the 50th meeting of the PWSCG since its inception.

2. Minutes and Actions

PR sought comments on the minutes from the April meeting. TN asked that a correction be made to change the reference to the inshore limit on page 10 of the pack that currently refers to KM as the unit when it should be nautical miles. TN also enquired about the point noted in that section about the remit of civil contingency advisors and the Met Office in coastal areas. TN enquired about the process for carrying over actions between meetings and how this was monitored. She noted that there were a couple of actions from January that it wasn't clear if they had now been actioned. The secretariat agreed to check back on those actions from the January meeting and explained that actions are carried over and are followed up in the monthly secretariat meetings held between BEIS and the Met Office.

PR enquired with JM about an action that was due for N. Ireland to investigate if there had been any reduction in forecasting capability in the west of N.Ireland. JM confirmed that MO had been in touch with him and provided an initial response and are following up with him.

3. BEIS Update

JP provided the BEIS update. The group were told about the latest Ministerial priorities including what the new Permanent Secretary has been focussing on since taking up her post in the summer and the recent appointment of Paul Monks as the BEIS scientific advisor. JP spoke about the main focus of the department being on the response to Coronavirus and preparations for the Spending Review. JP informed the group that on SR although the Government has cancelled the autumn budget, the department was still working towards agreeing a multi-year settlement. For BEIS and the Met Office, bids have gone in to continue funding the important contracts such as PWS and also the investment in new supercomputing capability.

MV noted his support for the UK to still maintain access to Copernicus data through ECMWF. DP enquired about the best way that others could support the supercomputer bid. It was felt that writing a letter of support would be a useful way of raising the importance of the issue within BEIS by demonstrating the cross government need for new supercomputing capacity. MV said that he would be leaning in on support for the HPC. JP stated that it would be good for others to write in too. It was agreed that the Secretariat would agree with the sponsorship team at BEIS an approach for getting certain parts of government to write in with letters of support to back the case for investment in new supercomputing capability.

4. Chair's Report

DP summarised his activity over the summer months. The COVID restrictions have prevented DP from getting out and about visiting customers and members as he would have wished. DP has met virtually with senior colleagues but also with some in person on 18th September including the MO Chief Scientist and the CEO Penny Endersby. DP spoke about having established a regular rhythm of meetings over the summer with the Secretariat and Independent Member to ensure delivery of PWS remains on track and any issues around performance were identified and escalated. DP attended a very informative deep dive session on Science.

5. Independent Member Report

DH updated the group on her activity over the last few months including chairing the MARG meeting at the start of August that saw very engaged contributions from the broadcasters on a range of current issues. DH informed the group that she had been involved in a number of meetings with the Secretariat and MO challenging them on maximum temperature performance and performance of the public facing channels such as the App. DH reminded the group that this would be her last PWSCG as her second term was coming to an end on 31st October. DH spoke about the importance of the PWSCG going forward and also the MARG which had reinvigorated the relationship with the broadcaster community and stressed the importance of maintaining that relationship into the future.

6. Future of Operational Meteorology Programme (FoOM)

The group were updated on the progress to deliver the FoOM programme. The core objective of this work is to provide operational meteorologists with access to new data and capability, it is about modernising the way operational meteorologists currently work so that new systems and processes future proof the role. The approach will be combined with a move to greater automation of processes and removing repetitive tasks allowing operational meteorologists to focus on the higher value activities. The programme is focussed on these key areas; Nowcasting, Visualisation (tools and systems), Defence Warnings and a blueprint for operational meteorology. PD spoke about the ground breaking research in nowcasting and the services provided as a result. The future objectives will be to make the processes more robust, increasing understanding of when the tools add value and how best to integrate these with operational processes.

The group were supportive of this programme and the aims and objectives behind it. DH enquired about how new data and services would get out to customers and what changes would result in the way information gets communicated to the public and broadcasters as a result. RS explained that as the changes start to take effect, initially the initial changes will be integrated into existing products and there would be an element of targeting improvements and continuous change. PD confirmed that they are talking to a raft of customers about how they can maximise the pull though of these changes and improvements. WL confirmed that the work being undertaken as part of the FoOM programme goes hand in hand with the work to review the NSWWS. MV expressed the importance of this work for MOD but also that he wouldn't want to see any loss or degradation to existing services. MV also noted that FoOM must address the restrictions around classified information in the Defence area. RS confirmed that conversations had taken place with the Met Office MOD account manager. IC summarised the key points of this important work programme and informed the group that it was his role within the Markets Directorate to ensure that capability is constructed in the right way to deliver and service customer needs.

7. Secretariat Report on Performance

Media and Reach Group Report

PR summarised the main areas of discussion which included broadcasters sharing some useful insight into their own challenges and outputs through the initial period of lockdown. A very helpful discussion was held on heat warnings which provided some useful feedback on the development of the heat warning service.

PWS Assurance Group (PAG) Report.

SD summarised the key actions from the PAG meeting which included discussion on the new CSA that is taking shape. The group discussed matters relating to the Spending Review, the new supercomputer and data.

8. Summer Weather update

WL began by reminding the group about the notable weather events that the UK had experienced since the April meeting. Events such as the heatwave that was witnessed in early August were looked at in more details as well as a number of other events such as the thunderstorms experienced in Scotland on the 11th and 12th of August which witnessed the tragic rail incident near Stonehaven. WL informed the group that while overall the MO performance for warnings had been good, there had been an exception which was the performance around the events on 27th and 28th August which the subjective verification process identified as a missed Amber warning event. WL noted that colleagues in the operations centre had made use of the nowcasting tools to help inform some warnings, especially those for thunderstorms. JM enquired about whether the greater use of nowcasting tools could mean an increase in the number of short notice yellow warnings being issued? WL said that could end up being one possible scenario that emerges but the MO would keep a close eye on that as they are aware that the responder community prefer to have as much notice as possible. WH spoke about the careful communications required when the MO are talking about high temperatures and records.

Responder workshops

The group were updated about the plans for an extensive consultation with the responder community and others over the coming weeks with activity having kicked off this week. KT asked to be included in the consultation. TN informed the group that the workshops run that week had gone very well and lots of useful feedback had been captured.

Heat Warning Update

The group were reminded that the milestone for this activity was about exploring options for the introduction of a heat warning service. The group will have a final say before any proposed service is agreed and a rollout begins. The group were informed that MO have been working very closely with PHE on the service ever mindful of the existing heat health alert service already in operation. The principles of the service will focus on using the existing NSWWS framework and technology, it will be impact based and complement existing heat services. It will be easy for media to understand and it will be a UK wide service. WL confirmed that as well as PHE the other Devolved Administration health agencies will be included in discussions. Other elements that could be incorporated include messaging on water safety and MO recognise a big communications piece will be required for a successful service. In terms of a timeline, the MO are working towards having a service being ready for launch in June 2021.

DP noted the challenges associated with introducing such a service given the three areas, heatwaves, heat health service and extreme heat. DH spoke about the importance of having the broadcasters on board as that will be essential in helping to explain the process and messaging and educating the public about the service. WL noted that there were already some volunteers from the MARG willing to assist. TN stated that she would welcome additional impact messaging going out alongside the heat warnings, for example the MCA often see a spike in calls for their service in weather that is seen by many as benign as more people head to the coast in warm weather. WL believes the MO has worked up a set of clear definitions and has looked at approaches taken in other countries such as Australia to inform the approach here. EO suggested it would be helpful to have a conversation with France as in Europe, FR, IT and the UK were the front runners in looking at the issue of extreme heat and the impacts on health. MV enquired about whether PHE warnings will be ported across into the Defence services? IC replied saying that this would need discussing as a service within in the MOD area at MO.

EO noted that PHE were looking at the data from the summer and that initial indications show that the impacts from the heat on health were high. DH asked whether the findings could be shared with the group? EO confirmed that the figures were still being finalised as it has been tricky to unpick from the COVID impacts. WH spoke about the lesson learnt from sticking with terms and phrases that are already well understood by the public. In this sense the use of the term heatwave could be built into the heat warning service. LM reminded the group about the distinction between the definition of a heatwave and the aim of introducing a heat warning service.

DP reminded the group that they had agreed to set a target to trial a service next year and that all sides need to crystallise efforts to deliver and meet that objective. WH noted that a clear communications plan will be needed and that a joined up approach between departments and agencies will be key when we have an extreme heat event forecast.

9. Milestone 4.1 Data Roadmap

AS introduced the update on the data roadmap and specifically Customer Data Access (CDA). Data release and access are to be prioritised. The group were content with the premise behind the work and to make data more easily accessible for others to use. MV questioned who the data was shared with. AS confirmed that for some countries data blockers are applied to prevent the access of the data in those countries. MV referred to data that might be shared with the US such as a model output that then gets shared with others. IC informed the group that the data that is being discussed here is data that forms part of the Met Office public task. There will be other data sets that are created as paid for by other organisations and wouldn't necessarily fall under the public task banner. RO clarified that the data in question here is about data supplied direct to the public. DH suggested including a risk on the Met Office's internal risk register to reflect the impact of sensitive data being made available beyond the intended users. TN noted that there was a question mark over one of the datasets and enquired what that meant about its inclusion. AS explained that this was a very quick first stage cursory list and would be worked on further.

10. Milestone 2.2 Digital Channels

CF updated the group on the plans to address Milestone 2.2 as set out in the paper submitted ahead of the meeting for recommendations to increase the retention and engagement of the Met Office website and App by August 2020 and to deliver these recommendations by March 2021. The work will focus around four areas:

1. Explore how to improve perceptions of accuracy across both app and website
2. Improve advice content to maintain Met Office authoritative voice and drive action
3. Help users find what they need on the website.
4. Improve users journeys for routes into the app, such as push notifications and warnings to increase user satisfaction

The work all follows the principles set out by the Government Digital Service into agile working practices. The aim is to keep the public and users engaged and retaining visits to the Met Office channels so that in times of severe weather the Met Office can maintain its authoritative voice.

The group were supportive of the approach and there were a number of follow up questions. The group expressed views that backed up the point about the quality of data and content and that this was important when keeping up a level of engagement with the public. CD spoke about the importance of considering how people receive the information but also then take action using that information. CD noted that being user led is very different from user testing to meet the goals of an organisation and enquired about the approach adopted by the digital team. CD shared an insight from the perspective of flood warnings how early on the public were encouraged to sign up for warnings through a land line service but that over time people dropped off. It would be good to include something in the user research that uncovers how people behave who think that the information isn't important to them. CF explained that they had looked into different 'persona types' to try and understand the needs of the public. DH was supportive of the 4 ambitions, and did note that the link to more information within the App had broken. ET explained that this had been identified in one of the 'sprint' work periods and will be fixed.

EO stated that it was useful in fulfilling their objectives to have MO supporting Reach. On messages around heat and cold they may not pose an immediate threat to life unlike a weather warning so the message has to be more nuanced. On heat and cold there is an apparent gap in the risk perception amongst the public, how are MO intending to deal with the 'nanny state' issue? LM noted that it wasn't always clear in terms of linking to advice about taking action. Better signposting to advice would be considered as part of the NSWWS review.

DP summarised the discussion noting that there was a distinction about a 'public service' and coming to the MO to hear from an authoritative voice. DP noted that the group backed DH's view which endorsed the four planned work areas. DP noted that on marketing and reach covers only about 2% of the PWS budget and there needed to be a debate about what we need to do to be more effective. That conversation should continue in the Autumn alongside the development of the CSA.

11. Enthusiast site

AW expanded on the paper that provided the group with an update on the plans and presented options for where to take the project forward over the coming months. The 'enthusiast site' had been running from April as a beta site but had to be taken off line in June due to issues with the procurement process. The group were presented with three options to discuss, these included 1. reinstating a minimum viable product by the end of the FY, 2. Not reinstating the enthusiast's website and focus on other work or 3. Use the work completed to date to help develop the visualisation requirement in the new CSA. The group debated the pros and cons of each option in detail. The group were informed that user research showed that there was a demand for the information and that it was well received by those using it. DP sought views on whether there were any other priorities that were more important. TN stated that the site was very well received by the operational coastguard to

improve situational awareness when completing search and rescue operations although they requested additional parameters to be added such as sea state and sea temp. Users found the data and mapping and the beta version very good for visualisation. IC informed TN that there were other products that it may be possible to provide to coastguards for those parameters she mentioned, and he would follow up offline.

IC expressed a preference for option 3 following the discussion and suggested that this option provided a more practical position to take the work forward if the group agreed. DP summarised the discussion and it was agreed that option 3 is the preferred way forward of the group and will be agreed in conjunction with the development of the new CSA.

12. CSA Re-write

SD outlined the approach and progress to date for developing a new multi-year Customer Supplier Agreement (CSA). The new CSA will be a shorter and more focussed document that will concentrate on setting out 'what' the PWSCG want MO to deliver and stray less into the 'How' which MO will articulate in a delivery plan. The themes are taking shape based on the conversations carried out with individual members of the PWCSG over the summer and wider engagement that will include feedback from responders and conversations with key broadcaster partners. SD touched upon some of the common themes that had emerged which includes improving accuracy both of everyday forecasts and warnings to improving the ease of access to weather information and improving the consistency between the various channels that people access weather forecasts.

The group put forward some suggestions about the content and shape of the document. DH suggested that the CSA remains flexible to be able to respond to changes in digital development and that in terms of MO reach there should remain a focus on getting messages to the hard to reach groups. The priority was about delivering a clear message that people understood and that people would then understand the impacts and take appropriate action if necessary. Others endorsed the four priority areas listed. JK noted that partnership working is essential and should feature. The group supported the overall priorities as listed, agreed that the CSA should focus on 'what' is being asked of Met Office. The group also supported holding an extraordinary meeting in December to review the draft of the CSA so that it will be ready to present as a final well worked up draft at the January PWSCG meeting.

13. A.O.B

PR informed the group that a letter of support to endorse the investment in the supercomputer would be sent by DP on the PWSCG's behalf as part of the Full Business Case that is being finalised. PR also raised the issue of wider support into other parts of Government and would discuss with JP and come back to DP.

Statement of thanks

DP thanked both DH and DR on behalf of all PWSCG members for their hard work and dedication with the PWSCG over the years. Their contributions made a real difference to the work of the group and members were extremely grateful for their support, everyone wished them well in their future endeavours.

Future Meetings

Extraordinary PWSCG for CSA – W/C 14th Dec TBC

Reach PAG and PPS – Dec 2020 TBC

UK PWSCG Wednesday 20th January 2021