

MINUTES
PWSCG (57) Meeting
10:00 – 16:30 24th April 2024
Hybrid meeting

Attendees

PWSCG Members		DSIT and Met Office	
Duncan Potts (DP)	PWSCG Chair	James Shapland (JS)	PWSCG Secretariat (DSIT)
Kim Shillinglaw (KS)	Independent Member	Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat (DSIT)
Andy Wells (AW)	Civil Aviation Authority	Lindsay Jamieson (LJ)	DD, DSIT
Agostinho Sousa (AS)	UK Health Security Agency	John Harrison (JH)	Met Office
Stefan Laeger (SL)	Environment Agency	Simon Brown (SB)	Met Office
John Thompson (JT)	Scottish Government	Alison Wood (AWd)	Met Office
Seamus McCann (SM)	Northern Ireland Government	Will Lang (WL)	Met Office
Ben Brook (BB)	National Fire Chiefs Council	Lisa Martin (LM)	Met Office
Dee Payne (DP)	Cabinet Office	Kristina Costar (KC)	Met Office
Katherine Marsden	FCDO (Observer)	Chris Frost (CF)	Met Office
<u>Apologies</u>			
Matt Steele (MS)	Ministry of Defence		
Chris Field (CF)	Welsh Government		
Matt Sheldon (MS)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency		
Gemma Cox (GC)	National Highways (England)		
Shaun West (SW)	National Police Chiefs' Council		
Ian Collins (IC)	Local Government Association		
Steve Mulrooney (SM)	Department for Levelling up and Communities		

Actions

	Owner	Action	Due date
1.	Secretariat and MO PWS Team	The group agreed that for PM1.4c the target for satisfaction with the CCA team of 'very satisfied' should be removed as an official metric but retain as a reporting function.	In next CSA
2.	Secretariat	Provide an explanation to PWSCG members about the subjective verification process	By 31 st May 2025
3.	Secretariat/MO PWS Team	PWSCG to be updated in a years' time on D1.1a and expanding the reach of civil contingency products	Carry forward for April 2025
4.	Will Lang	MO to provide N. Ireland with the name of the community groups signed up to the civil contingency training and products in their jurisdiction.	10 May 2024
5.	Alison Wood	MO to offer a deep dive session to Chair, Ind Mem and Secretariat to go through the approach for returning PWS services to operation in the event of an incident.	Summer 2024

	Owner	Action	Due date
6.	Richard Orrell	MO to carry out an exercise to test the plans put in place under PMD1.5c on continuity and RTOs following the deep dive with the Chair, Ind Mem and Secretariat	Before next PWSCG
7.	Secretariat and MO PWS Team	Include in the CSA a reference to report back on the PAG-3 engagement measures (PM3.7a & PM3.8d) in the autumn PAG-3 meeting.	Include in updated CSA
8.	All PWS members	PWSCG members to forward any final questions or suggestions for the CSA for 24/25 to the Secretariat.	By 10 May 2024
9.	Alison Wood	MO to provide a simpler explanation in layman's terms of what the HPC improvements will deliver for customers.	October 2024
10.	Kristina Costar	Share an embargoed copy of the London Economics report with PWSCG members ahead of publication.	Once final copy agreed
11.	Alison Wood	PWSCG to be offered a deep dive into the digital objectives and outcomes work	Summer 2024

Item 1: In Camera Session

See full version.

Item 2: Welcome and Introductions

DP welcomed MO colleagues to the meeting and round table introductions were given. Katherine Marsden joined in an observing capacity for FCDO.

Item 3: Updates and Reports

LJ provided an update from a DSIT perspective highlighting events that will be important for the PWSCG over the next year including a Spending Review and the General Election. For SR, a reasonable working assumption would be for it to occur in late Autumn and that the Department is starting to ramp up its preparatory work. Resourcing will be tight both funding and people. From a PWSCG perspective, being able to articulate a strong evidenced based rationale for continuing to fund these services will be key. LJ noted that the fixed costs elements within the PWS budget limit the flexibility if the budget comes under pressure. LJ noted that DSIT has government priorities and commitments in other areas of its portfolio such as the tech sector which means there will inevitably have to be trade offs and prioritisation by the government and department about where to spend and invest. There are of course areas to invest in that will benefit the wider MO such as recent Ministerial and Departmental interest in the requirement to upgrade MO National Security Advisory Group facilities.

DP provided a verbal summary of his activity for the year building on the examples in his update paper. DP remarked that given the active and stormy winter the UK has just experienced it shows why the MO getting it right, really matters. DP spoke about his focus for the PWSCG remains on accuracy and the need for PWS outputs to be trusted, consistent, useful, accurate and timely. DP spoke about a period of change at the MO citing the recruitment of a new Chair of the Board and the retirement of the Markets Director, Ian Cameron.

KS updated the group on her activity over the year. She cited the Citizen Engagement Strategy (CES) that has been in effect for a year as delivering some terrific early results including greater attribution on reach of PWS outputs which is important for the MO brand. KS noted that there had been less impact from the CES on direct reach and would be looking for the impact of the CES to make its mark in MO products. KS spoke about the Media and Reach Group (MARG) held in March which once again was a very useful and informative session. KS noted the continued gradual decline in TV as the main source of weather information for the public which reinforces the need to support the MO own brand and direct reach. KS also spoke of maintaining a watch on the public survey results which at times have been a little erratic in nature.

SB provided an update for the MO. Over the last year the organisation had been feeling the impacts of the delayed conclusion of the pay deal which had caused some fatigue and a sense of staff feeling worn down due to the protracted timeline. Against that backdrop was a series of industrial action which has impacted staff engagement scores. MO are working with DSIT on an updated Framework Document. On the HPC (High Performance Computer or Supercomputer), MO now getting close to point of delivery with MSFT (Microsoft) however MO is seeing the impact of the delay as a result of a lack of parallel suite updates to the computer models which is translating through to poorer scores for accuracy. In other areas, an independent review was conducted into the approach with MSFT to provide a view on continued HPC programme delivery and whether sticking with the current path is correct. The review was favourable in respect of the work of the programme team and reports that sticking to the current path for implementation is the right thing to do. MO Exec are assessing the impact of any headcount reductions and what this would mean for customers. If MO are required to reduce its civil service headcount this will be a challenge. Digital is another area of focus, specifically on the Web and App and maintaining consistency across all channels. MO involved in recommendations from the national resilience strategy work completed six months ago including a live conversation on MO being designated as a piece of critical national infrastructure. There will be a period of change over the next six months after which the organisation will focus on its corporate strategy. SB spoke about some organisational change and MO reorganising its internal structures to focus on three capability areas, Enabling, Products and services and National Capability. SB noted that the CES is gaining traction as well and pleased to see the 14 day output on the web and app.

SL provided some feedback about greater visibility of users featuring in the organisation structure and in terms of any resource constraints how can they continue to be excellent with less. SB noted that the customer experience fits in the final part of the value chain. SB remarked that the organisation tends to say yes to too much and may need to think about doing slightly less but doing that excellently.

Before moving onto item 4, PR checked with the group about the minutes from the previous meeting and if members were content with that record. No participants raised any point so the minutes were cleared.

Item 4: Review of Weather and Warnings

WL provided a summary update of the main weather events from the winter season which had been generally mild overall but wet and particularly stormy being driven by a lot of Atlantic variability. The sheer number of warnings issued and named storms made it challenging operationally. WL referred to some general commentary around the number of warnings issued, particularly yellows. Due to the nature of the weather this season there has been an increase in warnings issued but when compared to a ten year period there is no upward trend in the number of warnings being issued.

KS enquired if MO believes that warnings may unhelpfully be amplified through social media which maybe influencing a perception of over warning. WL agree that it may be having some impact in that way but that there are both negatives and positives to such channels amplifying the message in times of severe weather. WL covered other examples of their work over the winter including a rainfall event in Scotland and the associated landslip risk which has resulted in greater partnership working with the British Geological Survey (BGS). The group exchanged views on yellow warnings with members explaining what a yellow triggers in terms of action for them. AS said UKHSA staff had provided feedback that they can feel bombarded by the yellow health alerts. KS suggested MO should keep an eye on how the usefulness of yellow warnings stacks up in a busy social media environment. DP noted that for the COBR unit whilst a yellow doesn't trigger immediate action for them they are aware of some industries and partners where it does for example the water industry and Defra. Others spoke about yellows being more BAU but responders do look at the impact levels in the matrix. KS remarked about the positive high scores for people taking actions on the back of warnings but also noting the need to shift communications so they stay in line with an increasingly educated audience.

LM informed the group that the MO are conducting a review of yellow warnings, looking at the action taken and the difference in how they are used by responders and the public. They had gathered some insights from a survey into yellow warnings in N. Ireland. SL noted the importance of the narrative both before and after an event and to consider that in a low likelihood, high impact event the perception might be that they think it will not happen. SL stated that he thought the storm naming initiative continues to work very effectively.

WL continued with a summary of the key storm events of the season. DP said that the events were very well communicated allowing them to manage an effective cross government response. The group also debated the timing of events notably Storm Gerrit which impacted over the Christmas break. DP remarked that at the heart of NSWWS it is an impact based service so a mixture of science, forecasters judgement and experience. Storm Henck was cited as an example where the models were not performing well so the quality of the warning was more dependent on the experience and decision making of the Chief forecaster on duty. SL remarked about the cumulative effects of heavy rain and flooding events with WL responding that MO could be thinking more about some of those cumulative effects. The group briefly spoke about Storm Isha and the timing for the red warning issued which was accepted as sub optimal given the middle of the night issuance. SB said that MO were looking at the protocols around issuing warnings in such circumstances. The group were updated on the activity around enhanced comms for extreme cold and the lack of opportunity to use those this winter given its overall mild nature.

Item 5: Review of Theme 1 performance measures (PAG-1)

JS provided a summary of MO performance against the theme 1 deliverable which focus on the stay safe theme and warnings. Overall, there is a mix of red and greens with some of the Red metrics linking to stretch targets. The group were reminded about the 3-year rolling average scores for NSWWS targets and with some strong performance events about to drop off the cycle it is highly likely that MO performance will dip a little below target in the near future. DP took a view from the group to get a sense of whether members were satisfied with MO performance given some of miss if targets. The general consensus amongst the group was that they had to be honest about the performance but did recognise the context which sits behind it such as the impact of a lack of science upgrades. It was felt that the delivery of the contract was met but that there were clear areas where attention needs to be focussed next year. The group agreed the metrics should be kept as is. The group reviewed performance of

other metrics PM1.3, PM1.4a&c. A general question emerged regarding the timing of surveys which some felt had worked against MO this year. AWd remarked that it would be useful for MO to articulate those surveys which are conducted to assess performance compared to some which might be issued for a learning perspective. On PM1.4a&c the group debated the satisfaction scores and agreed that it is a very high threshold to hit for someone to say they are very satisfied with a service. It was agreed that the metric for 'very satisfied' would be removed as a stretch target but retained for reporting. JT enquired about the 80% score for warnings and whether that meant 1 in 5 people didn't find the warnings timely or useful. JS clarified that this score is related to the subjective verification process and the marking of MO performance firstly by MO and then validated by the Secretariat. It was agreed to provide additional information to explain the subjective verification process.

Item 6: Review of Theme 1 Deliverables and PMDs

WL provided a summary of performance of the theme 1 deliverables and the provision of civil contingency products – D1.1a. WL informed the group about the extensive training that had been delivered across the Civil Contingency Team in year, to over five thousand responders in total. Specifically new training for the Voluntary and Community resilience training has been rolled out in conjunction with other voluntary and community groups such as the Red Cross. They have also expanded the reach of advice emails particularly on the impact of ice. They have also made moves to open up access to Hazard Manager more widely. KS noted how important this outreach was and requested that the PWSCG receive an update in a years' time. The group are very keen to track progress in this area. The group acknowledged the success in this area and being very pleased with what has been achieved especially in efforts with the Environment Agency and UKHSA. SM enquired if he could check which organisations have signed up in N. Ireland as they want to better understand which of their community groups are accessing. The group were very satisfied that all had been completed on this action.

RO summarised the activity to deliver PMD 1.5c which focusses on agreed continuity plans and recovery time objectives for all the key channels such as web, app hazard manager and PWMS. The group were pleased to see this review and work to provide better resilience to services if there are problems. The group debated some of the recovery timelines noting the risk points around cover which may not always be 24-7. For some recovery actions the MO would do this in house but for other incidents say affecting the App there would be some reliance on partners. JH spoke about the different lines of support and explained the scaling nature of the support according to the severity of incident and the different service level agreements. The group recognised there is a balance in terms of affordability. MO have worked hard to put in place additional SLAs. SB noted that in the past it had been less clear about the priority order for restoring services but that the industrial action last year had focussed minds and the MO had a much better understanding and clear plan around priority services. AW noted similar challenges of retuning service levels after incidents and spoke about the example at NATS over a bank holiday. The group liked the framework approach presented. SL noted the potential for reputations to be severely damaged if issues are not dealt with swiftly. The group recommended that the MO carry out an exercise to test the plans and for the Chair, Ind Member and secretariat to have a deep dive into the resilience of bringing back PWS services.

LM provided an update on PMD 1.3d which is looking at how responders are utilising NSWWS products and services to best effect. LM confirmed that an agency has been engaged to conduct the survey activity with the resilience community. The group were very supportive of

this work and thought it would be useful in ensure the full value of NSWWS is exploited. The group approved the delivery plan.

Item 7: Sign off Theme 1

The PWSCG agreed to sign off theme 1 delivery as met.

Item 8: PWSCG Main Priorities

DP briefly confirmed that the focus now was back on the main PWSCG end of year sign off now the group had agreed PAG-1 delivery and also what should feature in the CSA for this new FY.

Item 9: PAG Reports

JS summarised the performance reports that had been provided to attendees as part of the pack of papers. The group noted each PAG report in turn. The group signed off PAG-2. On PAG-3 KS was supportive of the basket of measures approach but enquired as to whether it would be easy to separate indirect and direct reach. JS confirmed there would be one set for each. In terms of balance over the year JH confirmed that there had been a big push to focus on indirect reach but that the focus would be brought back onto the direct reach MO channels. The group agreed with LM suggestion to report back on the PAG-3 measures at the autumn PAG-3 meeting. No comments on PAG-4.

All PAG reports approved.

Item 10: PWSCG Secretariat Review

JS provided a summary of MO performance over last year in delivery of the CSA. DP noted he wasn't overly concerned on the Reds for Theme 1. KS agreed and it is about keeping an eye on the trend over time and not overreacting to a single year. KS encouraged the MO to not be defensive about the results as it signals why the investment in the HPC is required. KS made an important point about MO considering 'bridging actions' to take account of the fact that there isn't going to be an instant upturn to scores when the HPC comes online so how can the MO mitigate against further declines in performance in the interim. DP agreed and noted that the discussions today showed the need for considering what can be done in the meantime. SB asked the PWSCG how it wants to focus on what is the most important aspects. DP agreed the need for PWSCG to prioritise to make sure the money is best spent where needed. LJ noted that she is hearing about the elements of performance that are declining and therefore the risk to the MO brand is something that should focus resource on. JH hears the point about being defensive and thinks there is more they can do around the brand. JH is still keen to maintain a degree of stretch in the targets. The group spoke about the importance of the end of year narrative to convey a nuanced assessment of delivery in conjunction with the RAG scores. AS enquired if the full benefit that MO brings to the projection of UK soft power is fully captured and explained in the CSA. There could be more recognition to the quality of the products and services which can be emulated by others around the world which provides the UK with influence. AW noted that a degree of this is captured in PAG-4 reports.

Item 11: CSA refresh for 24/25

JS updated the group on the approach to the CSA for this new FY and detailed some of the changes such as separating out 1-2 year deliverables from some of the medium term 3-5 years. Other beneficial changes include assigning deliverables to Associate Directors to enhance ownership and delivery. JS touched upon the priorities including visualisation, ensemble 14 day forecasts and a focus on digital as well as the warnings review. DP reminded

the group that the PWSCG remit is to define the outcomes it wants to see, the 'what' and the MO to decide on the 'how'. SL liked the outcome focus, would like to see a reference to products to understand what they get for their money. PWSCG members were asked to email the secretariat with any further questions or suggestions. The group were happy with the draft provided.

Item 12: Supercomputer Update

SB provided the group with an update on the supercomputer programme, recapping on some of the background about the existing device and current timeline for implementation. The group were satisfied with the continuity plans for the existing device and noted the implementation dates. MO is expecting a go live date for Gen1a to be around October/November. All is looking good for this deadline and Quads and technology are already up and running on the new capability. The next parallel suite upgrade PS47 is scheduled for autumn 25/26. KS noted that with these timelines a bridging strategy will be essential. The group also wanted a simpler less technical explanation of what the new capability will deliver for customers over time. SB agreed to take away and relay that ask.

Item 13: Economic Value of Met Office (London Economics Report)

KC provided a headline summary of the London Economics report both on the value of the MO overall and the value to the public. The group were very pleased to see the findings and the value ratio figure derived. The group were keen to be able to see a copy of the final report ahead of publication and that all interested parties were consulted especially Departmental Chief Economists.

Item 14: Future Website and App development

CF presented options for the future of the MO web and App. The group commented on the 4 year timescale under option 1 and felt this was much too long to deliver this kind of change. CF felt that this was a realistic timescale given the government framework within which MO had to operate. SB noted that option 1 comes with additional cost. LJ linked this to the risk over the coming years to the MO brand from dipping performance and enquired about these options mitigating the brand strategy gap. Option 2 would be the quickest to see some results with option 1 taking longer. KS noted that improvement is required, her view of the current App is that it isn't entirely working like an App but is a bit like a website on an App. The App needs to have a bold consumer experience. Option 2 is not palatable if sticking with what we've got. The group pressed MO on what their recommendation is. CF believed option 2 provides access to suppliers that could deliver more. KS enquired about the digital objectives and outcomes presented and whether the PWSCG had seen these before. MO agreed to offer a deep dive into them. DP noted that these direct channels are important and that the national met service must retain a direct way to reach the UK public. The web and app is in effect a subset of the CES. The general consensus was that there probably needs to be a blend of the two options.

Item 15: In camera

See full version.