

## Briefing note

This briefing provides an update on items that were raised at the recent Committee scrutiny session with NRW. It includes sections on:

1. NRW staff expenditure
2. Data on drought
3. Access reform including access to water
4. Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

## NRW Staff Travel Expenditure

Following a question from Janet Finch Saunders MS regarding “*What steps is your organisation taking to ensure more value for money for the taxpayer in terms of staff travel expenses?*”:

Accelerated in response to the Covid pandemic, we quickly developed a hybrid working system where our colleagues now have the benefit of full ICT functionality when working from home – reducing travel expenses and their carbon imprint through fewer commutes and fewer business miles.

Reflecting the views of staff from their experiences of pandemic homeworking, as well as in consultation with the Trade Unions, we have launched a new Working Styles policy designed to give our colleagues a better work/life balance and increase flexibility and job satisfaction, whilst enhancing productivity and performance and ensuring that we can deliver effectively as an organisation.

In April 2022, we received a Freedom of Information Request for the following details:  
*Please include the information for each of the following periods: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22:*

- *A breakdown of any expenditure on the purchase or hiring of vehicles, including vans, cars 4x4s. Please provide the make and model of each vehicle, the cost of each vehicle, the number of vehicles purchased, the date of purchase and the purpose*
- *A breakdown of any expenditure on travel, including approved expenses, for example train tickets, taxi fares, private hire vehicles, flights. Please make clear how many tickets or individuals travelled in each entry, the company used and the class of each ticket.*

The full response is available in a spreadsheet sent with this briefing, but a table of the staff expense expenditure is below:

Travel expenditure	2019/2020			2020/2021			2021/2022	
	CTM	GPC	MyNRW	CTM	GPC	MyNRW	GPC	MyNRW
Train (including bus)	364072	14209.39	13768.22	211.1	113.16	193.8	15780.59	6124.31
Domestic Travel inside UK (Taxi, ferry etc)	N/A	1764.11	0	N/A	428.1	71.1	1417.91	578.5
Domestic Travel outside UK (Taxi, ferry etc)	N/A	925.51	0	N/A	0	0	175.19	0
Flights	5892.99	75.21	123	0	0	0	543.09	0
Staff personal car on work related - Petrol	N/A	N/A	78038.72	N/A	N/A	38960.2	N/A	101895.3
Staff personal car on work related - Diesel	N/A	N/A	148162.8	N/A	N/A	80216.99	N/A	179382.3
Bike	N/A	N/A	238.5	N/A	N/A	125.54	N/A	252.78
Motor bike	N/A	N/A	183.12	N/A	N/A	26.4	N/A	218.64
Electric/Hybrid Vehicle	N/A	N/A	186.3	N/A	N/A	856.49	N/A	1078.65
Short-term hire (outside the NPS contract)	N/A	4081.6	0	N/A	0	0	1390	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>369965</b>	<b>21055.82</b>	<b>240700.6</b>	<b>211.1</b>	<b>541.26</b>	<b>120450.5</b>	<b>19306.78</b>	<b>289530.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>631721.42</b>			<b>121203.2</b>			<b>308837.28</b>	

Please note CTM (Central Travel Management booking system) no longer in use after September 2020

GPC = Staff credit cards for work related expenses

MyNRW = staff expenses reimbursed via pay

Information available as higher level totals only

You will note that since the pandemic, we have more than halved our staff expenditure. In 2021/22 based on a headcount of 2500 FTEs, our expenses totalled £123.53 per person.

We are not complacent in this regard, and we are committed to increasing efficiencies whilst reducing carbon, and are consistently actively exploring how we can ensure the best value for money for the work that we do. Our Adfywio (Renewal) programme is also looking to make efficiencies in our built estate and across our fleet as a result of our new ways of working.

## Data on drought

As you are aware, last year saw one of the driest spring and summer periods on record, which combined with heatwaves that broke Welsh temperature records in July 2022. Between March and August, Wales received just 56.7% of its expected rainfall. This represented the third driest six-month period since records began in 1865, with only 1976 and 1984 being drier. Our NRW (Wales-wide) and three regional operational drought teams were all convened during mid July to late November 2022. The Wales Drought Liaison Group (led by the Welsh Government) also convened.

We are finalising a review of our response to the recent drought and can send you this as soon as it becomes available. Any recommendations and actions for improvements will be considered as part of our future drought management and planning. Alongside other members of the Wales Drought Liaison Group, we are also involved in Welsh Government's wider review of multi-organisation response, to inform any wider policy or regulatory requirements.

In addition, we will be updating the water company drought plan guidance for the next round of drought plans during 2023 and will incorporate any improvements identified from the recent drought experience.

This work is vital to inform our preparations for future heatwaves, droughts, and other extreme weather events. We know from assessment of future climate risks that flooding and droughts are going to be more prevalent in the future, as evidenced in the [Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment \(CCRA3\)](#) and we must collectively do all we can to help communities be more resilient to the effects of these changes.

NRW is currently undertaking an organisational wide baseline assessment of climate risks using the CCRA3 evidence base to understand the breadth of potential impacts that future events, including drought, will have across all of our remit and activities. This work is due to conclude late 2023 to provide us with well-defined priorities in terms of the adaptation actions that we must take.

## Access reform - including access to water

NRW has been funded by Welsh Government over the last 3 years to provide additional staff resource to advise and inform its Access Reform Programme. NRW advised across various proposals affecting Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) open access, public rights of way and also access information and planning.

During 2022/23 we focused on providing further advice on those access reform areas that would not require primary legislation, particularly in relation to responsible recreation

(including with dogs around livestock) and the Countryside Code. In addition we have supplemented the advice provided in years 1 and 2 of the programme.

Access to Water has always been a contentious issue. The [National Access Forum Wales](#) (NAFW) was tasked with exploring this separately and reported the outcomes of its sub-group discussions and associated conclusions and recommendations by March 2021. Following the Senedd election the report was re-issued to Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change, by the Chairman of the National Access Forum for Wales in July 2021. Welsh Government's Programme for Government makes a commitment to "Begin to designate Wales's inland waters for recreation, strengthening water quality monitoring". We are committed to supporting Welsh Government's delivery of this ambition.

During 2022-23 the NRW project lead has focussed on stakeholder engagement to inform project aims and approach. This includes improving understanding of stakeholder perceptions of the existing framework for Bathing Water designation, barriers to applications, and landowner concerns. The aim is to identify a small number of sites across Wales to run a pilot bathing season in 2023. The pilot bathing season will allow for organisations, including local authorities, who have not previously conducted a bathing season to work through resourcing and understanding the duties, and allow for water quality monitoring to be undertaken. The pilot season will inform recommendations to update and improve the framework for managing Bathing Waters, including identifying any requirements to amend the legislation and guidance. We are currently discussing seven potential sites for the pilot, including a number of reservoirs, standing waters and rivers.

## Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Currently, the only finalised SLA is that on Agricultural Pollution Regulations. We have shared with you the letter from the Minister for Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths MS, outlining the funding commitment for the next two years. As the other SLAs are finalised, we are committed to sharing with the Committee those that have been agreed with Welsh Government.

April 2023