Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 12 July 2018 in 2 Marsham Street, London.

Present

Emma Howard Boyd  Chair
James Bevan  Chief Executive
Richard Macdonald  Deputy Chair
Peter Ainsworth  Board Members
Gill Weeks
Joanne Segars
Maria Adebowale-Schwarte
Robert Gould
John Lelliott
Karen Burrows
Caroline Mason

In attendance

John Curtin  Executive Director Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Toby Willison  Executive Director Operations
Peter Kellett  Director of Legal Services and deputy for Harvey Bradshaw
Pat Bolster  Deputy for Bob Branson, Director of Finance
Sam Lumb  Deputy Director Governance and Engagement
Rob Creed  Governance and Engagement Manager
Beth Axtell  Board and Executive Secretariat Adviser

Item 5

Dieter Helm  Chair, Natural Capital Committee

Item 7

Simon Dawes  Sustainable Business Manager
Jen Garrett  Deputy Director, HR
Mike Clarke  Manager, HR
Richard Houghton  Deputy Director, Operations National Services

Item 1  Apologies for absence

1.1  John Varley, Lynne Frostick and Judith Batchelor sent apologies. Peter Kellett deputised for Harvey Bradshaw; Sam Lumb for John Leyland; and Pat Bolster for Bob Branson.
Item 2  Declarations of Interest

2.1 Richard Macdonald reminded the Board of his new role with the Farming Inspection and Regulation Advisory Group.

Item 3  Minutes of the Board Meeting on 16 May 2018 and matters arising

3.1 Pat Bolster, Emma Howard Boyd and Joanne Segars highlighted some minor corrections to the minutes.

3.2 The Board approved the minutes of the 16 May meeting subject to minor corrections.

3.3 The Board noted the action list and completed actions. It was confirmed that Robert Gould will take on the role of Board lead for Navigation from Peter Ainsworth.

Item 4  Chair and Chief Executive’s Updates

Chair’s Update
4.1 The Board discussed sharing key messages from their meetings with stakeholders, to inform their own meetings with the same stakeholders.

Summary of the June Board Planning meeting
4.2 The Board discussed and approved the summary paper.

4.3 It was confirmed that Richard Macdonald will be the Board’s lead for ethics.

4.4 The Board discussed and approved the revised schedule of meetings for 2019.

Chief Executive’s Update
4.5 James Bevan updated the Board that, subject to ministerial decision, fracking activities may commence over the summer. The Board discussed the importance of support for local staff involved in regulating the activity if it goes ahead.

4.6 The Board welcomed the initiative with the Geographical Association to provide young people with educational materials on flood issues. It was suggested the initiative be widened to cover wider environmental issues as appropriate.

Action: Harvey Bradshaw

4.7 The Board discussed the publication of the Multi Agency Flood Plan Review and reiterated the need for any new duties to be fully resourced.

4.8 There was a discussion about the potential risk to flood scheme funding after EU funding is no longer available. The Board reiterated the need to engage with Government on this issue as part of Spending Review 2019.

Item 5  Dieter Helm – Guest

5.1 Emma Howard Boyd welcomed Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committees to the meeting. There was a discussion about the work of the Committee; the ‘Pioneer’ projects (two of which are led by the Environment Agency); the importance of the 25 Year Environment Plan; and the practical means by which it is delivered.
5.2 The Board thanked Dieter Helm for attending and his contributions to the meeting.

Item 6 Environment Agency 5 Year Plan

6.1 James Bevan presented outline proposals for a new Environment Agency 5 year plan. The Board endorsed the initiative and asked that: urbanisation be considered; that it states what will be different at the end of 5 years; that the general public be considered as a specific set of customers. They also asked that links with the 25 Year Environment Plan be shown, whilst remaining a standalone document.

6.2 It was suggested that the Board discuss the Environment Agency’s role in delivering sustainable growth versus ‘sustainable prosperity’ at a future date.

Action: Harvey Bradshaw

Item 7 Annual Corporate Services reports

7.1 Internal Environment Management Report

7.1.1 Simon Dawes presented the paper. The Board congratulated staff on the good progress made. They reiterated the importance of working with the supply chain. It was suggested that the organisation link with Sustainable Procurement UK as an exemplar.

Action: Toby Willison

7.1.2 The Board endorsed the direction set out in the paper including the development of the next strategy in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

7.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report

7.2.1 Jen Garrett and Mike Clarke presented the paper. The Board discussed the good progress made and measures to improve the sexual orientation pay gap and on social mobility. The Board congratulated the team on winning the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion Pay Gap Award.

7.3 Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Report

7.3.1 Richard Houghton presented the paper. The Board discussed the ‘Safeguard’ action return levels from line managers; third party project arrangements; training for manual handling; provision of physiotherapy; annual health checks for the workforce and health and safety in non-Environment Agency managed workspaces.

7.3.2 The Board asked that reports of safety critical incidents come to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on a regular basis.

Action: Toby Willison

7.3.3 The Board discussed whether there should be a Board champion for HSW, or whether it continue to be covered by the ARAC. They asked that a proposal based on best practise be presented.

Action: Toby Willison
Item 8  Regular Finance Items

Schemes of Delegation
The Board noted the items in the papers on the Financial and Non Financial Schemes of Delegation.

Corporate Scorecard
The Board noted the Corporate Scorecard which had been circulated for comment by correspondence. They asked that more time be programmed in to future meetings to discuss performance.

Action: Secretariat

8.3 The Board delegated authority to Emma Howard Boyd and James Bevan to approve a reconstitution of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee membership.

Item 9  Committee Meetings – oral updates

9.1 The Board noted the paper on recent Committee meetings.

9.2 Joanne Segars asked the Board to approve extensions to members of the Pensions Committee as recommended by the Committee. The Board approved Kevin Ingram’s term to be extended by 3 years to July 2021 and Peter Smith’s term to be extended by 3 years to May 2021.

9.3 Karen Burrows presented the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's annual report to the Board.

9.4 The Board discussed the change in levels of assurance for the past year, noting that this may be because managers are asking for more challenging audits to take place.

9.5 The Board discussed the need to monitor corporate service related risks as they continue to transform - both at Environment Agency and Defra group ARAC level.

9.6 The Board reiterated the need for them to be consulted prior to any formal decision to transfer Internal Audit to the Government Internal Audit Agency.

Item 10  AOB and Date of Next Meeting

10.1 It was noted that the Board will hold a teleconference on 30 July 2018 and a visit to Lincolnshire on 26-27 September 2018.

10.2 The Board congratulated staff on their collective personal efforts contributing to the charity Wateraid.

10.3 Emma Howard Boyd thanked Karen Burrows and Peter Ainsworth for their six years service as Board members, on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Item 11  Meeting Review

11.1 The Board reviewed the meeting.