Board Meeting
Minutes of the Board meeting held on 7th February 2019 in London.

Present
Emma Howard Boyd  Chair
James Bevan  Chief Executive
Richard Macdonald  Deputy Chair
Gill Weeks  Board Members
Maria Adebowale-Schwarte
Robert Gould
John Lelliott
Caroline Mason
Lynne Frostick
Judith Batchelor

In attendance
John Curtin  Executive Director Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Harvey Bradshaw  Executive Director Environment and Business
Toby Willison  Executive Director Operations
John Leyland  Chief of Staff
Peter Kellett  Director of Legal Services
Pat Bolster  Director of Finance
Sarah Cook  Deputy Director Governance and Engagement
Rob Creed  Governance and Engagement Manager
James Creed  Board Governance Advisor

Item 5, 6 and 10
Tony Grayling

Item 5 and 6
Dafydd Evans

Item 10
Jennie Donovan MP

Item 6
David Rutley MP

Item 6
Tamara Finkelstein

1.0 The Board discussed a breakfast session with the Secretary of State before the meeting where they had discussed relevant issues including EU Exit preparations.

Item 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 John Varley and Mark Funnell gave their apologies for this meeting.
Item 2  **Declarations of Interest**

2.1 Maria Adebowale Schwarte updated the Board on her new position as Executive Director of the Foundation for Future London while stepping down as Director of the Living Space Project.

Item 3  **Minutes of the Board Meeting on 13th December and matters arising**

3.1 Maria Adebowale Schwarte requested that Item 12 be updated to include the Board’s recognition of the hard work undertaken by the staff responsible for Salmon Net Duties.

  **Action: Secretariat**

3.2 The Board approved the minutes with the above amendment.

Item 4  **Chair’s and Chief Executive’s update**

  **Chair’s update**

4.1 Maria Adebowale Schwarte was congratulated on her successful re-appointment as Board Member until 30th June 2022. A public announcement will follow.

4.2 It was proposed, and the Board approved, the appointment of Will Lidbetter to the Pensions Investment Sub-Committee.

4.3 Emma Howard Boyd presented her paper and updated the Board on the following engagements:

- The World Economic Forum
- Climate change and green finance, including engagement with EA pension fund affiliated companies through AGMs
- Meeting with Penny Mordaunt with focus on climate change and sustainable development goals

  **Chief Executive’s update**

4.4 James Bevan presented his paper and updated the Board on the following:

- The recent judicial review in which the High Court upheld the Environment Agency’s decision to approve changes to environmental permit for the hydraulic fracturing in Lincolnshire
- Preparations for the 2019/2020 budget and 2019 Spending Review
- The appointment of the new Natural England chair, Tony Juniper
- The Dame Glenys Stacey Review and implications for the future agricultural delivery landscape

Item 5  **EU Exit Preparedness**

Page 2 of 6
5.1 Tony Grayling and Dafydd Evans joined the Board to discuss EU Exit preparations. The Board discussed preparations for the possibility of EU Exit with or without a deal.

5.2 Dafydd Evans updated the Board on preparations for No Deal EU Exit, highlighting the 10 point programme and the focus on resilience in the Environment Agency.

5.3 The Board discussed risks associated with No Deal EU Exit, agreeing that preparation had been good. There have been detailed examinations into supplier resilience and flood warning systems, fuel stockpiling and asset maintenance.

5.4 The Board emphasised that EU citizen colleagues should continue to be supported during this period.

**Item 6  Tamara Finkelstein and Minister Rutley**

6.1 Tamara Finkelstein joined the Board and outlined the EU Exit preparation across Defra Group, with 53 projects currently ongoing. The focus is on minimising the risks while maximising the opportunities.

6.2 The Board discussed the preparations, agreeing that there are external factors which cannot be controlled but will affect Defra and the Environment Agency’s work.

6.3 Minister Rutley joined the Board to outline the Government wide approach to EU Exit.

6.4 Minister Rutley and Tamara Finkelstein thanked the Environment Agency for their work on preparations for EU Exit and left the meeting and invited the team to feed in information through engagement with businesses and Local Resilience Forums.

**Item 7  Reflections on guests’ session**

7.1 The Board discussed the session with Minister Rutley and Tamara Finkelstein, agreeing that it had been productive.

7.2 The Board agreed that the Executive should continue to feed into Defra’s preparations.

**Item 8  Time to Talk**

8.1 Sarah Chare and Paul Wyse joined the Board to introduce the Time to Talk unconference; a nation-wide day to talk about mental health.
The Board talked about the importance of destigmatising mental health and the procedures in place to grant people access to help in the Environment Agency.

**Item 9  FCRM Items**

9.1 John Curtin outlined the 2019/2020 FCRM GiA allocation, highlighting that the Southern RFCC wasn’t quorate when they agreed the precept.

9.2 The Board noted that some allocations had changed compared to previous budgets, but agreed that they had been calculated fairly and transparently. The Board approved the principles for the 2019/2020 FCRM GiA capital allocation, the final FCRM GiA capital allocations and the final FCRM revenue maintenance allocations.

9.3 The Board discussed Local Levies, agreeing that it was positive that many Local Authorities chose to increase their contribution during a time of limited finances. The Board approved the Flood and Coastal Levies, General Drainage Charges and, acting as the Board of the River Arun Internal Drainage Board, approved the drainage rates and special levies.

9.3 The Board agreed that subject to the Southern RFCC first confirming that they are supportive of the proposed precept and they advise that it is fair as to quantum and basis upon which it is calculated, the Board resolved to impose the IDB precepts in the amounts set out in Appendix 1 of the paper.

*Action: John Curtin*

**Item 10  Good Growth**

10.1 Jennie Donovan joined the Board to discuss the strategy for growth, highlighting that it is in an early stage of development but the timing is right with opportunities developing in this area. She gave a slide presentation to outline proposals.

10.2 The Board discussed the proposals, acknowledging that a lot of work had already gone into growth and sustainable development and that the key now is to develop the narrative around this.

10.3 The Board discussed the strategy, agreeing that is important to first define what growth should be, then to decide the path to that vision and the partners which are needed to achieve this.

10.4 The Board discussed scale and how to engage people at local levels. The Board agreed that it is important to make sustainable growth about people as well as the environment.
The Board discussed language and whether growth was the right word to use, given its association with unsustainable consumption. The Board suggested other words such as value and prosperity but also acknowledged that many communities find growth to be a positive word.

The Board agreed that “net resilience gain” would be a useful metric to look at given that climate change resilience is a crucial aspect of sustainability.

**Item 11  Finance Items**

**Finance Update**

11.1 Pat Bolster presented the paper.

11.2 The Board noted that due to ongoing uncertainty for businesses, SRoC income projections were down for next year as well, vindicating the gradual approach which had been taken to recruitment.

**NFSoD**

11.3 Peter Kellett outlined the items in the paper, which the Board approved.

**Item 12  Committee Updates**

12.1 The Board noted the Committee updates paper.

12.2 Lynne Frostick updated the Board on the FCERM Strategy, stating that consultation has been delayed due to work on EU Exit but will be progressed after March.

**Item 13  SSCL Contract**

13.1 John Leyland updated the Board on the contract with SSCL, stating that there is a clause which allows the Environment Agency to review SSCL’s performance in 2019.

13.2 The Board expressed their concern over SSCL’s performance, noting several instances of failures across the Defra Group, including for the Environment Agency.

13.3 The Board requested that ARAC have a further discussion about the SSCL contract at their March meeting, before a final decision is made by the Chief of Staff.

  **Action: John Leyland**

**Item 14  AOB**
14.1 Maria Adebowale-Schwarte raised that RFCC chairs had requested attendance by Board Members at their relevant Board meetings. 

**Action:** Board Members

**Item 15** Review of the meeting

15.1 The Board agreed that the meeting had gone well and that the guest session had been particularly productive. They noted the need to maintain a balance of formal and informal time for the Board to interact.