

Board Meeting

Minutes of the 112th Natural England Board meeting held on 9 November 2022

Attending

Dr Tony Juniper	Chair
Lord Blencathra	Deputy Chair
Rosamund Blomfield-Smith	
Catherine Dugmore	
Henry Robinson	
Kerry ten Kate	
Kim Shillinglaw	
Peter Unwin	
Dr Clare Fitzsimmons	
Professor Michael Winter	

Executive Team

Marian Spain	Chief Executive (and ex-officio Board Member)
Alan Law	Deputy Chief Executive
Dr Tim Hill	Chief Scientist
Navroza Ladha	Chief Officer, Legal, Governance and External Affairs
James Diamond (deputy for Gleny Lovell)	Director, People
Oliver Harmar	Chief Operating Officer

Apologies

Dr Andy Clements	Board Member
Gleny Lovell	Chief Officer, Business Management and Change

Guests

David Hill	Defra, Director General, Environment Rural and Marine
Paul Leat	Defra Group, Director, Communications
Sean Cornall	Director, Corporate Governance
Abdul Razaq	Defra Group, Director of Finance
Claudia Chambers	Director, National Operations
Laura McDixon	Manager, Health & Safety team
Jen Garrett	Defra Group, Director, People Strategy
Adelle Rowe	Director, External Affairs
Jen Almond	Director, National Operations
David Slater	Regional Operations Director, South-West
Ian Fugler	Director, Business Management and Managing the Organisation
Rob Caschetto	Senior Adviser, Business, Planning and Performance
Matt Heard	Director, Strategy

Caroline Cotterell	Director, Resilient Landscapes and Seas
Clare Warburton	Principal Adviser, Connecting People with Nature
Sally Marshall	Principal Adviser, Resilient Landscapes and Seas
Brad Tooze	Director, Greener Farming and Fisheries
Mick Oliver	Chief of Staff, Legal and Governance
Dawn Metcalfe	Principal Adviser, Governance
Matthew Wood	Senior Adviser, Governance (Minutes)
Katie Anderson	Senior Adviser to Oliver Harmar (Minutes)
Katie Frost	PA to Tony Juniper

Item 1 Welcome from the Chair and declarations of interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Board, Executive and guests to the 112th Board meeting.
- 1.2 Kerry ten Kate confirmed her roles as a trustee of the RSPB and with Finance Earth.
- 1.3 Henry Robinson confirmed that he is no longer Chair of the Hawk and Owl Trust.

Item 2 Review of July 2022 minutes and matters arising

- 2.1 The Board agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting with a minor amendment.

Item 3 Board sub-group updates

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 3.1. Catherine Dugmore as Chair of ARAC, provided a verbal update from the most recent ARAC meeting on 12th October. This included the following:
- 3.2.
 - Procurement and Capability.
 - Business interruption.
 - Cost of living.
 - Corporate Services.
 - District Level Licensing (DLL).
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 3.3. Catherine advised that the Annual Report and Accounts were due to be laid by the end of November following conversations with the National Audit Office (NAO) regarding a potential technical qualification.
- 3.4. The Board commended and agreed Catherine's approach to continue to seek a technical accounting qualification and acknowledged the impact this may have on future schemes and delivery.

Natural England Science Advisory Committee (NESAC)

- 3.5. Clare Fitzsimmons (deputising for Dr Andy Clements) provided a verbal update from the NESAC meeting on 13 September. The main topic of discussion was the All-England Strategic Landscape Assessments project. The Board commended the All-England Strategic Landscape Assessments mapping work and discussed what could be done to make it more user focused.

Remuneration Committee (REMCOM)

- 3.6. Peter Unwin provided a verbal update on the meeting on 16 August. REMCOM approved the delegated and senior pay and recognised the difficulties staff were facing with cost-of-living pressures.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

- 3.7. Clare Fitzsimmons provided a verbal update from the meeting on 14-15 September. Discussions included:
- Strategic Development
 - Areas of commonality e.g. Avian Flu.
- 3.8. Clare highlighted that JNCC are holding a meeting at the end of the month with the other national conservation bodies.

Natural England Landscape Advisory Panel (NELAP)

- 3.9. Rosamund Blomfield-Smith provided an update on NELAP's meeting held on 8 September. NELAP reviewed and offered steers on the Landscape Designations paper that discussed at item 8

Item 4 Quarter two health and safety (H&S) report

- 4.1. Oliver Harmar presented the report to the Board alongside Claudia Chambers and Laura McDixon.
- 4.2. The Board:
- reviewed progress against the 22/23 H&S Action Plan for quarter two;
 - noted the incident statistics summary for Quarter Two; and
 - noted an update on actions relating to an incident at a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Item 5 Chief Executive's report

- 5.1 Marian Spain presented her report to the Board. Marian gave updates on the Nutrient Neutrality (NN) scheme and communications, potential business disruption during the winter and Avian flu. The Board requested a further information on avian flu in December.

Action: Tim Hill

Chief Operating Officer's report

- 5.2 Oliver Harmar gave an overview of delivery during the last quarter and previous six months and gave the following highlights:
- Since the Action Plan had been developed a greater investment has been made in strategic activities i.e. the Nutrient Neutrality scheme.
 - Offshore wind casework has increased and that has required flexibility with regards the deployment of staff.
 - Actions to mitigate issues relating to procurement are beginning to alleviate the risk.
- 5.3 Jen Almond, as National Director for Operations gave a summary to the Board on performance during the last quarter.
- 5.4 Jen noted that there had been a mixed performance in quarter two with good progress made on familiar indicators and those within the organisations control.
- 5.5 Jen confirmed that a new reporting framework with further detail will be available in quarter three.
- 5.6 Abdul Razaq, as Finance Director, advised that the current trend forecast indicated that if the risks to procurement could be managed then NE would be on track to deliver within the budget.
- 5.7 The Board gave several presentational steers on future reports.

Item 6 Corporate and operational risks – quarter two report

- 6.1 James Diamond presented the paper to the Board alongside Ian Fugler and Rob Caschetto.
- 6.2 The Board:
- reviewed the end of Quarter Two corporate risk position for 2022/3 and provided its view.
 - noted the aggregation and interplay of each of the risks; and
 - noted the planned deep dive discussion on people capability at the December Board strategy meeting.

Item 7 Strategic priorities and business planning

- 7.1 Alan Law introduced the discussion and provided context to the discussion for 2023/24 business planning, supported by Matt Heard.
- 7.2 At the next meeting in December the Board would be given further information setting out what would be done differently in 2023/24.

Action: Alan Law

Item 8 Landscape designation programme

- 8.1 Alan Law introduced the paper to the Board supported by Caroline Cotterell, Clare Warburton and Sally Marshall. The purpose of the discussion was to provide an update on the landscape designation programme agreed by the Board in May 2021 and to seek agreement on how to take forward Natural England's ambition for alternative landscape approaches.
- 8.2 Rosamund Blomfield-Smith (as co-Chair of NELAP) provided feedback on NELAPs advice on the proposals for accreditation.
- 8.3 The Board:
- agreed the proposal to test an accreditation model for urban areas and advise on issues this testing should address;
 - agreed the suite of measures to drive landscape enhancement and recovery across non-designated countryside;
 - noted progress on the designations programme and the completion of the initial phase of the All-England Strategic Landscape Mapping project; and
 - noted the advice from NELAP on proposals for accrediting landscapes.

Item 9 Uplands issues

- 9.1 Alan Law introduced the discussion supported by Brad Tooze. The purpose of the item was to update the Board on recent developments and to seek strategic steers for the work in an upland context.
- 9.2 The Board agreed that further conversations should be arranged with upland estates about how to deliver nature recovery at a landscape scale.

Item 10 Governance update

- 10.1 Sean Cornall introduced the paper to the Board. The purpose of discussion was to update the Board on progress with previously agreed governance actions and to set out proposals for governance work over the coming months.

10.2 The Board:

- agreed the proposed approach for the 22/23 board effectiveness review and for it to be externally led.
- agreed the proposal (as agreed at September Board strategy session) for the continuing refresh of Board development.
- noted the possible refresh of Board member roles.

Item 11 Forward look

11.1 Sean Cornall led the Board through the forward look of meetings and arrangements for the following year.