

## Board Meeting

### Minutes of the Board meeting held on Wednesday 26 April 2023 at Foss House, York & via video conference

#### Present

Alan Lovell	Chair
John Curtin	Chief Executive
Judith Batchelar	Deputy Chair
Mark Suthern	Board Member
Stewart Davies	Board Member
John Lelliott	Board Member
Robert Gould	Board Member
Ines Faden Da Silva	Board Member
Sarah Mukherjee	Board Member
Lilli Matson	Board Member

#### In attendance

Lucy Hunt	Chief Operating Officer
Caroline Douglass	Executive Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Sarah Chare	Executive Director, Local Operations
John Leyland	Executive Director, Environment and Business
Pat Bolster	Director, Finance
Ilana Conn	Defra Deputy Director, Operational and Local Comms
Laura Milton	Director, Legal and Audit Services
Anna Burns	Deputy Director, Governance and Engagement
David Hallam (items 1 & 2)	Defra Director, Floods and Water
Corry McDiarmid	Board Governance Manager
Alex Hole	Board Governance Senior Advisor
Beth Lamb	Board Governance Advisor

#### Item 1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Alan Lovell welcomed attendees to the meeting. Alan also welcomed David Hallam who was deputising for David Hill as well as Sarah Chare and John Curtin in their new positions as Executive Director of Local Operations and Chief Executive respectively.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Caroline Mason and David Hill.
- Declarations of Interest**
- 1.3 There were no new declarations raised.

### Minutes of 15 February 2023 and 8 March 2023 meetings and matters arising

- 1.4 **The Board approved** the minutes of the 15 February Board meeting.
- 1.5 **The Board approved** the minutes of the 8 March Board meeting with one amendment.
- 1.6 The Board noted the action tracker.
- 1.7 Lucy Hunt provided an update on action 6, noting that the Regulatory Futures item would be going to the Executive Director's Team (EDT) meeting in July and then back to the Board in due course.
- 1.8 Lucy Hunt updated the Board on how the Environment Agency is leveraging the apprenticeship levy, completing action 4.

## Item 2 Chief Executive Officer priorities for next 3 months

- 2.1 John Curtin provided an overview of his priorities for the remainder of his time as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) before the new permanent CEO takes up the role in July. These were to prepare for the new CEO's arrival, help to improve the Environment Agency's relationship with Defra and ensure the Environment Agency is the best regulator it can be.
- 2.2 The Board discussed how John's priorities will help set a direction for and reassure staff during this period of senior leadership change. They also discussed the Office on Environmental Protection's (OEP) draft report on water quality. Alan Lovell praised Anna Burns and her team's work to keep the Board updated on the OEP's report.

*David Hallam left the meeting at the end of this item.*

## Item 3 Chief Operating Officer updates

### Reporting of Environment Agency Metrics to Defra / Secretary of State

- 3.1 Lucy Hunt provided an update regarding the sharing of the balanced scorecard data with Defra and the Secretary of State (SoS).
- 3.2 Lucy noted that the SoS had employed external consultants to design a dashboard of metrics for each arm's length body, and she anticipated that the balanced scorecard metrics will be used for this, allowing the business to move away from multiple ad hoc requests for metrics from Defra, Ministers and the SoS.
- 3.3 The Board discussed the benefits of the use of the balanced scorecard internally, including allowing colleagues to access metrics that relate

directly to their teams and areas of work. The Board also discussed how much data colleagues have access to. Sarah Chare outlined work being done to make balanced scorecard reporting consistent across local operations.

- 3.4 Lucy noted that an area view of measures will be available as part of the balanced scorecard reporting.

#### 2023/24 Scorecard Outlook

- 3.5 Pat Bolster outlined the 2023/24 Corporate Scorecard forecasts. The Board noted the update and the information in the paper.

- 3.6 The Board discussed the reasons for measures showing as 'red' at this stage and Sarah Chare explained how Operations communicate their projections for delivering against their KPIs.

- 3.7 Mark Suthern queried the lack of clarity around measures relating to the proportion of staff from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background and proportion of female executive managers. Lucy Hunt reassured the Board that narrative around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) metrics will be included in the 2022/23 quarter 4 corporate scorecard due to come to the May Board meeting.

## Item 4 Hot Topics

### Chief Operating Officer

- 4.1 Lucy Hunt updated the Board on the ongoing work regarding Defra group Corporate Services (DgCS). She gave an overview of the meetings she had recently had with Defra leadership to agree methods for continuous improvement. She updated the Board on the upcoming meetings with Defra heads of functions and what she hopes to achieve through these.

- 4.2 Lucy also provided an update on the pay remit and the latest talks with the unions. Lucy noted that industrial action was highly unlikely to cease anytime soon and there is now a risk the unions will stop engaging on negotiations altogether.

### Local Operations

- 4.3 Sarah Chare provided an update on the River Lugg prosecution and what lessons can be learnt from this case.

- 4.4 Sarah updated the Board on the East Coast Surge practice exercise that National Duty Managers had recently completed in Kings Lynn as well as Southwest Water's imposing of temporary use bans in Devon. She also told the Board that Local Operations were working closely with Environment and Business (E&B) and Defra to monitor the drought situation and were creating an incident structure for use in managing drought.

#### Environment and Business (E&B)

- 4.5 John Leyland provided an update following the previous week's National Drought Group (NDG) meeting. John gave an overview of the drought outlook for the coming year and noted that further data will be published from the Environment Agency and Met Office. John noted that the next NDG, in May, will be chaired by John Curtin and that preparations for associated media moments were underway. John noted that Rebecca Pow had attended the last NDG meeting and had expressed her continued support for the work being done in this space.
- 4.6 John highlighted to the Board the scale of the pressure that freedom of information (FOI) requests are currently having on E&B, in particular Water, Land and Biodiversity (WLB) and on the expert and legal teams who are needed to contribute to responses.

#### Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM)

- 4.7 Caroline Douglass provided an update on the proposals put forward regarding the FCRM Capital Programme reprofile and noted that this matter is under consideration by the SoS. She noted that the window for reallocation by His Majesty's Treasury had now passed but there will be another opportunity for this later in the year.
- 4.8 Caroline also provided an update on the launch of Rivercraft 2 and noted that the Board will hear a more comprehensive overview of this project as part of the 'celebrating success' item at the May Board meeting.

The meeting closed at 12:45pm.