



Board Meeting Minutes: 14 June 2023 (Public)

Location: Lancaster House, Newcastle

MMO Board

Hilary Florek (HF) – Chair
Belinda Howell (BH)
David Lyall (DL)
Peter Judge (PJ)
Terence Jagger (TJ) (via MS Teams)
Tony Delahunty (TD)
William Roberts (WR)

MMO Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Tom McCormack (TMc) – Chief Executive Officer
Jenny Stewart (JS) – Director of Planning and Change
Michelle Willis (MW) – Director of Finance and Resources
Pete Clark (PC) – Director of Operations
Trudi Wakelin (TW) – Director of Marine Development (Domestic and International)
Steph Campbell (SC) – Director of Digital and Analysis
Selina Stead (SS) – MMO Chief Scientific Advisor (via MS Teams)

Defra, by invitation

Mike Rowe (MR) – Director, Marine and Fisheries

Additional Attendees

None

Apologies

Rob Wilson (RW)

Board Secretariat

Julia Templeton (JT)
Ali Haynes (AH)

Governance

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks/Declaration of Interests

- 1.1 No new declarations of interest were reported.
- 1.2 The Chair reminded Board members to complete the Declarations of Interest proforma.
- 1.3 The minutes of the previous Board meeting on 16 May 2023 were agreed.
- 1.4 The Chair commented that a board timetable for 2024 meetings would be shared at the July 2023 board meeting.

2. Timeline for the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA)

- 2.1 Referencing the preparations for the completion of the 2022/23 ARA, MW drew the Board's attention to the new reporting requirements disclosure of fraud and business appointments.
- 2.2 MW shared that the Board would have the opportunity to comment on the CEO and Chair's statements and the Performance Review sections. She noted key dates for Board awareness; an ARA drop in session would be scheduled ahead of the Board's receipt of the first draft of the report. MW highlighted that the ARA timetable reflects a post recess laying date.
- 2.3 BR added that, as Chair of the ARAC, he felt it was important the Annual Report is reviewed by the Board, particularly to input to the framing of the report, key narrative and messages.

3. Ministerial Delivery Meeting (MDM) 12 June 2023

- 3.1 TMC updated the Board on the key themes arising from the MDM with Minister Spencer.
- 3.2 MR added that there is an aspiration for these meetings to become a useful method of communication between the MMO Executive and Minister, providing opportunity to flag key risks and celebrate achievements; the forum intends to assess MMO's operational delivery, in the context of the marine environment. Meetings will take place within the context of a 'spirit of no surprises' from Defra.
- 3.3 After a discussion around the 'state of the seas', and Defra's work to produce 15 indicators to monitor this, the Chair requested that SS brings forward a presentation to a future meeting, exploring ocean health within the context of MMO's strategic goals.
- 3.4 In response to a question from DL, TMC reflected on the May Stakeholder event, highlighting that future opportunities to engage with stakeholders would be exploited.

Operational

4. New Corporate Plan Commissions

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- 4.1 PC highlighted two key themes; i) an update relating on the mitigation of the risks identified by the Delivery Assurance Board (DAB), and ii) assurance of MPA byelaws and the Board role in this.
- 4.2 PC reflected that Stage One Byelaws had been live for one year and that fewer than 15 infringements of the four sites had occurred; these had been dealt with, with no further incidences, and for Stage Two, it was anticipated that the byelaw would be implemented during 2023.
- 4.3 PC flagged the risks associated from Stage Three onwards; critically an increase in work from 13 sites at Stage Two, to 41 at Stage Three. This increase in work to MMO is being mitigated through streamlining MMO's internal site assessment process, and outsourcing 10 site assessments with MMO to retain a quality assurance and decision making role in these. This would bring Stage Three back on track in time for its completion in early 2024.
- 4.4 PC outlined that further mitigations would be put into place at Stage Four, including outsourcing of management information to CEFAS, the team were currently working around the further complexities involved at this stage.

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

- 4.5 The discussion turned FMPs, their governance, and the MMO capacity required to deliver these Defra commissions.
- 4.6 PC summarised current and upcoming FMP work, noting that the Channel Demersal Non-Quota Species FMP is near completion, currently subject to consideration by Defra colleagues.
- 4.7 In response to a question from BR, PC agreed to confirm the economic value of FMPs.
- 4.8 MR thanked PC and the team, and the MMO in the round, for the FMP delivery work and highlighted that Secretary of State and Minister sign-off on all the front runner FMPs had been achieved the previous week. The Minister in particular was delighted with this progress.

Global and OCPP

- 4.9 TW gave an update to the Board on the key highlights of Global Marine Protection Activities over the last year. She noted that the Blue Belt team had received the Platinum Blue Park Award for the benefit to the Pitcairn Islands populations and environment.
- 4.10 Additional funding has been confirmed to support a further three countries, and close some existing OCPP partnerships. The Global team will be mapping its planned activity to support the delivery of MMO's Strategic Goals.
- 4.11 TW noted that a key delivery risks include dependency upon partners, notably NGOs, and attrition. To overcome these, TW will embed a hub and spoke delivery model, embedding Global roles across the planning and operational teams to broaden internal opportunity and develop resilience.

UK Seafood Fund (UKSF)

- 4.12 MW drew the Board's attention to MMO's role in supporting Defra to deliver the £65m infrastructure pillar of the UKSF. She noted the excellent collaboration undertaken across rounds one and two, championing the value of investments made across Ports and Harbours, Processors and Aquaculture enterprises. Round three, "Fleet Modernisation (Engine replacements for the small-scale fleet)" is ongoing.
- 4.13 BH commended MMO's achievements. She requested that future reports articulate not just the volume and value of investments, but also their outcomes. MW noted that all funding schemes are accompanied by evaluation criteria, she will investigate how these can be wrapped into MMO's strategic goals. HF was supportive of this, noting the Minister should be kept abreast of the benefits.

Programme Updates - Strategic

5. Fisheries Export Service (FES)

- 5.1 The Chair thanked the Executive for sharing documentation to clarify the history of FES, initially "FI001", an EU Exit project, noting that the Board have benefitted from a greater understanding of the project background.
- 5.2 MW highlighted that the route to approval of the FES Business Case is through Defra's Investment Committee, this is due to the value, complexity and UK wide project considerations. She added that the strategic component of the business case was at an advanced stage; she commended the work of PC and the Policy Team in synthesising the strategic risks, planned mitigations and guided the Board through the strategic case for the investment. MW further highlighted MMO's work with Devolved Administrations and Defra to build the compelling case for change.
- 5.3 MW outlined that the MMO Board would be engaged on the project both pre and post Defra's Investment Committee, the latter engagement will clarify any approval conditions applied by the Investment Committee. The MMO Board will also be made aware of any comments from the Red Team after they have reviewed the changes. The MMO Board will also be made aware of any comments from the Red Team after they have reviewed the changes.
- 5.4 In summary, MW indicated that the Executive were clear on the job of mapping the improvements proposed to mitigate the risks associated with FES. The business case will set out clearly where the improvements seek to mitigate risk.
- 5.5 The Chair welcomed further discussion with respect to the arranging of workshops to engage the Board comprehensively on FES.

Closing Matters

6. AOB, Forward Look and Date of Next Meeting

- 6.1 The Chair asked for reflections on the Board meeting, noting her contentment with the papers issued, which allowed Board time to be used effectively during the meeting.
- 6.2 The Chair noted that the next Board meeting is 4 July.
- 6.3 The dates and locations of Board meetings for the next 12 months should be agreed in advance and communicated to Board members as soon as possible, along with the location for the September Board meeting.