



Marine Management Organisation

Board Meeting Minutes: 21 September 2023 (Public)

Location: Sussex Yacht Club, Shoreham

MMO Board

Hilary Florek (HF) – Chair
Belinda Howell (BH)
David Lyall (DL)
Peter Judge (PJ), Planning and Investment Committee Chair
Tony Delahunty (TD)
William Roberts (WR), ARAC Chair
Rob Wilson (RW), RemCom Chair

MMO Executive Leadership Team

Jenny Stewart (JS) – Director of Planning and Change
Michelle Willis (MW) – Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy CEO
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

Defra

Mike Rowe (MR) – Director, Marine and Fisheries, by invitation

Additional MMO Attendees

Richard Hoskin (RH) – Head of Sustainable Fisheries (Fisheries Moment only)

Apologies

Terence Jagger (TJ)
Tom McCormack (TMc)

Board Secretariat

Holly Protopapa (HP)
Julia Templeton (JT)

Governance

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks/Declaration of Interests

- 1.1 HF welcomed all to the meeting, apologies from TMc and TJ were noted.
- 1.2 RW reported that he has been appointed Deputy Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, further to his existing role as Commissioner. There were no further declarations to those previously reported.

2. Minutes and Actions of 4 July 2023 Board Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the 4 July Board meeting were adopted. The board looked ahead to items for further discussion for the remainder of 2023, including current evidence projects and the next spending review, which could consider the organisation's digital strategy and progressing AI.

3. Minutes of the 14 June ARAC Meeting

- 3.1 The ARAC Chair summarised the previous meeting, highlighting the state of play of the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts (ARA), it was acknowledged that the timetable for the ARA move further into the autumn.
- 3.2 Concerns were raised about a potential slippage on a small number of internal audits, including one review which has been deferred. The committee would consider how that review is taken forward in light of a further, external review examining the same subject matter.
- 3.3 It was reported that a more pragmatic risk approach is being taken.

4. Decisions from the Extraordinary Board Meeting of 13 September

- 4.1 The secretariat summarised the decisions taken during the Extraordinary Board Meeting of 13 September 2023, allowing these to be ratified;
 - Decision 1309-01D: MMOB agreed to commercially commit to a third and final year of MMO's contract with Sentinel Marine.
 - Decision 1309-02D: The Board provided support for the MMO to commence pre-market engagement to investigate options for the provision of commercial vessels to MMO, this should include the engagement with relevant stakeholders.
 - Decision 1309-03D: MMOB provided their agreement to submit the Fisheries Export Service (FES) Business Case to David Hill, DG Environment.
- 4.2 The executive summarised that the FES phased project delivery would be used to determine the level of validation to be provided by the system.

5. New Committee

- 5.1 The Chair of the Planning and Investment Committee (PIC) introduced the final draft terms of reference (ToR), Board comments were requested, and would be considered at the first meeting of the new committee.
- 5.2 The Chair proposed to schedule the first two meetings of the PIC, returning to a future board meeting to validate or propose amends to the ToRs. Further to this, it was requested that the Chair of the Board delegates authority to settle committee membership to the PIC Chair, with volunteers to come forward for this.
- 5.3 The scope of the PIC was discussed, outlining the proposal that any project exceeding £500thousand or at outline business case stage would come to the committee for consideration, the proposal included a request for the Board delegated authority limit to be increased, with the current limit at £250thousand. After discussion into the volume of MMO projects within the current and proposed delegated authority limits, the Board took the decision to retain its current delegated authority at £250thousand, this position will be reconsidered in 2024.
- 5.4 The committee remit in relation to delegation and accountability was emphasised, with visibility and observation being necessary when MMO is delivering on behalf of the Department, or other government bodies.

Strategic

6. Spotlight on Fisheries (Fisheries Moment)

- 6.1 The group reflected on the events and stakeholder engagements of the 20 September 2023, which focused on ‘Why Fisheries Matter to the MMO’.
- 6.2 The opportunity to engage with industry in relation to new and forthcoming management measures was championed for enabling stakeholder concerns to be heard directly. Concerns included the complexity of different management regimes and stakeholder fatigue.
- 6.3 The MMO’s improved relationship with fishers was highlighted, noting fishers’ willingness to engage with MMO and across Defra to support with provision of evidence.
- 6.4 The Board called for increased resources, including the use of shared resources, and a redesign of roles to support the vision for fisheries. The Board emphasised the importance that this vision is for the long-term, improving MMO’s use of data and flows, and allowing for agile approaches to regulation and fisheries management. Defra have encouraged a bold spending review bid from the MMO with this in mind.
- 6.5 An integrated approach to fisheries and marine management was discussed, with data and digital as a solution. A transformative way of working across the whole marine system was considered with opportunities to enhance the MMO position as a global leader in fisheries management.
- 6.6 A board suggestion to commission a light touch audit into MMO’s approach to fisheries management was welcomed by Defra. This could explore MMO’s remit, simplification and the organisation as an enabler.
- 6.7 The Chair commended Defra and MMO authors for their supporting paper.

7. Defra View from the Bridge

- 7.1 The FES Business Case was highlighted as a recent, positive development.
- 7.2 The Board commended the MPAs and HPMAs implemented to date.
- 7.3 The Board thanked MR for his summary.

Operational

8. MMO Quarter 1 2023/34 – Finance, Performance, Risk, Assurance and Change

- 8.1 The executive projected a marginal underspend of £240thousand during Quarter Two, noting budgets have been overprogrammed to avoid overspend. It was reported that further funding would flow from Defra toward the end of Q2. With respect to MMO’s commercial vessels, Defra have held pressures to support MMO with fuel costs, MMO will recommend that this is released. MMO’s cost of living payment to staff will also be funded through the core budget, noting the discussed underspend.
- 8.2 MW shared that the forthcoming Ministerial Delivery Assurance Board (MDAB) meeting with Defra will discuss additional work relating to Fisheries Management Plans and Remote Electronic Monitoring.
- 8.3 Concerns relating to capacity within Defra Group Commercials (DGC) were highlighted, with a number of MMO evidence projects challenged by DGC’s ability to progress commercial activity to achieve project spending within the financial year.
- 8.4 Positive progress against the operational risk register was noted, supported by MMO Risk Champions and corporate planning. A need to revisit the strategic risk register was flagged.
- 8.5 It was reported that two cases from the Marine Licensing Backlog remain, the reasons for this were discussed.
- 8.6 The board heard that operations are largely on track to meet their KPIs, with some minor exceptions including wildlife licenses. JS advised that further key measures would be adopted in due course, as part of the ongoing work to develop MMO’s performance framework.
- 8.7 JS updated on the Change Programme, sharing the user acceptance issues emerging through of the phased delivery of FES, and ongoing discovery work for the Marine Licensing Case Management System (MCMS) replacement.
- 8.8 Noting MMO’s mandated use of DDTs, the board considered the value for money aspect.

9. Annual Report and Accounts (ARA)

- 9.1 The executive report that the proposed laying date of October has been deferred to the following month due to a slight delay to the audit schedule. It was stated that audit is progressing well with no points of concern. The business will make full use of the 18 October ARAC to explore the state of play for the ARA. MW thanked Board Members for their comments on the report, sharing that these have largely been impacted, the updated report would be shared with MMOB early October.
- 9.2 MMO Finance have recognised the need to work closely with the Private Office to inform timings for sign off with

the Minister.

People

10. MMO Capacity, Capability and Culture

- 10.1 An update on the MMO 3Cs Programme was provided, highlighting colleague interest in progressing equality, diversity and inclusion. Culture improvements were particularly discussed, including at the leadership level, where there is intent to invest further.
- 10.2 The group reflected on how Board Members and Executive Leaders could work collectively on leadership commitment to real, cultural improvement.
- 10.3 The impact of practical and behavioural changes to improving culture were noted in favour of process improvements. Confidence building, demonstration of commitment and the need to create career pathways were emphasised.
- 10.4 The group considered how the project could be re-energised, particularly in view of new priorities forthcoming from the Department. It was suggested that each Board Member could adopt a pillar of the 3Cs Programme to help demonstrate dedication to change.
- 10.5 There was support for the introduction of resource to support a culture change, with external speakers highlighted as an example.
- 10.6 The group were united in their desire for a culture that supports risk taking. It was agreed that a separate session would be convened to determine Board involvement.

Closing Matters

11. AoB

- 11.1 The board thanked the executive for their insightful below the line papers relating to Marine Spatial Prioritisation. A separate session to discuss the complex political nature of offshore wind and its significant implications was requested.
- 11.2 The executive's progress in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing were commended, noting both the "Dip in the Sea" literature and Menopause Group's recent triumph at the Menopause Friendly Employer Awards 2023.
- 11.3 Further positive reflections were provided into the stakeholder engagements throughout Shoreham and MMO's strong performance in delivering grant funding.