

# Minutes of the board meeting held on Thursday 11 April 2024 via MS Teams

## Present

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

## In attendance

Philip Duffy	Chief Executive
Tamara Bruck	Executive Director, Strategy, Transformation and Assurance
Caroline Douglass	Executive Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Sue Longstone	Director of Operations North
Anna Caffyn	Finance Director
Laura Milton	Director, Legal and Audit Services
Ilana Conn	Deputy Director, Operational and Local Communications
Georgina Collins	Director, Regulated Industry
David Hill	Defra Director General, Environment Group
Alex Hole	Board Governance Senior Advisor
Beth Lamb	Board Governance Advisor

## Item 1: Welcome

### Apologies

- 1.1 The board noted apologies from John Leyland, Sarah Chare, Nick Joicey, Harry Leeder and Corry McDiarmid.

### Declarations of interest

- 1.2 No new declarations were raised.

## Item 2: Verbal updates

### Chair's update

- 2.1 The Chair updated the board on the successful appointment of 2 new board members. The board noted that recruitment for a new Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair was underway with interviews likely to take place in June.

### Chief Executive's update

- 2.2 The Chief Executive updated the board on work underway to address prolonged wet weather, with some local teams under consistent pressure for several months.
- 2.3 The board also noted updates on work to improve health, safety and wellbeing processes regarding working in water, recruitment for a new Director of Strategy, development of the business plan for 2024 to 2025, the ministerial direction relating to determination of environmental permits for new waste incineration facilities in England, the pay remit for 2024 to 2025 and progress on water quality regulation.
- 2.4 The board discussed the business plan and queried if appropriate operational plans had been put in place to support the proposed changes. They were reassured that there was plan in place.
- 2.5 The board endorsed plans to support area directors with briefings on how to respond to MP requests.

### Executive Director hot topics

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

- 2.6 The board noted that the target for homes better protected in 2023/24 has been exceeded and noted updates on the delivery of the £25m natural flood management (NFM) fund, development of the farming recovery fund and plans for the administering the £75m funding for internal drainage boards (IDBs).
- 2.7 Board members discussed their separate responsibilities with regard to the River Arun international drainage district (IDD) and were reassured that appropriate measures were in place to manage flood risk in the IDB.

## **Strategy, Transformation and Assurance (STA)**

- 2.8 The board noted the updates on the new operating model for STA, the charging schemes that have recently gone live, the new Executive Director's team (EDT) subgroups being set up to replace the business boards, and the new risk management process being implemented to ensure consistency of risk escalation across the organisation.
- 2.9 The board enquired about work being done to reduce duplication of STA roles across the business. The board asked the executive director of STA what challenges she had faced since starting the role and if she had identified any quick wins. The board noted that collaboration across the business was of high priority and that she was keen to quickly address issues in the digital and IT space.
- 2.10 The board noted the particularly successful collaboration between the Environment Agency and Defra to get the new charging schemes finalised.

## **Local Operations**

- 2.11 The board noted the updates on the ongoing situations at Walley's Quarry and Pilsworth landfills, recruitment for the new Director of Operations for the South and Southeast and progress with regard to permitting transformation. The board noted that there was appetite for announcement on transparent metrics and a new enhanced pre-application service in July.
- 2.12 The board noted there was to be a more assertive stance on managing illegal waste activity going forward, including the increased consideration of the use of suspension notices.

## **Environment and Business**

- 2.13 The Executive Director of Environment and Business updated the board on the recent publication of the event duration monitoring (EDM) data, and the positive outcomes in terms of allowing easier access to this data.
- 2.14 The board praised the quality of the communications approach around the publishing of the EDM data. The board discussed how the Environment Agency can be more transparent with other data sets and build on learning from the release of the EDM data. They noted the work underway in the STA directorate to improve the public register.
- 2.15 The board queried how the Environment Agency is responding as a regulator following the publishing of the EDM data.

- 2.16 The board noted the Office of Environmental Protection (OEP)'s review of compliance activity.

### **Item 3: Any other business (AOB) and date of next meeting**

#### **AOB: Financial outcomes following year end**

- 3.1 The Finance Director updated the board on the financial position including the agreed capital overspend and resource departmental expenditure limits (RDEL) predicted overspend. The board noted that these points will be picked up by the finance director's team but overall the financial position is being managed well.

#### **Date of next meeting**

- 3.2 The board noted that the next meeting and visit would be taking place 14 to 15 May 2024. The board secretariat provided an overview of arrangements for the 2 days.

The meeting closed at 10:30am.