

Minutes of the board meeting held on Friday 15 November 2024 via MS Teams

Present

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

In attendance

Tamara Bruck	Executive Director, Strategy, Transformation and Assurance
Anna Caffyn	Director, Finance
Sarah Chare	Executive Director, Local Operations
Matt Cornford	Director, Strategy
Chris Davis	Deputy Director, Communications
Caroline Douglass	Executive Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Philip Duffy	Chief Executive
David Hill	Defra Director General, Strategy and Water
Alex Hole	Board Governance Senior Advisor
Beth Lamb	Board Governance Advisor
Harry Leeder	Deputy Director, Governance and Engagement
John Leyland	Executive Director, Environment and Business
Estelle Palin	Deputy Director, Legal Services

Item 2

Jonathan Day	Deputy Director, Risk Assessment
Julie Foley	Director, Strategy and National Adaptation

Item 1: Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies

- 1.1 The board noted apologies from Brittany Harris and Laura Milton.

- 1.2 The board noted that Estelle Palin would be deputising for Laura Milton.

Declarations of interest

- 1.3 There were no declarations raised.

Item 2: National flood risk assessment 2 (Nafra2) and national coastal erosion risk mapping (NCERM) report review

- 2.1 The board welcomed Jonathan Day and Julie Foley to the meeting. The Executive Director of flood and coastal risk management (FCRM) introduced the item and Julie Foley provided an overview of the reports. The Board noted the headlines from the reports, which are that the number of properties at risk of flooding and coastal erosion have increased since the last National Assessments were made.
- 2.2 The board noted the publication timescales for the reports. The board discussed how information laid out in the report was being used to direct resource to the correct teams within the Environment Agency, and noted that this would be picked up in due course as part of the spending review work.
- 2.3 The board raised questions around the communications plan for the publication of the reports, in particular around resource in place and how to responsibly relay the information included in the reports. The board noted how the team are engaging the academic research community and discussed the impact on, and engagement with Local Authorities on the outputs of this work.
- 2.4 The board noted that the reports were purely factual, and don't reflect any future policy decisions on issues such as investment or house building. The board noted that Minister Hardy had been briefed on the findings of the reports.

Item 3: Directorate hot topics

Chief Executive

- 3.1 The Chief Executive updated the board on the progress regarding the spending review and noted that the board would be informed once a conclusion had been reached.
- 3.2 The board noted further updates relating to the preparation of the 2025-26 business plan, the government and Defra reviews currently underway, progress on waste crime and the 2024 pay deal. The board also noted work underway to address the ethnic minority background and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) pay gap.

- 3.3 The board discussed how the business plan would be impacted by the outcome of the spending review and noted that this would be a topic of discussion at the February board call.
- 3.4 The board noted their support for ongoing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work.

Strategy, Transformation and Assurance (STA)

- 3.5 The Executive Director of STA provided an update on the work ongoing on EDI and told the board that the next staff survey was currently underway. The Board also noted updates regarding the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) audit of freedom of information (FOI) response performance, fleet strategy, investment in corporate estates, the latest conversations with trade unions and ongoing Defra reviews.
- 3.6 **Action:** The board asked the Director of Strategy to provide a briefing note on the ongoing Defra reviews and how the Environment Agency is supporting them.
- 3.7 The Director of Strategy also updated the board on the following week's MP drop-in session due to be held at the Houses of Parliament.

Local Operations

- 3.8 The Executive Director of Local Operations provided an update on sewage treatment work inspections, EDI work within Local Operations, Walley's Quarry and High Speed 2 (HS2).

Environment and Business

- 3.9 The Executive Director of Environment and Business provided an overview of ongoing work in his department on the low carbon economy and a new circular economy taskforce. The board noted that Environment and Business was working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Natural England on recognising the political imperative of growth whilst also protecting the environment.
- 3.10 The board was also updated on the implementation of the water special measures bill and work ongoing with Defra to address funding issues.

Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM)

- 3.11 The Executive Director of FCRM updated the board on the latest developments regarding FCRM funding. She also updated the board on the announcement of a review of partnership funding policy by the Minister.

- 3.12 The board discussed the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) review of investment proposals.

Finance

- 3.13 The board heard that the final signed annual report and accounts were expected to be available later that day. The board acknowledged and thanked the Director of Finance for the large amount of work which had gone into reaching this point.

Item 4: Any other business (AOB), date of next meeting and review of meeting

AOB

- 4.1 No items of AOB were raised.

Date of next meeting

- 4.2 The board noted that the next meeting would be taking place on Tuesday 17 December in London.

Review of meeting

- 4.3 This item wasn't taken.

The meeting closed at 11:05am.