

# Minutes of the board meeting held on Thursday 23 October 2025 at 2 Marsham Street and via MS Teams

## Attending

Alan Lovell  
Ines Faden Da Silva  
Stewart Davies  
Brittany Harris  
Maya Leibman  
Lilli Matson  
Sarah Mukherjee  
Mark Suthern  
Jon Watts

Chair  
Deputy Chair  
Board member  
Board member  
Board member  
Board member  
Board member  
Board member

## In attendance

Philip Duffy  
Tamara Bruck

Anna Caffyn  
Sebastian Catovsky  
Sarah Chare  
Chris Davis  
Caroline Douglass

John Leyland  
Alice Mayne  
Laura Milton  
Verity Zurita  
Alex Hole  
Derry Gallagher

Chief Executive  
Executive Director, Strategy Transformation and Assurance  
Director, Finance  
Defra Director, Floods and Water (from Item 3.6)  
Executive Director, Local Operations  
Deputy Director, Communications  
Executive Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management  
Executive Director, Environment and Business  
Director, Strategy  
Director, Legal and Audit Services  
Deputy Director, Governance and Engagement  
Board Governance Senior Advisor  
Board Governance Advisor

## Item 3

Georgina Collins

Director, Strategic Design and Transition Programme

## Item 4

George Leigh  
Susan Casper

Strategy Manager  
Manager, Chief Scientist's Group

## Item 5

Laura Phillips

Senior Advisor, Strategy

## Item 6

Tony Kluth

Defra group Head of Digital Communication

## **Item 1: Apologies, declarations of interest, minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

### **Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from David Hill and Corry McDiarmid.

### **Declarations of interest**

- 1.2 No declarations of interest were made.

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2025**

- 1.3 **Decision: The board approved** the minutes of the board meeting held on 16 September 2025.

### **Matters arising**

- 1.4 The board noted the progress made on all actions.
- 1.5 The board noted that an update on action Board2025-042 would be made in December.
- 1.6 The board noted that the organisation had reached compliance with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).
- 1.7 The board requested that action Board2025-047 be completed as soon as possible.

## **Item 2: Approval of the changes to the Pensions Committee membership**

- 2.1 Lilli Matson updated the board on the proposed changes to membership of the Pensions Committee, for two Pensioner/Deferred member representatives to receive a one-month extension to 14 December 2025.
- 2.2 The board noted that these short extensions would support a suitable handover at the December Pension Committee meeting to the two new Deferred and Pensioner member representatives who are due to start their tenure 1 January 2026.
- 2.3 The board noted that the Pensions Committee had approved these extensions on 7 October 2025.
- 2.4 **Decision: The board approved** the extensions and appointments to the Pensions Committee membership.
- 2.5 Lilli Matson provided a brief update to the Board on the progress with securing an in-principle arrangement with a new pooling provider. The Board would be updated as the matter progressed.

### **Item 3: Independent Water Review: Strategic Design and Transition Programme update**

- 3.1 Georgina Collins joined the meeting.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive introduced the item and provided an overview of the progress being made in response to the recommendations set out in the Independent Water Commission Report and that Defra had put a range of options to the Secretary of State and ministers to consider.
- 3.3 Georgina Collins provided an update on the draft White Paper expected to set out the high-level options for implementing the headline recommendations of the review.
- 3.4 The board noted that a transition plan would be published as an annex to the White Paper, providing a roadmap for moving from the current framework to the new, to provide certainty on delivery of PR24 (Price Review 2024) and on how PR29 will be delivered.
- 3.5 The Board noted that a working group of water regulators had been established, led by the Environment Agency, and it was working through common issues such as performance, control strategies, reviewing the PR process to improve outcomes and integration, communications and engagement, evidence and research, enforcement and water resource management.

*Sebastian Catovsky joined the meeting.*

- 3.6 The board noted that the Price Review process had the potential to make the greatest positive impact on growth and house building, and could take significant costs for government out of the system.
- 3.7 The board discussed the longer-term plan and next steps following the draft White Paper, including the new regulator's scope, scale, functions, and classification (departmental or non-departmental).
- 3.8 The board discussed the Environment Agency functions outside the review's scope, but which were part of the current integrated system, and whether the draft White Paper would address these. The board recognised that this would largely depend on the agreed structure of the new water regulator.
- 3.9 The board noted that the outcomes of the review were not built into the next year's business plan as there were many unknowns at this stage.
- 3.10 As a result of the additional work generated by the Independent Water Review, the board sought assurance that the risk of inability to meet its legal obligations as an organisation was being properly managed.

- 3.11 The board noted that costs associated with any reorganisation were dependent on the scale of change.

#### **Item 4: A new approach to reporting on regulated sectors**

- 4.1 George Leigh and Susan Casper joined the meeting.
- 4.2 The Director, Strategy provided an overview of the regulated sectors that may be considered for future reporting initiatives. These included water-only companies (WOCs), waste management companies, and energy providers.
- 4.3 The board deliberated on the intended objectives of implementing reporting mechanisms for specific sectors, and discussed the potential benefits of increased transparency, accountability, and sector-wide performance insights.
- 4.4 The board examined the feasibility of introducing reporting schemes across diverse sectors. It was noted that sectoral differences, and intra-sector variances, would require tailored approaches and control strategies to ensure effectiveness and relevance, given the degree of diversity within sectors.
- 4.5 The board considered the resource requirements associated with establishing and maintaining new reporting frameworks, the cost-benefit rationale and long-term sustainability of such initiatives.
- 4.6 The board discussed the 'do nothing' approach and explored whether that would be appropriate.
- 4.7 The board noted existing collaborative arrangements with the large operators in the waste sector; that criminal entities also operated in the waste sector and would be unaffected by public reporting; and that regular operators sought stronger advocacy to distinguish their practices from those of non-compliant actors.
- 4.8 The board discussed whether the Chief Regulator's Report could be utilised further as a vehicle for providing sector insights.
- 4.9 The board discussed the implications of introducing new reporting schemes, whether public reporting would incentivise improved behaviours, and alternative approaches such as awareness campaigns.
- 4.10 The board thanked the team and noted they would further explore the various options and return for discussion next year.
- 4.11 **Action:** Secretariat to add a follow up discussion on 'A new approach to reporting on regulated sectors' to the Forward Programme for 2026.

#### **Item 5: EA2030: Implementation**

- 5.1 Laura Phillips, Senior Advisor, Strategy team joined the meeting.

- 5.2 The Director, Strategy updated the board on the embedding of the EA2030 strategy within the organisation, and of work underway to embed the new way of operating to deliver the strategy, focusing on brand, culture and communications.
- 5.3 The board discussed the use of the performance framework as a tool to drive and sustain behavioural change, ensuring that these behaviours are not only understood but consistently demonstrated and evaluated.
- 5.4 The board discussed the importance of clearly articulating how the strategy was being delivered to ensure alignment and shared understanding across all levels of the organisation.
- 5.5 The board discussed engagement and induction to ensure all colleagues understand the strategy and their role within it. This approach should be sustained throughout the strategy's duration to maintain clarity, momentum, and alignment.
- 5.6 The board discussed fostering a sense of ownership and alignment with the strategy, the need for all staff to see the strategy as their own, to bring it to life in their daily work, and how the organisation would work as one team to implement it. The recruitment process should clearly communicate this expectation to all new starters especially at leadership level.
- 5.7 The board discussed embedding the strategy across the organisation through consistent measures that promote shared standards and visible leadership, exemplifying how to lead by example and uphold the same high standards internally that we expect of those we regulate.
- 5.8 The board discussed the importance of defining a clear vision of success as the strategy was embedded, to ensure that its impacts were visible, measurable, and meaningful to all those served by the organisation.

## **Item 6: Strategic Communications**

- 6.1 Tony Kluth joined the meeting. The Executive Director, Strategy Transformation and Assurance introduced the item.
- 6.2 Deputy Director Communications provided background on the challenges (and their root causes) of the communications corporate service offering.
- 6.3 The board noted that Defra Group Communications is undergoing a restructure, but that a proposed new approach to managing the EA's external reputation and media presence has been devised which would deliver key benefits to the organisation.
- 6.4 The board discussed the refreshed communications strategy and its focus on brand cohesion, improved performance within the existing service model, and enhanced reputation through consistent messaging.

- 6.5 The board discussed the proposed brand refresh, including its alignment with the organisation's strategic identity and the use of the term 'guardian' to personify its role. The board noted plans to implement the refreshed brand through tools developed by the Communications team to ensure consistent representation throughout the organisation.
- 6.6 The board welcomed the collaborative approach underpinning the refreshed communications strategy and its delivery.
- 6.7 The board was supportive of the proposals to initially focus on the 5 areas identified to improve performance to the communications service, and for a future focus on the remaining 4 elements thereafter.
- 6.8 **Action:** Secretariat to add a follow up discussion on the Communications Strategy to the Forward Programme for 2026.

## **Item 7: AOB, forward programme, review of meeting, and date of next meeting**

### **Any other business**

- 7.1 The Executive Director, Local Operations provided an update on the 44<sup>th</sup> Plenary of the European Environmental Protection Agencies (EPA) meeting which she attended as deputy for the Chief Executive.
- 7.2 No other business was raised.

### **Date of next meeting**

- 7.3 The date of the next meeting was noted as 17 December 2025, to be held in 2 Marsham Street.

### **Forward Programme**

- 7.4 **Action:** Secretariat to add a discussion on NGO relationship management to the Forward Programme for 2026.
- 7.5 **Action:** Secretariat to ensure adequate time be held during February and March 2026 Board meetings for discussion on Independent Water Review following the White Paper.

### **Review of the meeting**

- 7.6 The Board reviewed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 14:35.