Minutes of the board meeting held on Thursday 7 May 2026 at 2 Marsham Street and via MS Teams

Present

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

In attendance

Philip Duffy	Chief Executive
Kate Atkinson	Director, Strategy
Tamara Bruck	Executive Director, Strategy Transformation and Assurance
Sarah Chare	Executive Director, Local Operations
Caroline Douglass	Executive Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Clare Jeffreys	Director, Finance
Chris Davis	Deputy Director, Communications
Laura Milton	Director, Legal and Audit Services
John Leyland	Executive Director, Environment and Business
Verity Zurita	Deputy Director, Governance, Government Relations and Private Office
Sebastian Catovsky	Defra Group Director, Floods and Water
Corry McDiarmid	Board and Executive Governance Manager
Derry Gallagher	Board and Executive Governance Advisor

Item 3

Adam Hammerton	FCRM Advisor, Solent and South Downs

Item 5

John Russon	Director, Portfolio Management Assurance and Commercial
Dan Bond	Deputy Director, Portfolio Management
Drew Oram	Manager, Portfolio Management

Apologies

David Hill	Defra Director General, Strategy and Water

Item 1: Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Apologies

1.1 All attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were noted from David Hill.

Declarations of interest

1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2: Hot Topics

Chief Executive

2.1 The board noted that the Director for Incident Management, Operational Risk and Resilience was acting as Senior Responsible Officer for the review of the organisation’s security posture. Updates will be provided to the board in the coming months. The board also noted the reclassification of certain assets as critical infrastructure.

2.2 The board noted that the pay remit has not yet been issued, that engagement with trade unions is ongoing, and that the business plan is being finalised alongside organisational changes within the Transformation portfolio.

2.3 The board noted the establishment of a new Investment Committee to strengthen governance.

Strategy Transformation and Assurance

2.4 The board noted an update on business continuity arrangements in response to ongoing geopolitical instability in the Middle East, including that coordination mechanisms and contingency plans are in place and the position is being closely monitored, with no material operational impact, and a measured approach maintained alongside ongoing staff engagement.

2.5 The board noted the simplification of Declarations of Interest reporting, which has improved staff engagement, compliance and management oversight; welcomed external recognition of the Contact Centre’s planning capability; and noted the continuing focus on health, safety and wellbeing.

Flood and Coastal Risk Management

2.6 The board noted that the capital programme met its targets on time and within budget, delivering protection to more properties than planned, and recognised this as a significant achievement at the close of the programme period. It also noted the commencement of the new programme, including updated guidance and funding arrangements, with delivery challenges being actively managed in the context of cost pressures.

2.7 The board noted the appointment of a new Thames Delivery Director to strengthen delivery and long-term management of the Thames estuary; and welcomed national recognition of the organisation's infrastructure teams for their work in reducing carbon across projects.

Environment and Business

2.8 The board noted an update on media coverage and ongoing communications activity, including continuing engagement to support public understanding of the organisation's role.

2.9 The board discussed progress in the waste reform programme and the expected publication of an Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) review of historical performance of waste sector inspections, with preparations in place to respond to media or political pressure. The board noted that improvements to systems, governance and operational practice have been made and continue, alongside work to strengthen consistency, transparency and assurance.

2.10 The board noted ongoing work to review regulatory structures, including in collaboration with the Office for Nuclear Regulation, and that a further update will be brought to a future meeting.

Local Operations

2.11 The board noted an early indication of strong year-end performance, with improved delivery against key measures compared to the previous year, subject to final validation. It also noted successful cross-organisational delivery of key programmes.

2.12 The board noted ongoing engagement with external stakeholders, including key partners, alongside participation in forthcoming events to support growth and investment priorities.

2.13 The board noted progress in operational initiatives, including a national waste campaign and continued focus on organisational capability and recruitment in key leadership roles.

Finance

2.14 The board noted the provisional year-end financial position, including underspends within both resource and capital budgets. Lessons learned and actions to strengthen in-year financial management and pipeline planning will be brought back to the board.

2.15 The board received an update on preparation of the draft Annual Report and Accounts (ARA), noting good progress, improved audit processes and no significant issues identified to date, and requested the inclusion of year-on-year comparisons to provide greater context.

2.16 **Decision: The board decided** that further work was required on the preparation of the draft Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) before approval and requested revised arrangements for review and sign-off.

Communications

2.17 The board noted the importance of a proactive communications approach, including increased use of digital and social media to ensure the organisation's work and impact are clearly communicated. It was noted that continued emphasis will be placed on clear, consistent messaging and maintaining visibility of operational delivery across priority areas.

2.18 The board noted that further updates on communications strategy and progress will be provided at a future meeting.

Item 3: River Arun Annual Report and Accounts

3.1 Adam Hammerton joined the meeting.

3.2 The Director of Finance provided an overview of the approval requested regarding the River Arun Internal Drainage Board's (IDB) governance and accountability return for 2025/26.

3.3 **Decision:** The Environment Agency Board, acting pursuant to the legal functions of the River Arun IDB Board:

- **approved** the Annual Governance Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026 and **authorised** the Chair to sign the annual governance statement on behalf of the River Arun Internal Drainage Board.

- **approved** the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, certified by the Responsible Financial Officer, and **authorised** the Chair to sign the accounting statements on behalf of the River Arun Internal Drainage Board.

Item 4: Efficiencies Plan 2026/27

4.1 Chief Executive introduced the item.

4.2 The board received an overview of organisational development over recent years, noting growth aligned to expanded responsibilities and increased delivery expectations. The board recognised that this, alongside wider public sector efficiency expectations, has informed the development of a refreshed approach focused on modernisation, improved productivity and long-term sustainability.

4.3 The board noted that efficiencies are expected to be delivered over a multi-year period through a combination of transformation activity, process optimisation and workforce management approaches. It was further noted that work will continue to refine and develop the approach as it progresses.

4.4 The board discussed communications, recognising potential sensitivities and the importance of clear and appropriately managed messaging, and supported the proposed direction. The board will continue to monitor progress.

Item 5: FCRM Allocation Principles and Prioritisation

5.1 John Russon, Dan Bond and Drew Oram joined the meeting.

5.2 The board received an update on revised FCRM allocation principles and the prioritisation approach for the Investment Programme from 2027/28 onwards.

5.3 The board noted that the proposals have been considered by the FCRM Committee and shared with Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) and other stakeholders, with further feedback to be incorporated following additional stakeholder input. As a result, a final proposal was not presented for approval at this meeting.

5.4 The board discussed the emerging approach, noting its alignment with updated policy, value for money and wider considerations, and the need to balance a range of national and local factors.

5.5 The board discussed the treatment of legacy schemes developed under previous approaches, noting that some may not fully align with the new framework. The board noted that this area is under review to determine proportionate next steps, and that a balanced approach will be taken, reflecting schemes' stage of development and current priorities, while seeking to maintain confidence and deliver appropriate benefits where possible.

5.6 **Decision: The board decided** that approval of the final allocation principles and prioritisation approach should be considered once all feedback has been received and incorporated and that approval will be undertaken by the Chair, in consultation with a subset of members, at a later date.

5.7 **Action:** Secretariat to schedule a meeting for the Chair and relevant members to consider the final proposals once ready.

Item 6: 2027/28 Board and Committee dates for approval

6.1 The board noted the suggested schedule of Board and Committee dates and locations for 2027/28 meetings and 2028/29 meetings.

6.2 **Decision: The board approved** the dates for 2026 Board and Committee meetings.

Item 7: AOB, date of next meeting and review of meeting

7.1 The board noted that formal approval had been granted by the Secretary of State to recruit 4 new board members.

7.2 No other business was raised.

Dates of next meetings

7.3 The dates of the next meetings were noted:

- Q4 Performance board meeting on 24 June 2026 to be held at Thames Barrier Conference Centre;
- Board Call on 12 August 2026.

Review of meeting

7.4 The board reviewed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:35