



Board Meeting

Minutes of the **Natural England** Board meeting held on 15 July 2026

Attending Board members

Dr Tony Juniper	Chair
Mark Tufnell	
Professor Clare Fitzsimmons	
Rachel Danemann	
Alastair Leake	
Professor Lynn Dicks	
Cynthia Alers	
James Scott	

Executive Team

Marian Spain	Chief Executive (and ex-officio Board member)
David Lowe	Director, Business Management and Managing the Organisation (deputising for Kirsty Carter-Brown)
Peter Brotherton	Director, Science (deputising for Sallie Bailey)
Oliver Harmar	Chief Officer, Strategy
Sarah Zielicka Edwards	Chief Officer, Legal, Governance and External Affairs
Navroza Ladha	Chief Officer, Legal, Governance and External Affairs
Alan Law	Chief Officer, Operations

Defra / NE Directors

Sally Randall	Director (Defra), Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mike Cuthbert	Director, Planning and Performance (item 4)
Cheryl Willis	Director, Science & Evidence portfolio (item 4)
Joe Hillier	Director, Analysis (item 4)
John Holmes	Director, Strategy (item 4)
Adelle Rowe	Director, External Affairs, Board and Executive Services
Amanda Craig	Director, Resilient Landscapes (item 6)
Rachel Fraser	Director, Finance

Apologies

Kate Gibson	Deputy Chair
Sallie Bailey	Chief Officer, Science
Kirsty Carter-Brown	Chief Officer, Business Management

Item 1 Welcome from the Chair and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Board, Executive and guests to the 134th Board meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Kate Gibson, Kirsty Carter-Brown and Sallie Bailey.
- 1.3 No changes were noted for the Register of Interests:

Item 2 Review of 20 May Board meeting Minutes and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The Board approved the Minutes and Matters Arising, subject to a minor typographical amendment.

Item 3 Chief Executive's Report

- 3.1 Marian Spain presented an overview of the significant and timely issues that had arisen since the last meeting.
- 3.2 In discussion, the Board welcomed the Chief Executive Officer's update and requested further information on the following matters:
 - an update through a Board webinar on Landscape Recovery and
 - a revised timetable for the Nature Restoration Fund.

Action: a revised timetable for the Nature Restoration Fund, setting out who will be speaking to whom, including handling plan. Brad Tooze and Oliver Harmar.

Item 4 Strategy Implementation update

- 5.1 The purpose of the Strategy Implementation update was to provide the Board with an overview of progress on the changes to NE culture, structures and processes that will enable NE to deliver its outcomes.
- 5.2 The Board was asked to note progress and to feedback on:
 - Evaluation progress and action taken on findings
 - Progress on the Critical Reforms that are driving change
 - Efficiency programme
- 5.3 The Board noted the importance of tracking progress through performance reporting, self-evaluation and learning loops to build staff confidence. The Board discussed the need for clear evaluation in demonstrating tangible change and emerging patterns, including opportunities to identify outputs and areas for improvement and understanding the impact of the investment.

The Board emphasised the need for effective staff engagement, clear tracking of progress and the use of evidence to support discussions with Ministers.

The Board noted the need for a clear plan to identify efficiencies, including resource tracking, potential cash release, and opportunities for increasing income generation, such as Biodiversity Net Gain.

Item 5 NExCo Risk Appetite

- 6.1 The Board considered the Risk Appetites identified, were content with the categorising but need further assurance of alignment with the Strategy. The Board agreed that it would return for discussion by webinar followed by a short correspondence paper.

Action: Consider the Risk Appetite in line with the Strategy and how this aligns with the Strategic goals, bring back to Board as a webinar and a short correspondence paper for approval. Oliver Harmar and Amanda Wolfe

Item 6 Governance Approvals

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Programme Approval

- 6.1 The Board approved the programme in principal and requested this return through correspondence with a final plan for publication.

Action: Return to Board through correspondence with a final plan for publication. Oliver Harmar and Amanda Craig.

- 6.2 The Board agreed the following engagement actions:
- develop a communications campaign to raise the public profile of SSSIs; and
 - engage with Defra on the proposed SSSI pipeline.

Financial Scheme of Delegation

- 6.3 The Board approved NE participation in the Three Dales Landscape Recovery Scheme to support long-term, landscape-scale nature recovery at Ingleborough National Nature Reserve.

Sub Committee update

- 6.4 The Board noted the recent meeting topics.

Health and Safety Policy amendments

- 6.5 The Board approved the changes without any amendments.