



Board Meeting Minutes: 9 July 2026 [Public]

Location: Newcastle/Hybrid

MMO Board

Les Philpott (LP), Chair
Tony Delahunty (TD), Deputy Chair
Rob Wilson (RW), RemCom Chair
Mark Ripley (MR), ARAC Chair
Judith Petts (JP)
Terry Jones (TJ)
Laura Dance (LD)

MMO Executive Leadership Team

Elysia McCaffrey (EM), CEO
Paul Errington (PE), Acting Director of Finance and Resources
Pete Redfern (PR), Acting Director of Planning and Change (item 6 only)
Stephanie Campbell (SC), Leading Director, Regulatory Reform (inc. Corry and Hancock responses) (item 8 only)

Additional Attendees, by invitation

Julia Templeton (JT), Governance Lead and Advisor to Chair
Gareth Baynham-Hughes (GBH), Director of Marine and Fisheries, Defra
Mark Pendlington (MP), Chair, Cefas (item 7 only)
Neil Hornby (NH), Chief Executive, Cefas (item 7 only)
Toby Nation (TN), Director of Environmental Quality, Infrastructure and Planning, Defra (item 8 only)
[Redacted], Environmental Quality, Infrastructure and Planning Team, Defra (item 8 only)
[Redacted], Environmental Quality, Infrastructure and Planning Team, Defra (item 8 only)

Apologies

Peter Judge (PJ), PIC Chair
Pete Clark (PC), Director of Operations

Governance and Accountability

1 Welcome and Introductory Remarks/Declaration of Interests

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Board recorded its thanks to Michelle Willis for her significant contribution to the organisation, formerly as Director of Finance and Resources, Acting CEO and most recently as Chief Strategy Officer. Members noted their appreciation for her commitment to the organisation and wished her well for the future.
- 1.3 JP declared her continued involvement with Marine Science UK as a member of the Executive Committee. The declaration was duly noted and recorded.
- 1.4 It was confirmed that the following items had been deferred for discussion at the September Board Meeting;
 - HR and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, allowing the annual People Survey to conclude
 - Planning and Investment Committee (PIC) Chair Briefing, allowing the PIC Chair to attendIt was confirmed that Quarter One 2026/27 assurance papers would be provided to the Board over the summer in keeping with standard reporting timescales.

2 Previous Minutes and Actions

- 2.1 The minutes of the 14 May 2026 meeting were approved as an accurate record without amendment.
- 2.2 The Board reviewed outstanding actions. Members discussed a number of actions which remain ongoing and agreed that consideration should be given to closing actions which have transitioned into business-as-usual activity and replacing them with updated actions where appropriate.

3 Committee Briefings

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 3.1 MR provided an update on recent ARAC activity, following the June meeting.
- 3.2 The Committee noted ongoing improvements in principal risk reporting and discussed the need for further work to articulate organisational risk appetite and risk tolerances more clearly.
- 3.3 ARAC particularly considered a deep dive into MMO legal capacity. Members recognised progress in understanding the risk and the actions being taken to manage immediate pressures. It was agreed that longer-term solutions will be required to address underlying causes and support delivery of organisational objectives.
- 3.4 Discussion also focused on the importance of embedding legal expertise earlier within organisational decision-making processes. Members recognised the need to balance demand, capacity and organisational culture while supporting more proactive legal engagement.
- 3.5 ARAC also reviewed the completed 2025/26 internal audit programme and discussed work underway to strengthen clarification of the statutory framework and the wider control environment.
- 3.6 The Board recognised ARAC's continued focus on assurance, risk and governance matters and thanked ARAC and the Executive for their significant work to onboard RSM to the internal audit programme with a view to improving in-year assurances in 2026/27.

Executive and Policy Briefings

4 CEO Briefing

- 4.1 EM provided an update on organisational activity and emerging priorities, focusing initially on legal risk, where it was reported that MMO continue to flag funding requirements with the Department for Transport in support of Harbour Revision Orders (HROs).
- 4.2 More broadly, the Board discussed opportunities to introduce legal advice at earlier stages of organisational decision-making. Members supported efforts to encourage earlier engagement with legal colleagues. The Board agreed to support EM by holding them to account to embed this new way of working.
- 4.3 The Board received an update on the MMO Lighthouse Programme, including workstreams relating to people, regulatory reform, digital transformation and organisational effectiveness. Members welcomed the progress made to date and noted the positive level of engagement across the organisation. The Board recognised the significant effort involved in progressing transformation activity alongside delivery of operational responsibilities.
- 4.4 Updates were also provided on implementation of Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS), the Fish Export Service (FES), stakeholder engagement activity and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Members noted ongoing engagement with stakeholders regarding recent activism affecting MPAs and welcomed actions being taken to

strengthen relationships across the sector.

- 4.5 The Board welcomed the successful outcome of recent fee increase discussions and recognised the contribution of colleagues involved in securing approval.
- 4.6 In the context of the Octopus Bloom, members discussed the importance of horizon scanning and future planning in relation to changing marine conditions, environmental pressures and emerging regulatory challenges. The Board agreed that consideration of future ocean risks should remain a key area of focus.
- 4.7 There was a further discussion to the MMO's external reputation and the importance of increasing understanding of the organisation's contribution through stronger communications and stakeholder engagement.

Action

MMOB-66 **Future Ocean Risk – MMO Strategy:** Executive to devise an operational plan to accompany the MMO strategy, ensuring future ocean risk is a key area of focus

5 Defra Policy Briefing

- 5.1 GBH provided an overview of the current policy landscape and recent developments within Defra.
- 5.2 The Board noted that recent Ministerial changes have created uncertainty regarding delivery timelines for a number of policy decisions, including MPAs and surface surveillance options. Positively, MMO have already had the opportunity to meet with the Minister who has commenced a programme of Fisheries visits.
- 5.3 Updates were provided on marine planning, fisheries policy and the UK-EU reset. There was discussion on Marine Spatial Prioritisation (MSPri) where the Board advocated for roles and responsibilities between Defra, MMO and The Crown Estate (TCE) and the scope of the programme to be clearly defined to benefit external audiences.
- 5.4 Defra's response to the EFRA Committee Report on Resetting the Relationship with the Fishing Industry was also discussed.
- 5.5 The Board welcomed the update and noted the importance of maintaining close engagement with Defra colleagues during the period of change.

Strategy and Stakeholders

6 MMO Strategy Reset

- 6.1 The Board considered the MMO Strategy Reset.
- 6.2 Members welcomed the overall direction of the strategy and recognised the significant work undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team and supporting colleagues in developing the refreshed document. The Board considered the document to be a strong and positive foundation for the next phase of organisational development.
- 6.3 The Board discussed opportunities to simplify language, improve clarity and strengthen references to organisational effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 6.4 The Board supported the proposed approach and agreed that final amendments should be incorporated prior to publication and launch. As the Board were pleased with the substance of the strategy, there was agreement to delegate the final approval of the document to LP as Chair, who will consider for approval on behalf of the full Board. Following this, MMO will engage the Fisheries Minister.

Decision

MMOB-29D **MMO Strategy Refresh – 2032:** The Board approved the reset strategy subject to minor amends to simplify language in areas. It was agreed that the Executive would take forward the requirement to simplify content where identified with final approval delegated to the Board Chair.

7 MMO & CEFAS Spotlight

- 7.1 The Board welcomed MP and NH and thanked them for their attendance and contribution to the discussion.
- 7.2 Members discussed opportunities to strengthen collaboration between MMO and Cefas across marine planning, fisheries management, scientific evidence, climate adaptation and future ocean risks.
- 7.3 The Board noted the strong strategic alignment between the two organisations and welcomed the positive and constructive relationship that has developed. Members expressed support for increased collaboration, recognising the benefits of knowledge sharing, secondments and joint consideration of emerging marine challenges.
- 7.4 Discussion focused on horizon scanning, the evolving marine environment and opportunities to future proof regulatory decisions through improved collaboration and evidence-sharing. A further MMO visit to CEFAS Headquarters/RV Endeavour in Lowestoft was considered with this in mind.
- 7.5 The Board welcomed the discussion and supported continued development of the strategic relationship. It was suggested that a Future Ocean Risks Commission (or similar) is established to support the embedding of long-term

thinking in regulatory decision making.

Action

MMOB-67 **Future Ocean Risks – Commission:** EM and NH to consider a Future Ocean Risks Commission, or similar, to embed long term thinking across regulatory decision making in our marine environment.

8 Corry and Hancock Review

- 8.1 The Board received an update on MMO's contribution to the Corry and Hancock Reviews, including work associated with the Lead Environmental Regulator (LER) Programme. Defra colleagues joined the Board to present the LER approach to its pilots, transition to BAU and rollout; the presentation particularly focussed on the early findings of an external evaluation which will complete in 2027.
- 8.2 Members welcomed progress and discussed the importance of understanding outcomes for developers, regulators, communities and wider stakeholders.
- 8.3 The Board encouraged continued focus on evaluation, value for money and capturing learning throughout programme delivery so that this can be captured and embedded in real time.
- 8.4 Future reporting should continue to demonstrate the outcomes and benefits arising from regulatory reform activity.

9 People and Remuneration Committee Proposal

- 9.1 The Board considered proposed changes to the Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference.
- 9.2 Members discussed the proposed expansion of remit and the benefits of broadening the Committee's focus to provide strategic oversight of organisational people matters.
- 9.3 The Board agreed the Committee should remain strategic in nature and discussed the importance of maintaining clear distinctions between responsibilities held by the Committee, ARAC and the Executive.
- 9.4 Members also discussed governance arrangements, success measures and reporting arrangements between the Committee and the Board.
- 9.5 The Board supported the proposed changes, subject to amendments discussed during the meeting.

Decision

MMOB-30D **People and Remuneration Committee:** The Board agreed to expand the Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference, the following amends were agreed;
Name of Committee: People and Remuneration Committee
Expansion of Remit: To support and assure the MMO People Strategy, ensuring the Committee does not duplicate the work of the ARAC in assuring risks related to the workforce
Delegation of Functions: To receive full delegation from the MMO Board to determine SCS Pay Remit, End of Year Awards and In-Year awards, in keeping with Cabinet Office guidance. It was agreed that the RemCom should report its decision making to the Board periodically.
Attendance and Quoracy: Head of HR and Head of Legal to be included, Board Chair to have an open invitation to attend. Quoracy requirements (the Chair plus one RemCom Member) to be made explicit.
Other: It was requested that Committee Terms of Reference are updated to confirm that a member of the Board should sit on MMO SCS Recruitment Panels, and that a paragraph is added to the ToRs to clarify the strategic focus of the Committee, ensuring it does not become operational in nature.

Strategic Finance and Commercial

10 Business Planning and Savings and Efficiencies

- 10.1 PE presented an update on business planning, savings and efficiencies.
- 10.2 The Board discussed workforce impacts, budget pressures, recruitment restrictions and the potential impact on organisational capability and delivery.
- 10.3 Members noted that financial risks for 2026/27 currently appear manageable but discussed ongoing uncertainty relating to future financial settlements and the position beyond 2026/27.
- 10.4 The Board thanked the Executive Leadership Team for the work undertaken to develop and refine the proposals. Members recognised the significant challenge presented by the current financial environment and the uncertainty associated with future funding settlements.
- 10.5 The Board placed particular emphasis on the importance of protecting critical organisational capability, specialist expertise and workforce resilience whilst delivering efficiencies and organisational change, it was agreed that the Board should reconvene at the end of August 2026 to give further consideration to funding risks in 2027/28. It

was further agreed that the People and Remuneration Committee should be tasked to provide assurance to the Board regarding workforce resilience and capability within future budget constraints.

Actions

- MMOB-68** **Extraordinary Board – Savings and Efficiencies:** Secretariat to arrange an extraordinary Board session at the end of August 2026 to consider the funding risks identified for 2027/28.
- MMOB-69** **Workforce Resilience and Capability:** People and RemCom to provide assurance to the Board regarding workforce resilience and capability within future budget constraints.

10.6

11 At Sea Surveillance – Offshore Patrol Vessels Contract Renewal

- 11.1 The Board considered proposals relating to offshore patrol vessel arrangements. Members noted that the current contract expires on 31 October 2026 and that a decision on any extension must be taken by 31 July 2026 to avoid a break in service. The Board also noted that approval was required under the MMO Scheme of Delegations as the value of the proposed extension exceeds £1 million.
- 11.2 [Redacted]
- 11.3 The 12 month extension to MMO’s contract with Sentinel Marine was agreed by the full Board [Redacted].

Decision

- MMOB-31D** **Offshore Patrol Vessels:** The Board approved a 12-month contract extension [Redacted].

Meeting Close

12 Meeting Close, Forward Look and AOB

- 12.1 The Chair led a review of the meeting, with members remarking positively on its content. EM offered CEO engagement with Board Members in between meetings to support member engagement outside of the schedule.
- 12.2 The Board reflected positively on its engagement with Cefas and agreed that future Board visits should include opportunities to observe operational delivery and engage directly with operational colleagues and partner organisations.
- 12.3 Members noted that any arrangements for further Ministerial engagement following upcoming Government changes would continue to be supported through established departmental processes.
- 12.4 The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled for 16 September 2026 in Portsmouth, subject to operational arrangements, and agreed that a subsequent meeting would be held in York on 12 November 2026.
- 12.5 Members welcomed the quality of papers, discussion and challenge throughout the meeting. The Chair thanked attendees for their contributions and noted forthcoming discussions on savings and efficiencies.
- 12.6 The Chair closed the meeting.