Trade Remedies Authority

TRA Board meeting minutes (public version)

Date: 29 April 2026

Time: 13:00

Venue: TRA Office / MS Teams

Members:

Nick Baird — Chair

Jessica Blakely/Carmen Suarez — Chief Executive

John Alty — Non-executive Director

Guita Blake — Non-executive Director

Clare Brodie — Legal and Compliance Director

Patricia Gallan — Non-executive Director

John Hughes — Non-executive Director

Adam Marshall — Senior Independent Director

Steve O'Donoghue — Director of Corporate Services

ExCo:

Analysis and Verification Director — Trade Remedies Authority

Policy, Strategy and Engagement Director — Trade Remedies Authority

Investigations Delivery Director — Trade Remedies Authority

DBT:

Director, Trade Defence — Department for Business & Trade

In attendance:

Private Secretary to the Chief Executives — Trade Remedies Authority

Head of Governance and Business Services — Trade Remedies Authority

Board Governance and Secretariat Manager — Trade Remedies Authority

Presenters:

Item 7: Head of Data and Monitoring — Trade Remedies Authority

Item 8: Commercial and Contract Manager — Trade Remedies Authority

Item 9: Head of Reconsiderations and Compliance — Trade Remedies Authority

Item 9: External Independent Reviewer

Item 13: Head of People — Trade Remedies Authority

1. Welcome, apologies and declaration of interest

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. There were no apologies and no new declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of last meeting and actions arising

The Board approved the minutes of the meetings held on 25 February and 9 April 2026.

The Board noted the action tracker.

3. Chair's report

The Chair highlighted the combined challenge of constrained budgets, a rising and more complex caseload, and expectations to deliver investigations faster.

The Chair noted issues relating to TRS, which were considered later in the meeting.

4. Chief Executive's report

The Board received an update from the Chief Executive on key priorities and areas of concern, including the increased focus on agility following engagement with the Department for Business and Trade.

The Board noted the continuing financial pressures and the need to improve core financial management, which would be a priority for the new Head of Finance.

The Board noted the target to launch TRS no later than 2 July to remain within budget, and that delivery was being monitored closely.

The Board noted ongoing efficiencies work, including process and capability improvements, invest-to-save opportunities, and potential policy changes being explored with the Department for Business and Trade.

The Board noted the strategic risk update.

5. Political environment check-in

The Board received an update on the political and external environment, including discussion of the steel measure and its potential effect on the TRA's caseload.

6. ARAC report

The Board received an update from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on its areas of focus for the year: risk, finance and efficiencies, commercial, and digital and technology, alongside standard assurance activity.

The Board noted progress on assurance mapping, forecasting and tracking efficiencies, commercial capability, contract management and MOUs.

The Board discussed matters relating to cyber and TRS. The Chair requested that the Board be kept updated on the outcome of this work and receive additional updates on TRS as needed.

7. 2026–27 budget allocations, case demand and efficiency outlook

The Board considered modelling on case demand, resourcing and the efficiency trajectory required to operate within a tightening budget envelope.

The Board noted that forecast case volumes were broadly similar to business planning assumptions, but with a different mix and more complex and novel case types. The Board encouraged continued monitoring of volume and weighted complexity.

The Board agreed to organise a short session with the non-executive directors to explore more radical options and noted initial thinking on prioritisation principles.

8. Approval of the surge resourcing contract

The Board considered the proposed contract to provide contingent capacity in the event of a significant caseload surge and noted that the contract would be zero cost unless activated.

The Board approved the surge resourcing contract, noting that use of the contract was contingent on additional Department for Business and Trade funding. The Board agreed that it must be notified of any activation of the surge approach.

9. Procedural improvements

The Board noted the work taking place on procedural improvements.

10. Case update

The Board received an update on live casework.

11. Performance report

The Board reviewed year-end performance reporting and noted a mixed position across measures, with the balance of green and amber ratings consistent with stretching targets.

The Board encouraged continued transparency through “comply or explain” narrative and noted that future performance reporting, including all KPIs, should be brought earlier in the agenda.

12. TRA Plan Approval

The Board discussed the draft TRA Plan and agreed that it appropriately set strategic direction while recognising uncertainty.

The Board approved the TRA Plan for publication on 30 April 2026, with final sign-off delegated to the Chief Executive.

13. People Insights: How are our people

The Board discussed the People Survey results and noted strong engagement in the context of organisational change and high delivery pressure.

The Board noted the strategic importance of retaining specialist capability and reducing churn, and noted concerns regarding limited flexibility on pay due to Cabinet Office guidelines.

14. Any other business

The Board noted the forward workplan.

15. Meeting close

The meeting closed at 16:31.