



Office for Environmental Protection

Minutes

Extraordinary meeting of the Board

Thursday 16 March 12pm

MS Teams

Members

Malcolm Beatty OBE	Board Member
Richard Greenhous	Chief of Staff
Julie Hill MBE	Board Member
Professor Dan Laffoley	Board Member
Dr Paul Leinster CBE	Board Member
Professor Richard Macrory CBE	Board Member
Natalie Prosser	Chief Executive
Dame Glenys Stacey	Chair

OEP Attendees

Peter Ashford	General Counsel
REDACTED	Business Planning and Analysis Officer (item 23.30)
REDACTED	Senior Projects Officer (item 23.31)
Mike Fox	Head of Communications and Strategic Relations
Joe Hayden	Head of Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement
Andy Lester	Head of Business Strategy and Planning
Professor Robbie McDonald	Chief Insights Officer
REDACTED	Business and Governance Officer (Secretariat)

23.29 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

The Board received apologies from the Head of Communications and Strategic Relations, the Chief Regulatory Officer and the Head of Finance and Corporate Services. The Head of Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement attended as delegate for the Chief Regulatory Officer.

There were no new declarations of interest.

Richard Macrory, Paul Leinster and Julie Hill have previously declared an interest as former employees or Board members for the Environment Agency, in respect to items relating to *this section has been redacted as it relates to information recorded*

for the purposes of OEP's functions relating to investigations and enforcement. The relevant item at this meeting does not relate to the Environment Agency. Having taken advice, the Chair decided that there is no need for the Board members to recuse themselves from the discussion.

23.30 Business Planning

The Board thanked officers for the work on the business plan. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board considered and commented on the thematic issues proposed to be prioritised in next year's business plan. The three main thematic priorities have been identified as: *this section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.* It is proposed that the main priorities be underpinned by four other themes which will provide foundation work for the year ahead: *this section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board broadly endorsed the approach. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.* It was assured that that the plan is adaptable to changing circumstances and the mechanisms are in place to allow for that.

The Board also considered and commented on the key prioritisation choices highlighted in directorate business plans. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.* We could also usefully consider the quality of post implementation reviews.

The Board queried whether we have sufficient capacity for responding to requests for advice from ministers. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board highlighted issues for the Executive to consider affording higher priority. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.* The Board recognised that changes to prioritisation must be resource neutral overall, and final decisions are yet to be made, but it considered that work on the people strategy should not be deprioritised.

The Board noted the level of definition we expect to give to our plans in Y2 and Y3 and encouraged the medium and long-term planning approach. It asked when work on the three main priority areas would likely be complete, making room for other priorities. This is difficult to determine, while we are yet to complete our first investigation or projects to deliver environmental law reports, and gauge if and how each is influential. Broadly speaking, the later into the 3-year period, the more likely our priorities will flex. The Board discussed the advantages of planning some of our work – for example, our approach to scrutiny of environmental improvement plans – over the longer-term, perhaps five years, and for our business planning and priority areas to reflect this. This is the aim.

The Board considered the risks to delivery of the plan, and expenditure of our budget, set out in the analysis section. It commented on the Executive's proposals to mitigate those risks. It queried the reprioritisation of work in-year - *this section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs*. It was assured that the Executive has a monthly review process, and that any relevant reprioritisation will be brought to the Board. The Board appreciated that we need a mix of smaller and larger projects, and flexibility needs to be built into the resourcing accordingly.

This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs. The Board commented that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee could play an assurance role in the mitigation of these risks. ACTION Chief of Staff and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to discuss.

The Board discussed how we could get additional assurance, and government engagement on the plan. Currently the engagement we have with government is centred around Defra, but the Board queried how we engage across government. Developing our approach to cross government engagement is one of the prioritised projects in our plan.

The Board considered the indicative resourcing expected from DAERA, the draft priority of projects proposed for Northern Ireland within the sums indicated and the approach to seeking additional resources in year. The Board noted that there is still work to do to accurately assess the potential impact we can have in Northern Ireland with the funding available, and the extent of additional funding we should bid for.

The Board APPROVED the delegation of interim budget proposals set out at paragraphs 32-36 of the business planning paper.

23.31 Office Premises Lease

The Board received the latest update on progression with signing the lease for our Wildwood office premises. We anticipate that the lease will be ready to sign imminently, but it cannot be signed until we have received and are satisfied with the Licence to Underlet and the Licence to Alter.

The Board AGREED to the proposed amendments to the Financial Scheme of Delegation and the Non-Financial Scheme of Delegation as set out in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the associated paper. ACTION: Head of Business Strategy and Planning to update the annexes to the Delegation Policy accordingly.

The Board AGREED to the Chief Executive's decision to execute the lease, subject to her first being satisfied that the License to Underlet and Licence to Alter are in place and that they meet the OEP's requirements.

The Board queried when we would expect to move into the new office. If the lease is signed by the end of March, the construction supplier will need a four-week mobilisation period, and then 8-10 weeks to complete the work. Our assumption, if the expected timescale is followed, is that we will be able to take up occupation in July.

The executive confirmed that many staff are enthusiastic about the prospect, but there is some uncertainty amongst others. Work is in hand to define the benefits of hybrid working and the return to the office, with the aim of realising the benefits fully.

23.32 Any other business

This section has been redacted as it relates to information recorded for the purposes of OEP's functions relating to investigations and enforcement, it contains information provided in confidence and it contains legally privileged advice.

There was no other business.