Office for Environmental Protection

Paper 26.XX

Minutes

Extraordinary meeting of the Board
Wednesday 10 June 2026
MS Teams

Members

Malcolm Beatty OBE	Board Member
Professor Liz Fisher	Board Member
Dame Helen Ghosh	Chair
Julie Hill MBE	Board Member
Professor Dan Laffoley	Board Member
Dr Paul Leinster CBE	Board Member
Caroline May	Board Member
Natalie Prosser	Chief Executive
Helen Venn	Chief Regulatory Officer

OEP Attendees

Richard Greenhous	Chief of Staff
Joe Hayden	Head of Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement (item 26.34)
Angel Lai	Head of Finance and Corporate Services
Andy Lester	Head of Business Strategy and Planning
REDACTED	Senior Investigations Officer (item 26.34)
Professor Robbie McDonald	Chief Insights Officer
REDACTED	Principal Lawyer (item 26.34)
REDACTED	Board Secretary and Private Office Manager
Jamie Sawyer-Merchant	Acting Head of Litigation and Casework
Sophie Tremlin	Lawyer (item 26.34)

26.33 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Caroline May. There were no new declarations of interest.

26.34 Proposed closure of investigation and production of report regarding the investigation into emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid pesticide Cruiser SB in 2023 and 2024

The Board considered the proposed closure of the investigation into emergency authorisations of neonicotinoid pesticide Cruiser SB in 2023 and 2024, and the production of the related investigation report. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board noted the proposed conclusion that there had been no failure to comply in respect of the first two grounds set out in the papers. It was noted that this is the first investigation in which we have concluded that there has not been a failure to comply with the law on one of the grounds we have investigated. This should give confidence to public authorities that we are open minded, and will engage with evidence and representations.

The Board considered the report. It judged it should report on the evidence and material provided during the course of the investigation, rather than emphasise discussions.

The Board noted that Defra intended to update its guidance on emergency authorisations. We will continue to monitor future authorisations to assess whether the updated approach is applied correctly. The Board also discussed how monitoring should be positioned in the report and associated communications, and whether the work could be reflected in the Annual Report next year.

The proposed publication timing was noted as the first week of July and it was confirmed that the Board will be made aware of the communications proposals. **ACTION** Head of Communications and Strategic Engagement.

The Board agreed to conclude the investigation and take no further steps under any of our functions in relation to the SoS's failures to comply with environmental law referred to in the papers.

The Board agreed to approve the draft investigation report at Annex A, which has been produced in accordance with section 33(5) of the EA21 subject to its discussion. It agreed to delegate approval of non-material amendments in light of its discussions to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair.

In light of the Board's discussions, the Chief Executive agreed to publish the report, in full, and the Information Notice, on the OEP's website in accordance with the transparency commitments set out in our Enforcement Policy.

26.35 ARAC report to the Board 2025/2026

The Audit and Risk Committee Chair introduced his report, noting the cooperation received from officials and staff, and the actions taken in response to the Committee's decisions. It was noted that a list of deep dives will be added to the list of items considered throughout the reporting period.

The Board welcomed the report, and the work and support of the Committee during the year.

26.36 Annual Report and Accounts 2025/2026

The Board noted that the Annual Report and Accounts process had been completed significantly more quickly than in previous years, which was welcomed as a notable achievement.

The Board discussed the sufficiency statement, noting that there is no objective measure of the level of activity against which funding sufficiency can be assessed. It was agreed that the report should clearly explain the implications of funding constraints, including what the OEP has been able to deliver within the available funding during the year and what has not been possible. This would also help to provide context for the position in the following year, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland. The Board emphasised the importance of setting clear benchmarks against the Corporate Plan, to avoid the assessment of sufficiency being open to interpretation. It was noted that funding may be sufficient for the current year, but this may not be the case in future years. ACTION Head of Business Strategy and Planning to ensure a redrafted sufficiency statement is considered by the ARAC Chair, ahead of presentation to ARAC and the Board

The Board welcomed the wider report as an effective report on the OEP's delivery and achievements during the year. It considered it a fair and balanced report of performance including financial performance.

The team was asked to confirm the number of valid complaints included in the "year in numbers" table and to review that section more broadly.

The report approval timeline was confirmed with its completion to be scheduled before summer parliamentary recess. The ARAC will consider the report again on 29 June, after which the Board will be asked to agree it by electronic business.

26.37 Any other business

This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.