Office for Environmental Protection

Minutes

Meeting of the Board
Wednesday 16 July 2025
MS Teams

Members

Malcolm Beatty OBE	Board Member
Professor Liz Fisher	Board Member
Julie Hill MBE	Board Member
Professor Dan Laffoley	Board Member
Dr Paul Leinster CBE	Board Member
Professor Robbie McDonald	Chief Insights Officer
Natalie Prosser	Chief Executive
Dame Glenys Stacey	Chair

OEP Attendees

Peter Ashford	General Counsel
Mike Fox	Head of Communications and Strategic Relations
Richard Greenhous	Chief of Staff
REDACTED	Principal Investigations Officer (item 25.37)
Angel Lai	Head of Finance and Corporate Services
Andy Lester	Head of Business Strategy and Planning
REDACTED	Principal Procurement and Supplier Officer (item 25.36)
Richard Marsh	Head of IT and Digital Services (item 25.36)
REDACTED	Board Secretary and Private Office Manager
Kate Tandy	Head of Litigation and Casework (item 25.37)
Helen Venn	Chief Regulatory Officer

Observers

David Lambert	Boardroom Apprentice

25.33 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Natalie Prosser and Malcolm Beatty.

There were no new declarations of interest.

Julie Hill and Paul Leinster were recused from item 25.37 owing to the ongoing conflict of interest.

25.34 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from the 4 June meeting were agreed.

The Board noted the matters arising report

25.35 Report of the Chief Executive

The report was introduced by Chief of Staff. It was confirmed that Caroline May and Liz Fisher had begun their terms on the Board on the 1 July and they were both welcomed to their first meeting.

The Board were provided with an update on the EIP report for both England and Northern Ireland. It was confirmed that the Defra's refresh of the EIP for England had been delayed. We continue to engage with Defra in relation to the refresh.

It was noted that preparations are ongoing for the first EIP report in Northern Ireland. The Board discussed the need to consider the approach for the report to ensure the desired response to the report.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy report and Inspections report had been published. It was highlighted that the Inspections report had received very positive engagement and feedback from academic stakeholders, and some international bodies. The Board congratulated the team and highlighted the need for continuing strategic stakeholder engagement for future reports. **ACTION** General Counsel to circulate the feedback received.

The Board were updated on a number of matters connected to our objective for better law, better implemented. It was confirmed that we will respond to Defra's consultation regarding the improvement of the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain. Our oral evidence session at the Court of Appeal had gone well in relation to the Right Community Action case and that the outcome should be handed down before the end of the year. The Cunliffe interim report had been published and the full report is due on Monday 21 July.

The independent review of governance in Northern Ireland has been published, and our advice was both reflected and quoted within the review. Our position statement on good environmental governance will be made publicly available.

The Board were provided an update on our ongoing work in relation to the Planning and Infrastructure bill. It was noted that the updated bill presented a reduction in the degree of regression we had initially reported with more protection, specific outcomes and species now included in the bill.

The content of our letter was considered, and the Board considered the need to still note the regression in environmental protection (whilst acknowledging the positive steps taken) to remain transparent and independent. The Board were made aware of the communication strategy in relation to the letter.

A small project had been agreed within the business plan to consider the implementation of the bill once it has passed.

The Neonatal Care Leave policy had been rolled out in England. The policy doesn't apply to Northern Ireland staff as the legislation does not apply in Northern Ireland but it is hoped it could in the future.

The Board welcomed the news that an independent review had been commissioned as a result of the people survey. The review is to investigate reports of bullying and harassment within the organisation. The results of this review will be fed back to the Board as soon as possible.

The Board were made aware that the advert for the Chair's position had not yet been published.

25.36 End User Computing Contract Approval

The paper was introduced, and the Board queried the sums proposed for the new contract. It was confirmed to the Board that the overall cost reduction in the new contract is owing to an increase in efficiency at Boxxe rather than the previous contract being an overcharge.

The Board highlighted the need to schedule the next round of procurement early enough to ensure all options for the next contract can be considered.

The Board agreed to a financial commitment for this replacement EUC contract of £2.9 million over a four year initial term. It also agreed to a specific delegation to the Chief Executive to approve the contract award to the selected supplier, subject to the contract award not exceeding £2.42 million for a four year initial term. In addition, the Board agreed to a specific delegation to the Chief Executive to approve variations of the contract value with a cumulative total up to and including 20% of the original contract award value. If variations of contract value are required whereby the cumulative total exceeds 20%, Board approval would be requested.

25.37 Investigation Closure

This section has been redacted as it relates to information recorded for the purposes of OEP's functions relating to investigations and enforcement.

25.38 Any other business

There was no other business.