



Minutes

Meeting of the Board

Wednesday 8 July 2026

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Members

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

Neil Emmott	Head of Monitoring Environmental Law and advice
Mike Fox	Head of Communications and Strategic Relations
Helena Gauterin	Head of Environmental Law
Richard Greenhous	Chief of Staff
Angel Lai	Head of Finance and Corporate Services
Andy Lester	Head of Business Strategy and Planning (acting as Board Secretary)

20.40 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Board reflected on the sad news that Board Member Malcolm Beatty had passed away, and on his contribution to the OEP. The Board noted that Malcolm had been instrumental in establishing the OEP in Northern Ireland, was widely respected by staff and stakeholders and would be sorely missed. The Chief Executive had attended the memorial service along with other staff members. It was clear that Malcolm was held in affection by his community.

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

20.41 Minutes, Matters Arising, Items decided by electronic business

The minutes of the meetings of 19 May and 10 June were agreed, and the matters arising noted. The Board questioned progress on reappointment of Board members and emphasised the risks to quoracy of the Board should timely progress not be made.

Since the last meeting, the Board had agreed the Annual Report and Accounts by electronic business.

20.42 Report of the Chief Executive

Our first report on progress in Northern Ireland has been published, with the launch event well attended by stakeholders, albeit with fewer MLAs than we had anticipated. The Minister and Committee Chair each welcomed our report, and there had been solid media interest. Overall, we were pleased with its reception.

We continue to engage in England to improve how we work with Defra on the visibility of progress to inform our report. We have been seeking to move towards a more open and discursive engagement particularly on more complex questions. There is less progress in this regard than we hoped, but dialogue continues.

The Board noted the publication of the Climate Change Committee's reports 'A Well Adapted UK', and its launch event, and on the publication of the Farming Roadmap. It reflected on the need for adaptation to translate across public policy, including for example the Roadmap. There may be a role for the OEP in this respect; to recognise consistently that climate change will demand a raising of ambition, if outcomes are to be secured in the future climate. Current programmes risk being detached from this reality. The Board will have opportunity to discuss these issues at its next meeting.

We continue to invest time to build relationships with those responsible for delivering water reform, and had met with Dame Julia Black and a number of senior officials brought in to deliver the programme. We had discussed key issues for the reforms, including the 'divisibility' of environmental regulation and the regional or catchment tier of planning. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.* The Board noted there are challenges in implementing any bill in this Parliamentary cycle, and that reform must interact with the AMP process for 2029 where there appears to be delay.

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The Board noted progress with our work on by-catch. This is a key reason why Good Environmental Status is not achieved. *This section has been redacted as it relates to information recorded for the purposes of OEP's functions relating to investigations and enforcement.*

The Board commended the submission of evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee, and in relation to the Environment Act. It encouraged each to be published.

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The Board welcomed publication of the framework document, annual report and accounts and that our Northern Ireland funding is confirmed. It commended the efforts of the teams to lay the accounts significantly earlier this year.

The Board was briefed on the consultation in relation to Nutrient Action Programme regulations. It was reminded of the prior consultation and the task and finish group which was set up to consider these issues, independent of the Minister. The proposals for consultation are those which arose from the task and finish group. There are positive

elements, including tightening of the slurry movement regulations, a planned 30% reduction in the phosphorus surplus in agriculture, and a faster review cycle.

We are analysing the proposals. The Board were informed of two potential material issues. The new regulations may be allowing pig and poultry units to operate at a phosphorus surplus, which results in an increase in these units which would add significantly to the environmental damage from nutrient loads.

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

The Board will consider our advice on 2 September. ACTION Head of Analysis to consider how we can best make the Minister aware of our likely areas of concern.

20.43 Any other business

There was no other business