Minutes

Extraordinary meeting of the Board
Wednesday 29 October 2025
MS Teams

Members

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

OEP Attendees

Peter Ashford	General Counsel
Mike Fox	Head of Communications and Strategic Relations
David Hampson	Principal Lawyer (item 25.57)
REDACTED	Team Leader, Scrutiny and Advice (item 25.57)
Angel Lai	Head of Finance and Corporate Services
REDACTED	Legal Administrator (item 25.57)
Professor Robbie McDonald	Chief Insights Officer
REDACTED	Principal Lawyer (item 25.57)
REDACTED	Board Secretary and Private Office Manager
Helen Venn	Chief Regulatory Officer

Observers

David Lambert	Boardroom Apprentice

25.55 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Malcolm Beatty joined the meeting from agenda item 25.58

There were no new declarations of interest.

25.56 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from the 8 October meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising to consider.

25.57 Protected sites on land and in freshwater: Report for England

The Board was presented with the final report and provided with background on the considerations that informed the resulting recommendations. The team acknowledged the valuable contributions from both colleagues and external stakeholders, notably Natural England.

A layered communication plan will be developed to address the needs of various audiences and distribution channels, with the inclusion of an infographic suggested for consistent use.

It was proposed that the report could benefit from an explanation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), highlighting their significance and the necessity for strong legal protections. It was suggested that the report could give a better sense of protected sites as 'jewels in the crown' and why they matter.

The Board endorsed the recommendations within the report, emphasising the importance of prioritising these actions.

The Board expressed its gratitude to the team for producing a thorough and detailed report, particularly in light of the challenges encountered during its development.

The Board agreed with the recommendations of the paper to approve the report in substantially the form at Annex A to that paper (subject to only non-material amendments). The Board also agreed with the recommendation to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, ensuring that the final report has satisfactorily incorporated such non-material amendments as the Board directed during its meeting. No such amendments were directed in the meeting.

25.58 Any Other Business

The Board was made aware of the preliminary progress in establishing a relationship with the new Secretary of State. While this relationship is still in its early stages, it was noted that we have formulated plans to develop it further.

The Board was informed of a delay in the completion of the audit for the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts. The Board will be updated regarding the revised timeline for completion and any additional developments as soon as further information becomes available.