

Confirmed Minutes

Title of Meeting: **Board Meeting (Business)**

George Hall, Guildhall, Swansea

Date of Meeting: 7 May 2015

Board Members: Ruth Hall
Madeleine Havard
Harry Legge-Bourke
Peter Matthews (Chair)
Andy Middleton
Nigel Reader
Paul Williams
Hywel Davies
Lynda Warren
Emyr Roberts (Chief Executive)

Executive Team in attendance: Clive Thomas, Director of Governance
Niall Reynolds, Director of Transition
Kevin Ingram, Executive Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Ashleigh Dunn, Executive Director of Organisational Development and People Management
Gareth O'Shea, Executive Director, Operations South
Tim Jones, Executive Director, Operations North and Mid
Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Knowledge Strategy and Planning

Secretariat: Kelly Goswell
Geri Mills

Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies

2. Apologies were received from Catherine Smith (Director for External Relations & Communications), Martin Britton (Chief Information Officer), Trefor Owen (Executive Director for National Services) and Paul Williams (for part of the meeting).
3. The Chairman formally welcomed Gareth O'Shea to the Board meeting, as the recently appointed Executive Director, Operations South.

Declarations of Interest

4. No declarations were registered.

Ratification of Minutes

5. The minutes from the Board meeting on 27 March were agreed as a true record of the meeting and approved by the Board subject to minor amendments.

Review of Action log

6. Actions were reviewed with the following comments:

Action1: NRW to provide a briefing note to the Group on the Woodland Advisory Panel update - Discharged

Action 2: Executive Director for National Services to provide a briefing note to the Board on new planting, replanting and felling figures for forestry in Wales. Discharged - Briefing note and presentation circulated prior to the Board meeting.

Action 3: Circulate ToR and members list – Discharged - both members list and terms of responsibility shared with the Board.

7. The Board discussed the woodland action plan and noted a planned meeting on 15 May with the forestry business sector.

ACTION POINT: Executive Director of Knowledge, Strategy & Planning to provide a briefing from the forestry business sector meeting for the July Board meeting

Wellbeing, Health & Safety Update NRW B B 25.15

8. The Board agreed at the meeting in March that the Wellbeing, Health and Safety briefing would be tabled in advance of meetings and noted as a fixed agenda item.
9. The Chief Executive highlighted a number of issues from the briefing, including near miss reporting, which will be better supported by a new system to improve the reporting process. The Board also noted the rise in sickness absence, in particular the rise in mental health related absences and were assured that actions are in place to address this.
10. The Board agreed to review the benchmark of 7 days absence (average) per employee and suggested revising the wording of the 'target' to make it clear that it is a maximum not to be exceeded, rather than a target to achieve.

ACTION POINT: Executive Director of Organisational Development and People Management to review the sickness absence benchmark and revise wording of the target

11. The Board discussed the importance of the Hostile Sites Database and also noted the requirement for lone workers and field staff to be fully first aid trained and, in some instances, equipped with satellite GPS telephones for emergency situations.

Performance Framework 2014-2015 & Corporate Dashboard Report (Presentation) NRW B B 26.15

12. The Chief Executive made a presentation, supported by Chairs of each Good for Boards, outlining performance in delivering the priorities in the Corporate Plan, as set out in the Business Plan for 2014/15 and remit letter from Welsh Government.
13. The Board welcomed the report and provided the following feedback:
 - The report is an invaluable source of information and NRW has done well to establish an exemplary approach to performance reporting. The report demonstrates the value of performance management as it details the broad nature of NRW's work, the successes, and the areas which require attention.
 - The merits of restricting the term 'Cyfoeth' to the apprentice scheme were discussed, and it was agreed to consider using a different term to cover work placements and volunteering.

- The detailed graphs within the report are a rich source of information but are difficult to read, even in A3 format
 - The 'Good Knowledge' theme as all green was discussed and the longer-term challenges in this area were noted
 - Concern was raised regarding the two red indicators in the 'Good Environment' theme and the Board was clear that improvements are required for 2015/16
 - The ARAC Chair noted that the finances had been well-managed during the year. The presentation of Risk Register was useful and a number of specific items on the register will be discussed in detail at future ARAC meetings.
 - The Chairman and Board highlighted the potential communications opportunity for the performance reported at year end, as well as the robustness of the reporting itself
14. The Board endorsed the report and extended thanks and noted that the report reflected the exceptionally dedicated work force, who have delivered under very challenging circumstances during 2014/15.

Incident Management Strategy NRW B B 27.15

15. The Executive Director of Knowledge Strategy and Planning welcomed Paul Edmonds to the meeting and introduced the paper asking the Board to approve the Incident Management Strategy 2015-2020, the associated Action Plan and indicative Results Based Accounting (RBA) Plan.
16. The Board discussed the paper and provided the following feedback:
- The Strategy will provide more focus as it outlines our statutory role as a Category 1 responder and sets objectives to increase our efficiency and deliver a fully integrated service across our functions
 - It was noted the Community Board sub group had previously reviewed the paper in some detail and it was confirmed that their suggestions were incorporated in the paper.
 - The Board agreed that our overarching objective is to prevent incidents occurring
 - The Board noted the opportunity to build our reputation with the public and partners, and that how we approach our work in this context will be as important as what we do
 - Incident communications is a critical part of our work and will require a continued focus both internally and externally.
 - Workforce planning issues were noted, with the training requirements to fully utilise the whole of NRW's field based staff raised as a key point
 - It was recommended that the links between incidents and risk management be further developed in the strategy.
 - The title will be reviewed when the template for such documents as these is agreed

17. The Board approved the strategy subject to some minor amendments and noted the action plan.

Evidence Paper - The Current Status of Salmon and Sea Trout in Wales NRW B B 28.15

18. The Executive Director of Knowledge Strategy and Planning welcomed Peter Gough to the meeting who provided the Board with an update detailing the current status of salmon and sea trout in Wales.

19. The Board were asked to note the current status of salmon and sea trout stocks in Wales, recognise the declining trend and consider implications for future stock management, as well as note the next phase of work and options for stock restoration.

20. The Board noted the paper and provided the following feedback:

- Following the decisions at the December Board meeting, the Board noted that we are now delivering on our commitment of engaging stakeholders in a systematic way and that this effort will now need to be sustained for the long-term
- Environment Board group members and the Board agreed that the change in sea conditions is having the most adverse effect on salmon stocks and therefore the reduced population needs to be managed in as sustainable manner as possible, whilst in Welsh rivers
- The importance of engagement, at a senior level, with other UK counterpart organisations was agreed
- The Board agreed the next step is to develop an options paper for further measures to support sustainable management of stocks. The engagement with stakeholders, through a series of workshops, to develop agreed action plans is essential.
- The Chair would inform the Minister of our concerns

ACTION POINT: Executive Director of Knowledge, Strategy & Planning to develop an options paper and to provide further updates on Action Plan development for future Board meetings

- The Environment Board group confirmed their support in helping to develop the paper

Natural Resource Management (Partnership) Project Funding - 2015/16 NRW B B 29.15

21. The Executive Director of Knowledge Strategy and Planning welcomed Rhian Jardine to the meeting and introduced the paper.

22. The Board discussed the paper and provided the following feedback:

- The Board agreed that the change of name for the fund should be from this year, to help establish clarity with our wider partnership working
- The Board approved the proposed approach to proportionality
- The Board were briefed on the content of a letter received the day before the Board meeting, from the Wildlife Trusts for Wales. The Communities Board group agreed to work with the team to consider the issues raised
- ARAC's role to help provide due diligence, assurance and therefore mitigate any risks was confirmed
- The Board discussed the approach to establishing a threshold for a percentage contribution to project overheads. A distinction was made between contributing to core costs of the partner organisations and project overheads. Consistency was needed and it was agreed that the proposal for the figure of 7% threshold would be discussed further.
- The Board also considered whether increased flexibility to fund projects outside NRM pilot areas was required, as well as whether a wider range for funding contribution might be appropriate
- Meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund, to learn more about the events they host to engage stakeholders, was suggested.
- It was agreed that more clarity was needed between the terms , customer , stakeholder and partner

23. The Board agreed the general direction proposed in the paper and that the outstanding issues would be discussed with the Communities Board group on behalf of the full Board.

ACTION POINT: Executive Director of Knowledge, Strategy & Planning to finalise the Natural Resource Management funding criteria with the support of the Communities Board Group

Complaint Handling & Commendations and Access to Information - Annual Reports (2014/15) NRW B B 30.15

24. The Director of Governance introduced the paper to the Board to note progress in the handling of complaints and requests for Information received for 2014/15 and to approve the Annual Reports

25. The Board discussed the paper with the following noted:

- ARAC had considered the interim reports and offered assurance to the full Board

- The reports reflect the performance of the whole of the organisation and both confirmed a positive trend in performance. The Board agreed that complaint handling and access to information directly reflect our commitment to excellent customer care.
- Annual reports for these responsibilities are not statutory requirements but since both are governed by external regulators, (the Public Services Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner respectively), reporting annual performance formally is considered to be best practice. Both reports confirm that in respect of escalation to these regulators, NRW has had no significant adverse rulings during the year
- Reporting on our legal activity, including successes and challenges, would be welcomed

ACTION POINT: Director of Governance to provide a report on legal activity for a future Board meeting

- It was noted that in presenting the annual statistics a clearer distinction between in-year cases and cases that overlapped reporting years would be helpful.

26. The Board noted the report, welcomed the performance and highlighted the focus on customer care.

Natural Resources Wales Business Case - Progress Report (Presentation) NRW B B 31.15

27. The Director of Transition provided the Board with a presentation detailing the progress on delivering the Business Case benefits and outcomes.

28. The Board noted the update and commended the rigour of benefits tracking and the overall report which communicates very well the scale and complexity of the change that has been achieved

Update from the Chairman (verbal)

29. The Chairman gave an update of meetings attended and reported on activities under the four pillars of Natural Resource Management :

Environment

- Meeting with Minister

Economy

- JNCC Strategic Review

Knowledge

- Come on Board events

Update from Chief Executive (verbal)

30. The Chief Executive provided a verbal update to the Board which included:

- Work to develop a health prospectus of the 'NRW offer' is progressing well.
- A Pollinators factsheet for public organisations was in preparation by the Executive Director of Operations North and Mid
- A meeting had been held with the Scientific Advisor to Welsh Government to further develop a 'team Wales' approach to research activities among universities.

Report from Committees

Remuneration Committee

31. The minutes from the meeting held on 20 March were formally received by the Board.

ARAC Committee

32. The minutes from the meeting held on 20 March were formally received by the Board.

FRMW Committee

33. The Committee met on 14 April to discuss the future of FRMW, and the planned response to the Welsh Government proposals on Sustainable Urban Drainage and other relevant planning issues.

Protected Sites Committee

34. No statutory meetings have been held since the last Board meeting, however the committee met on 17 April to provide advice to the Knowledge, Strategy and Planning team on various issues.

Updates from Board Groups (written)

35. The Board Group reports were provided for information

Forward Look

36. The Chairman confirmed that as the July Board meeting would be his last whilst in post a degree of stocktaking for continuity purposes would be required as part of the agenda.

37. The Board discussed the need for a more detailed session on the Environment Bill.

ACTION POINT: Date to be arranged for the Environment Bill session

Any Other Business

38. The Board noted the success of the recent Come on Board sessions

39. The Chairman closed the meeting.