Confirmed minutes

Title of meeting:	**NRW Board Meeting (Public)**
Location:	Buckley and Teams
Date of meeting:	12 February 2026
Members present:	Neil Sachdev, Chair Prof Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chair Ceri Davies, Chief Executive Dr Hushneara Begum Dr Pete Fox Prof. Calvin Jones Lesley Jones Prof Rhys Jones Mark McKenna Helen Pittaway Adam Taylor
Executive Team members present:	Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services Dominic Driver, Executive Director of National Operations Lyndsey Rawlinson, Executive Director of Place Louise White, Executive Director of People and Facilities
Attendees present:	Phil Williams, Head of Governance and Board Secretary (All items) Meinir Wigley, Head of Communications and Digital Transformation
Observers present:	None
Apologies:	Karen Balmer Dr Rebecca Colley-Jones
Secretariat:	Rhiannon Spencer, Board Secretariat Team Deb Lee, Board Secretariat Team Andrea Bennett, Board Secretariat Team

Declarations of Interest:	None

Item 1. Open Meeting

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Declarations of interest and apologies were noted as above.

Item 2. Review Minutes

Item 2A. Review Minutes from 27 November Public Meeting

2. The minutes from the public Board meeting on 27 November were reviewed and agreed.

Item 2B. Review Minutes from 12 January Public Meeting

3. The minutes from the public Board meeting on 12 January were reviewed and agreed.

Item 3. Update from the Chair

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

4. The Chair introduced the item and thanked the team involved with the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) launch. It was suggested that a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) could be developed in relation to clarify roles and responsibilities for addressing the issues highlighted.

5. The recruitment process for the new CEO had been postponed and would restart in April. Ceri Davies would continue in the role of CEO until the recruitment was successful. The Chair thanked all staff and colleagues who had been involved in the process to date. The Chair also noted that NRW needed to be able to respond to public concerns quicker, however they may not be able to be resolved immediately.

Item 4. Update from the Chief Executive

Sponsor and Presenter: Ceri Davies, Chief Executive

6. The Chief Executive (CEO) introduced the item. The Green Paper had been launched by Welsh Government (WG), who had thanked NRW for the effort put in to the launch. The consultative approach to water sector regulation and the implications for NRW role were outlined, which included collaboration with the new economic regulator and system planning function. The Paper had set out the regulatory roles, and the new system planning function was clearly explained by WG. The system planning function would bring both the water and environment sectors together.

7. NRW would support WG in developing the approach, including ensuring that the correct level of investment was achieved for the changes required. The budget settlement had confirmed the baseline funding for WG in terms of Water Regulations. The Paper aimed to foster a co-produced approach to water sector governance, involving multiple stakeholders and focusing on holistic, pragmatic solutions rather than fixed regulatory models.

8. It was emphasised that, despite legislative changes not being expected until after 2030, NRW were encouraged to trial new regulatory approaches now, in collaboration with Ofwat and WG, to inform future legislation.

9. The Board discussed the importance of aligning system planning and regulatory approaches across England and Wales, particularly for major rivers, to avoid divergent management and ensure effective catchment planning. NRW were working with partners to discuss areas that flooded frequently and the options available for the community moving forward.

10. NRW had accelerated the issuance of flood alerts and increased proactive media coverage to ensure the public received timely warnings, using multiple channels such as social media, TV, and radio. NRW had also strengthened early coordination with the local authorities, police, and fire and rescue services, sharing information to enable joint planning and a Team Wales approach to flood response.

11. The Board discussed the challenge of balancing incident response with day-to day operations, noting that many staff had dual roles, and that increased incident frequency could delay other work.

12. The team in North East Wales described the development of community flood plans and the use of hydrometric data to support flood forecasting, asset management and natural flood management interventions.

13. The Board queried why there appeared to be increased discussion around enforcement actions. The Board could be provided with improved Management Information, but this would need to be supplemented by some of the cases within the CEO Report. In relation to enforcement, the processes were long and NRW

would focus on how to address the issues, as a regulator. A meeting with the Deputy First Minister (DFM) would be arranged if required.

14. NRW were working with WG to ensure that they would be influencing the legislation in both England and Wales, and that staff involved in the Green Paper, were also working on the White Paper. In relation to the Financial Penalties Mechanism, the Board queried whether NRW could use the money in and focus on the improvements without taking away from investments and settlements. This was a significantly practical area that was being reviewed with WG.

Item 5. Update Report of Committees

Sponsors and presenters: Committee Chairs

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – 9 December

15. Lesley Jones, member of ARAC provided an update on the Committee meeting on 9 December. It was highlight that Audit Wales had provided an update on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) Report and ARAC would review the comparable data over time, to assess ongoing value.

16. ARAC had also been presented with an overview of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Report and were assured that Audit Wales were content with NRW's response. Although oversight of the SSSI's would sit with the Protected Areas Committee (PrAC), progress would be reported to ARAC. Other discussions at ARAC included the Finance Update, including Counter Fraud, Contingent Liabilities and legal cases, the Internal Audit Plan and the executive summaries for two recent Internal Audit Reports.

Evidence Advisory Committee – 28 January

17. Steve Ormerod, Chair of EAC provided an outline of the remit of the Committee. EAC had discussed the follow up to SoNaRR, and the protected species in terrestrial monitoring, which enabled the Committee to understand the ongoing work towards 30 by 30 and NRW2030. The designated features on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) network required a degree of expansion. There was a need to understand the pressures that were driving biodiversity in the wrong direction.

18. One of the priorities was to have adaptable and cost-effective monitoring, which would need to be agile. The interpretation about the SSSI Report included the need to consider whether NRW could continue to measure sites to the current extent. EAC had queried what the right measurement levels were and whether the current level was sufficient enough to understand the sites condition.

Finance Committee – 3 February

19. Helen Pittaway, Chair of FC highlighted the items from the meeting including the Finance Performance Report, the 2026/27 budget, business planning, and metrics. The Financial approvals included the Telemetry Project, the Fleet Replacement project, and a s83 approval. An update on the Annual Review of Charges was also discussed, as well as the governance review of committees.

Flood Risk Management Committee – 17 December (IDDs) and 15 January

20. The Chair of FRMC provided an update on the recent meetings, where they had discussed the Internal Drainage District (IDDs). Also discussed was the Telemetry Project Report, which included the current use of technology and intelligence of what was happening in the environment and how NRW would need to react. Concerns had been raised in relation to the resourcing and funding for this area. There were lessons to learn on managing and procuring the data.

Land Estate Committee – 22 January

21. The Chair of the Land Estate Committee discussed the investigation on NRW's ongoing work in relation to Green Finance, and the need for a better understand on the forecasting. The Committee had also discussed the management of recreational activities on the land managed by NRW, and the extent of the decisions NRW could make in relation to the land.

People and Customer Committee – 4 December

22. The Chair of PCC updated the Board on the PCC meeting from 4 December. The contributions coming out of the Case for Change were being communicated through the Committee. It was confirmed that the Executive Director of People and Facilities would take over as the ET lead in the PCC.

23. PCC had previously discussed and endorsed both the Wellbeing Health and Safety Strategy and the Wellbeing Health and Safety Q2 Report. The Strategy had been updated to include the wider public element.

24. The Committee had also discussed staff wellbeing and NRW's response, and the Wellbeing Health and Safety strategy was being done annually. An annual Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report had been produced, which would also include staff wellbeing and other characteristics. Specific training would be provided for both the Board and ET. NRW had implemented anti-racism within this work and the Wales Action Plan, which would help with other work in relation to protected characteristics.

DECISION: The Board approved the WH&S Strategy.

DECISION: The Board approved the WH&S Q2 Report.

Wales Land Management Forum

25. Rhys Jones as Chair of the Wales Land Management Forum provided an update on the recent meeting and noted the ongoing work to broaden the membership of the forum.

Wales Water Management Forum – 13 November

26. An update on 13 November Wales Water Management Forum, had been provided at the November Board meeting. The next meeting would take place on 12 March.

Item 6. Finance performance report

Presenters: Rob Bell, Head of Finance

27. The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services introduced the item. The Head of Finance provided an overview of the Finance Performance Report, which had also been discussed with both ET and the Finance Committee (FC). The Chair of FC noted that the Committee had discussed how the underspend could be used.

28. There had been a minor change in the overall forecast, with income on profile. But timber income had expected to fall short, and there was an underspend in relation to staff costs due to the recruitment controls. There were ongoing discussions with WG around returning the underspent funds and the potential use for liabilities.

29. NRW were aiming to complete land purchases, such as the opportunities at Kilvey Hill to purchase land and compensate tree cover, by year-end to utilise surplus capital, with contingency planning in place if transactions were delayed. NRW were also exploring options for longer-term acquisition agreements.

30. The Board discussed the multifaceted impact of underspends on operations and noted that the delays were spread across the organisation and not limited to specific areas.

31. It was also suggested that a taskforce could be established, similar to the Environment Agency, to support the policy in order to put out a clear message in relation to organised waste crime. The Environment Agency had permanent resources for this particular work. The Executive Director of Place and Service was discussing this area with colleagues and noted that there were a number of issues

that needed to be addressed.

32. The Board queried whether the committed capital funding could be carried over to the next financial year. The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services would look into this option with finance colleagues in WG.

ACTION: The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services to discuss with WG, the option of carrying over committed capital funding to the next financial year.

DECISION: The Board approved the changes to the latest forecast, from £302.5m to £303.3m.

Item 7. Place presentation

Sponsor: Lyndsey Rawlinson, Executive Director of Place and Service
Presenters: Elsie Grace, Head of North East Operations; Liz Felton, Team Leader, Environment Team; David Powell, Operations Manager NE; Keith Ivens, Operations Manager, Flood & Water Management; Sara Pearson, Team Leader, Energy Delivery; Sue Williams, Team Leader, People & Places

33. The Executive Director of Place and Service introduced the item. The Head of North East Operations presented an overview of the ongoing work in NE Wales and noted that a large amount of the proposed new National Park would be mainly in NE Wales.

34. An update on the Dee Conservancy and its jurisdiction was presented. The major decarbonisation initiatives such as the HyNet Project, carbon capture at Heidelberg Materials, and low carbon power generation was described. NRW's regulatory and stakeholder coordination roles were highlighted.

35. The dual regulatory role in NE Wales was presented. NRW teams worked closely together and new technologies, such as drones, were now being used for emissions monitoring. The complexity of managing high-risk industrial sites near communities was presented.

    The management of highly regulated water courses were presented, as well as the flood mitigation infrastructure and the use of telemetry and hydrometric data to support operational decisions and community resilience. Land management activities, timber income, recreational site management, and the development of wind farms were outlined. The team were supported by the Energy Delivery team and local benefit funds.

36. Regional and Local partnerships with NRW were outlined, including the work with the public service boards (PSBs), health groups, and local authorities. This overview also included the projects that were focused on soil health, fire

management, and habitat improvement.

37. The Board were provided with a summary of the vision to shift from reactive to preventative approaches, develop a forward-thinking plan, and empower staff and partners to address complex challenges collaboratively.

Item 8. AOB

38. There was no AOB.

End meeting

Public Q&A

39. The Board had received a question seeking the Boards view on the contradiction between NRW's own performance assessment and the finding of the SoNaRR that suggested a less positive report. The Board explained that the Green ratings available in the Annual Reports reflected the progress against planned activities within available resources, while the SoNaRR Report assessed the overall state of nature in Wales, which was influenced by factors beyond NRW's direct control.

40. The Board acknowledged the need for clearer communication about the difference between activity-based metrics and environmental outcomes, and would provide written responses in relation to the ongoing public engagement.

Close public meeting