

Met Office Board

Summary

5 November 2021

Meeting held at Glasgow Caledonian University

- Rob Woodward (Chair) thanked Glasgow Caledonian University for their hospitality at the dinner the previous evening and for making their excellent facilities available.
- Apologies from Clare Wasteney (BEIS Open Board Scheme observer) and Jane Lancaster (Prospect representative) were noted.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Penny Endersby (Chief Executive) presented her report and the Board noted a number of points, including the extensive preparations and support for COP26; the three new resolutions the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) had adopted, following significant input from the Met Office; the progress of the cyber security enhancement programme; the challenges around short-notice, short-lived extreme weather events and how to disseminate effective warnings; and a number of ongoing staff issues.
- The Board discussed the proposals for flexible working. Workforce expectations were evolving rapidly. Potential recruits were turning down offers they perceived as unduly rigid. Board members confirmed this reflected their experiences in other businesses, particularly in the technology sector which was seeing high levels of staff churn. The Board discussed practical issues associated with flexible working, including how to foster a corporate 'community' and team events, as well as the legal, contractual and tax implications of any changes.
- James Partington (NED, BEIS representative) briefed the Board on the focus of activities at BEIS, including COP26, fuel supplies and the energy crisis, and European programmes and engagement. He commented on spending review allocations for research and development and proposals for Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- Duncan Potts (Chair, Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG)) joined the meeting to discuss progress and performance since the signing of the new Customer Supplier Agreement (CSA) in April 2021. The PWSCG were exploring how to measure the 'reach' of the Met Office, both direct and indirect, to different audiences and components of the value chain.
- Nick Jobling (Chief Financial Officer) presented the Finance Report, noting the challenges were around resourcing rather than delivery. The Board discussed the resourcing requirements of the new Programmes directorate and asked what activities could be outsourced.
- Nick Jobling provided a summary of the Met Office's submission for the spending review.
- Charlie Ewen (Chief Information Officer) provided the Board with progress report on the supercomputer programme. He provided, in the context of the Met Office's legacy technology architecture, a strategic overview of what the programme was aiming to achieve. The Board discussed the data platform needed deliver the benefits through to customers, as well as the relationship between different 'cloud' providers who could support the Met Office.
- Rob Woodward welcomed Clare Barclay (UK CEO, Microsoft) and Michelle Lancaster (Director of Sustainability, Microsoft) to the meeting. They outlined and the Board discussed the opportunities, particularly in the light of COP26, they saw in the sustainability arena and what type of partnerships could support this work.
- Jane Hayes (Partner, Independent Audit) joined the meeting to report back on the Board Effectiveness Report. The Board's strengths provided solid foundations upon which to develop incremental change. The Non-Executive Directors would meet to formulate an action plan for the wider Board to consider.

- Simon Brown (Services Director) provided an update on the Services directorate, outlining its role and how this related to the Met Office's national capability. He noted too much time was currently spent on routine production and, in future, there was a need to get more automated data to the Operational Meteorologists from the strategic data programmes.
- The Board acknowledged the huge amount of work that had gone into the preparations for the COP25 Conference and asked Stephen Belcher (Chief Scientist) to pass on the Board's appreciation.
- Next meeting to be held on 2 February 2022.