

Met Office Board

Summary

31 January 2024

Held in person at the Met Office HQ, Exeter

- Rob Woodward (Chair) welcomed attendees and confirmed the meeting was quorate.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Rob Woodward reflected on the Board dinner discussion on whistleblowing and raising concerns the previous evening.
- Penny Endersby (Chief Executive) presented her report to the Board, noting:
 - The positive ministerial response to Prime Minister's questions on Storms Isha and Jocelyn
 - Visits from Fiona Ryland (Government Chief People Officer) and John Glen (Cabinet Office Minister).
- The supercomputer implementation remained challenging but there had been some positive progress undertaking initial testing; concerns on the approach to replacing the MASS storage infrastructure continued. The Board discussed the status of the corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as the end of the financial year approached; the Board agreed a technical change to KPI 1.3 on diversity should be made for staff, but not Executive performance measures. The Board asked about the corporate strategy review in the light of spending review preparations and how artificial intelligence (AI) and the London Economics report on the Met Office's value to the UK economy would be incorporated. The timing of strategy discussions would depend on when a new Chair was appointed and plans to refresh the existing 2019 – 2024 strategy. The Board discussed the requirements and implications should the Met Office be classified as Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and whether this would be beneficial.
- Adam Jackson (DSIT Director) provided an update on activity in DSIT, which was now celebrating its first anniversary. He provided an update on Andrew Griffith's priorities – he was now in post as Science Minister.
- Stephen Belcher (Chief of Science and Technology) provided a verbal update on the Met Office Scientific Advisory Committee (MOSAC) and Science Review Group (SRG) meetings. MOSAC had reviewed the progress with 'Momentum', the new core numerical forecasting model that would replace the existing 'Unified Model'. Developments in AI, for both weather and climate, had been discussed.
- Stephen Belcher tabled updated Terms of Reference for MOSAC for approval. He outlined the proposed approach for the appointment of a new MOSAC Chair (to take effect after the January 2025 meeting) which the Board discussed and agreed in principle.
- Simon Brown (Services Director) presented the Quarterly Weather update for Autumn 2023. It had been a very busy period for severe weather warnings, which had continued over the festive holiday period; the Board commended the forecasting team for the quality and resilience of their work over this period. The associated KPIs remained on track. The Board also discussed the longer-term seasonal forecast and the North American hurricane season.
- Nick Jobling (Chief Financial Officer) presented a paper on the future European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) programme and funding. There were accounting implications from the current delays to one of the programmes and also issues to consider in relation to longer-term funding. It was noted how important satellites were for Met Office work, with these observations providing around two-thirds of forecast 'skill'. The Board approved the approach to the short-term issues, subject to confirmation from the Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG) and asked for further information on the longer-term issues, including about the approach of other European partners.
- Nick Jobling introduced the finance report. He expanded on the short-term accounting implications of the delay in the MTG satellite programme. He explained the accounting treatment of the grant funding for the Microsoft supercomputer programme.

- Nick Jobling and Andy Cooper (Head of Plans and Performance) introduced a paper outlining the proposed approach to setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the forthcoming 2024/2025 Financial Year. The aim was to minimise the change in the organisation's current trajectory and focus on the implementation of the first stage of the supercomputer programme. Final KPI proposals would be submitted to the next Board meeting.
- Penny Endersby and Paul Chavasse (Board Secretary) provided an update on the final draft of the proposed new Met Office Framework Document. The Board endorsed this draft which would then be ready to submit to HM Treasury.
- The Board discussed the commercial relationship around the supercomputer programme, noting the ongoing support from the Cabinet Office specialist.
- Dave Britton (Associate Director, Communications and Engagement) provided an update on the Engagement Strategy, reminding the Board of its six themes. The Board discussed perceptions of forecast accuracy, the availability of climate data supporting the 'Get ClimateReady' theme and the need to protect the Met Office's integrity.
- Tammy Lillie (Chief People Office) provided an initial assessment of the People Survey – though comparative data from the wider Civil Service was still awaited. In a challenging year for staff, there had been falls in some measures such as for 'managing change'. A report with proposed actions would be presented to the next Board meeting.
- Tammy Lillie introduced the half yearly People Report. The source of job applicants was discussed. The Board discussed the level of management skills across the Met Office and the need to engender a culture where line manager feedback was provided to staff over the course of the year.
- The findings from the Board Effectiveness Review were tabled. While the top-level summary was that the Board was working well, there were suggestions to take forward, including around continuing to engage the Board with strategy formulation. The feedback would be collated and distilled into recommendations to table at the next meeting.
- Rob Woodward closed the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 27 March at the University of Reading.