

Met Office Board

Summary

27 March 2024

Held at University of Reading, Greenlands Campus

- Rob Woodward (Chair) welcomed attendees and confirmed the meeting was quorate. Rob Woodward thanked the University of Reading for their hospitality and generously providing their facilities for the Board and Committee meetings.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2024 were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Rob Woodward provided an update on the process to appoint a new Chair for the Board and a new Chair for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- Gilbert Brunet (Met Office Scientific Advisory Committee (MOSAC) Chair) joined the meeting on-line from Australia. Rowan Sutton (Science Review Group (SRG) Chair) joined the meeting in person. Gilbert Brunet reported that the issues discussed by MOSAC included the move towards open data supporting future collaboration, the dual strategy of developing machine learning in parallel with physics-based numerical weather models, the work to exploit ensembles and the continuing work to enhance the computational efficiency of the Next Generation Modelling System (NGMS). Rowan Sutton reported that SRG had discussed the good progress on elements of climate modelling, whether there were too many activities ongoing, the role of partnerships and how to formulate a machine learning strategy for climate science.
- The Board discussed the MOSAC and SRG reports. The Board also discussed how to raise the profile of the reports in Government and how to gain more traction and scale up Climate Services. Stephen Belcher (Chief of Science and Technology) outlined the response the Met Office were taking to address the points raised. The Board approved the response to the MOSAC report.
- Penny Endersby (Chief Executive) presented her report to the Board, and reported on:
 - The position on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the end of the financial year
 - The visit by the Microsoft UK CEO, when she had explained the breadth and importance of the service into government that the supercomputer would deliver
 - The delays to the MTG satellite programme – the implications were mainly on the financial position
 - The budget process
 - A visit from the Permanent Secretary to demonstrate the Met Office's national security work
 - The latest gender pay gap report.
- Paul Riches (DSIT Representative) reported excellent feedback after the Minister's recent visit to the Met Office. While there was as yet no formal spending review commission from HM Treasury, DSIT were undertaking preliminary work. A full business case for the ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) Headquarters in Reading was being submitted to the DSIT investment committee and then on to Treasury.
- Nick Jobling (Chief Financial Officer) introduced the finance report. He was now reasonably confident the budgeted operating profit would be exceeded.
- Nick Jobling and Andrew McKean (Associate Director, Finance) presented the Budget for the next financial year. It had been formulated as a result of a challenging but constructive process. Following drafting, the potential introduction of headcount constraints had been raised; these could have implications on revenue streams. Given the uncertainty, Nick Jobling recommended that this version was adopted and changed at a later date if needed. The Board approved the budget as tabled for the 2024/2025 Financial Year.
- Nick Jobling and Andy Cooper (Head of Plans and Performance) introduced the proposed structure of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the forthcoming 2024/2025 financial year. The approach and structure were broadly similar to the previous year. The Board approved the proposed KPIs and the Corporate Performance Pay (CPP) structure for 2024/2025.
- Following the dinner the previous evening, the Board was joined by four senior members of the University of Reading (UoR) to discuss the benefits of the Met Office Academic Partnership. There was a constructive discussion about the excellent work of UoR, existing areas of successful collaboration and those which would

provide fruitful areas for future focus, particularly given the unique cluster of meteorological expertise sited on the UoR campus.

- Guests from London Economics presented the pre-final draft of the report they had been working on with Kristina Costar (Principal Economist). The draft had calculated the Met Office delivered an 18.7 times benefit per pound of public investment, which compared positively with the outcome in 2015. The Board discussed the major assumptions and drivers behind these conclusions. They also discussed how to launch and communicate the final report.
- Charlie Ewen and Mark Hunt (Associate Director, Future Technology) presented an update on the supercomputer programme. The Board discussed the contingency arrangements in place and also the recent meeting with Microsoft. The Board approved the associated KPI 2.1.
- The Board considered the approach to and assessed some independent assurance on the current Met Office commercial approach to the Microsoft contract.
- Penny Endersby introduced the work on data exploitation that Ian Cameron (Markets Director) and Charlie Ewen had been leading. This was a crucial, but challenging, area for the Met Office. Supported by technical analysis a clearer understanding of customer needs for environmental (i.e. meteorological) data had been developed. The work had identified 8 different end customer uses. The strategy was to tackle three work streams:
 - A short-term approach to deliver tactical benefits from the existing constrained infrastructure
 - A medium-term work stream over 3 – 5 years to develop a new data exploitation capability
 - A third work stream to retire legacy products and services which were no longer required.
- The Board approved and signed off KPI 3.9 on thought leadership.
- The Board noted the seasonal weather update that had been tabled.
- Hunada Nouss (Non-Executive Director and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair) provided a verbal report on the ARAC meeting the previous day. The Committee had reviewed the recent horizon scanning and risk dependencies exercises, considered the Head of Internal Audit's annual review and the Audit Plan for the next financial year.
- Jordan Giddings (Non-Executive Director and Security Issues Committee (SIC) Chair) provided a verbal report on the recent SIC meeting.
- The report from the Board Effectiveness Review was tabled with five recommendations. The Board approved these.
- The Board thanked Ian Cameron and wished him well for his retirement after a 40-year career with the Met Office. Rob Woodward closed the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 5 June.