

Met Office Board

Summary

29 September 2022

Held at Transport Scotland, South Queensferry

- Rob Woodward (Chair) welcomed attendees and confirmed the meeting was quorate. Jordan Giddings (NED & Chair, Security Issues Committee) and James Partington (NED, BEIS Representative) joined the meeting remotely. Rob Woodward thanked Transport Scotland for kindly allowing the Met Office to host the meeting from their National Control Centre overlooking the Forth road bridges.
- As this was James Partington's last Board meeting, Rob Woodward took the opportunity to thank him for his significant contribution to the Met Office and to wish him well for the future. He had been an exemplary representative of government on the Board.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Penny Endersby (Chief Executive) presented her report. She provided a positive progress report on the supercomputer programme, noting factory acceptance testing of the system was on track to give a conditional pass. She also reported on a constructive meeting with Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft.
- She noted the number of commissions emanating from central government. The Met Office's submissions had been aligned as far as possible with the spending review. Responses had yet to be received. Government changes were anticipated but had not yet been confirmed.
- Responses to the Arm's Length Body Review questionnaire had been submitted to BEIS, as well as a Public Sector Research Establishment (PSRE) value assessment. Central government was keen for these reviews to demonstrate efficiency savings. The Board discussed the need to articulate the Met Office's capabilities, the social and economic benefits from its work and the opportunities it could exploit from its trading fund status.
- The Board noted the lessons learned review of the tender process for the supercomputer programme was awaited, but initial indications suggested it was a well-run procurement process with no governance failings.
- James Partington noted the expected changes at BEIS with the new government; there was clearly an initial focus on energy security and pricing. Work was continuing on EU programmes.
- Rob Woodward welcomed David Pirie (Executive Director, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)) to the meeting. He outlined SEPA's role with environmental regulation and flooding, where SEPA worked very closely with the Met Office. Looking forward, he outlined key priorities and some of the big challenges, such as surface water.
- Simon Brown (Services Director) summarised the overall seasonal performance of the summer weather forecast. With John Taylor (Associate Director, Weather Advice and Impacts) he explained the process around the summer heatwave and assessed the initial feedback. This had been a major exercise to coordinate and to maintain a drumbeat of communications, but public ratings for 'awareness' and 'action taken' were exceptionally high. As for the first ever 'red' heat warning, feedback was still being collated from customers to consider the range of lessons to learn from the event
- Rob Woodward welcomed Martin Thomson (National Operations Manager for Resilience, Transport Scotland) and Rebecca Graham (the Operational Meteorologist embedded at Transport Scotland) to the meeting. They outlined Transport Scotland's role and how it worked with the Met Office, noting how this had of necessity evolved over lockdown. Rob Woodward thanked Martin Thomson, who then led a visit to the Operations Centre.
- Nick Jobling (Chief Financial Officer) presented the Finance Report. He focused on the profit forecast which was more challenging than normal. He outlined the options and actions that had been identified to close the potential gap.

- Hunada Nouss (Chair, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)) reported from the ARAC meeting the previous day, noting the Annual Report & Accounts were almost complete. There had been a helpful presentation as part of a deep dive into the Supercomputer Exploitation Programme.
- Ian Cameron (Markets Director) presented the Markets Horizon Framework paper, looking across the three timescales. Over the shorter-term Horizon A, Met Office resource and funding was already heavily committed. He outlined potential approaches across the markets of government, industry and citizen over the longer horizons. The Board discussed the capabilities the Met Office would need to develop.
- The Board considered and approved the business case for the Amazon FACE project, which was being funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to assess the ability of the Amazon forest to absorb carbon dioxide.
- Jordan Giddings provided an update from the Security Issues Committee meeting on 5 September. While there was currently much demand in this area, there was a concern this could lead to unfunded scope creep.
- In response to previous actions, papers had been tabled on the plans to update the LIDAR network and on the licensing of the Unified Model.
- The Board approved an updated version of their Terms of Reference.
- The next meeting was scheduled for 30 November 2022 at Microsoft's offices at Paddington.