

Met Office Board

Summary

30 November 2023

Held in person the Met Office HQ, Exeter

- Rob Woodward (Chair) welcomed attendees and confirmed the meeting was quorate. He welcomed Lisa Browne to her first meeting as the Prospect Union representative. He reflected on the dinner the evening before to which senior representatives from the Met Office Academic Partnership universities were invited.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Penny Endersby (Chief Executive) presented her report to the Board, noting:
 - The excellent forecasts for Storms Babet and Ciaran, for which customers had been appreciative
 - Progress with the cross-government work on climate security
 - The work, led by Ian Cameron, Markets Director, to review issues around data exploitation and prioritise the focus of future business cases
- While there had been more comfort at the previous meeting on the timeline to implement the new supercomputer, there had since then been some further delays to system integration acceptance testing. In addition, there was a potentially more serious delay with the supplier's development of the MASS storage software. While a rectification plan was awaited, one solution might be to separate out the Generation 1a and 1b implementations to minimise the delay to the first phase of delivery. While the resilience of the current supercomputer was proving robust, the Executive team were working on a contract extension and other resilience planning.
- The Turing Institute was keen to drive forward the AI collaboration, though the Met Office needed to be conscious of its capacity. As well as work by ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) there was an increasing amount of investigation around AI research and processes among Western European weather centres.
- Nick Jobling (Chief Financial Officer) introduced the finance report. Profits for the last two months had been better than expectations which should secure the dividend and would be helpful for corporate performance pay. He explained the financial implications of changes to the lifecycles of EUMETSAT satellites.
- Dave Britton (AD, Communications and Engagement) and Clare Frank (Ambassador Programme Lead) introduced the Met Office Ambassador Programme. It was supported by a wide range of staff and had been successful in reaching a diverse audience from a wide range of backgrounds. Support from the Non-Executive Directors would be welcome.
- Nicola Ford (AD & ED&I Committee Chair) introduced the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) update. She noted the introduction of workplace passports. There was positive feedback from new starters who felt they were joining an inclusive organisation. The Board discussed the challenges of increasing ethnic minority representation, particularly at senior levels.
- Hunada Nouss (Non-Executive Director, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair) gave an update on the meeting the previous day. The Committee had discussed the requirement to start TCFD reporting. They noted the increasing level of cyber security threat. The risk register and risk appetite were reviewed prior to submission to the Board. Regular reports on GDPR and counter-fraud were tabled.
- Michael Maling (Corporate Risk Manager) presented the corporate risk register. The new strategic resourcing risk, the AI risk and the change readiness risk were discussed; interdependencies between the risks were also considered. The Board approved the annual risk appetite statement.
- The Board discussed the supercomputer contract and the range of options available to the Met Office over the duration of the contract.

- Vice-Admiral Duncan Potts (Chair, Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG)) gave a presentation on the approach, priorities and work of the PWSCG. The Citizen Engagement Strategy, the National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS) and comparisons of forecast accuracy were discussed.
- Ian Cameron (Markets Director) and Helen Bye (Head of International) presented a paper on the international framework. Given the number of opportunities available, the Board discussed how Met Office priorities were aligned with Government and in particular FCDO priorities.
- The Board approved the business case to continue funding for the Weather and Climate Science for Service Programme (WCSSP). The programme had been running successfully in Brazil, China, India, S-E Asia and S Africa since 2014, primarily funded by Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- Mark Hunt (AD, Future Technology) reported on the supercomputer programme. Positive progress had been made on the physical build of the infrastructure. There had also been progress in stabilising the software stack, which was a precursor to commencing system integration and then user acceptance testing. However, a delay with the MASS storage software had been disclosed; this would be required before the Met Office could utilise the full 6x compute capacity that Generation 1b would enable.
- Adam Jackson (DSIT Director) provided an update from the Department, noting the background of the new Science Minister. The response to Sir Paul Nurse's Landscape Review, which had a big section on Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs), was discussed.
- Rob Woodward closed the meeting, noting the annual staff Awards for Excellence in Exeter the following week which some Non-Executive Directors were attending.