ENVIRONMENTAL
Standards Scotland
Ìrean Àrainneachdail na h-Alba

**Minutes of the Board meeting held on Friday 8 May 2026, 10:00 – 14:00 held in Lomond, Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD**

**Board:**
Richard Dixon (RD), Chair
Marie Fallon (MF)
Paul McAleavey (PM)
Chris Spray (CS)
Morag Sheppard (MS)
Laura Anderson (LA)

**Apologies:**
Annalisa Savaresi (AS)
Rebecca Peppiette (RP), Head of Corporate Services and Communications

**Attendees:**
**ESS Team** (Items 2-8 as noted):
Mark Roberts (MR), CEO
Neil Langhorn (NL), Head of Strategy and Analysis
Jamie McGrandles (JMcG), Head of Investigations, Standards and Compliance
Alisdair Stapley (ASt), Governance Lead
Calum Ross (CR), In-house Solicitor
Kate Hawkins (KH), Programme Manager
Alan Hunt (AH), Head of Policy Analysis and Horizon Scanning **(Item 5)**
Sally Rouse (SR), Principal Scientific Advisor **(Item 5)**
Kirsty Macleod (KM), Senior Policy Analyst **(Item 5)**
Sarah Carruthers (SC), Biodiversity Policy Analyst **(Item 5)**
Sandy Bendall (SB), Principal Investigations Officer **(Item 4)**
Ingrid Wallace (IW), Senior Investigations Officer **(Item 4)**
Kirsty Laing (KL), Business Support Officer (minutes)

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| **1.** | **Private session**<br><br>The Board attended a private session. |
| **2.** | **Welcome**<br><br>The Chair welcomed the Board and attendees to the meeting, including new Board member LA and the newly appointed Programme Manager, KH. Apologies were received from AS and RP.<br><br>CS noted his interests relating to biodiversity due to his former position as Chair of the UK Special Protection Areas (SPA) and the Ramsar Scientific Working Group.<br><br>MS declared an interest relating to her position as acting Chair of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland. |

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| **3.** | **Chief Executive's update**<br><br>MR provided an update on ESS' activities since the last Board meeting, highlighting:<br><br>• the key milestones of the Scottish Parliament elections 2026 and ESS' plan for engagement with new Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and committees<br>• an update on the progress of recruitment in relation to ESS' new duties<br>• stakeholder engagement and planned publications following the election<br><br>The Board noted the update and discussed further engaging with senior representatives in Scottish Government.<br><br>**Action: MR to consider opportunities for engagement with senior representatives in Scottish Government and ESS Board.** |
| **4.** | **Investigations and representations**<br><br>[At this point, SB and IW joined the meeting]<br><br>JMcG discussed case IESS.24.047, concerning ESS' consideration of the effectiveness of engine idling laws, outlining the key findings and proposed next steps. The Board noted the findings, discussed key considerations and approved the proposed action.<br><br>JMcG presented an update on the work of the Investigations Standards and Compliance (ISC) team, specifically highlighting progress on:<br><br>• the bycatch investigation<br>• the Special Protection Areas case<br>• the contaminated land case<br>• the public registers project and potential next steps<br><br>The Board noted the updates and discussed the recent increase in representations and the growing complexity of cases received, including the |

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| | resourcing of the ISC team. The Board also noted the importance of effective stakeholder engagement.<br><br>[At this point, SB and IW left the meeting] |
| **5.** | **Strategy and Analysis**<br><br>[At this point, AH, KM, SR, SC joined the meeting]<br><br>NL introduced the Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) report, with AH presenting the main findings and recommendations. In discussion, the Board:<br><br>• noted the analysis of the current regulatory framework, the main findings and recommendations proposed<br>• considered the evidence from the call for views and further discussed the scope of the report<br><br>The Board approved the paper, subject to amendments, thanked the team for their hard work, and agreed to delegate final sign-off of the report to CS and MR.<br><br>KM introduced the Seafloor Integrity report, with SR presenting the main findings and recommendations. In discussion, the Board:<br><br>• noted the main findings and recommendations presented<br>• considered the proposed timeline for publication of the report<br><br>The Board approved the paper, subject to amendments, thanked the team for their hard work, and agreed to delegate final sign-off of the report to CS and MR. The Board also considered the consistency of tone and structure across the two reports.<br><br>[At this point, AH, KM, SR, and SC left the meeting.]<br><br>NL presented the commissioned report on the long-term outcome assessment, providing an overview of the work and its key findings. The Board considered the paper and discussed the feedback received, as well as the scope of the project. |

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| | The Board agreed that the project findings should be considered further.<br><br>**Action:** MR to discuss next steps with RD.<br><br>NL provided an update on the work of the Strategy and Analysis team. In discussion, the Board:<br><br>• noted the progress of work on water quality and river basin management planning<br>• noted the outcome of the work undertaken to agree an approach to prioritising ESS's future proactive analytical work<br><br>The Board noted the paper. |
| **6.** | **Minutes and Matters arising**<br><br>The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 6 February 2026, were approved by the Board. The Board noted the running list of matters arising and actions and agreed to minor amendments.<br><br>The Board noted a previous action to discuss artificial intelligence (AI) and its opportunities and challenges for ESS' work. They requested that this discussion be brought forward to a future meeting. |
| **7.** | **Governance**<br><br>MF updated the Board on the Audit and Risk Committee's ("the Committee") activities since the previous meeting, noting key developments from the most recent Audit Chair Network.<br><br>MF provided a verbal update from the Equality Champion Working Group, highlighting:<br><br>• the recent review of policies for Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)<br>• updates on outcomes from the recent culture workshop<br>• topics and discussion points for the upcoming Equality Champions Working Group meeting |

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| | MS provided a verbal update from the Cyber Champion Working Group, highlighting:<br><br>• the expanded scope of the working group to include information security and artificial intelligence<br>• the heightened threat of cyber-attack and the continued importance of staff awareness and monitoring<br>• engagement with peer organisations on cyber security<br><br>CS provided a verbal update from the Sustainability Champion Working Group, highlighting:<br><br>• ongoing progress regarding carbon offsetting options<br>• ESS entering phase two of the sustainability plan<br>• engagement with peer organisations on sustainability best practice<br><br>ASt presented the annual Review of Schemes of Delegation, which included the Scheme of Internal Delegation and the Specific Scheme of Delegation. The Board reviewed the paper, noted the recommended updates, and approved both schemes.<br><br>MR presented the Corporate Risk Register, highlighting updates and providing contextual narrative. The Board noted the updates and approved the register.<br><br>MR gave a finance update, providing an update on 2026/27 expenditure, new duties recruitment planning, and external audit processes. The Board noted the updates.<br><br>ASt presented the final draft year-end figures for ESS' Performance and Management Indicators (PMIs) 2025/26, noting that ESS' new set of PMIs will be presented at the December 2026 Board meeting. The Board noted the content of the update and the next steps.<br><br>ASt presented the annual review of Committee membership. The Board confirmed they are content with the Committee and approved its membership. |
| **8.** | **Any other business** |

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| | The Board noted the upcoming events for 2026. |

**Dr Richard Dixon**

**Chair, Environmental Standards Scotland**

**7 August 2026**