



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

ADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes

01 July 2025

Westminster Kingsway College – Victoria Centre, 76 Vincent Square,
London, SW1P 2PD

Invited					
Name	Representing	Present	Name	Representing	Present
Robert Caudwell (RC)	Chair	Y	Brian Stewart (BST)	RFCCs	Apologies
Tim Farr (TF)	Vice Chair Advisory Committee	Y	Henry Cator (HC)	President	Y
Charles Mills (CM)	Vice Chair Policy Committee	Y	David Riddington (DR)	Vice President	Apologies
Peter Bateson (PB)	Company Secretary	Apologies	Jean Venables (JV)	Vice President	Y (Online)
Angie Fitch-Tillett (AFT)	Eastern Branch	Y (Online)	Anne McIntosh (AM)	Vice President	Y (Online)
Peter Richardson (PR)	Lincolnshire Branch	Apologies	John Grogan (JG)	Vice President	Apologies
Charles Pudge (CP)	Marches Branch	Apologies	William Harrington (WH)	Defra (co-opted)	Y
Bill Symons (BSY)	Northern Branch	Y	Doug McMurdo (DM)	Great Ouse Branch	Y
Priscilla Haselhurst (PH)	South Eastern Branch	Y	Innes Thomson (IT)	Chief Executive	Y
Rebecca Horsington (RH)	South Western Branch	Y			
Will Staunton (WS)	Trent Branch	Apologies	In Attendance		
James West (JW)	Wales Branch	Y	Ian Moodie (IM)	Technical Manager	Y
Michael Sly (MSL)	Welland & Nene Branch	Apologies	Laura Lamb (LL)	Membership Officer	Y
Ian Hodge (IH)	Environment Agency	Y			
Mike Stanton (MST)	Local Authorities	Y			

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530	<p>Welcome/ Apologies</p> <p>RC welcomed everyone, introductions were made, and apologies noted as above. Welcome was given to three new board members, Councillor Mike Stanton (MST), Councillor Doug McMurdo (DM) and Michael Sly (MSL) (apologies given).</p> <p>MST introduced himself as the new Director representing local authority members of ADA. MST explained his previous management consultant career</p>	

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	<p>and his current roles as a councillor on Somerset Council, a Board Member of Parrett IDB, and Chair of the Somerset Rivers Authority.</p> <p>DM introduced himself as a Vice Chair of the Great Ouse Branch of ADA, Chair the Bedford Group of IDBs and until recently, an Environment Agency appointed member of the Anglian (Great Ouse) RFCC. He is also chair of Bedford Borough Council's Pension Fund and Chair of the national Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF).</p> <p>MSL was elected on 26 March to represent the Great Ouse Branch as an ADA Director and is Chair of the North Level District IDB, as well as being an active farmer in the Cambridgeshire Fens.</p>	
531	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Item 535b was noted as a declaration of interest for TF.</p>	TF
531	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The actions outstanding from the previous meeting and not covered in this meeting are as follows:</p> <p>Item 519: De-maining paper. IT said that the delay in addressing this is linked to ADA awaiting parliamentary approval of the statutory instrument for alternative land valuation calculations followed by space/resource at the Environment Agency and Defra to address policy changes required to enable taking this initiative forward.</p>	
532	<p>Approval of Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the ADA Board Meeting held on 04 March 2025 were approved.</p>	
	ADA ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION	
533	<p>ADA Advisory Committee Report</p> <p>TF said that the three substantive topics covered in the meeting held on 10 June were: staff pay and conditions, membership fees, and a renewed ADA Business Plan. These matters would be discussed in detail later in the meeting.</p>	
534	<p>Finances</p> <p>a. Audited Accounts 2024.</p> <p>The audited accounts were presented to the Board and adopted. IT explained that some tax (£4,269) has been declared on earnings and interest received, specifically from LAPSIP projects, which are classified as taxable income.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>The Board adopted the accounts and supported RC signing the letter of representation on their behalf. Proposed by RH, and seconded by PH.</i></p> <p>b. CEO's Finance Report to 30 April 2025 –</p> <p>IT reported the following.</p> <p>Headline Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscription income has reached the revised budget target for this point in the year. The addition of some expected new members in-year should mean that the budget target will be exceeded. Advertising revenue and expenditure have been well managed by Ryan Dixon and are expected to match budget estimates. IT had no particular concerns needing to be reported to the Board. 	

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	<p>Key Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was an unexpected reduction in Environment Agency (EA) membership fees (circa £12k) as a result of 4 RFCCs deciding not to renew their memberships with ADA. Whilst disappointing, ADA will seek to discuss future membership arrangements with the EA in tandem with the planned revision of the membership fee structure. As a result of the above income reduction, a review of the 2026/27 and 2027/28 budgets will be necessary. The proposed 6.5% uplift in membership fees which was intended to achieve a balanced budget may need further consideration at the October Advisory and Board meetings. The bank balance remains stable, with interest now being earned from the savings accounts. <p>Forward Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets for 2027 and 2028 will be made available at the next Board meeting. As well as the above, a more detailed operational budget for 2026 will be prepared for comment. This will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee. All of the above considerations exclude any consideration of additional sources of income. The Board asked IT to reflect on the potential for additional income sources to try and limit the need for above-inflation membership fee increases. <p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanks were extended to PB for his help to Sue Crowther with finalising the 2024 accounts at the ADA office. 	
535	<p>Business Planning</p> <p>a. Director updates The three new directors, MST, DM, and MSL have all been registered with Companies House.</p> <p>b. Deputy Chair appointment HC updated the Board on the results of the interviews for Deputy Chair of the Board conducted on 19 May. He discussed the three interviewed candidates of which the subcommittee decided Micheal Sly was the strongest candidate who the interview panel unanimously recommend to the Board. The panel valued his experience ad his forward-facing attitude. The panel also recommend that MSL is offered presentation training, something which can also be extended to key ADA staff.</p> <p>DECISION: RH proposed the recommendation to appoint Michael Sly and PH seconded, with all Board Members in favour.</p> <p>ACTION: IT to research presentation training options.</p> <p>c. New Vice Presidents IT explained that ADA currently had four Vice Presidents and had historically had up to seven, giving political plurality and reflecting influential individuals across the flood and water sector. IT reported that JG will be stepping down at the next AGM. JG is no longer a member of parliament, and in discussions with IT, reflected that he would welcome his post being replaced with either a Labour MP or Peer.</p>	IT

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	<p>The Board discussed the paper presenting a list of potential Vice President candidates. Consideration was given to the individuals listed and the breadth of the representation that should be sought through ADA Vice Presidents. Mention was made that candidates from Reform or independent political candidates in the future, in line with ADA's apolitical status.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>The Board supported approaching the following individuals to become ADA Vice Presidents:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lee Pitcher MP, Labour member of parliament for Doncaster East & the Isle of Axholme, and currently Chair of the APPG for Sustainable Flood & Drought Management.</i> • <i>Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Chief Whip for the Liberal Democrats,</i> • <i>Peter Glas, immediate past Delta Commissioner in the Netherlands and former President of the Union of Water Boards in the Netherlands, and</i> • <i>Baroness Minette Batters, immediate past President of the National Farmers' Union and now a crossbench peer.</i> <p>ACTION: <i>HC to invite Peter Glas, IT to contact Alistair Carmichael, and to ask MSL to invite Baroness Batters.</i></p> <p>d. Company Secretary updates None to report.</p> <p>e. Draft Business Plan 2025-28 IT presented the draft Business Plan document for the next three years to the Board having been adjusted following input and comments from the Advisory Committee.</p> <p>The Board gave overall support for the document, but wanted to see further work on ADA's vision statement contained within the document. It was felt that it could be snappier, unique, and memorable. It was also noted that devolution should be considered equally as an opportunity as well as risk. Discussion around the need for a name change for the Association took place. It was concluded that this would be best to take place at a future time when ADA and ASA agree to unite. The Board emphasised the importance of the connection with ASA and IT said that he would now work with ASA in establishing a joint plan for both parties based upon the ADA plan.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>IT to revise the Vision. MS and PH offered to help with that. IT to arrange a meeting to discuss.</i></p> <p>f. Membership fees restructuring Membership fee restructuring was discussed based on the paper submitted. The main driver was the potential amalgamations of IDBs and also the opportunity of working more closely with ASA, taking a whole catchment approach. With IM's assistance, IT explained that officers were finding favour with a system which set IDB memberships as a function of the total drainage rates and special levies received, and that other metrics were being considered for other membership categories. It added that any change on the basis of maintaining similar income levels would lead to some winners and losers.</p> <p>The Board highlighted a number of considerations as follows;</p>	<p>HC,IT, MSL</p> <p>IT,MS, PH</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to reflect and align on a joint membership fee structure with ASA. • How does Local Authority reorganisation and devolution get picked up? • Where local authorities appoint members onto IDBs, what is the appropriate membership, does this create any duplication? • For Local authorities should population size or catchment size be considered as a metric? • For Environment Agency and RFCCs, there is a need to rebalance and reset what they pay. • Whether the current timing is right to implement a change in membership fees and structure? Increasing concerns about public bodies willingness to pay membership fees. • Do we plan for an overall maintain-income approach or an increase-income approach to support further ADA resource? <p>DECISION: The discussions concluded with the Board recommending that we carry on modelling and planning a change in the system for calculating membership fees, but refrain at this point in time from consulting or implementing any changes.</p> <p>ACTION: Through the Advisory Committee, to establish a small working group to include an ASA representative and MSL.</p>	TF
536	<p>ADA Employees' Pay & Conditions Progression Policy</p> <p>A revised draft Employees' Pay & Conditions Progression Policy was presented. Adjustment on timeline for one to one staff appraisals, and the employers pension contribution percentage were discussed and the Board was informed that the Advisory Committee was comfortable with final amendments put forward. These changes were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timeline for application of pay and conditions decisions, • the ADA employers pension contribution for all staff to 9% with effect from 01 July 2025. <p>The Board asked whether the annual implementation date for new pay awards, conditions, and cost of living allowance increases as set out in the draft Policy should move to 01 January rather than 01 December in order to better align with ADA's financial year. There was no objection to this proposal and IM agreed to consult with staff and set whichever date was agreeable to them.</p> <p>DECISION: The Board adopted the ADA Employees' Pay & Conditions Progression Policy as presented, as proposed by JW and seconded by RH, subject to ADA staff agreeing on either the 01 December or 01 January implementation dates (see post meeting note).</p> <p>(POST MEETING NOTE: Annual pay and conditions implementation date set to 01 January with agreement of staff and Policy updated accordingly and circulated to all staff.)</p>	
537	<p>ADA Policy Committee Report</p> <p>CM and IM summarised the Committee's meeting held on 20 May. A subcommittee of the Policy Committee has been formed to investigate climate resilience and carbon reduction for lowland pumped catchments. They are working on a proposal document setting out the next steps and proposed outputs, and how to tangibly achieve them.</p>	

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	<p>The Committee had talked about overhauling water level management plans (WLMPs) and how they could be replaced with operational five-year maintenance plans which ecologists would prefer as well as whether the various WLMPs within a catchment area could be combined where they had substantial commonality or overlap. PH had recently awarded a contract for a water level management plan study and explained how taking a wider view is valuable, not just looking at environmental sites, but taking a whole catchment view. PH will share finding of the study with ADA.</p> <p>CM reported that David Letellier's update on Welsh Internal Drainage Districts was most useful and that further consideration would be given to the subject after Welsh local elections in 2026.</p> <p>Referring to discussions on IDBs taking on the role of Statutory Consultees, IT noted that Blake Stephenson MP for Mid-Bedfordshire had engaged with the Bedford Group of IDBs, to put before Parliament a Ten Minute Rule Bill about how IDBs should be made statutory consultees within the planning process. The Bill had passed its first reading, with a second reading due on 11 July. Given the type of Bill, it was unlikely to pass the second reading, but had raised the profile of this topic amongst MPs.</p>	
538	<p>National Strategic updates from Defra and Environment Agency</p> <p>Updates were provided by WH and IH, covering the following key updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood resilience in England inquiry being undertaken by the Environmental Audit Committee. Floods Minister - Emma Hardy, Environment Agency's CEO - Philip Duffy, and Defra's Flood & Water Director - Sebastian Catovsky, were set to give evidence on Wednesday 09 July. • Spending Review. Government announced its spending plans on 11 June 2025, covering the period 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2029. It announced a £4.2 billion investment in new and existing FCERM assets for the next three years. • National Infrastructure Strategy was announced on 19 June, setting out the government's ten-year long-term plan for social infrastructure with the Flood Capital Funding: £7.9 billion (capital-only April 2026- 2035). This includes the capital element of the £4.2 billion. There is no revenue element of the Infrastructure Strategy. • Future FCERM Capital Programme. There will be fewer engineering flood defence projects from April 2026, in favour of asset repairs and replacement allowance due to the depreciation of assets. For example, around 60,000 properties face increased risk of flooding due to condition of assets below their target condition, should asset repairs not be affordable. • Revenue maintenance. Financing for routine asset maintenance is under pressure and will continue to be so. An example of the significant gap between the estimated need and available revenue maintenance funding in one Environment Agency area was discussed. • Floods funding reform consultation announced at Flood & Coast 2025, closes on 29 July 2025. This is the chance to influence the next ten years of the capital programme. The government is proposing to fully fund the first £3m of any project, and there after contribute 90% with 10% needing to be raised from other sources. Capital refurbishment of FCERM assets are proposed to be fully funded and there are proposals to further incentivise natural flood management and property flood resilience measures. The consultation contains three broad options for the approach to prioritising schemes in the future. There are two webinars coming up 10 and 21 July 2025 	

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	<p>related to this consultation. The consultation also includes two calls for evidence on: alternative sources of funding and exploring opportunities for English devolution. If taken forward, these reforms will be on a longer timeframe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra IDB funding research project. Specification is now finalised and Defra is working with its procurement team to get the study underway. • IDB Storm Recovery & Asset Improvement Fund. Minister Hardy had agreed to an additional £16 million being allocated to the fund to support additional works under Tranche 2B. Projects have already been allocated, to be delivered by 31 March 2026. WH/IH offered Defra's thanks to IM for his support with the IDB recovery funding process. 260 grants have been awarded for a total value of close to £91 million, which benefits 400ha of agricultural land and 91,000 homes and businesses. It also helps avoid £1.3 billion of damages. • Defra staff. Permanent Secretary, Tamara Finklestein, has retired and David Hill is Acting Permanent Secretary. Kate Davies is Interim Director General. Jonathan Baker is replacing Laura Lutkoski as Deputy Director for Floods, Waterways and EA Sponsorship Division from the end of August. • Environment Agency appointments. At the request of the Secretary of State, Alan Lovell, is staying on as EA Chair into 2026. Four RFCC chair replacements are going to be announced shortly. • EA2030 Future Plans. Caroline Douglas is to hold a stakeholder event on 08 July briefing on the EA 2030 future plans. RC will be representing ADA. <p>Board members raised queries around the newly published National Standards for SuDS and whether Schedule 3 will be implemented. WH said that Defra was still considering the most appropriate way forward with SuDS approval.</p> <p>IT and RC were expecting to meet for a routine meeting with Minister Hardy. (POST MEETING NOTE: Date of meeting set for 22 July)</p> <p>ACTION: IM to notify IDB clerks/CEOs of Defra seminars on floods funding consultation.</p>	IM
539	<p>ADA policy and technical activities</p> <p>IM updated the Board regarding the following policy and technical activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Funding Reform Consultation. ADA was preparing a response and was seeking views from ADA member authorities. <i>IDB senior officers were invited to an online meeting to share their views and discuss ADA's response on 09 July 2025.</i> • Opportunities for future learning, including managing challenges like peat soils, • Flood resilience in England inquiry. On 19 May, IM gave evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry in the Palace of Westminster. • Good Governance Guide, Version 2 of the guide for Internal Drainage Board Members was recently published by ADA on the ADA website. Over 1,000 printed copies have been distributed to IDBs. Thanks to Wilkin Chapman Rollits LLP for undertaking the review and revisions to the content. A planned IDB workshop on the guide has been delayed, but will be rescheduled. • Exemption Reform consultation. ADA has responded to the consultation looking at reforming the process for setting and amending environmental permitting exemptions under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. ADA had highlighted in the response how the Netherlands regulate Water Boards' activities through a Code of Practice that 	

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	<p>is updated every five years. It offered a simpler model for regulating public authorities managing watercourses and other flood defence assets and largely removing the need for a road swathe of exemptions, consents and permits. This may be a useful model for UK regulation reform, to simplify the process, enable environmental enhancement through public works, and establish greater environmental compliance and certainty, and reduce regulatory burden.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Activity Permits (FRAPs). Significant delays had been noted in the consideration and return of applications for FRAPs, with the Environment Agency offering to fast-track FRAPS for IDB Fund projects. Demonstrates significant burden created by the EA's regulatory regime. • IDB Rating Land Valuation Statutory Instrument. The Land Valuation Agency has raised issues with Defra about the Statutory Instrument and Phil Camamile and Craig Benson have been liaising with Defra to answer these queries. The Statutory Instrument will go through the internal Defra legal check process before being presented to Parliament in the Autumn. • Rural Flood Resilience Partnership. ADA is working with the Environment Agency to help develop a website for the partnership to publish the outputs of the actions it is undertaking. • Lowland Peat. IM presented the key outputs and findings from the Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilots (LAPSIP) that ADA had been supporting IDBs with on behalf of Defra. ADA had submitted its final draft report on LAPSIP to Defra during April 2025, and had recently received corrections and comments to be worked through before publication. IM outlined the number of water level management assets and telemetry systems that have been installed and the area of lowland peat soils that these assets and systems will help retain water safely over. It featured how local skills (IDBs and contractors) as well as specialist UK manufacturing have featured. The Defra Peat Soils team were now aware of the budget they would have available for the coming spending review period. It was looking likely that further funding for schemes to better manage lowland water levels for peat soils would be made available. The funding would likely combine support for strategies and infrastructure and would be available for applications from land managers, IDBs and others involved. Whilst a more substantial amount of money would be made available for such projects, it would be important for quality applications to be made with tangible benefits for retaining water safely for peat soils. ADA was continuing to work with Defra to support this next round of projects. 	
540	<p>Events</p> <p>IT provided a brief update on events involving ADA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood & Coast 2025. ADA ran a very successful joint stand with ASA at the event. IM presented on two separate occasions and a popular parliamentary session was hosted by IT to encourage making the connect between practitioners and politicians. Next year, the event moves to Liverpool. IM presented twice at the event on both LAPSIP and the RFRP. • ADA Flood & Water Conference 2025. IT named the four presenters confirmed to speak at the on 25 November: Sebastian Catovsky (Defra Floods Director), Lila Thompson (CEO, British Water), David Porter (Dfl Director and ICE President elect) and Juan Valero de Palma (President, Fencore). • APPG. ADA and CIWEM have helped the APPG to meet monthly since November 2024, with the next one scheduled for 15 July. The partnership 	

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	with CIWEM is working well. ADA and CIWEM are aiming to bring all the water-related APPG's together for a joint meeting in the Autumn.	
541	<p>AOB</p> <p>IT had received a call for nominations for the Kings Birthday Honours List 2026 and invited Board Members to consider potential candidates from the flood and water management sector.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>LL to send email to Board members seeking nominations for the Kings Birthday Honours List 2026, suggestions before 25 July 2025.</i></p> <p>IT mentioned that an issue had arisen at Middle Level Commissioners and that they were considering calling for a judicial review of a funding decision made by the Environment Agency.</p>	LL