Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# Minutes

**Tuesday 23rd September 2025**
**Venue: Rural Innovation Centre, Kenilworth CV8 2LG**
**10.30 – 13.30**

| **Invited** | | | | | |
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| **Name** | **Role and organisation** | **Present** | **Name** | **Role and organisation** | **Present** |
| Tim Farr (TF) | Advisory Committee Chairperson, Deputy Chair, ADA | Y | Josie Bateman (JB) | Environment Agency (National Agency) | Apologies |
| Charles Mills (CM) | Policy Committee Chairperson, Deputy Chair, ADA | Apologies | Catherine Harris (CH) | Wilkin Chapman LLP (Independent Advisor) | Apologies |
| Robert Caudwell (RC) | Chairperson, ADA | Y | Innes Thomson (IT) | Chief Executive, ADA | Y |
| Peter Bateson (PB) | Company Secretary, ADA | Y | | | |
| Jim Hutchinson (JH) | Balfour Beatty (Associate Member) | Y- online | **In attendance** | | |
| Jane Froggatt (JF) | Chief Executive, Witham & Humber Drainage Boards (IDB) | Y | Laura Lamb (LL) | Membership Officer ADA | Y |
| Glen Westmore (GW) | Flood Risk Planning and Consenting Team Leader, Surrey County Council (Local Authority/ASA) | Apologies | Ian Moodie (IM) | Technical Manager, ADA | Y |

| Ref | Minutes |
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| 52 | **Welcome and apologies- JB, GW, CM, apologies received.** |
| 53 | **Declarations of interest**<br>None. |
| 54 | **Minutes of previous meeting**<br>Accepted. |
| 55 | **Board of Directors Update**<br>RC gave an update that the board have confirmed the appointment of Micheal Sly as Deputy Chair. Since the board meeting, new vice presidents are confirmed as Lee Pitcher MP and Peter Glas, ex Delta Commissioner. Lee joins ADA with the intention that he overlaps with John Grogan who will stand down at the December AGM and Peter's appointment will allow for a healthy exchange with our Dutch colleagues.<br><br>The Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP is now confirmed as our keynote speaker at the ADA conference, and RC and the senior leadership team hope that this will also assist ADA in finding a suitable liberal democrat to invite to become a VP. Decisions were taken at the board to develop the detail and business case around membership fee restructuring, but not to consult more widely with the membership at this stage given the financial strains being felt by many at present. The new ADA Pay and Conditions process and guidelines were agreed by the Board. |
| 56 | **Matters Arising** (none) |
| 57 | **Finances**<br>**a) Bank Balance**<br>By the end of August the balance was just under £350k.<br>**b) Income & Expenditure**<br>There is an overall variance of £700 between forecast and actual costs, well within acceptable tolerances. IT explained a number of specific variances which were accepted by the Advisory Committee. PB pointed out confusing figures in the income and expenditure spreadsheet for correction before presentation to the Board<br><br>***Action: IT to make corrections ahead of presentation to the Board***<br><br>On current forecasts, it is expected that ADA should generate a surplus for 2025 of around £29k which is largely attributed to revenue generated from the LAPSIP project.<br>**c) Balance sheet**<br>Accepted by the Advisory Committee.<br>**d) Budget proposal for 2026 and draft budget for 2027**<br>IT explained that assuming a further membership fees rise of 6.5% and no additional income other than membership income and advertising fees, the draft budget for 2026 was showing a deficit of around £20k and for 2027, a deficit of around £14k. Whilst not yet finalised, there is an opportunity to work with Defra on follow-up LAPSIP work which could generate up to £112k of additional income. External costs associated with that would be of the order of £60k and |

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| | the remainder for covering time inputs by IM. The Advisory Committee agreed to budgeting for £80k income and £60k expenditure which would then lead to a balanced budget for 2026.<br><br>***Action: IT to balance budget for 2026 for submission to the Board***.<br><br>There were no suggested changes to the draft budget for 2027.<br>e) **Membership fees for 2026**<br>The Advisory Committee agreed to support a proposal to the Board of;<br>- 6.5% increase on membership fees<br>- 3.5% increase on advertising fees<br>**f) Debtors**<br>IT thanked Sue Crowther for her work recovering debts. IT will be speaking to Anglian Water and Cumbria River Authority. PB suggested that we write off the older smaller debtors as bad debts and claim the VAT back. For IDBs who do not wish to pay this year, issue credit notes. IT upbeat that most outstanding local authority debts will be paid with uncertainty only with Bury Council. IT is pursuing through his contacts there. |
| **58** | **ADA Business Plan 2025 – 2028**<br><br>IT presented a final draft showing objectives and graphics added. The discussion focussed on the presentation of the key business drivers and it was agreed that the emphasis should be changed to just Membership and Representation with Staff and Officers and Finance being presented as supporting enablers. Minor change was also suggested in the vision statement to replace the word "stronger" with "better"<br><br>PB also suggested to change the business plan period from 2025-2028 to 2026-2029.<br><br>***Action: IT to make changes and submit final draft to Board*** |
| **59** | **Business Development**<br><br>**a) ADA Vice Presidents**<br><br>We are delighted to confirm the appointment of Col (Ret.) Peter Glas LLM MSc and Lee Pitcher MP.<br><br>**b) Future Structure of Membership Fees.**<br><br>The Advisory Committee received a paper which has been prepared by IM.<br><br>At the last Board meeting, they asked for ADA to make progress on the design of a membership fee restructuring but to retain the detail for wider discussion until such time that the Board directed was right for wider consultation. IM explained that one of the main drivers was the implications on membership fees under the current structure when boards amalgamate. MLC and Ely Group are undertaking studies which could lead to significant reform of the boards under their management, which in turn could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of boards and the membership fees payable to ADA.<br><br>The most logical solution appears to be to calculate fees as a percentage of a board's rateable income. This can vary from year to year but the general trend is upwards due to increasing development, meaning that more special levy is being raised. IM presented various |

statistics, trends and data he has worked with, taking into consideration various criteria such as general inflation, electricity costs, red diesel, and NI costs.

IM explained that if a basic factor was applied, there would be lower and upper anomalies with some smaller Boards paying very little and the larger Boards paying well above what they currently pay. IM went on to examine upper and lower percentile thresholds and has concluded that in combination with a charge factor, this will control upper and lower thresholds whilst maintaining the level of income required by ADA. The committee agreed that this system would automatically keep up to date and accepted the rationale. It was note that there will be some winners and losers ( a handful of larger Boards at the upper end of the system ). TF acknowledged that one of the biggest risks would be in some Boards not being prepared to pay increased membership fees and that ADA would need to have a robust strategy in place to sell the concept. Whilst appreciating IM's work and the thought that has gone into revising ADA's fee structure, JF expressed reservations about the proposal to move away from the current calculation based on Boards' Annual Values of land and property, the beauty of the current system being Areas are fixed and the totals will not change even with potential amalgamations of Boards. The proposal to use IDB Special Levy + Drainage Rates x 0.5% as the new basis is essentially moving from a fixed baseline to a variable one, and cash values increase year-on-year.

Other considerations discussed included fee structures for national agencies, local authorities and associate members. For Associates, ADA will be proposing a banded approach depending on the size of the business. For Local Authorities, the structure will be tied into a joint approach yet to be discussed with ASA. For National Authorities, ADA is considering tying membership fees into the scale of FCERM operational funding allocations for each of the devolved flood risk agencies and other national bodies which are members of ADA. The split between EA and RFCC membership fees requires further consideration. The challenge may be in understanding the reliable source of publicly available information to define the base information against which an agreed factor can be applied.

PB suggested that for IDBs, the figures could easily be taken from AGAR submissions, which are planned to go digital.

IT thanked the members of the working group for their inputs and IT appreciated the views of Karen Daft as an IDB CEO. The Committee commended IM on the paper presented.

***Action: IM To modify paper, reducing detail slightly, before it goes to the Board.***

**c) ADA - ASA Collaboration**

An initial meeting has been held with three members of the ASA executive committee. An initial draft business plan has been shared with them and the key points they raised were around the identity of the integrated body and a desire for ambition in expanding membership. ASA would like to retain control over how funds are spent on their areas of interest, particularly in relation to SuDs and surface water. There is interest in having custodianship of a committee. The Advisory Committee then discussed that separate committees may help reassure and retain existing members. The board structure itself may need to be reduced and rethought. It may be an opportunity to secure government/agency/RFCC funding. Everyone concluded that we are better working together. The Advisory Committee discussed the branding and the importance of keeping the words "Authorities" and "Drainage" in the title or supporting straplines used.

JH noted that the future capital programme may increasingly include surface water projects. Surface water is a particular concern for London boroughs. The LODEG group in London is

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| | well positioned to play a role, with Victoria Boorman as an ASA director in a key position. JF suggested that the proposed merger of the 2 organisations usually leads to one new one with its new culture, systems and processes. She felt that preserving separate committee structures would not facilitate establishment of a new organisation and risks duplication and waste in running parallel committee structures; it could be perceived as administering 2 separate bodies rather than the creation of a new organisation.<br><br>Based on the constructive discussions which have taken place, ASA has asked for revisions to the initial draft business plan before it is shared further.<br><br>***Action: IM to give a verbal update to the Board.*** |
| **60** | **Pay & Conditions**<br>2025 Pay & Conditions proposal – A confidential paper was presented to the Advisory Committee which was dealt with in closed session without ADA staff present, chaired by TF.<br><br>***Action: TF to share Advisory Committee recommendations with ADA Board*** |
| **61** | **Events**<br><br>**a. ADA Flood and Water Conference – 25 November 2025- London**<br>The keynote speaker will be the Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP. ADA is awaiting confirmation of his exact availability to finalise timings. Other speakers are Juan Valero de Palma, Lila Thompson, David Porter and Sebastian Catovsky. Full details are online at ADA's website and tickets are selling well.<br><br>IT confirmed that there will be no formal Clerks meeting the night before the conference but ADA will be happy to join any informal gathering that clerks staying in London may wish to organise. ADA is looking into a series of Clerks meetings for 2026 which focus on a variety of technical subject areas of interest. This could include topics covering AGAR returns, Governance, H & S, and media training. ADA would use such events as opportunities to invite sponsorship and participation from Associate members.<br><br>**b. ADA AGM** – 2 December- Online<br><br>The format of the AGM will be similar to 2024. |
| | **AOB**<br><br>None |
| | **Dates of Meetings in 2026**<br><br>Meeting dates were agreed for 2026 as follows;<br><br>- 10th February 2026<br>- 16th June 2026<br>- 22nd September 2026 |