



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

ADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS Meeting Minutes

14 October 2025

I View, Wellington House 125-130 Strand, London WC2R 0AP

DRAFT

Invited					
Name	Representing	Present	Name	Representing	Present
Robert Caudwell (RC)	Chair	Y	Ian Hodge (IH)	Environment Agency	Y
Tim Farr (TF)	Vice Chair Advisory Committee	Y	Mike Stanton (MST)	Local Authorities	Apologies
Charles Mills (CM)	Vice Chair Policy Committee	Y	Brian Stewart (BST)	RFCCs	Y
Peter Bateson (PB)	Company Secretary	Y	Henry Cator (HC)	President	Apologies
Angie Fitch-Tillett (AFT)	Eastern Branch	Y (Online)	David Riddington (DR)	Vice President	Apologies
Doug McMurdo (DM)	Great Ouse Branch	Y	Jean Venables (JV)	Vice President	Y (Online)
Peter Richardson (PR)	Lincolnshire Branch	Apologies	Anne McIntosh (AM)	Vice President	Y (Online to Ref 565)
Charles Pudge (CP)	Marches Branch	Y	John Grogan (JG)	Vice President	Apologies
Bill Symons (BSY)	Northern Branch	Y	Peter Glas (PG)	Vice President	Y (Online)
Priscilla Haselhurst (PH)	South Eastern Branch	Y	Lee Pitcher (LP)	Vice President	Y (from Ref 566)
Rebecca Horsington (RH)	South Western Branch	Apologies	William Harrington (WH)	Defra (co-opted)	Y
Will Staunton (WS)	Trent Branch	Y (Online)	Innes Thomson (IT)	Chief Executive	Y
James West (JW)	Wales Branch	Apologies	In Attendance		
Michael Sly (MSL)	Welland & Nene Branch	Y	Ian Moodie (IM)	Technical Manager	Y

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542	<p>Welcome/ Apologies</p> <p>RC welcomed everyone, introductions were made, and apologies noted as above.</p> <p>Welcome was given to Michael Sly (MS) who had been elected to represent Welland & Nene Branch and appointed as ADA's succeeding Vice Chair. Peter Glas (PS) and Lee Pitcher MP were also welcomed, having accepted the Board's invitation to become ADA Vice Presidents.</p>	

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543	<p>Declarations of Interest None raised.</p>	
544	<p>Matters Arising The Board received a short update on Vice Presidential appointments from IT.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>Board agreed to pause appointments of further Vice Presidents pending considerations at a future Board meeting.</i></p> <p>IT noted that ADA had supported putting forward two persons for King's birthday honours.</p>	
545	<p>Approval of Minutes The minutes of the ADA Board Meeting held on 01 July 2025 were approved.</p>	
	ADA ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION	
546	<p>ADA Advisory Committee Report TF reported the substantive topics covered in the ADA Advisory Committee meeting held on 23 September: staff pay and conditions, membership fees, and revisions to the draft ADA Business Plan. These matters would be discussed in detail later in the Board meeting.</p>	
547	<p>Finances</p> <p>a. Finance Report IT presented the financial report to 31 August 2025 to the Board.</p> <p>b. Bank Account Balance The Board noted that ADA's cash balance at 31 August 2025 was £349,938 compared to £325,178 on 31 August 2024.</p> <p>c. Income and expenditure IT reported the income and expenditure to 31 August 2025 as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subscription income has broadly matched revised budget estimates, after the membership withdrawal of four RFCCs earlier in the year. • ADA Gazette advertising revenue and expenditure have been well managed by Ryan Dixon and advertising income expected to exceed budget estimates (£46,000 v £44,000 budgeted). • Expenditure for the year to date at 31 August was £291,986. Using a smoothed monthly profile, this is just under £29,000 below original budget estimates. <p>d. Balance sheet The Board noted the balance sheet presented as at 31 August 2025.</p> <p>e. Debtors The Board noted the debtors total was £5,600 at the 25 September 2025 versus £14,000 at 31 August 2024.</p> <p>f. Membership subscription fees 2026 The Board discussed the projected uplift in membership subscription and ADA Gazette advertising fees for 2026 as proposed by the ADA Advisory Committee at 6.5% and 3.5% respectively.</p>	

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	<p>Following discussion, a proposal was put forward of an uplift of 6.5% for IDB membership and 5% for all other members and advertising as proposed by PH, seconded by CM.</p> <p>An alternative solution of 5% uplift on all membership categories and advertising was proposed by TF and seconded by BST</p> <p>DECISION: <i>The Board voted on the alternative solution to increase ADA subscriptions and advertising fees by 5% in 2026. 7 in favour, 2 against, 3 abstentions.</i></p> <p>g. Budget for 2026</p> <p>A draft budget based upon subscription increases of 6.5% and advertising of 3.5% was presented to the Board, with reflections on the consequences of the Board agreeing to a 5% uplift in fees for 2026. Supported by DM, IT estimated that instead of a close to balanced budget under the original proposal, ADA would need to plan for a small deficit of around £5k.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>As a consequence of the membership subscription fees increase, the Board agreed to a budget deficit of ~£5,000 in 2026, which effectively over-ruled its decision under minute 455a. to achieve a balanced budget by 2026.</i></p> <p>ACTION: <i>IT to update ADA Budget for 2026 based upon Board feedback and revisions to ADA subscriptions and advertising fees for 2026.</i></p> <p>PG noted that the Union of Water Boards in the Netherlands have a base increase set to track inflation and then discuss any further adjustments based on the purposes of what the organisation does and why it does it, setting out a clear rationale for changes and the value to the membership.</p> <p>PB asked what ADA's reserves were likely to be at year end. Post meeting note – end of year reserves are estimated to be in the region of £220k. Minimum reserves should be immediate cash access to cover 6 months basic staff and overhead operating costs which in 2025 are approximately £200k.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>Future subscription decisions should be based upon the value of what any changes would achieve and the value to the membership.</i></p> <p>All Board members agreed that it was important for ADA to highlight all the work it does for its members.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>ADA to provide a list of activities which have benefitted its members in 2025 and publish.</i></p> <p>h. Future structure of IDB membership fees</p> <p>IM presented a detailed paper on the potential effects of applying an annual membership fee on IDBs based upon 0.5% of an IDB's income from drainage rates and special levies from the preceding financial year. This included setting a minimum subscription fee at the 20th percentile and reducing the proportionate contribution to 0.1% above the 80th percentile. Such a system</p>	IT

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	<p>would negate the need for the ADA Board to annually set an inflationary uplift in membership fees for IDBs.</p> <p>The Board noted that subscription income from IDBs since 2013 had not kept pace with the three most common measures of inflation in the UK (RPI, CPI, and CPIH).</p> <p>The proposed methodology had been tested on data from the preceding 12 years and two future years, and matched closely the total income received from IDBs during this period. The change would result in a reduction in the subscription fee for smaller IDBs, and an increase for mostly larger IDBs. Specific changes to the subscription income from IDBs within the Middle Level were noted.</p> <p>The Board was interested in the proposal and supported further work to develop proposals for subscriptions from other membership categories in the future, potentially to apply from 2027.</p> <p><i>ACTION: IM to prepare a paper setting out potential options for setting membership fees from other non-IDB membership categories.</i></p>	IM
548	<p>Events</p> <p>IT provided a brief update on events involving ADA:</p> <p>a. APPG</p> <p>ADA and CIWEM helped the APPG to meet on 15 July to discuss the role of farming in drought and flood resilience. The next meeting of the APPG will be the AGM on 10 December 2025, where it is also planned to discuss the effects of reducing river maintenance</p> <p>b. EUWMA 2025</p> <p>IT and RC reported their attendance to the EUWMA Annual Meeting in Hamburg and Lower Saxony on 15-16 September 2025. IT highlighted the ongoing work to raise embankments along the length of the lower River Elbe.</p> <p>c. ADA Flood & Water Conference 2025</p> <p>IT reported healthy ticket sales to date, and the confirmation of the fifth speaker for the event: The Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Chair of the House of Commons EFRA Committee.</p> <p>d. ADA AGM 2025</p> <p>IT reported that notice had been given for the AGM to be held online on 02 December 2025. Members could register to attend via the ADA website.</p> <p>e. Events planning 2026</p> <p>IT summarised plans for ADA events in 2026, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ADA Environment Day 2026, 04 February 2026, Park Farm, Thorney ii. Strategic Partner in Flood & Coast 2026, 09-11 June 2026, Liverpool Exhibition Centre iii. ADA Flood & Water Conference 2026, 17 November 2026, One Great George Street, Westminster iv. Media Training for Senior IDB Officers v. More IDB Clerks meetings/seminars are being planned 	

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549	<p>Business Planning</p> <p>a. Company Secretary updates PB presented information to ADA Directors from Companies House regarding identity verification. Verification would create a Company Code (CC) that will be linked to each Director's ADA Board appointment. This has to be completed by the time ADA submit their next confirmation statement to Companies House, 28 March 2026.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>All ADA Directors to complete their identity verification with Companies House before 28 March 2026.</i></p> <p>b. Draft Business Plan 2026-29 IT presented the draft Business Plan document for the next three years to the Board having been adjusted following input and comments from the previous ADA Board meeting and the Advisory Committee.</p> <p>DECISION: <i>The Board approved the Business Plan 2026-27 as tabled, with minor revisions to wording and the graphics provided within.</i></p> <p>ACTION: <i>IT to revise wording as directed and graphics as specified and publish Business Plan 2026-29.</i></p> <p>c. Future working with ASA IT reported that IM had prepared a paper outlining the steps towards the creation of a new broader and inclusive association for 'Flood & Water Authorities', integrating the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and Association of SuDS Authorities (ASA). The paper had been discussed at a joint working group meeting of ADA and ASA on 22 September, and next steps to revise and add to this paper had been agreed. A joint meeting is planned shortly to agree what can be disseminated to ADA's and ASA's Board and Executive for their comments.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>IT</p>
550	<p>ADA Employees' Pay & Conditions IT, IM, RC withdrew from the meeting room for this item and TF took over as Chair.</p> <p>a). Cost of living increase The board members confirmed that the cost of living inflationary increase would apply to all staff and continue to be based upon the average percentage increase in average weekly earnings for the private sector over the preceding 12 months to 01 October as provided by data from the Office for National Statistics' Average Weekly Earnings (AWE): Private Sector Year on Year Single Month Growth.</p> <p>b). Individual progression and performance awards These potential awards to ADA staff are based on the performance of ADA overall, delivery against the current business plan and affordability. The board agreed that the budget, as presented, allowed for some room to make individual awards with an available sum of £6,000, which it proposed be allocated to the Chief Executive and Chairman to agree on distribution to individual staff (based on each of their recently undertaken performance appraisals).</p>	

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	<p>Post-meeting note: The Chair and CEO have agreed, that given the team's excellent and equal performance through 2025, the agreed award from the Board will be split pro-rated based on their working hours (excluding the Chair and CEO).</p> <p>c). Allowance awards</p> <p>The board agreed that, with effect from April 2026, the annual car allowances and the annual health insurance allowances to ADA staff (where applicable) would be adjusted annually for inflation on the same percentage basis as staff pay.</p>	
	POLICY & STRATEGY	
551	<p>ADA Policy Committee Report CM and IM summarised the Committee's meeting held on 10 September.</p> <p>The Committee received a presentation on Flood Risk Activity Permits from the Environment Agency following substantial delays in the issuing process this year, which put at risk important capital and maintenance works related to main river. The EA had confirmed delays would be reduced from ~26 weeks that some IDBs had faced, to ~9 weeks. However, this was still considered by the Committee to be unacceptably more than the 28 days accepted in many other regulatory areas, and showed the fundamental failures within the EA's Environmental Permitting system.</p> <p>The Committee is establishing a list of ADA Representatives on key policy topics, which has been circulated to all ADA Committee and ADA Forum members.</p> <p>IM has convened a meeting on 22 October 2025 to discuss the future of Water Level Management Plans with IDBs, Defra, EA, Natural England, and the Broads Authority</p>	
552	<p>Withdrawal of main river maintenance IT explained to the Board that, as a result of a developing situation about the withdrawal of main river maintenance by the Environment Agency in Somerset, IT had written to Philip Duffy, the EA's CEO, to express ADA's concern about the handling of the issues and to request an urgent review of the situation. Exchanges of letters are underway and the latest letter from ADA to P Duffy was shared with Board members ahead of the Board meeting.</p> <p>The stopping and withdrawal of maintenance is a building issue on medium and low consequence main rivers across England. The Somerset example has highlighted differences of approach by EA Area teams around the country, some making every effort to discuss the difficulties with local RMAs and partners, and other EA Areas such as Wessex falling short of applying that ethos.</p> <p>In some cases, IT reported that IDBs are struggling to carry out their statutory functions owing to unmaintained and constricted sections of main river downstream of outflows from IDB systems. There are also instances of asset failure where the EA are unable to justify repair, despite these disrepairs badly</p>	

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	<p>affects the function of IDB operations. Such instances are giving rise to IDB ratepayers challenging the payment of their drainage rates.</p> <p>The situation is deemed unacceptable and ADA will be making representations to Defra and Minister for Water & Flooding, Emma Hardy about the matter. ADA is also signalling the issue to local authorities who are increasingly concerned. ADA has called for a discussion on main river maintenance at the next Flood Resilience Taskforce meeting in December.</p> <p>IH responded by saying that the EA's national team were fully aware and briefed of the situation in Somerset and that Caroline Douglass, the EA's Executive Director for FCERM was prepared to meet with interested parties to discuss a way forward. IH also added that asset depreciation considerations were also affecting investment decisions saying that the £26 billion of assets protecting around 2.3 million people were valued closer to £7.6 billion after depreciation.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>To set up a meeting with Caroline Douglass, ADA, CLA, ADEPT and NFU ahead of the Flood Resilience Taskforce meeting in December. IT happy to assist IH in setting up the meeting.</i></p> <p>WH reported that the Environment Agency and Defra was seeking to set up a meeting with concerned local MPs in Somerset.</p> <p>PG commented that a recent OECD report estimated that countries face 6 – 9% of their GDP being at risk if those countries do not take action to adapt and become more resilient to climate change. PG also asked what initiatives were being progressed to seek outside support from large finance organisations such as banks and insurance companies.</p> <p>The ADA Southwest Branch has requested that ADA convene a meeting of ADA Branch Chairs to discuss maintenance issues across the country with a view to preparing a position statement to be shared with Defra and Minister Hardy. The Board agreed to support this initiative.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>IT to convene a meeting of ADA Branch Chairs. Post meeting note – meeting arranged for 29 October and a local authority representative of the LGA SIG for IDB Levies is also expected to attend.</i></p>	IH/IT
553	<p>National Strategic updates from Defra and Environment Agency</p> <p>Updates were provided by WH and IH, covering the following key updates:</p> <p>a. New FCERM Funding Policy was announced on 14 October immediately prior to the ADA Board meeting. WH thanked ADA and its members for their input and engagement. WH highlighted three key parts of the new policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Eligibility – New/improved assets will be eligible for 100% of the first £3 million, and up to 90% beyond that. This is a minimum, and projects will be able to and encouraged to secure more funding from elsewhere to enable the government's funding to go further. Also, existing assets will be eligible for 100% of capital refurbishment costs. • Prioritisation – Projects will be ranked by benefit-to-cost ratios, with additional contributions boosting a project's prioritisation. This prioritisation will determine whether a project receives Defra funding. • Strategic Objectives – Will be applied on top of the prioritisation by value for money to ensure the programme achieves specific policy priorities. 	IT

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	<p>The overarching strategic objective is reducing risk from, and increased resilience to, flooding and coastal erosion and deliver environmental outcomes that are intrinsic to meeting this ambition. There will also be objectives for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deprivation, to guarantee a minimum level of investment to deprived areas ○ Natural Flood Management (NFM), to guarantee a minimum level of investment (£300 million over 10 years) ○ Using Defra FCERM investment to unlock additional contributions from public, private and charitable sources. <p>The new policy will also remove the requirement to move properties between risk bands to receive funding, removing the 20% cap on environmental benefits, open up funding to non-RMAs, especially on NFM projects, and remove the rule on properties built after 2012.</p> <p>Finally, WH reported that Defra will review the new policy in three years, and Defra and EA colleagues would be offering ADA a meeting to go through the Policy in more detail.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">b. Defra IDB funding research project. Consultants (ICF and Logika) had been appointed and a summary of the specification for the project published in the Autumn 2025 ADA Gazette. Questionnaire to IDBs was being developed. WH thanked IT and IM for their input so far and for joining the Project Steering Group, and to all IDBs for their input going forward.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">c. IDB statutory instruments/orders. Defra were progressing eight statutory instruments/orders under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and were endeavouring to progress these as quickly as possible. These included orders for the amalgamations to form the Upper Ouse Water Management Board and North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">d. IDB Storm Recovery & Asset Improvement Fund. IH highlighted the successes of the now £91 million fund, with 201 projects successfully completed to date with 77 still in delivery for completion by March 2026. IH thanked IDBs utilising the fund to make improvements to their assets and systems, ADA for its support, and IM for his work on the programme.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">e. IDB Funding Statutory Instrument (Environment Act 2021). Defra officials were awaiting a final steer from ministers and will then move through to the final legal checks and clearance before being laid in Parliament. WH confirmed that the SI will follow the affirmative procedure and so will be debated in both Houses of Parliament before it is made and comes into force.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">f. Flood Action Week. The Board meeting was held in the middle of the week of announcements and events to build trust and confidence in Environment Agency and government's actions to prepare for winter, and raise awareness of flood risk and the actions people could take to prepare and increase their personal safety. A parliamentary reception was held 14 October 2025 to raise awareness among MPs ahead of the winter.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">g. Reservoir Safety Regulation (RSR) Programme. IH reported that a public consultation would soon launch to gather views on proposed reforms to</p>	

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	<p>reservoir safety regulation in England and Wales. The current three-way structure of reservoir safety management, owners, engineers, and regulators will remain unchanged. Owners will continue to be responsible for safety, supported by engineers, with regulation overseen by the Environment Agency. However, all stakeholders will be affected by the proposed changes.</p> <p>Key proposals would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new hazard classification system, based on recent research, to ensure proportionate safety measures. • Updated safety management practices tailored to reservoir hazard levels. • Clearer roles and responsibilities for owners, including expectations for incident and near-miss reporting. • Reforms to engineer panels to support career development and attract new talent. • Enhanced regulatory powers, including civil sanctions for non-compliance. <p>h. EA High Consequence Asset Condition. IH gave a detailed report based on data gathered for the Environment Agency's Corporate Score card position on Environment Agency assets in high consequence systems (those that protect a large number of properties) maintained above target condition, that it reports to Defra. Recent Environment Agency high consequence (EAHC) asset condition scores have stabilised just above 92%. However, without additional maintenance funding assets will continue to deteriorate in the longer term. The EA's long-term ambition was to restore 98% of EAHC assets to target condition, at current funding levels. As of October 2025, 92.9% of EAHC assets were at or above required condition, an increase of 0.2 percentage points since the end of Q1 2025/26.</p> <p>IH highlighted that no additional funding available to the EA to repair assets following the 2023/24 floods. Repairs were funded through repurposing existing funds and so the repair programme is still ongoing, and some assets remain below target condition. However, IH emphasised that these assets will work as required during a flood event. Funding for asset maintenance is from both capital and revenue streams, with capital spend repurposes in the last two financial years to improve asset condition. The EA would be diverting more capital investment towards repairing and restoring critical assets (+£36 million in 2024/25, and +£72 million in 2025/26). Total figures on spend for reconditioning assets to working condition, and for capital management interventions for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were presented:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>REC Funding</th> <th>REC Assets funded</th> <th>CM Allocation</th> <th>Properties better protected</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>£30m</td> <td>250</td> <td>£266m</td> <td>13,074*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2025/26</td> <td>£56m</td> <td>500</td> <td>£241m</td> <td>20,402†</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>CM = Capital asset management interventions REC = Reconditioning assets back to working condition * Actual properties better protected † Forecast properties better protected</p> <p>No update was provided on asset condition within low and medium consequence systems.</p>		REC Funding	REC Assets funded	CM Allocation	Properties better protected	2024/25	£30m	250	£266m	13,074*	2025/26	£56m	500	£241m	20,402†	
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	<p>i. Higher Land Water Charges. IH reported that higher funding levels agreed by the EA in 2025/26 are being rolled forward for the next financial year and retained at £6.1 million. Notifications would follow EA Board approval in the usual manner.</p>	
554	<p>ADA policy and technical activities</p> <p>a. IDB Storm Recovery & Asset Improvement Fund IM summarised the outputs of the £91 million Fund through to September 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 279 projects funded, ○ 200 projects completed, ○ 200,000 ha benefiting, ○ £52.6 million issued, ○ Tranche 2 funding 180% oversubscribed, applications totalled £163 million, ○ 6km embankment stabilisation, ○ 32 temporary pumps, ○ 73 stations with telemetry upgrades for remote operation, ○ Environmental enhancement, fish friendly pumps, tilting weirs, biodiversity enhancements. <p>b. Water management for 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.</p> <p>c. Consultations IM reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Flood Funding Reform. ADA had responded to Defra's consultation in July 2025 and the response has been published online. ii. Electricity Standing charges for pumping stations. The Distribution Connection and Use of System Agreement (DCUSA) had voted against making reforms to standing charges in order to offset the disproportionate impact of transmission charges on intermittent 'peaky' users of electricity, such as flood and water level management pumping stations. The recommendation has been made to OFGEM who will make their final decision in due course. 	

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	<p>Furthermore, it has been announced by OFGEM that there will be further substantial increases in electricity transmission charges and so it is likely that these will put a further inflationary pressure on many IDBs with pumping stations and consequently result in above CPI increases in drainage rates and special levies. ADA is taking steps to gather data and prepare a letter to the Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change to note the sector's concerns. Recommendations were also made to send letters to Defra, MHCLG and all MPs in affected constituencies</p> <p>ACTION: ADA to gather data regarding increases in standing charges for pumping stations and prepare letters to Defra, MHCLG and all MPs in affected constituencies.</p>	IM/IT
555	<p>Meeting Dates 2026</p> <p>The Board confirmed the following meeting dates in 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 03 March, Westminster Kingsway College, London • Wednesday 01 July, Kings College, The Strand campus • Post meeting note: the October meeting has been changed to Tuesday 20 October, London due to venue availability and will be at Kings College, The Strand campus. 	
556	<p>AOB</p> <p>None raised.</p>	