



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

ADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes

03 March 2026

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

FINAL

Invited					
Name	Representing	Present	Name	Representing	Present
Robert Caudwell (RC)	Chair	Y	Mike Stanton (MST)	Local Authorities	Y
Tim Farr (TF)	Vice Chair Advisory Committee	Y	Brian Stewart (BST)	RFCCs	Y
Charles Mills (CM)	Vice Chair Policy Committee	Y	Henry Cator (HC)	President	Y
Peter Bateson (PB)	Company Secretary	Y (Online)	David Riddington (DR)	Vice President	Apologies
Angie Fitch-Tillett (AFT)	Eastern Branch	Y (Online)	Jean Venables (JV)	Vice President	Y (Online)
Peter Glas (PG)	Netherlands	Y	Anne McIntosh (AM)	Vice President	Y until point 6g.
Lee Pitcher (LP)	MP	Apologies	John Grogan (JG)	Vice President	Y
Charles Pudge (CP)	Marches Branch	Y	William Harrington (WH)	Defra (co-opted)	Apologies
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(Online)	In Attendance		
Will Staunton (WS)	Trent Branch	Y	Ian Moodie (IM)	Technical Manager	Y
James West (JW)	Wales Branch	Y (Online)	Laura Lamb (LL)	Membership Officer	Y
Michael Sly (MSL)	Welland & Nene Branch	Y			
Ian Hodge (IH)	Environment Agency	Y			

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557	Welcome/ Apologies Vice Presidents, Peter Glas (PG) and Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (AM) were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were given from Lee Pitcher (LP) and Will Harrison (WH).	
558	Declarations of Interest	

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	None	
559	Minutes of Previous Meetings Minutes of 14.10.2025 were approved.	
560	Matters Arising a. 549a. All bar one ADA Directors had completed their identity verification with Companies House. Outstanding Director to complete process before 28 March 2026 deadline. b. 552. Outstanding action noted for IH and IT to set up a meeting with Caroline Douglass. c. 554c. In relation to standing charges for pumping stations, a letter had been sent by IT on 26.01.2026 to the appropriate DESNZ Minister and copied to Defra officials.. <i>Action: Copy of IT letter to DESNZ to be sent to Baroness McIntosh and passed to House of Lords Environment & Climate Change Committee.</i> d. 552. Withdrawal of main river maintenance. HC enquired about minutes and actions from the latest meeting of ADA Branch Chairs. It was confirmed a further meeting date for ADA Branch Chairs had not been set. There had been discussion within the Environment Agency since and the message is that the revenue budget for asset maintenance needs to be redistributed, but it is not increasing. The ADA Board agreed that efforts around highlighting the importance of adequate maintenance funding need to continue. There was a brief discussion around ADA seeking legal advice for IDBs where main river maintenance was a concern, though the recent case involving Natural Resources Wales was noted. It was agreed that further discussion with Defra and specifically the Floods Minister were needed. IT summarised that ADA's main focus is working with civil servants within Defra and the Environment Agency's National team to engage on main river maintenance, PSCAs, and de-maining. A lot is relying on IDBs demonstrating that they can step up to deliver maintenance works effectively, in order for the EA to see IDBs as equal partners. In Somerset this required IDBs to plan and prepare to play a greater role in the future. It was noted that Somerset IDBs needed a couple of years to take steps forward in their capacity. IT noted his involvement on a Defra group looking at the transition process for the new Water Bill following on from the Cunliffe Report.	IT
	ADA ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION	
561	ADA Advisory Committee Report TF summarised the recent meeting of the Committee on 10.02.2026. The main discussion focussed on the underpinning of ADA and ASA's collaboration and establishing a strategic case for a new joint association. TF thanked Jane Frogratt for her comments on looking strategically and involving members views. The points raised in the Membership fee paper (discussed under item 563a.) was favoured by the Committee.	

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562	Finance Report IT presented an overview of the 2025 accounts, summarising how the outturn had differed from that forecast. There were two main factors: • a change to the publishing dates of the ADA Gazette (the Winter edition is now published in January each year rather than mid-December in order to avoid the Christmas period). This resulted in three editions of the ADA Gazette instead of four being published in 2025. Overall advertising revenue remained stable, with thanks to the work of Ryan Dixon. • Adjustment to staff costs as a result of the conclusion of salary reviews in line with the ADA Employees' Pay & Conditions Progression Policy adopted by the Board 01 July 2025. Subscription income was steady and showed a slight increase with more Associate Members in 2025. There had continued to be substantial work on debtors by Sue Crowther resulting in a continued low number of longstanding debtors. The increased venue costs of hosting the annual ADA Flood & Water Conference at One Great George Street were noted, resulting in the event struggling to breakeven or make any revenue for ADA. ADA administrative costs were £12k less than budgeted, partly due to a staff member on unpaid leave for a proportion of 2025. The overall reserves to the 31 December 2025 were £220k. The higher interest savings accounts had accrued £7k of interest with £40k in one and the other with £100k. The Board stated its approval for a balanced budget approach going forward. There was a discussion around attracting water companies as members of ADA, noting recent engagement with senior staff at Wessex Water. IT welcomed Board Members establishing contacts where they had these.	
563	Board Business & ADA Business Development a. Future membership fee structure IM presented how ADA and ASA are looking to unite and with both boards' approval become one combined association in the near future. The vision is for the new membership association to be inclusive a give a voice for all risk management authorities in the country. He summarised the collaboration planning work to date, how the comments from the Advisory Committee have been taken on board in relation to the business development case. The paper assesses the pros and cons, structure of new association and the narrative of the change of name in a series of meetings with ASA. The Board were given a summary of the potential membership fee structure for a combined association, looking at the benefits and disadvantages of the existing ADA and ASA fee structures for both local authorities and commercial associate members. Both ADA and ASA charged a largely consistent annual membership fee for local authorities. A combined association had scope for expanding membership in this area, but it would be difficult to plan for due to ongoing local government reform in England. Given that there was there being single tier of local authorities across the whole of England by around 2030 a single membership fee offering was thought the most suitable. But offering a discounted rate for district councils, given that ADA already have a number of	

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	district council members. He explained that a cheaper 'Community Group' membership category could be offered that was accessible to Town & Parish Councils and other local community organisations (e.g. flood action groups). Future considerations would be whether to offer a three-year committed membership at a discounted rate, and whether groupings of local authorities (such as London Boroughs) could access a discounted group membership. He also noted that combined authorities could be a consideration for a membership category in the future, although they currently lack a specific flood risk management functions at the moment. In terms of fees, a balance will needs to be struck across the different membership categories in a new association. IM recommended increasing the local authority fee to between £600-£700 for unitary councils. For corporate associate members ADA currently has a single fee, but it was proposed moving to a simple tiered feescale fee based upon the number of employees (full time equivalents) within a business (including within any global parent businesses and/or subsidiaries). It was also proposed to remove individual membership. The proposals would not change the current Associate Membership income from existing members very much, but potentially make membership more attractive to more businesses enabling more growth. DM suggested considering the fee for Town and Parish Councils as these can be quite different scales of public authority, and considering population size as a metric for varying the membership fee for local authorities of various types and sizes. The Board was also updated on EA and RFCC membership fees, with current arrangements continuing for one further year, with all RFCCs incorporated as members, while ADA develops an improved fee structure. IH said a single payment for the Environment Agency as a national agency would be more practical to separate fees for the EA and each RFCC in the future. He stated the Environment Agency will contribute £38,980 to ADA in 2026 including for the 12 RFCCs. RFCC chairs need to be aware of the importance and value of the membership, especially during transition to a new association. b. ADA/ASA Collaboration IT noted that it was unlikely that concrete proposals for a new association will not be ready to bring before an AGM in 2026 and will carry over to 2027. The narrative is important and our respective member buy in is very important and board members were encouraged to discuss ideas around a new association with other members. c. Defra Lowland Peat Contract IM reported that the latest Defra funding stream for lowland peat water level management was now in development. ADA had been invited to provide expert support to the new grant scheme under a new contract (max. £112,000), which could be renewed by mutual agreement up to three further years. ADA would be supporting the Environment Agency and Defra with the administration of the new grant scheme. IM noted that the new lowland peat water management grant funding scheme would likely be more competitive (open to a range of land management organisations rather than just exclusively for IDBs) and would likely encourage collaborative projects involving multiple organisations	

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	within a lowland peat area. d. Digital Training Academy Discussions with SAAA that there may be an additional income stream to ADA if successful for a digital training learning suite. PB can confirm that the board are supportive of a digital academy workstream and just wanted some more details. e. Advertising and sponsorship IT presented the paper on advertising income by Ryan Dixon on ADA Gazette advertising income. He summarised that ADA would once again be a Strategic Partner in Flood & Coast 2026, and was in talks with the 'New Civil Engineer' publication and researching other PR opportunities. Advertising and sponsorship of ADA events was going well, with Balfour Beatty and Wilkin Chapman Rollits co-sponsoring the ADA Flood & Water Conference 2025 and Breheny the sole sponsor of the ADA Environment Day 2026. f. Company Secretary and Directors Updates PB referenced one director outstanding on identity verification with Companies House, which has a deadline of 28.03.2026 and there will be a branch director change coming later this year for the ADA Lincolnshire Branch. He was not aware of any further retirements planned.	
	POLICY & STRATEGY	
564	Environment Agency and Defra updates IH provided the following updates from the Environment Agency and behalf of Defra. a. Recent flooding The Board received a comprehensive update on the recent flooding in Somerset following Storm Chandra. Directors noted the scale of rainfall across the South West, the declaration of a major incident on 27 January, and the subsequent transition into recovery. The Board acknowledged the extensive pumping operations deployed across the Somerset Levels & Moors, as well as the continued multi-agency coordination with Somerset Council, local IDBs, and other partners. Although conditions were improving, water levels were expected to remain elevated owing to ongoing unsettled weather. Directors raised concerns on the timing for trigger levels for pumping infrastructure in Somerset, which IH confirmed would be subject to review. b. FCRM investment An update was provided on the 2026/27 Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) investment allocations within the confirmed £4.2bn three-year settlement. The Board noted the 2026/7 capital programme, including £750m for schemes and nearly £50m of IDB-led projects, alongside the broader scope of activities funded through the settlement such as asset maintenance, natural flood management, and operational readiness. IH confirmed the Environment Agency's asset maintenance allocation for 2026/7 was £143.5 million. c. IDB Storm Recovery & Asset Improvement Fund	

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	The Board received a detailed overview of the IDB Fund (2024–26), noting that by March 2026 a total of 278 projects across 94 IDBs had been delivered, supporting resilience across more than 400,000 hectares of agricultural land and benefiting over 200,000 properties. Directors recognised the strong collaborative working between IDBs and the EA, and the positive contribution that this programme had made to rural resilience and long-term asset reliability. d. Financial matters Updates were provided on the Higher Land Water Contributions, drainage rates, special levies and precepts, all of which have been set in accordance with statutory processes. Ian explained that the EA Board also formally noted its responsibilities when acting as the Internal Drainage Board for the River Arun Internal Drainage District. A progress report was presented on the Defra/MHCLG-commissioned IDB Funding Research, now moving from diagnostic analysis into options testing. Early findings point to increasing financial pressures on IDBs, rising costs, and variations in reserves. Members noted the forthcoming case studies and the development of a benefits framework to support clearer articulation of the value IDBs provide. e. English Drainage Boards Statutory Instrument (SI) The English Drainage Boards (Alternative valuation calculation) Regulations 2024 (the SI) is a piece of draft legislation that will allow: - existing IDBs to use a new valuation calculation based on up-to-date data to calculate their annual drainage rates and special levies - new IDBs to be created - existing IDBs to expand their boundaries. It was confirmed by Defra that the Minister has come back on the final substantive changes, so the SI is now being finalised ahead of legal checks within Defra. The SI will then need to be signed off by the Minister before it goes to Parliament to complete its affirmative procedure. There are several standard steps for this to happen and the timeframe is not confirmed. However, the process was likely to take several months to complete. f. IDB Orders On behalf of Defra, IH provided updates on the following amalgamations and reconstitutions of IDBs, which had, or were scheduled, to come into force in early 2026: - Orders made: - Upper Ouse Water Management Board, amalgamation of the three Bedford Group IDBs comes into force 01.04.2026. - Goole & Airmyn IDB reconstitution, came into force 27.02.2026. - Ouse & Derwent IDB reconstitution, came into force 27.02.2026. - Waveney Lower Yare & Lothingland IDB reconstitution, came into force 27.02.2026. - Orders due to be made: - North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board amalgamation of Lower Medway IDB and North Kent Marshes IDB	

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	was shortly due to be made and come into force 01.04.2026. • Order being worked on: ○ Four more: one amalgamation and three reconstitutions. g. Channel Management The Board also received updates on conveyance management, including the principles guiding the use of dredging, regulatory exemptions, FRAPS and work undertaken to address the backlog of FRAP permits issued. IH reported that the EA were undertaking work to review the EA maintenance protocol, following feedback from partners in Somerset and actions agreed at the Flood Resilience Taskforce. Work to improve clarity, consistency, and consultation processes for the maintenance protocol and on other linked actions is underway. The Board further noted that the EA were considering the procedures for demaining, including the early exploratory activity on the River Hun in Norfolk. There was a frustration that the reports and guidance from demaining pilots undertaken in 2018 had not been published by the EA. <i>Action: IM to email IDBs to seek cases where future demaining would be possible and welcomed by the IDB/local community.</i> There was a discussion around whether PSCAs had become progressively more complicated for IDBs to operate. IH noted that PSCAs and associated guidance was being looked at by the EA.	IM
565	ADA policy and technical activities a. Trusted partner status Leading on from the discussion around FRAPs, IM discussed the concept of trusted partner status that had been raised by Dan Corry's independent review of Defra's regulatory landscape, and how that could be considered in relation to watercourse maintenance works by RMAs. IM highlighted the Dutch regulatory system, which is more simplified in relation to water boards routine works, where a protocol for watercourse maintenance standards is agreed between government and the boards every five years, and allowed working within those requirements without consents/permits required. b. Electricity fixed/standing charges for pumping stations IM presented on the substantial increases in electricity standing and fixed network charges for pumping stations. IM had had conversations with Ofgem with Steve Larter (Witham & Humber Drainage Boards) and Paul Burrows (Middle Level Commissioners). Ofgem had requested ADA to seek the MPAN of every pumping station's electrical connection in order to look into this further. ADA collected this data for over 600 IDB pumping stations, but was refused the data by the EA for their 360 pumping stations. ADA submitted the MPAN number to Ofgem at the start of January, to which Ofgem replied that they would not undertake any analysis with this data and could not contact electricity suppliers for the relevant data. The Board agreed that wider lobbying was needed on this issue and welcomed that IT had written to the relevant DESNZ minister on this matter and ADA was awaiting a response. c. Consultations	

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	IM provided an update on the recent consultations ADA had responded to/engaged in since the previous Board meeting: • Drought Preparedness inquiry (House of Lords Environment & Climate Change Committee) – IM provided written evidence, Andrew Newton (Ely Gorup of IDBs) attended inquiry session on 10.12.2026 • Reforms to the statutory consultee system (MHCLG) [Closed: 13.01.2026] • Beaver long term management plan (Natural England) [Closed: 20.02.2026] Phil Brewin (Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium) responded. • FCERM Strategy Review – Early gathering of views (Environment Agency) [Closes: 13. March 2026] IM noted the following ongoing consultations ADA would be engaging with: • FCERM Funding Guidance (Environment Agency) • Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system (MHCLG) [Closes: 10 March 2026] • River basin management plans: significant water management issues (Environment Agency) [Closes: 20 May 2026]	
	COMMUNICATIONS & EVENTS	
566	ADA Events IT provided a short update on the following events: a. Environment Day There was a capacity audience at the ADA Environment Day, with a good range of speakers, and sponsorship from an associate member helping to cover a proportion of the costs. Thanks to MS for providing the venue was noted. b. Media Training ADA was holding a media training day for IDB officers and board members in March with a team of media experts led by Tom Heap. Focus was on how to engage and present to the media more positively. c. Flood & Coast 2026 ADA will once again have a presence at the event as a ‘strategic partner’. ADA would have a small pop up pod within the ‘local authority village’ within the exhibition hall. It was noted that IDBs and LLFAs could also apply to have a poster in that area, entitling them to two free tickets to the Conference. d. ADA Flood & Water Conference 2026 The date and venue of the Conference were confirmed as Tuesday 17 November 2026, at One Great George Street, Westminster. There was a discussion around whether ADA are planning to hold more demonstration type events in the future. IM said that whilst ADA was not looking to host such events centrally, ADA would be happy to support Associate members led demonstrations/exhibitions, or where these are arranged by ADA	

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	branches or IDBs in the future.	
577	Any other business The ADA Board of Directors extended their thanks to the ADA staff team for their work during the previous four months.	