

## Summary of the NIEA Board Meeting

10am, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026

NIEA Lisburn Boardroom

### Board Members in Attendance:

David Reid (DR)	Chief Executive, NIEA (Chair)
Richard Crowe (RC)	Director of Water Regulation and Enforcement Division, NIEA
Alistair Beggs (AB)	Director of Waste Regulation and Enforcement Division, NIEA
Liz Loughran (LL)	Director of Natural Environment Division, NIEA
Stephen Welch (SW)	Non-Executive Board Member
Veronica Morris (VM)	Non-Executive Board Member

### Other Attendees:

Anne McDowell (AMcD)	Head of NIEA Corporate Services Branch, Central Services Unit, NIEA
Charles Barnett (CB)	Head of Financial Reporting Branch, Central Services Unit NIEA
Ciara O'Kane (CO'K)	Board Secretariat, Central Services Unit, NIEA
Peter Fallon (PF)	H&S Advisor, Health and Safety Co-ordination Branch, DAERA
Teresa O'Neill (TO'N)	Head of Central Services Unit, NIEA
Janice Riddell (JR)	Head of NIEA Chief Executive's Office, NIEA
Janice Harris (JH)	Assistant Director Operational Review Programme, NIEA
Brian McVeigh (BMcV)	Water Regulation and Enforcement, NIEA
Cara Lavery (CL)	Head of Programme Management Office, NIEA
Niall Davey (ND)	Head of Environmental Crime Unit, NIEA

Item		Action
1	<p><b>Introductions (and Apologies)</b></p> <p>DR welcomed attendees to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies from Mariesa Carey.</p>	
2	<p><b>Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>No new conflicts of interest were recorded.</p>	

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3	<p><b>Minutes and Action Points, from Board Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025</b></p> <p>The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025.</p> <p>Updates were provided on a number of actions; these are recorded in the Action Log <b>AE1/25/2895875</b>.</p>	<p><b>Papers</b></p> <p><b>25-4-2</b></p> <p><b>25-4-3</b></p>
<p><b>Standing Items</b></p>		
4	<p><b>NIEA Resources Committee Update</b></p> <p>VM delivered the NIEA Resource Committee update and recommended the Board note the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board discussed sickness absence levels across NIEA and expressed a concern for the pressure on colleagues. Discussion included how to support colleagues moving forward.</li> <li>• VM will consider a recommendations paper on supporting staff; the Resource Committee will present this paper to the NIEA Board.</li> <li>• The importance of staff engagement and internal communications was discussed. It was agreed that, once in post, the new Grade 7 for NIEA communications, people and workforce planning (job title to be decided) will attend the Resources Committee.</li> <li>• The Board asked for a deep dive into sick absence. TO'N will, with input from other Divisions and Units, develop a paper on NIEA staff sickness absence. This will be presented to the Resources Committee. The Resources Committee will provide an update to the NIEA Board.</li> <li>• The Board highlighted the NIEA Newsletter as being exceptional, and discussed other excellent work being done by the comms team and ORPT.</li> <li>• Capital Expenditure was discussed. SW suggested the need for 'oven ready' projects. DR asked for the Resources Committee to consider level of overcommitment, consider assessment of</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-4</b></p> <p><b>AP 25-4-1</b></p> <p><b>AP 25-4-2</b></p> <p><b>AP 25-4-3</b></p>

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	<p>underspend/overspend and then make an assessment on the need to prepare business cases for some projects (list of prioritised projects).</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VM will consider a recommendations paper on supporting staff; the Resource Committee will present this paper to the NIEA Board.</li> <li>• TO’N will, with input from other Divisions and Units, develop a paper on NIEA staff sickness absence. This will be presented to the Resources Committee. The Resources Committee will provide an update to the NIEA Board.</li> <li>• VM to consider level of overcommitment, consider assessment of underspend/overspend and then make an assessment on the need to prepare business cases for some projects (list of prioritised projects).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Health and Safety Monthly Report</b></p> <p>PF updated the Board on health and safety and recommended the Board noted the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p>DR thanked the Health and Safety Team for their support.</p>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-5</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>NIEA Corporate and Business Planning</b></p> <p>AMcD updated the Board on Corporate and Business Planning – specifically the NIEA Business Plan 2025/26 confirming the 6-month position and the 9-month position.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the 9-month position 1 KPT is amber (Lough Neagh) and 1 is red (Planning). It was agreed that Planning would be discussed later in the meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-6</b></p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DR commended the quality of the updates and thanked NIEA Corporate Services Branch (Chris Bulter) and staff for their contributions.</li> <li>• It was noted that considering the high level of vacancies within NIEA, the agency is in a good position overall, in terms of meeting its targets.</li> <li>• It was acknowledged that Key Priority Target 3 – Planning is not yet where it needs to be, but strong effort and direction could deliver a positive turnaround.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMcD to issue the updated version of the NIEA Business Plan 2025/26 9-month position to the Board.</li> <li>• In future, secretariat is to alert SW and VM when updates have been provided after the initial issue of Board Papers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AP-25-4-4</b></p> <p><b>AP-25-4-5</b></p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>NIEA Risk Register / NIEA High Level Risk Summary</b></p> <p>AMcD updated the Board on the NIEA Risk Register / NIEA High Level Risk Summary.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board discussed their concern regarding the identified Health and Wellbeing risk. It was noted it was good to communicate with all staff with the resources available and this should be done on a more regular basis.</li> <li>• The Board noted the benefit of taking annual leave and would encourage staff to do so.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In relation to health and wellbeing, JR (Chief Executive’s Office) to draft a memo for DR in early March to issue to all staff referencing PPA Completion; Performance Management; Absence Management, Annual Leave.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-7a</b> <b>Paper 25-4-7b</b></p> <p><b>AP-25-4-6</b></p>

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<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Update from NIEA Planning Management Meeting (including NIEA Planning Improvement Plan)</b></p> <p>LL presented the Update from NIEA Planning Management Meeting (including NIEA Planning Improvement Plan) Paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LL introduced the Paper, advising the increase in performance within Key Priority Target 3 – Planning, will not be delivered by year end. It was advised that the target only considers statutory cases, however there are non-statutory cases that are also just as important and need worked on.</li> <li>• The Board acknowledged this target, will not be fully delivered by year end and agreed whilst this is the case, progress is important.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-8</b></p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Update on ORPT (Operational Review Programme Team)</b></p> <p>JH and CL presented an update on ORP. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme progress</li> <li>- Current status of projects</li> <li>- Phase1B timescales</li> <li>- Programme plan</li> <li>- Staff survey 3</li> <li>- On the horizon</li> </ul> <p>The Board noted the paper and current position.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tremendous work and progress were highlighted and DR thanked the team for their work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-9</b></p>
<p><b>Strategic Discussion</b></p>		
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Waste Crime</b></p> <p>AB and ND provided an update on Waste Crime, asking the Board to note the content of their Paper and current position.</p> <p>The Board noted the content and current position.</p>	<p><b>Paper 25-4-10</b></p>

	<p><b>Discussion following the paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AB drew the Boards attention to paragraph 5, to discuss the main challenges that enforcement functions for the agency face, this included recruitment and retention, training, fragmentation, intelligence sharing and analysis, policy and lastly infrastructure to utilise new enforcement powers. Main discussion was a concern around vacant posts and getting these resolved.</li> <li>• It was agreed a Paper on The Recommendations of the NIAO Reports to Waste Crime would be presented at the June ARAC meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A paper on the recommendations of the NIAO Reports to Waste Crime is to be presented at the June ARAC meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AP 25-4-7</b></p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>ORP Project 5 – NIEA Strategic Plan</b></p> <p>BMcV presented on ORP Project 5 – NIEA Strategic Plan, this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development journey</li> <li>- Benchmarking summary</li> <li>- Proposed NIEA Strategic Plan content</li> <li>- Measuring progress</li> </ul> <p>The Board noted the presentation.</p> <p><b>Discussion following the presentation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed NIEA Strategic Plan Content was discussed, with conversation being held on the NIEA Mission, Vision and Values.</li> <li>• There was concern raised around the timeline of the plan being so long, but this was justified as the plan is a long-term vision and the environment does not change quickly.</li> <li>• It was agreed that in order to move forward in measuring progress the best option is adopting a multi-framework alignment more broadly against existing frameworks. It was agreed a ORPT would draft a submission to put to the Minister.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentation / Discussion</b></p>

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	<p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JH to provide the NIEA Board with an update on the progress of ORP Project 5 (NIEA Strategic Plan).</li> </ul>	<b>AP 25-4-8</b>
<b>12</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>AMcD advised the Board on the NIEA Board Effectiveness Plan, giving an overview of Board evaluation processes and other elements to consider enhancing Board effectiveness.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting, and Approval of Items for Strategic Discussion at the next Board Meeting</b></p> <p>Date of next meeting: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026.          It was agreed the July Board Meeting would be moved to the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2026 from 10.30am – 2pm. The July 2027 meeting would also be moved to the last Thursday in June 2027.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <p>Secretariat to reschedule the July 2026 and July 2027 Board meetings to the last Thursday in June 2026 and 2027.</p>	<b>AP 25-4-9</b>