



Minutes of NSTA Board meeting on 22nd January 2026
09.30-14.30
Videoconference

Directors	In attendance
Liz Ditchburn Chair	Paul Buckfield (items 10 and 11) Chief Digital Officer
Stuart Payne Chief Executive	Saratu Mamman (item 11) Head of Corporate Services and Programme Delivery
Nic Granger Chief Information and Financial Officer (CIFO)	Alex Longden (item 11) Chief Data Officer
Iain Lanaghan Non-executive Director	Hedvig Ljungerud (items 12 and 13) Director of Strategy
Sara Vaughan Non-executive Director	Tom Wheeler (item 12) Director of Operations
Sarah Deasley Non-executive Director	Anthony Moulds (item 12) Head of Economics
Vicky Dawe Shareholder Director	Kristina Dahlstrom (item 13) Head of Policy and Strategy
Malcolm Brown Non-executive Director	Thierry Berns (item 13) Senior Policy Adviser
	Russell Richardson, General Counsel and Company Secretary
	Fiona Gruber Board Secretary

1. Welcome and introductions

Liz Ditchburn welcomed directors to the meeting.

2. Conflicts of interest

No conflict of interest with any agenda item, nor as a result of new appointments, was declared by any director.

3. Minutes and matters arising

The board discussed and approved the minutes of the November meeting and reviewed the action log. Directors agreed to add two remuneration committee actions (nomination of a People NED and nomination of a NED as a whistleblowing officer) to the board action log.

4. Chair's report

The chair updated the board on the NED recruitment campaign. There was a very strong response to the campaign and interviews have been scheduled in early February, to be followed by informal discussions with directors. A nomination committee has been scheduled in early March.

Following a recent meeting with the chair of an operator who had not seen the NSTA's publication of well decommissioning performance and their inclusion within this, directors highlighted their interest in understanding in due course how data transparency impacts on operator behaviour.

5. Committee reports

The remuneration committee met prior to the board meeting and discussed and agreed the Chief Executive's proposed 2025 performance bonus.

6. Safety and environment report

The Chief Executive presented the safety and environment report, with updates from the HSE and OPRED. On 12th December he met, alongside senior leaders from OPRED and HSE, industry MDs for their biannual meeting hosted by OEUK. The meeting was constructive and considered a range of important issues and opportunities.

7. Chief Executive report

The Chief Executive updated the board on the NSTA's activity since DESNZ's publication on 26th November 2025 of its consultation response document. The North Sea Future Plan proposes significant changes to oil and gas licensing and the NSTA's primary objective and powers. The executive has launched an overarching project to coordinate the broad scope of changes which will be needed after the necessary legislation comes into force. The board discussed those elements which may need board consideration and agreed it would like to discuss Transitional Energy Certificates when the policy has been further developed.

The board discussed the extent of recent M&A activity and agreed that it would be useful to see more detailed regular updates on M&A activity.

Performance report

The board received and noted the interim performance report.

The board thanked the Chief Executive for his update and looked forward to discussing these matters further at future meetings.

8. CIFO report

The CIFO presented the Q3 finance report and noted that the final underspend for the year would not be confirmed until the extent of the legal costs refund - following the recent litigation outcome - was known. On holiday accrual, the board agreed that in future it would make sense to calculate it only at financial year end.

Following the board's approval of the 2026-27 budget by correspondence in December 2025, the CIFO approved a small adjustment, to account for the cost of additional national insurance contributions on a fully staffed basis.

9. Shareholder report

The Shareholder Director updated the board on departmental business and the forthcoming launch of the North Sea Future Board, to be chaired by the Minister of State for Energy.

10. Cyber security strategy

The executive presented its draft cyber security strategy for the NSTA to secure its position as a cyber-resilient regulator with optimal security capabilities, proactive threat management and secure digital innovation capabilities. The strategy is aligned with the NSTA's crisis management framework and its IT and information management strategies. The proposed cyber risk appetite is as low as is reasonably possible, balancing costs and benefits with the need to provide flexible services.

The board thanked the team for the paper and discussed the potential impact of a successful cyber-attack on the NSTA's services, given the evolving threat landscape. The board supported the proposed posture and was confident in the NSTA's ability to restore services quickly if necessary. It was confirmed that the board would always be notified of any serious incidents. The board supported the strategy and the proposed risk appetite and agreed that the cyber resilience maturity matrix should be taken to a future audit and risk committee meeting.

11. Data and digital strategy

The executive presented a refreshed data and digital strategy, setting out plans to build strong foundations to ensure the NSTA is well positioned to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving energy landscape. Strengthened and more automated governance, infrastructure enhancements, and better structured data capabilities will allow the team to carefully prioritise work for optimum outcomes.

The board thanked the team for their presentation of plans to leverage new technologies to accelerate the proactive use of NSTA hosted data. The board welcomed the team's focus on enabling more structured use of data and its strong focus on communicating the benefits. The board discussed the team's assessment of its current and potential future position on the maturity matrix and agreed that it would be important to capture and communicate achievements effectively.

The board endorsed and approved the strategy.

12. Electrification scenarios

The executive presented the status of currently ongoing Electrification Reasonableness Assessments (ERA) and the implication of potential outcomes, including the possibility of unlocking hub investment.

The board thanked the team for their analysis of the economic reasonableness of electrification. They discussed the analysis and agreed that the topic would return to the board in future.

13. Hydrogen regulation: process and approach

The executive presented a proposal for a limited additional regulatory role for the NSTA in offshore hydrogen production, for in principle board approval, and updated the board on the wider hydrogen context. The intention of the regulatory proposal is to minimise duplication and conflict between regulators whilst adding value on stewardship and spatial planning.

The board thanked the team for the update and discussed both aspects of the proposal. Directors noted the findings of the analysis and agreed in principle to the NSTA seeking a licensing role on 'freestanding' offshore hydrogen production, and a consultee role on 'renewables integrated' offshore hydrogen production, as and when the government expands its focus to offshore production. The board further noted the broader hydrogen context, including the current offshore hydrogen projects pipeline.

14. Agenda planning

The board discussed the engagement plans for future board meetings and dinners, including visiting the Tyneside supply chain cluster in July.

There was no other business.



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Liz Ditchburn, Chair

19th March 2026