

# Broads Authority

## Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2024

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## Present

Bill Dickson – in the Chair for agenda item 1

Harry Blathwayt (in the Chair from item 2 onward), Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Paul Hayden, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Siân Limpenny, Michael Scott, Vic Thomson, Fran Whymark

## In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Jonathan Goolden – Monitoring Officer, Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology, Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, Rob Leigh – Head of Communications, Rob Rogers – Director of Operations, Natalie Beal - Planning Policy Officer (for items 14-16), Sara Utting – Senior Governance Officer, and Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer.

## Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chair explained that the meeting was being audio-recorded. All recordings remained the copyright of the Broads Authority and anyone wishing to receive a copy should contact the Governance Team. The minutes remained the record of the meeting. He added that the law permitted any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of public meetings of the Authority. This did not extend to live verbal commentary. The Chair needed to be informed if anyone intended to photograph, record or film so that any person under the age of 18 or members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed could be accommodated.

## 1. Appointment of Chair to the Broads Authority

Tony Grayling was proposed by Stephen Bolt and seconded by Siân Limpenny.

Harry Blathwayt was proposed by Alan Goodchild and seconded by Martyn Hooton.

Ballot papers were distributed, collected and counted by the Senior Governance Officer and the Governance Officer, overseen by the Monitoring Officer.

**It was resolved by 12 votes to 2 to appoint Harry Blathwayt as the Chair of the Broads Authority for the forthcoming year 2024/25.**

Harry Blathwayt took the Chair.

The Chair thanked the Members and said that he hoped that he fulfilled the Members' wishes in voting for him, and also thanked Tony Grayling for standing. The Chair then thanked the outgoing Chair, Bill Dickson, and said that he could not speak highly enough of the way that he had conducted himself and the way that he had conducted business for the Broads Authority.

Bill Dickson thanked the Chair for giving him the opportunity to address the Board one last time and congratulated the Chair on his election. He said that it had been a privilege to lead

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the Board and had enjoyed working alongside Members and Officers and added that the strength of the Authority laid in the unfailing professional integrity, resilience and propriety of the Authority's Officers.

## 2. Appointment of Vice-Chair to the Broads Authority

Tristram Hilborn was proposed by Tony Grayling and seconded by Tim Jickells.

**There being no other nominations Tristram Hilborn was appointed Vice-Chair of the Authority for the forthcoming year 2024/25.**

## 3. Chairman's announcements

The Chair said that the Briefing and Workshop on Tolls and Budget would be held on Tuesday 8 October 2024 at 2pm.

The Chair confirmed that both Stephen Bolt and Matthew Shardlow had been re-appointed for a second term as Secretary of State appointees.

## 4. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Tristram Hilborn, Kevin Maguire, Lesley Mogford and Matthew Shardlow.

## 5. Introduction of members and declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered.

## 6. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

## 7. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

## 8. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 9. Summary of actions and outstanding issues

Members received the latest summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions at previous meetings. The Chief Executive (CE) said that there were no further updates to the report.

A Member asked whether there was anything that could be done to move forward with the Wherryman's Way footpath. One of the Members from Norfolk County Council said that there

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were a lot of parties involved in this project, however, there was nothing new to report. The Chair noted that there was a meeting of Broads Local Access Forum in September and said that this subject should be raised at that meeting.

**The report was noted.**

## 10. Strategic priorities update

Members received the report providing an update on the Strategic Priorities. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority was on track with the priorities.

A Member asked whether it would be possible for the Broads Nature Recovery Plan to be brought to a future Broads Authority meeting. The CE confirmed that this was being brought to the September Board meeting and there would be a lot of work on this issue in the next few months. The CE added that the Nature Recovery Strategy, which covered Norfolk and Suffolk, was now making substantial progress, and it was envisaged that a draft Strategy would be produced by January 2025 for consultation.

**Members noted the progress in implementing the 2024/25 priorities.**

## 11. Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 and Code of Corporate Governance 2024

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The SGO said that, as required by legislation, the Draft Annual Governance Statement was published on 31 May 2024 and since that date, there were a couple of updates to the report which related to the internal audit recommendations. The SGO referred Members to page 49 of the papers, and said that Risk 4: Risk Management Framework, and Risk 3: Key performance Indicators were both now complete. On page 51, the deadline on Risk 9: Pilotage had been updated to 31 October 2024, as the Authority was waiting for the outcome of legal advice relating to this issue. On page 52, Risk 1: Health & Safety at Work policy, there was a revised date for completion of 31 March 2025, due to the unexpected delay in fulfilling the vacant Head of Health and Safety Management post.

A Member commented that the Targets and Outcomes Framework which Defra were developing for National Parks had been previously discussed, and asked whether this was in abeyance until the new Government considered what it wanted to do. The Chief Executive (CE) replied that there were set National targets that had been driven from the Environment Plan and the next stage was to disaggregate those amongst the protected areas, and Natural England was doing some of that work. The CE added that the Authority had been engaged with Natural England to start the process and commented that, for instance, the ambitions around tree planting might be appropriate for some National Parks, but had limited application in the Broads. The Member asked whether, if this Framework came to fruition, would it be referenced in the Annual Governance Statement. The CE confirmed that this would be the case.

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A Member asked what the delay on Risk 9: Pilotage was. The Director of Operations (DO) said that through the Port Marine Safety Code the Authority was required to make provision for a pilot. This had been discussed at a recent Navigation Committee, however, the Authority needed to check its proposed action against the Harbours Act to ensure that what the Authority had put in place was legal. The DO confirmed that the Safety Management System had been updated with the new details for pilotage within the Broads as per the audit and as agreed with the Navigation Committee, the legal check is the final aspect of this work.

A Member commented that at the recent Risk, Audit and Governance Committee meeting it was agreed that the Authority would expedite the delivery of the Health & Safety at Work policy, and asked whether it was possible to bring the date forward from March 2025. The CE said that it was hoped that it would be possible to bring the policy to the September Board meeting.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Siân Limpenny.

**It was resolved unanimously to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 and to note, subject to the implementation of improvements identified in the action plan, that the Authority's systems of governance and internal control are considered to be adequate and effective.**

## 12. Draft Statement of Accounts

Members received the Draft Statement of Accounts from the Director of Finance (DF). The DF thanked the Members who attended the Finance and Statement of Accounts training on 16 July.

The DF reported that since the verbal update provided to Members on 10 May, the deficit had increased by £20,101 and was due to the audit fees going to the provision held within the balance sheet which exceeded the amount that was available. The total deficit, however, was funded by the reserves.

The DF referred Members to table 1 on page 69 of the report and said that this took the actual figure reported to Members and splits this by Directorates and project funding. Table 2 on page 70 summarised the year-end adjustments made which Members do not see up until this point and the details on the adjustments were set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 of the report. Table 3 on page 71 sets out where these adjustments fell within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which could be found in the Draft Statement of Accounts (on page 89 of the combined papers). The DF added that the most significant adjustments put through at year end related to capital purchases and the pension. The pension calculations are done by the actuary employed by Norfolk Pension Fund and those adjustments could be found under employee expenses in table 3. Capital adjustments included the removal of capital purchases which was transferred to the balance sheet under other services.

At the Risk, Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 23 July, EY (the external auditors) were in attendance and gave a verbal update on the position of the audit with 70% of the audit having been completed. The DF said that there would be a delay in the accounts being

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signed and the audit being finished due the recent election and the wait for the backstop legislation to be published. The original backstop proposed that accounts up to 2022/23 would need to be signed by 30 September, however, without the legislation in place the outstanding 2022/23 accounts could not be signed off and would mean that 2023/24 accounts would be further delayed. It was therefore possible that the 2023/24 accounts would probably not be brought to the Board before March 2025.

A Member commented that the Authority paid a lot of money for the audit and asked that the new Chair write to the new Secretary of State with the argument that the audit procedures for the Authority were over-burdensome. The DF said that at every opportunity, where there was a consultation about the audit fees, the DF responded and pointed out that if the audit regulations kept up with the Companies Act, the Authority would fall within the small audit regime and added that because they had not changed since 2014, the Authority was still caught in the same band as the County Council and District Councils find themselves. The DF said that feedback received had been that the backstop needed to be dealt with first before any other changes were made. The impact for the Broads Authority was slightly less than other authorities, some of whom were still waiting for sign off of 2019/20 accounts. The DF hoped that once the backstop was dealt with, the Government would then look at a change in the regulations in respect of levels of audit. The Chief Executive (CE) said that it would be worth the Authority to send a letter to the new Deputy Prime Minister.

A Member asked who would control any change of the rules. The DF confirmed that at present it was the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

**Members noted the current position regarding the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.**

### 13. Recreation and Tourism Strategy

Members received the report of the Head of Communications (HC). The HC provided an overview of the report and Strategy and said that this was a high-level plan at this stage and once adopted by the Broads Authority the HC would seek to implement the 5-year project plan. He added that there was a need for further detail and scoping to map out specific projects and responsibilities.

The HC said that it had not been an easy task to produce a Strategy that was sensitive to the challenges facing the tourism sector and the Broads in general, but also reactive to the opportunities that existed. All stakeholder comments during the consultation had been carefully considered whilst being mindful of the Authority's statutory obligations, core purposes and also the delicate balance of economic, environmental and social needs and priorities.

The HC said that he was very grateful to all that offered their support, comments and constructive feedback during the consultation, in particular Maria Conti as her expertise had been an enormous help during the process. The wealth of comments received during the survey, workshop and consultation had demonstrated a willingness to collaborate in order to

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make the Broads leisure and tourism sustainable. Given the limited resources available to all parties, that collaboration would be essential to the success of the Strategy.

A Member commented that it might be worth considering an additional action in respect of the Government's intention to create nine new National River Walks, and asked whether it was worth engaging with the Government on this matter. The HC noted this.

A Member referred to section 3.3 of the Strategy, Attracting wider audiences, and asked how the Authority would engage with schools. The HC said that the Authority's Education Officer had received extra funding through Generation Green to help get under-represented groups into National Parks, and this would include school groups, and confirmed that the Authority was currently exploring options in this respect. The Member said that there were charities in Norwich that provided funding for schools to get out into nature, and would pass on the details to the HC.

A Member said that at the Navigation Committee in June he raised a point regarding objective 7 of the Strategy - enabling more people from all walks of life to experience the Broads National Park, and had asked why ethnic minorities were not included in the Strategy. The HC said that the strategy was a high-level document and that, following adoption of the Strategy, further work would be carried out to provide details and scoping for specific projects and responsibilities which would include targeting under-represented groups.

A Member asked about visitor numbers and whether there was any data on numbers post-pandemic. The HC said that unfortunately he had not yet received any data on visitor numbers for 2023, however, trends showed that 2023 was a slower year than the previous couple of years. He added that in 2024, accommodation figures had not improved, however, the weather had not helped and the Broads were competing with cheaper, foreign holidays.

One of the Members for Norfolk County Council said that footpath counters had been working throughout the summer and he would see if he could get any data on the number of people using footpaths around the Broads area.

A Member commented that he had been speaking to Hire Boat operators and said that the weather had impacted their day boat hire numbers.

Michael Scott proposed, seconded by Paul Hayden.

**It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Recreation and Tourism Strategy.**

## 14. Endorsing East Suffolk Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document

Members received the report of the Planning Policy Officer (PPO). The PPO explained that this document set out the standards, guidance and approach for open spaces in East Suffolk. The document had been taken to the Planning Committee on 19 July 2024 where it was recommended that the Broads Authority endorse the East Suffolk Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document.



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Andrée Gee proposed, seconded by Tim Jickells.

**It was resolved unanimously to endorse the East Suffolk Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document.**

## 15. Thorpe St Andrew Neighbourhood Plan - Adoption

Members received the report of the Planning Policy Officer (PPO). The PPO said that this Neighbourhood Plan had been through consultation and examination and it was discussed at the Planning Committee on 21 June 2024, where it was recommended to the Broads Authority that the Thorpe St. Andrew Neighbourhood Plan was made/adopted.

Fran Whymark proposed, seconded by James Harvey.

**It was resolved unanimously to make/adopt the Thorpe St Andrew Neighbourhood Plan.**

## 16. Local validation list – update for Biodiversity Net Gain

Members received the report of the Planning Consultant. The Planning Policy Officer (PPO) gave an overview of the report and said that it had been brought to the Planning Committee on 21 June 2024, where it was recommended that the Broads Authority approve the updated Local Validation List.

A Member asked how this would be monitored. The PPO said that there was a requirement for the Authority to monitor and that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) be in place for 30 years. The PPO said that this was not her area of expertise and that she would ask the Biodiversity Net Gain Officer to provide further information for Members.

A Member asked whether this was an input measure or an outcome measure. The PPO said that BNG required a 10% net increase in biodiversity.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Andrée Gee.

**It was resolved unanimously to approve the proposed amendments to the Local Validation List.**

## 17. Committee membership and member appointments

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The SGO said that following the appointment of Harry Blathwayt to Chair of the Authority, he would no longer be able to serve on the Standards Committee, and therefore, asked whether there was any Member who wished to be appointed to the committee. Andrée Gee confirmed that she was happy to be appointed.

The SGO said that there was a vacancy on the Navigation Committee following Greg Munford coming to the end of his term as Secretary of State appointee. Tony Grayling confirmed that he would be willing to be appointed to the Navigation Committee.

Michael Scott proposed, seconded by Tony Grayling.

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It was resolved unanimously to confirm the Broads Authority member appointments for the 2024/25 year to:

- i. the Navigation Committee; Planning Committee, Risk, Audit & Governance Committee; Standards Committee and the Broads Local Access Forum and
- ii. outside bodies (table 2).

## 18. Appointment of Independent Persons

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The Chair said that he had personally interviewed the proposed appointees when they were candidates for the Independent Persons for North Norfolk District Council and said that they were highly qualified for the position and would recommend them to the Board.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Andrée Gee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. To appoint Charles Monteith and Hannah Brown as the Authority's Independent Persons for a four year term.
- ii. To thank Christine Lee and Amanda Orchard for their services.

## 19. Items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

There were no matters to report under this item.

## 20. Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2023/24

Members received the report of the Waterways and Recreation Officer. The Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (HCME) said that he wanted to thank the two Broads Authority members appointed to the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) for their input over the past year. He said that there had been many meetings held out in Broads locations, with a number of sites visited.

The work of BLAF balanced the strategic aims for access with examples of practical delivery of the Integrated Access Strategy and its objectives which provided the framework for focussing limited resources, as well as having demonstrated close working with Norfolk County Council as the largest Highways Authority in the Broads.

**The report was noted.**

## 21. Report on outside bodies – Whitlingham Charitable Trust 2023/24

Members received the report from the Trustees of Whitlingham Charitable Trust. The Chief Executive (CE) said that unfortunately the Trustees were unable to attend this meeting and

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present the report in person. He said that the Authority had gone through an open process for the recruitment of the Trustees in 2023 and added that he had attended the AGM and his observation was that the Trust was going from strength to strength. However, when the brownfield site next to Whitlingham Country Park was developed, this would have an impact on the site.

**The report was noted.**

## 22. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Broads Local Access Forum – 6 March 2024

Standards Committee – 7 March 2024

Risk, Audit and Governance Committee – 12 March 2024

Navigation Committee – 11 April 2024

Planning Committee – 26 April 2024

Planning Committee – 24 May 2024

Planning Committee – 21 June 2024

## 23. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

## 24. Formal questions

There were no formal questions of which notice had been given.

## 25. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 20 September 2024 at 10.00am at a venue to be advised.

The meeting ended at 11:23am

Signed by

Chairman