

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2019

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Present

Nicky Talbot – in the Chair, Kelvin Allen, Linda Aspland, Matthew Bradbury, Greg Munford, Mike Barnes, Andy Hamilton, Alan Thomson, Harry Blathwayt, Leslie Mogford.

In attendance

Maria Conti – Head of Governance, Bill Housden – Head of IT and Collector of Tolls, Emma Krelle - Chief Financial Officer, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Ash and Simon Sparrow.

Recordings

The Chair announced that the meeting would be recorded and that the copyright remains with the Authority. A copy of the recording could be requested from the Governance team.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Leslie Mogford to his first Navigation Committee meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest

Members expressed their declarations of interest as set out in Appendix 1 of these minutes.

3. To note whether and items have been proposed as matters of urgent business

No items were proposed as a matter of urgent business.

4. Public question time

No public questions were raised.

5. Minutes of Navigation Committee meeting held on 5 September 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

6. Summary of actions and outstanding issues following discussions at previous meetings

The Chief Executive gave an update of issues recently presented to the Committee.

With regard to the Network Rail Whole Life Strategy, he reported that Authority officers met with Network Rail (NR) management in October. The Authority had consulted the Committee, the NSBA and other interested parties about the need for NR bridge control cover on

Christmas Day and Boxing Day. There had been no demand for the bridges to swing last year and the feedback unanimously agreed it was unnecessary for NR to provide the service this year. NR is replacing the existing contacts on the bridges with electronic contacts, which should help the reliability of bridge opening. From February, the bridge signal box staff will act as bridge operators only, with signalling being operated from Colchester. NR has agreed they will provide contact numbers so boaters can call them when at the bridges. The Authority is awaiting NR's business case for bridge replacement.

Members felt it was important that NR recognised the unique position of the region in having four swing bridges, and the significance to the Broads' navigation. The Chair noted that if the boating community had any issues regarding the bridges, they were advised to contact NR directly so they had a record of incidents affecting boaters, as well as incidents interrupting the rail service. The Authority agreed to provide contact details on the Broads Authority website so people can do this.

7. Chief Executive's report and current issues

The final report of the Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs, led by Julian Glover, was published in October. The Chief Executive reported that the initial response from the National Park Authorities was generally good, but that Government was unlikely to consider the report within the next year.

At their meeting on 27 September, the Broads Authority adopted a Climate Change Emergency Statement for the Broads. It includes an aim to make the Authority carbon neutral by 2030 and reduce all carbon emissions to zero by 2040, working with stakeholders to reduce emissions from domestic, travel and other sources in and around the Broads. The Authority's officers are working with local authorities and parish councils on this issue.

The Chief Executive commented that while the carbon emissions from boating were a relatively small part of overall emissions for the area, boating businesses and tourism operators should be encouraged to see where carbon reductions could be made. It was noted that the technology to move away from using fossil fuels in boats was some way off, and hybrid engines were still relatively costly. A mid- to long-term strategy would also need to find ways to improve the supporting infrastructure, encourage visitors to travel to the area in more sustainable ways, and give boating businesses time to plan for change. It was noted that new generations of visitors would demand more environmentally friendly services. A member added that, as an internationally protected landscape, the Broads was in a strong and positive position to promote sustainability.

8. Proposed navigation charges for 2020/21 in the navigation area and adjacent waters

The Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and Head of IT & Collector of Tolls introduced the report formally consulting the Navigation Committee on the level of charges for the navigation

area and adjacent waters for 2020/21. The Tolls Review Group (TRG) had considered the level of charges at their meeting on 4 October.

Members were presented with background information on the tolls setting process, recent and projected boat numbers, and current pressures on the navigation expenditure. They were asked for their feedback on three options, as set out in [para 4.4. of the report](#). They were also asked to consider the potential for additional expenditure for three projects, namely pontoons at Peto's Marsh, online safety training for boat users, and a repeat sample survey conducted in 2014 of private boat owners.

In summary, Option 1 recommended a 1.8% toll increase across the board, and Option 2 added the cost of the pontoons and safety training projects, meaning a 3.4% increase across the board. Option 3 took Option 2 and increased the costs for unpowered, hybrid and electric vessels at a lower rate (+1%) than those using diesel and petrol (+3.6%). Linked to Option 3, members were asked what more the Authority could do to encourage sustainable boating.

The Chair asked each member for their views on the options and proposed additional projects. She also read out comments from the NSBA and from members not at today's meeting.

- Members supported Option 1 to increase tolls by 1.8% to maintain existing services and taking account of a reduction of ten hired motor cruisers and the proposed toll change for electric auxiliary yachts.
- Members agreed with the TRG's recommendation that the structure of the charges should be amended so that electric powered auxiliary yachts pay the same as unpowered sailing boats.
- It was noted that the NSBA supported Option 1 combined with Option 3, but did not support Option 2.
- Members had varying views on Option 3 to have a lower toll increase for unpowered, electric and hybrid vessels. It was felt the technology was still limited at this stage, and electric boats were unlikely to be the longer-term solution to sustainable vessel propulsion. In general, members recommended an across the board toll increase.

Members had the following feedback on the potential additional expenditure set out in para 4.1 of the report.

- Pontoons to provide access for boats at Peto's Marsh (£30,000): Members supported this project, which would provide access to one of the biggest attractions in the southern broads. However, they did not think it should be fully funded through tolls. It was suggested a 0.5% toll increase could be used to part fund the project (around 50%), with other sources raising the remainder, such as contactless card donation posts at the mooring or online crowd funding. One member felt the concept of donations, albeit voluntary, at one mooring and not at others was not in line with the Mooring Strategy. Another member asked if the pontoon, as a public access facility, could be funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund award to Suffolk Wildlife Trust for

the wider Peto's Marsh project, but it was noted this was not possible within the funding criteria.

Members agreed to recommend a 2.3% increase across the board (1.8% + 0.5%), with the trialling of contactless/online donations at various locations and other potential sources of funding used to raise the remaining £15,000.

- Online safety training for boat users (£20,000): Members felt this online tool would be ineffective in reducing the number of boating accidents, because most hirers would not use it. An alternative could be to post more boat safety information on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. It was suggested that private boat owners should not be asked to fund the cost of this training through tolls, and the hire boat industry could look at their own systems to see what could be improved. It was pointed out that safe and courteous boating behaviour benefited everyone using the waterways.

The Chief Executive agreed to take members' views back to the Broads Hire Boat Federation.

- Repeat sample survey of private boat owner views (£30,000): **Members agreed with the TRG's view that this survey was not a priority.**

A member asked why the recommended toll increase was always 'previous year plus an increase' and whether future efficiencies might lead to a variable budget. Another suggested a thorough review of the longer-term budget setting for the navigation to get more out of a flexible tolls system. The Chief Financial Officer responded that officers use a zero-based budget process to assess expenditure for the following year, and individual budget holders are required to submit requests for expenditure split between 'essential' and desirable'.

In summary, the Chair noted the Committee's support for Option 1, with an additional 0.5% increase to part fund the Peto's Marsh pontoons project. The Chief Executive agreed to send the feedback from today's meeting back to Committee members to check before taking it to the Broads Authority on 22 November.

9. Construction, maintenance and environment work programme: progress update

Members received a progress update for the construction, maintenance and environment work programme. The Director of Operations pointed out that this year's dredging programme target of 44,000m³ was lower than the usual 50,000m³ target, because the dredging was being focused on difficult/hard-to-reach areas, based on the results of hydrographic surveys. A member felt it would be helpful to communicate this to the public, alongside more information generally to give people a better understanding on how funds were being spent.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on **Thursday 16 January 2020** at the Dockyard, Griffin Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0SL commencing at 2pm.

11. Exclusion of the public

It was resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the item below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public benefit in disclosing the information.

The public left the meeting and the recording was suspended.

12. Exempt minutes of Navigation Committee meeting held on 5 September 2019

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 4.28pm

Signed

Chairman

Appendix 1

Declaration of interests Navigation Committee, 31 October 2019

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Mike Barnes	8	As declared and toll payer
Kelvin Allen	8	Chair, BASG C/C
Linda Aspland	8	Toll payer, none otherwise
Harry Blathwayt	8	Toll payer
Alan Thomson	8	Toll payer
Andy Hamilton	8	Toll payer
Greg Munford	8	CEO, Richardsons Leisure Ltd President, British Marine
Matthew Bradbury	8	British Canoeing member Toll payer
Nicky Talbot	8	Toll payer