

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022

1.	Apologies for absence	2
	Recordings	2
2.	Declarations of interest	2
3.	Matters of urgent business	2
4.	Public question time	2
5.	Minutes of last meeting	2
6.	Summary of actions and outstanding issues following discussions at previous meetings	2
7.	Chief Executive’s report and current issues	3
8.	East Norwich Masterplan	3
9.	Construction, Maintenance and Ecology work programme – progress update	5
10.	Draft budget 2022/23 and financial strategy to 2024/25	5
11.	AINA Code for the design, construction and operation of hire boats	6
12.	Powerboat racing review 2022	6
13.	Date of next meeting	6
	Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 13 January 2022	6

Present

Simon Sparrow – in the Chair, Linda Aspland, Mike Barnes, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Mathew Bradbury, Andy Hamilton (from agenda item 8), Leslie Mogford (from agenda item 8), Greg Munford, Paul Thomas, Alan Thomson.

In attendance

Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology, Esmeralda Guds - Governance Officer, Linda Ibbitson-Elks – Head of Safety Management, Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations, Cally Smith – Head of Planning, Sara Utting – Senior Governance Officer.

Also in attendance

Graham Nelson – Executive Director of Development and City Services, Norwich City Council.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Nicky Talbot and John Ash.

Recordings

The Chair announced the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the standing orders for procedures for remote meetings. The meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the live stream accessible from the Authority's website. The Broads Authority retained the copyright of the recording and the minutes remained the formal record of the meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

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

3. 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 last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chair.

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

Members received a report summarising the progress of issues that had recently been presented to the Committee.

The Chief Executive updated the Committee that officers were chasing the lease on Burgh Castle mooring which was with the landowner's solicitors. The Authority hoped to resolve this matter as soon as possible.

The publication of the Government's response to the Landscape Review was imminent. There would be a twelve-week consultation period and so a Landscape Review member workshop for all members and co-opted members would be arranged at the end of February.

The Chair asked about the delay on remedial work being done on the bridges by Network Rail. The Director of Operations explained that the work had been delayed until later this year when an agreement had been reached between the rail company and the track owner on when the possession order could take place.

Members noted the report.

7. Chief Executive's report and current issues

The Chief Executive introduced the report and commented that discussions with the Chair of Barton & Irstead Parish Council regarding the lease of Barton Turf Staithe 24-hour moorings were ongoing.

A member commented he fully endorsed the Authority's stance in regards to Barton Turf moorings. He agreed the Authority shouldn't be paying a high cost for leases for little return, as this was in line with the mooring strategy supported by the Navigation Committee. However, water facilities should be available so losing a water point was a concern. The Director of Operations responded that negotiations were still ongoing and that the Authority would explore other options to retain the water point if the mooring was lost.

Andy Hamilton joined the meeting.

The report was noted.

8. East Norwich Masterplan

The Head of Planning, and the Executive Director of Development and City Services (EDDCS) from Norwich City Council presented the covering report. The report introduced the development of Stage 1 of the masterplan for East Norwich and outlined the key issues for navigation to be taken forward in Stage 2.

Members views were sought on the development of the master plan, the emphasis of the river and the provision for navigation indicated within the plan and the principle of the fixed bridges.

Members welcomed the plan. They recognised that the plan linked in with the Broads Authority area and had potential for placemaking, such as at Whitlingham Country Park, benefitting tourism and enhancing navigation.

Recognising the access issues to the development site(s) a member suggested considering the river for commercial use for bringing in materials to the development site. The EDDCS responded that, they would be happy to consider non-traditional routes of delivering materials via the river although this might not be required.

A member queried whether any consideration was given to Carrow Abbey, a valuable heritage asset. The EDDCS confirmed that it was the plan's objective to safeguard and secure public access to the Abbey.

It was clarified that the masterplan was carried out in advance of a planning consent consultation process. It was not a planning application, merely an indication of what could be achievable. Any decision made on fixed or lifting bridges would be received as part of a planning application. A member commented that he understood that consensus for opening bridges was needed early on in the process in order to maximize the prospect of this plan being successful and to be taken forward.

The masterplan as a whole would be dependent on having to construct new bridges to create linkages between the different sites (i.e. vehicle access). It was made clear that the type of bridge would affect the viability of the plan as fixed bridges were cheaper to construct and had less cost implications than opening bridges, both in terms of construction and maintenance and managing costs.

Leslie Mogford joined the meeting.

It was highlighted that the opening bridges don't open easily and that it wouldn't be unreasonable to set a fixed soffit height for any new fixed bridges so that access for navigation was not impeded any more than it was currently. One member pointed out that as it stands, getting from the Northern Broads to Norwich would require having to go through a fixed bridge anyway, so consideration should be given whom navigation would be kept open for. Members were asked to note that the principle of a fixed bridge would not apply to all bridges, like Breydon bridge or Somerleyton swing bridge, but was subject to specific circumstances and opportunities within the masterplan.

The Broad Authority's position was that the historic right of navigation into Norwich must be protected and that any new bridges should be opening bridges. The implications of a fixed bridge were sterilisation of the Port of Norwich; loss of historic right of navigation; impede access to high bridged and fixed mast craft and possible impact on Norwich Yacht Station. Members were asked to also keep in mind that the opening of Trowse rail bridge and Carrow bridge were governed by Acts of Parliament, which meant a considerable amount of legal work would be required to issue consent for a fixed bridge.

It was emphasised that the marina indicated in the masterplan was a mitigation for putting in a fixed bridge. Informal comments received from the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association (NSBA) said they would prefer the marina to be 100% visitor moorings. Although, the idea of maximizing the offer for visitors was supported, officers believed that revenue from private mooring would be required to make the marina viable.

The overall opinion of the Committee was that every effort should be made to preserve navigation into Norwich and to make sure that any new bridges could open.

Members believed that there was scope to make use of the river and that lifting bridges would support navigation and that without it there would be an overall loss of navigation areas. A member suggested that Heritage Harbour status could be investigated for Norwich as part of the overall development of the waterfront areas.

Members understood that the marina indicated in the masterplan was a mitigation for putting in a fixed bridge. However, the Committee was opposed to fixed bridges and believed that delivering boats to the centre of Norwich was more important than a marina.

Members did welcome the principle of redevelopment of the brown field land/Master Plan and the opportunity that it offers, however the general consensus was that Members were opposed to fixed bridges and would choose lifting bridges over a marina.

Graham Nelson left the meeting.

9. Construction, Maintenance and Ecology work programme – progress update

The Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (CME) reported that the planned annual dredging volume total had been achieved ahead of schedule. This was mainly because the lagoon area, created as part of the Chara Bay project, took more sediment than previously calculated. In addition, the CME team spent less time than predicted on water plant cutting.

Commissioners Cut 24-hour mooring would stay closed until an affordable solution could be found. The Head of CME explained that complete replacement of all steel pilling wouldn't be cost effective. Maintaining the existing line and strengthening what was already in place would offer better value for money and allows the mooring to re-open. Work was going out for re-tender with the aim to start work in the spring.

In response to a question about progress being made on dredging Geldeston Dyke, the Head of CME responded that the focus on shoals in the main river and limited capacity at the dredge storage location, meant that the CME team hadn't managed to dredge that far up the river yet. It was highlighted that the Broads Authority's extent of navigation management responsibility was uncertain along Geldeston Dyke. A nominal division exists at the start of the straight dyke to the railway bridge, marked by a 3-mph sign. Through a local access arrangement, the Authority clears the water plants beyond its navigational limit along Geldeston Dyke. Dredging is a far more expensive activity, so members were asked to consider whether the Authority could afford to continue to extend the scope of its dredging responsibilities, bearing in mind the priorities and demands on resources it was facing.

The Head of CME confirmed that dredging in terms of volumes had been less than previous years, but explained, dredging was targeted where it would be most beneficial to users like areas of the river or broad which were shallow.

The report was noted.

10. Draft budget 2022/23 and financial strategy to 2024/25

The Director of Finance introduced the report which covered the actual Navigation income and expenditure up to 30 November 2021 and the Draft Budget for 2022/23.

At the end of December 2021, toll income was £184,000 above budget and the report showed a forecast at the end of November 2021 of £189,000 above budget. Members were updated that current predictions suggested that the forecast could be as much as £195,000 above budget.

There were no further updates to the December 2021 expenditure figures.

In regards to the draft budget, pay had been difficult to forecast. Members of staff making up 62% of the navigation side of the budget meant that pay negotiations could have a big impact on the budget.

Inflation and the cost of energy continued to increase and at the end of November the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 4.6% and continued to rise. The CPI for December wouldn't be available until 19 January 2022.

It had been predicted that 20 hire boats would be removed from the network, however this did not occur which has contributed to a favourable variance on toll income for the 2021/22 budget. Next year's budget assumed, based on intelligence from the industry, that further boats would be removed.

Members noted that the Chief Executive Directorate had now been renamed as The Directorate of Finance and Support Services.

The report was noted.

11. AINA Code for the design, construction and operation of hire boats

The Head of Safety Management introduced the report and informed Members that the Hire Boat Code, introduced in 2009, had mandatory implementation for the safe operation of all types of powered craft hired to members of the public within the navigational areas of the Broads. A new code came into force on 1 January 2022.

The report was noted.

12. Powerboat racing review 2022

The Head of Safety Management introduced a report which covered the management of power boat racing on Oulton Broad, including a fixture list for the 2021 season.

Members had no comments on the proposed fixture dates.

The report was noted.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on Thursday 14 April 2022 at 10am.

Signed

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 13 January 2022

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Greg Munford	Item 11	Hire boat operator
Simon Sparrow	Item 8 and item 11	Owner of larger boat trying to get to Norwich and Hire boat operator