

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021

1.	Apologies for absence	2
	Remote meeting standing orders and recording	2
	Announcements	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	3
	Network Rail	3
	Moorings	3
7.	Chief Executive's report and current issues	3
8.	Construction, maintenance and ecology work programme progress update	4
	Work programme	4
	Aquatic plant cutting trial at Hickling	4
	Dredging	4
	Floating pennywort	5
9.	Draft budget 2021/22 and Financial Strategy to 2023/24	5
10.	Tolls enforcement	6
11.	Changes to Hire Boat Licencing Conditions	6
12.	Residential Moorings Guide – final draft	7
13.	Date of next meeting	7
	Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 14 January 2021	7

Present

Nicky Talbot – in the Chair, Kelvin Allen, John Ash, Linda Aspland, Mike Barnes, Harry Blathwayt, Mathew Bradbury, Andrew Hamilton, Leslie Mogford, Greg Munford, Simon Sparrow, Paul Thomas, Alan Thomson.

In attendance

Natalie Beal – Planning Policy Officer (item 12), Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment, Essie Guds – Governance Officer (meeting moderator), Bill Housden – Collector of Tolls, Linda Ibbitson Elks – Head of Safety Management, Emma Krelle - Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Mullarney - Governance Officer, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations, Sara Utting – Governance Officer (meeting moderator).

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies had been received.

Remote meeting standing orders and recording

The Chair welcomed everyone to this meeting of the Navigation Committee, which was being held remotely under the Standing Orders for remote meetings adopted by the Broads Authority on 22 May 2020. 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.

Announcements

The Chair announced that it was Kelvin Allen's last Navigation Committee meeting. Kelvin had served 8 years as a Broads Authority member. She thanked him for his contribution and for keeping members informed about angling and the challenges of the fishing community using the Broads. She wished him best for the future.

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 22 October 2020 were approved as a correct record 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.

Network Rail

The Broads Authority (BA) is working closely with Network Rail and other partners on issues around the future of Trowse bridge, and Somerleyton, Reedham and Oulton Broad bridges.

One member mentioned the UK Heritage Harbour Initiative, which proposed that historic ports and harbours in the UK be recognised as 'Heritage Harbours'. CEO to investigate if this would be useful for the port of Norwich.

Moorings

It was reported that the Environment Agency had acquired resources for repiling at Burgh Castle moorings, which commenced on Tuesday 12 January. The Authority was in further discussions with the landowner regarding the lease. The approach to Breydon Water was critical and provided somewhere safe for vessels to moor up. The Authority would decline the alternative moorings at Belton Reach.

The report was noted.

7. Chief Executive's report and current issues

The Chief Executive (CEO) informed members that good progress was being made with the 9 online safety videos developed by Archant and the Broads Hire Boat Federation (BHBF). He thanked Greg Munford and Richardsons for their support with the project and said it was important to get the videos out in a timely manner for visitors and private boat owners to view.

It was explained that using the existing Richardsons/Archant animated videos was a cost effective and speedy method. The material was of a generic interest that would be adapted and anonymised for use on the Authority's website before the start of the 2021 season.

One member queried how boat yards would be expected to use the videos, and if it would impact the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) report. The CEO said the Authority was still in discussion with the MAIB and reminded members that the lead inspector had indicated that any action taken by the Authority in advance of the report being published could be considered in the report. He explained that the ambition was for all Broads' operators to use the videos in the handover material shared with visitors, details of which would be discussed with the BHBF. It was hoped that Rangers could gather feedback on the handover procedure and usefulness of the videos at a future Super Safety Day.

One member commented that the videos may not be relevant for day boat operators and suggested they be used in addition to the safety videos already provided by some operators. He said handover forms can request visitors declare they have watched the videos. Another

member said the animations would be enjoyable to watch and reinforced the message of a safe and enjoyable visit.

Members thanked the Broads Authority's Head of Communications, Director of Operations and the rest of the team for their work on the project.

The report was noted.

8. Construction, maintenance and ecology work programme progress update

Work programme

The Head of Construction, Maintenance, and Ecology (CME) reported that some developmental projects had been deferred until next year due to the current lockdown restrictions. Maintaining safety and conditions on the navigation had continued as planned. He thanked the CME and Ranger teams for their work with this.

Aquatic plant cutting trial at Hickling

The final report on the stonewort cutting trial at Hickling Broad concluded that there was evidence it had a negative impact. Actions arising from the outcome of the trial included raising awareness with the public of the impact of stonewort growth and where it could be found, as well as what the marked channels meant and how they were managed. The Head of CME said this may require additional signage, which would be explored with the Ranger team. He added that the sailing and windsurfing clubs in the area identified modifications that were available to certain vessels and sailboards that could mitigate the impact of sailing in weedy conditions outside the marked channel, however this was not possible for all types of vessels.

The Authority had a strong commitment to cutting the marked channel to maintain a safe route through the Broad and would explore the cutting of common species that occur on the channel edges with the landowner. However, it was noted that this would require additional Authority resource and further agreement from Natural England.

One member commented that there were reports last summer of boats getting fouled with water plants when in the marked channel.

Dredging

Dredging work in Hickling on Catfield Dyke needed to be extended for an additional four weeks, so the closure would be in place until 26 February 2021.

In response to a member question about the dredging reported in Appendix 1 of the report being under budget and completed in a shorter time for some of the individual projects, the Head of CME explained that the team had worked efficiently. He said that the volumes of sediment removed from the Waveney was more than in the plan. Staff time was included in the total project cost and as a fixed resource for the year; any staff time saved in one project is made available for other dredging project work.

Floating pennywort

A lot of floating pennywort was found and removed from the Ant by the Authority's Rangers and Operation Technicians at the end of last year. The invasive species can grow quickly and the Head of CME said it was a demand on staff time but required quick action in order to eradicate. The Authority was not alone in organising and co-ordinating the response to the floating pennywort and external funding routes were being explored.

One member commented on a report that suggested that the ebb at Yarmouth would be hampered by 37% by the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing and asked how this would affect river levels in the Broads system. The Head of CME said that the 37% was the width of the river taken up by the abutments of the planned bridge. He explained that the modelling didn't demonstrate whether there would be an impact upstream of Great Yarmouth but that the issue had been raised as part of the consultation. The Environment Agency would be considering such impacts further.

The report was noted.

9. Draft budget 2021/22 and Financial Strategy to 2023/24

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) reported that the actual variance at the end of November was a favourable variance of £148,391, mainly due to the improvement in toll income. At the end of December, private income was £2,214,901 and hire income was £1,105,681. This was a deficit of £122,418 compared to the annual budget.

Deferred projects have been incorporated into the 2021/22 draft budget as well as the 4% navigation charge increase and safety package. It was explained that the budget also considered a 2% pay increase for staff, however it was noted that the National Joint Council had not entered into negotiations yet. If this was not implemented then it would create an approximate consolidate saving of £97,750 (£45,000 relating to Navigation). The forecast would be adjusted accordingly in 2021/22.

An adjustment would be made to the Plant, Vessel and Equipment earmarked reserve at the end of the financial year to correct the split between Navigation and National Park. The CFO said due to the improvement in income, the previously cancelled contributions to earmarked reserves would be reinstated at the end of the year. A member suggested delaying committing to this spend until the Authority had a better understanding of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The CFO noted that there would be a review of the reserve levels during 2021/22 to make sure it was adequate for any future lockdown restrictions. If income and expenditure continued as projected, the reserves would remain above the recommended 10% at 11.2%.

The report was noted.

10. Tolls enforcement

The Authority has sought legal advice on how to shorten the tolls enforcement process for the small number of toll payers who persistently fail to pay their tolls on time. After the initial notice, offenders would receive one final letter, streamlining the process and reducing the resources required of the small Tolls team. The final stage of the process involved taking legal action.

The Collector of Tolls explained that it was a criminal offense not to pay the navigation charges, adding that the number of people taken to court was relatively small. One member suggested highlighting the implications of not paying a toll in Broad Sheet, the toll payer newsletter. The Collector of Tolls added that individuals were made aware of this before a summons was issued.

The Chair asked that feedback on the new process be reported to a future Navigation Committee meeting.

The report was noted.

11. Changes to Hire Boat Licencing Conditions

The Head of Safety Management (HoSM) outlined a review of the risk management system, and the introduction of a formal process to consistently measure compliance of the hire boat licencing conditions for all types of hire boat operators. The risk-based approach would use a traffic light system to identify those operators who were not compliant. The new system would allow for an annual inspection of those that were failing to meet the conditions.

A member queried the accessibility of a traffic light system for people suffering from colour vision deficiency. The HoSM said wording would be provided as well.

In response to a member question it was clarified that hire boat operators would be notified of their initial assessment ranking. There were also no current plans to make the assessment information public. Minor issues would be addressed in writing, whereas major issues would require additional visits and a set timescale for the operator to become compliant. The HoSM said the aim was to work with hire boat operators and provide information and advice where necessary.

A member asked whether the red category was enough for operators most at risk. The CEO said formal action would be taken if an operator was seriously failing.

Another member discussed incorporating mandatory viewing of the safety videos into the audit process to make a more robust system. The CEO said evidencing whether hirers had watched the videos had been discussed with the BHBF. The preference was for this to be included as part of the handover process, requiring hirers to sign a declaration form that they had watched and understood the material. Alternatively, they would be asked to view the videos on arrival before proceeding with the hire.

The Director of Operations cautioned making viewing the videos too prescriptive, recognising that operators targeted their handover processes to the ability of the hirer. The CEO said the videos were not designed to replace the existing handover and ‘show out’ procedures but to enhance them.

In response to a member question about the inclusion of these procedures in the hire boat licence, the CEO explained that revisions to the Hire Boat Code were in development. He said the expectation for the coming year was that all hire boat yards implemented a comprehensive handover procedure and ‘show out’. The Authority was in discussion with the BHBF regarding this.

Members were in support of the proposed hire boat licencing conditions framework. The report was noted.

12. Residential Moorings Guide – final draft

The Planning Policy Officer introduced the final draft of the residential moorings guide and said it had been designed to implement the residential moorings policy of the Local Plan. It was noted that there was one permitted scheme in the Broads.

There were no further comments from the Committee.

The final draft Residential Moorings guide would be presented to the Planning Committee and then the Broads Authority for adoption.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on Thursday 15 April 2021 starting at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 3.30pm.

Signed

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 14 January 2021

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Kelvin Allen	8	Chairman Broads Angling Services Group
Greg Munford	11	Hire boat operator
Simon Sparrow	11 12	Hire boat operator Residential mooring