

Demasting Moorings
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report provides members with an update on the current position regarding the development of demasting moorings in the navigation area. The report identifies that there have been problems in proceeding with the construction of the demasting mooring that was identified as a priority by members at St Olaves and seeks members' views as to whether the pontoons purchased by the Authority to provide this mooring should be used at another site to provide a demasting mooring or used to provide a safety mooring in the lower Bure.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Broads Authority's stated aim is to provide demasting moorings at all four quadrants of bridges that span the navigation. This ambition is enshrined in the Authority's Mooring Strategy and the aim has been taken forward into the Authority's Integrated Access Strategy which was adopted in May 2012. Consultation took place with stakeholders in 2013 as to where the Authority should concentrate its efforts towards increasing demasting mooring provision.
- 1.2 The consultation exercise revealed that stakeholders considered St Olave's and Acle bridges as the highest priority sites for demasting mooring provision in the Broads. Officers considered that St Olaves should be treated as the priority site for safety reasons as there is a history of boats getting into difficulty at the bridge due to the strong current conditions and unlike Acle Bridge there are no existing moorings that can be used in an emergency.
- 1.3 This committee considered the matter at its meeting on the 5 September 2013 and agreed with this assessment and the Broads Authority identified the provision of demasting moorings at either St Olave's or Acle bridges as a corporate priority for the financial year 2013/14.

2 Progress

- 2.1 Officers therefore surveyed both bridge sites and identified potential locations for demasting mooring provision. With regard to St Olaves the most appropriate site was identified as being upstream of the bridge on the true left bank of the River Waveney adjacent to a reeded edge. This site was agreed as being the most appropriate location in further consultation with the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association (NSBA).

- 2.2 Pontoons were therefore purchased by the Authority for installation at St Olave's in late 2013. However, it has not been possible to proceed with the required work as on one section of the frontage the landowner intends to install his own pontoon moorings and there are concerns about the effect the pontoons would have on landscape and biodiversity at the other possible site on the frontage.
- 2.3 Unfortunately the other potential sites identified at St Olaves would require leasing land from adjacent landowners and potentially taking on liability for piling. Additionally much of the piled frontage is already used for private online mooring or mooring dykes and signed "No Mooring". This means that it is not feasible to adopt the preferred approach of installing pontoons set out into the river as this would obstruct access to private sections of the river frontage. Normally the Authority would install two 11.5m pontoons at a site to provide a layby mooring and this would cost approximately £13,000.

3 Future Options

- 3.1 The sites identified at Acle as being suitable for the installation of pontoon moorings could be investigated further but it has recently come to light that the Authority owns land on the true right bank of the River Bure downstream of the bridge which may be suitable for developing a demasting mooring on the piled edge of the bank. Officers therefore consider that it would be sensible to investigate this site further to define the boundaries of the land owned by the Authority rather than immediately installing the recently purchased pontoons at Acle Bridge.
- 3.2 Should it be possible to develop a demasting mooring against the bank of the land the Authority owns, consideration could be given to installing the pontoons elsewhere on the lower Bure to provide a safety mooring.
- 3.3 Members will recall that the provision of a safety mooring on the lower Bure was also prioritised by the Committee. Unfortunately it has not been possible to negotiate a lease for the preferred site for the provision of such a mooring and this means that realistically the only way to provide a safety mooring downstream of Stokesby would be to install pontoons.

4 Asset Management

- 4.1 Members will also be aware that the Authority is currently undertaking a major project to assess mooring provision generally in conjunction with the Environment Agency and its contractors, Broadland Environmental Services Ltd. As part of this process the Authority has agreed to hold a stakeholder working group to discuss the issue of mooring provision and identify which sites are essential to maintain and where new opportunities should be investigated. This piece of work is essential as the Authority has identified that in order to maintain the majority of the existing 24-hour moorings in the system, the Authority will need to allocate a budget in the order of £108,000 per annum to cover the costs of repiling the existing structures as they reach

the end of their useful lives. Clearly adding to the asset management liability by leasing new sites will add to this burden.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Officers consider that prior to taking on new liabilities the Authority needs to have a full understanding of the financial implications of mooring provision in order to be able to recommend a strategic approach for the future regarding the maintenance and provision of 24-hour moorings and demasting moorings in the navigation area. To inform this process it is considered essential at the appropriate time to engage with a stakeholder working group to examine the issues in the round. Detailed recommendations can then be presented to the Navigation Committee and Broads Authority regarding the capacity of the Authority for taking on new mooring sites and which sites should be considered a priority.
- 5.2 As identified in paragraph 2.2 it has not proved possible to proceed with the St Olaves site and members' views are therefore sought as to whether the pontoons, which have already been purchased by the Authority, should be used to provide a safety mooring in the lower Bure or retained for use at a bridge site elsewhere in the navigation area.

Background papers:	Nil
Author:	Adrian Clarke
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Broads Plan Objectives:	NA5, TR2
Appendices:	None