

# Broads Authority

## Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2026

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## **Present**

Harry Blathwayt – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, Gail Harris, Heather Hilburn, Tim Jickells, Curig Johnston, Leslie Mogford, Tim Munday, James Reeder, Matthew Shardlow, Vic Thomson, Fran Whymark.

## **In attendance**

John Packman – Chief Executive, Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, Rob Rogers – Director of Delivery, Dan Hoare – Head of Operations, Harry Mach – Sustainability Manager, Joseph Balaam – Governance Officer, Lorraine Taylor – Head of Governance.

## **1. Welcome and apologies**

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.

**Apologies** were received from James Harvey, Tristram Hilborn, Martyn Hooton, Siân Limpenny, Gurpreet Padda

## **2. Chairman's announcements**

The Chair confirmed that there was no change to the order of the agenda and that no members of the public had registered to speak.

## **3. Introduction of members and declarations of interest**

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered, and as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

## **4. Items of urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

## **5. Public question time**

No public questions had been received.

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## 6. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 7. Minutes of extraordinary meeting

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 19 December 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 8. Summary of actions and outstanding issues

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

**The report was noted.**

## 9. Strategic priorities – update for 2025/26 and draft strategic priorities for 2026/27

Members received the report of the Head of Governance. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the report comprised of two key parts; the first part being an update on the current strategic priorities, and the second a draft of priorities for the upcoming year. The CE said there were quite a few priorities in the draft plan but deemed them all worthy of inclusion. The CE emphasised that a priority had been included that addressed navigation in response to a previous suggestion from one of the Members.

A Member commented that the focus on climate change in the report was too focused on future initiatives, and the Member hoped wider aspects of climate change would be considered. The CE said this was worth consideration in any future updates to the plan.

A Member said nature recovery was not reflected strongly enough in the report and had hoped this would be an ongoing priority. The CE said there were a number of priorities which were not included in the list of priorities that would be reported back to Members at each Broads Authority meeting, however, this was an ongoing priority.

A Member commented that the DEFRA priority of “Access for All” was entirely focused on physical access and did not include a socio-economic perspective. The CE said challenges had been created from the uncertainty around grant funding and it had been difficult to represent all the priorities and actions of the Authority into the report. The CE confirmed funding would be made available to address the “Access for All” priority which would enable the authority to look beyond physical access. A Member agreed that the importance of socio-economic access should not be understated as to ensure all people could enjoy the Broads.

A Member asked if there was any danger that the Authority’s strategy could be compromised should DEFRA change their priorities. The CE said the Authority had to be increasingly mindful of ministers priorities and expected focus would be on 30by30 and biodiversity issues. The CE advised Members that a draft grant agreement had been received from Defra, but was

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expecting some amendments before the final agreement was received. Defra priorities would be included in the final agreement and the CE said that he expected 30by30 to be included having recently attended a presentation on this. The CE added that the Authority's responsibilities were vast and the purpose of the strategic priorities was to inform Members of the Authority's progress on these throughout the year.

A Member agreed that all of the Authority's aims could not be included in the strategic priorities for 2026/27 and emphasised that this was only a one-year priority list. Consequently, the Member was not too concerned that some priorities had not been included. The Member commented that some of the draft priorities had been included in previous priority lists and had under-delivered due to funding issues. The CE said the Authority had delivered on a number of their more ambitious priorities over the last year but said a reduction in funding had impacted the Authority. The CE further noted that due to this, the Authority had been heavily reliant on partners on issues such as biodiversity, who were also struggling. The Member suggested an alternate category in future reports in which priorities would be added but delivery would depend on resource availability. The CE appreciated the ambition of the Members but emphasised the issue of resource availability. The CE hoped to bring a report to the May meeting which would address some additional aims.

A Member suggested future reports should include a traffic light system in which priorities that lacked resource availability would be included and acknowledged and asked for the thoughts of the CE on AI driving efficiency in future and questioned the ethical aspects of this. The CE said the Authority had an AI policy which included how AI could be used and which applications were supported by the Authority. The Director of Resources (DoR) said the Authority would be financially limited in the implementation of AI and no firm decisions had been made about any specific system to be used at present. The DoR acknowledged that planning was one of the areas that was considered to be benefitted by the use of AI. The Member agreed that future exploration into the use of AI would be beneficial.

A Member requested that socio-economic access be included in the agenda of the Broads Local Access Forum for further discussion. The CE acknowledged the issues raised by Members and committed to including biodiversity, access for all and the wider climate issue in a report which would be brought to the committee at a later date.

A Member asked if there was a large project the Authority would like to undertake but did not have the resources to do so. The CE said the Authority was not heavily engaged in species specific programmes. The Authority was reliant on volunteers for this but further engagement was not possible at this time due to the lack of available resources and staffing. A Member said this was a good example and commented that it would be useful if a future report could identify projects that would address the biodiversity issues raised by Members. The CE said a workshop with Broads Authority Members had been suggested by the Risk, Audit and Governance committee that would address some of these issues before the May meeting. The DoR said that the strategic priorities for 2026/27 were required by Defra to enable the first quarter of the National Park Grant to be paid in April.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Peter Dixon

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**It was resolved unanimously to approve the draft strategic priorities for 2026/27, with the inclusion of socio-economic access to 'access for all', additions to the response to climate change priority, and the inclusion of 30by30 in the final Strategic Priorities list for 2026/27.**

## 10. Budget 2026/27 and Financial Strategy

The Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR said the report covered two items, actuals up to the end of December 2025 and the draft budget for 2026/27. At the time of writing the report the January figures were not available, but would be provided in a verbal update. Table one now showed a total favourable variance of £1,329,998 which was a reduction of £919,648 when compared to December figures. This was in part due to timing issues with the National Park grant between December and January. There were no changes to Table 2 and 3. Table 4 contained the earmarked reserves which had reduced to £3,655,976 due to expenditure taking place, a reduction of £94,493.

The DoR confirmed the letter of intent from DEFRA had been received on 26 February 2026 which stated the intended funding allocation to the Authority. This would be confirmed in the Grant Funding Agreement which was due to be received before the end of March. The budget had been based on flat cash from DEFRA for revenue and capital, as well as a 3.5% increase in tolls. The DoR said paragraph 7.3 highlighted factors taken into consideration which included the assumption of pay increases over the next three years. Pay accounted for 62% of the consolidated expenditure, which was a reduction compared to previous years following the restructure; this figure was 74% last year.

Table 6 provided an overview of the 2026/27 budget. This table did not include £135,478 of funding from DEFRA for access, however this would not affect the net position if it were included. The DoR highlighted staff pay as the common increase in expense among all directorates. Table 7 detailed central costs and compared the forecast of 2025/26 to the 2026/27 and 2028/29 budgets; National Park remained high due to the capital grant expenses. The DoR said staff vacancies could lead to forecast adjustments, which was set out in the key assumptions. The DoR emphasised that all vacancies would still require management team justification and approval.

The DoR highlighted that the consolidated deficit was mainly on the National Park side which would be funded by the General (National Park) reserve. In comparison, navigation showed a surplus of £75,000. The DoR emphasised that the Navigation reserve remained at 11.2%, above the minimum level. Despite the deficit on the National Park side this also remained above the minimum level. The Navigation surplus could be lowered by changes to boat numbers outside the forecast reduction.

A Member asked for clarification on paragraph 13.4 of the report regarding income production from recharging staff time to projects and asked if income could be grown by this method. The DoR said any additional projects where staff time was currently recharged to projects was consumed in the National Park and Navigation reserves. By putting this in the earmarked reserves it would highlight to members the additional monies generated from staff recharges on projects. This would also make it more easily available to spend on additional

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projects in the future. The DoR confirmed staff recharging to projects was not a new approach but would instead be presented differently in future.

The CE thanked the DoR and acknowledged the challenge presented by uncertainty and last-minute capital funding updates.

Gail Harris proposed, seconded by Tim Munday

**It was resolved unanimously to:**

- i. Note the actual income and expenditure figures and prudential indicators**
- ii. Adopt the:**
  - a) 2026/27 Budget, including the endorsement of assumptions applied in the preparation of the Budget; and**
  - b) Earmarked Reserves and Financial Strategy for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29**
- iii. Agree the recommendation set out in paragraph 13.4 to create a new earmarked reserve to make available in future years funds generated from staff time recharged to externally funded projects.**

## **11. Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategy**

The Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR said the Risk, Audit and Governance committee had reviewed this report and supported the recommendation to the Broads Authority. The DoR highlighted a long-term ambition to look at treasury advisers which had yet to be fulfilled due to other work commitments. The DoR said this ambition remained and any employment of treasury advisers would require a change to the risk appetite in the strategy, which would consequently need Members' approval. The DoR advised the Authority was looking at dates to arrange a workshop for Members to discuss options around capital expenditure following the receipt of the DEFRA letter of intent.

The DoR highlighted section 2.6 of the report, specifically the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy. The audit of the 2024/25 statement of accounts noted that this was not officially documented. This was addressed in section 4.3 to 4.6 of the strategy.

A Member queried the capital investment strategy and sought further clarification. The DoR said the strategy included the £1,400,000 capital and was broad in detail. These details would be discussed at management group and later in a Members workshop following set criteria from DEFRA. The options raised during these discussions would be presented in a report to this committee at a later date.

The Chief Executive (CE) confirmed that the letter of intent from DEFRA detailed a three-year capital allocation of which a discussion would be required to allocate expense over the next three years in order to make the most positive difference. The CE emphasised that the capital funds allocated annually would need to be spent by the end of each financial year and

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suggested the possibility of larger projects that could be delivered in part over the next three years.

A Member asked if the Authority could invest more aggressively if funding were to be confirmed over a three-year period. The CE said this would not be possible as the sale of any grant funded capital items would revert to DEFRA. The DoR advised years two and three of the capital grant were indicative and could be changed by DEFRA.

Matthew Shardlow proposed, seconded by Gail Harris

**It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategy.**

## 12. Climate Action Plan

The Members received the report of the Sustainability Manager (SM). The SM thanked those who responded to the consultation process in December and advised the Climate Action Plan was a requirement following the Authority's commitment to Race to Zero. The SM advised this plan was proposed to run until 2027 and the targets included within the plan would be posted onto the Authority's website.

A Member sought further clarification around figure 2 and asked if the estimations reflected emissions at Cantley. The SM said there had been an error in the chart presentation as the bars were not properly stacked and should show a decrease. The SM confirmed that the Broads would be the only National Park with positive greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 largely due to being a wetland park. On a 100-year timeline such wetlands would still expect to be a slight net source of emissions due to the generation of methane and drawing down carbon dioxide. Consequently, the SM confirmed this was not due to any emissions at Cantley. The SM commented that British Sugar had made a number of investments to reduce the carbon footprint of the Cantley factory and good progress had been made over the last decade.

A Member thanked the SM and praised the progress made. The Member supported the proposed targets and said adopting targets was only the first step. The Member would like future versions of the plan to address specific environmental risks within the Broads area and actions that could be taken to mitigate these issues. Finally, the Member asked if any assumptions had been made in the 2040 target. The SM confirmed that the 2040 target assumed that the world would be progressing as expected. The SM provided zero carbon electricity as an example and said the target could not be met if this did not become available. In this respect the Authority would be dependent on international targets being met and would be limited to mitigate environmental impact otherwise. The SM said future plans could explore this link in greater detail.

A Member asked what the most important priority over the next twelve months would be. The SM said that trying to get the pipeline of the peat programme through would be one of the most important things the Authority could do in terms of environmental impact. The SM said the Authority was still awaiting information regarding the availability of funding through Zero Emission Vessels and Infrastructure fund.

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A Member was pleased with the report but sought clarification on the six provided examples in the report. The Member commented that some aspects included in the adaptation section and mitigation section would experience a crossover between the two. The SM said more concrete proposals would be produced following the Broads Futures Initiative and said the categorisations of the aspects were a stylistic choice and acknowledged some would be applicable to both mitigation and adaptation.

Tony Grayling proposed, seconded by Tim Munday

**It was resolved unanimously to approve the Climate Action Plan and linking future action plans to the Management Plan cycle.**

### 13. Strategic Planning: Broads Plan timetable and NSIP process

The Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE) and the Head of Planning. The CE said the report dealt with two aspects; the Broads Plan and two large Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) which would require significant input from the Authority. The CE referred members to section 4.1 of the report of which the CE believed there would be a limited number of people who could fill the role as described. The CE suggested a former employee, Andrea Long, take on the managing of these projects for the Authority. The CE advised that Andrea Long had submitted a proposal which the CE believed was cost effective. Consequently, the CE added the recommendation that the Board approve the appointment of Andrea Long to project lead the development and production of the Broads Plan and the NSIP process.

A Member asked if the Authority were receiving funds from the developers. The CE said the Head of Planning had submitted a detailed proposal to Essex and Suffolk Councils for them to fund the required work. The Authority had ambitions to consult with a wide range of people which included specialist consultants. The CE believed the £50,000 listed in the budget was a generous sum and did not expect all of this to be used. The Member asked if negotiation had taken place to ensure the Authority had received the best value for money possible. The CE said the Authority relied heavily on district councils, particularly East Suffolk Council, in which similar figures were put forward.

A Member commented Norfolk County Council possessed expertise which could be utilised by the Authority. The Member expressed discomfort in endorsing the services of Andrea Long without any details being shared with the Members. The CE said Andrea Long had previously been the Head of Planning and was responsible for overseeing the previous Broads Plan and was already familiar with the Authority's stakeholders. The costs for overseeing the NSIP work and the Broads Plan were modest

A Member asked if any funding would be available in supporting the NSIP. The CE said the NSIP would be self-funded. The Head of Planning had costed this based on advice from colleagues in Suffolk. The Broads Plan would be funded via National Park funds of which a nominal £50,000 had been allocated in the budget. The CE advised the NSIP programme

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would last three years and the demands on the Authority would be substantial. Due to this specialist expertise would be required.

A Member was surprised the discussion of this contract had come to the Members and believed this could have been resolved without Members involvement. The Member stated they strongly supported the proposal presented by Andrea Long. The CE said this issue was brought to the committee to allow for transparency in the decision-making process but could have been actioned without the need of approval.

A Member asked for further clarification regarding stakeholder input and who would be involved, specifically in step five of the actions. The Member hoped a wide cross section of input from various groups and demographics. The CE said the Authority had recent positive experience in the development of the Local Plan in engaging young people, parish councils and a wide range of stakeholders. The CE hoped the Authority would build on this work using similar processes.

A Member asked for assurance that procurement processes had been followed. The CE said openness and transparency were the key factors in deciding to bring the decision before this committee. The CE further advised the appointment would be time sensitive and obtaining multiple quotes would cause a detrimental delay to the process. The Member asked if the Authority was seeking exemption from the procurement policy to appoint Andrea Long. The CE said it would be a waiver of standing orders relating to contracts.

A Member was excited for the state of the park report and asked if it would be included in the proposed contract. The CE believed consultants could potentially be sought due to the limited capacity of the Authority. The CE suggested there could be advantages in producing this report independently and commented this process would form part of the £50,000 set aside in the budget.

A Member echoed support for Andrea Long but understood why some Members who had not worked with her were initially sceptical.

Peter Dixon proposed, seconded by Gail Harris.

**It was resolved unanimously to:**

- i. Adopt the outline timetable and process for the development, consultation and publication of Broads Plan 2028**
- ii. Support the process for the feedback on the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)**
- iii. Approve the appointment of Andrea Long to project lead the development and production of the Broads Plan and the NSIP process.**

## **14. Capital Expenditure – Update**

The Members received the report of the Head of Operations (HO). The HO said the £1,385,000 received as a capital grant in 2025/26 from DEFRA focused on two strands for

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investment; one being innovation, invest-to-save and income generating activities and the other 30by30 biodiversity delivery.

The HO said all purchases in Appendix 1 of the report had been completed and in some cases a waiver of standing orders was needed to secure the purchase of unique items where it was not possible to obtain three quotes. The HO provided the Fen Harvester as an example of this. The HO stated the list contained one major land purchase, five major projects and six purchases of capital items.

The HO highlighted the purchase of land at Mallow Marsh as significant. This was due to the area being in declining ecological condition. As a result of the purchase the Authority had now secured income from the countryside stewardship scheme on this area.

The HO informed Members that the final delivery of electric charging bollards was still outstanding. Capital money received in 2025/26 had paid for bollards, which would be installed the following financial year. Work at the Dockyard had begun and the delivery of solar panels was expected in the week following this meeting.

A Member asked what the water quality monitoring equipment would be used for. The HO said there were two types of monitors; handheld monitors which would detect salinity and track water quality changes, The other was a multi-parameter unit which logged every 15 minutes and would enable long-term tracking.

A Member asked if any feedback had been received from DEFRA regarding the completion of targets across the two strands highlighted in the report. The HO confirmed feedback from DEFRA had not yet been received but workshops with consultants appointed by DEFRA had begun and the process was ongoing.

A Member asked if vessel purchases could be made following the three-year funding allocation. The Chief Executive (CE) said the funds in question were for National Park purposes and any vessel purchases could be made from the navigation earmarked reserves. A Member asked if there were any multi-year projects which could be considered over the funding period. The CE said a discussion would need to take place regarding future capital expense.

**The report was noted.**

## 15. Committee timetable of meetings

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG). The HoG advised members a date had been set for online training on Finance and the Statement of Accounts. This would take place on 14 July 2026. This session was for all members to attend. The HoG said the dates for 2026/27 meetings had been based on the meeting schedule for 2025/26.

Leslie Mogford proposed, seconded by Alan Goodchild.

**It was resolved unanimously to approve the calendar for 2026/27.**

## 16. Whitlingham Charitable Trust – appointment of Trustees

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG). The HoG said four members were appointed to the Whitlingham Charitable Trust for a period of three years in 2023. One of these members had stepped down in the last year and the three existing members would like to remain with the trust. The Chair of the Trust was agreeable to the reappointment of the three remaining members and the Broads Authority would handle the recruitment process for the new Trustee. The HoG added that the appointed Trustees would be required to produce an annual report which would be presented to the Authority in July.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Matthew Shardlow

**It was resolved unanimously to:**

- i. Agree to the reappointment of Matthew Bradbury; Tracey Brown; and David Diggins as Trustees to the Whitlingham Charitable Trust on behalf of the Authority, for a further period of three years.**
- ii. Agree to the recruitment of a fourth Trustee for a period of three years.**

## 17. Items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port, Marine Facilities and Safety Code

The Director of Delivery (DoD) advised that the 2023/24 audit of the Authority's Port, Marine Facilities and Safety (PMFSC) code recommended the Authority report compliance of its PMFSC to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The MCA window for compliance opens every three years and the DoD advised the Authority was prepared to submit the PMFSC to the MCA.

The DoD advised there was a slight change in April 2025 when the new revised code was introduced and was renamed the Port Marine Facilities Safety Code. The new code had a wider remit, and now included, for example, facilities that possessed a jetty or marina and would not previously have a code, to develop their own. The DoD said that a signed letter from the duty holders was required to be submitted alongside the Authority's PMFSC. The Chief Executive (CE) had sent Members the draft of this letter and commented that the consultants had been impressed with the Authority's work and thanked the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association who had been helpful in engaging with sailing clubs and other groups to share information on the new requirements.

A Member asked if the letter would be signed on behalf of the Authority as a whole or specific Members individually. The DoD confirmed the letter did not name Members individually and would be signed by the Chair on behalf of the Authority. A Member commented the letter was well written and shared their support.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Leslie Mogford

**It was resolved unanimously to endorse the letter which the Chair would sign on the members behalf.**

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## 18. Member report on outside bodies – Norfolk RAMS Board

The Members received the report from Tony Grayling (TG). TG said the Norfolk Rams Board oversee the implementation of the Norfolk green infrastructure recreational impact, avoidance and mitigation strategy. This addresses the impact of additional visitors to protected sites across Norfolk. TG praised the work of the Environment Policy Advisor who had helped secure success in the first round of grant funding which would be used to assess the impact on the Broads.

A Member asked if the criteria and scope of RAMS would be impacted by legislative changes around RAMSAR sites. TG said he was unaware of this but commented they currently held the same status as Former European Protected Sites. The chair thanked TG for his report.

**The report was noted.**

## 19. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Navigation Committee – 6 November 2025

Planning Committee – 7 November 2025

Risk, Audit and Governance Committee – 25 November 2025

Planning Committee – 5 December 2025

Planning Committee – 16 January 2026

## 20. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

## 21. Formal questions

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

## 22. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 15 May 2026 at 10.00am at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH.

## 23. Exclusion of the public

Stephen Bolt proposed, and Tim Jickells seconded.

The Authority **resolved** to exclude the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1 ,2 and 3 of Part1 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.

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## 24. Exempt Minutes of extraordinary meeting

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2025 were confirmed and would be signed by the chair as a correct record of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 11:45am

Signed by

Chairman

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## Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 27 February 2026

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Peter Dixon	8	Trustee and Chair of the Museum of the Broads. Partner in bid to National Lottery Heritage Landscape Connection Scheme.