

Demasting Moorings
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report provides members with a summary of the results of a survey of demasting mooring provision in the Broads navigation area carried out by officers in summer 2014. The report also identifies suggested priority sites for the provision of new demasting moorings, seeks members' views as to whether the sites identified in the report are the correct ones for prioritisation and also whether budget should be allocated for the provision of new demasting moorings.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Broads Authority currently provides 66 24-hour moorings and a number of formal demasting moorings and safety moorings throughout the navigation area. Most of these moorings have been developed on flood defence piling installed by the Environment Agency, or its predecessor authorities, or on piling installed by the Port and Haven Commissioners. In some cases the Authority owns the land and has responsibility for the maintenance of the piling. In others the Authority leases the land but has no responsibility for maintaining the piling which provides the vertical quay heading for boats to moor against. Additionally some of the Authority's safety and demasting moorings have been provided by the installation of pontoons or dolphins.
- 1.2 Since 2006 the provision of moorings by the Authority has been guided by a Mooring Strategy which was developed by officers working with a Steering Group and wider consultation group which included representatives from the Authority's partner organisations and stakeholders. In adopting the Strategy the Authority applied a number of overarching principles regarding the provision and development of moorings throughout the navigation area. These included a commitment on the part of the Authority to the continued provision of free moorings in the Broads but the strategy also recognised that the Authority could not be the sole provider of moorings in the Broads.
- 1.3 The Strategy was reviewed in 2009, and in 2013 the Strategy was subsumed into the Authority's Integrated Access Strategy which, while adopting the core principles of the Mooring Strategy, also applied other guiding principles and a number of key objectives to the delivery of mooring improvements in the Broads. With regard to demasting moorings the Integrated Access Strategy also carried forward the specific aim for the provision of demasting mooring facilities at all four quadrants of bridges that span the navigation.

2 Current Level of Provision

- 2.1 Members will recall that in 2014 the Authority adopted a repiling programme for its existing 24-hour moorings with the aim of ensuring that there would be no net loss of moorings in the Broads due to piling reaching the end of its life. This was a key element of the Authority's Asset Management Strategy. At that time members also asked officers to identify potential sites for the development of new moorings and this included demasting moorings.
- 2.2 In order to recognise where the major gaps in provision are officers have carried out a survey of demasting mooring provision to identify where formal demasting moorings exist, either provided by the Authority or others, and also where informal demasting facilities are available.
- 2.3 The results of the survey show that provision of formal demasting moorings throughout the Broads is variable. Some bridges do have formal demasting moorings such as at Beccles Bypass but not at all four quadrants of the bridge, whereas at others there is no formal provision at all such as at Ludham. What is apparent, however, is that informal demasting takes place at many sites either by boaters using private piling, for example upstream of St Olave's Bridge, or Broads Authority 24-hour moorings that are close by, such as at Somerleyton and Potter Heigham.
- 2.4 The problem with unsigned informal facilities or 24-hour moorings is that there is no guarantee that boaters will be able to find a gap to use for demasting particularly during the height of the season when pub, shop and 24-hour moorings are usually extremely busy.

3 Identification of Priority Sites

- 3.1 Whilst being mindful of the Authority's stated ambition to have demasting moorings at all four quadrants of bridges officers have recognised that aside from the presence, or not, of facilities a number of other factors need to be taken into account when deciding whether to prioritise sites. These include the type of boats using the area, proximity to other bridges, bridge height and tidal range and current.
- 3.2 For example in Norwich there are a number of bridges in close proximity to each other and not many masted vessels navigate in the area. It is also extremely unlikely that boaters would stop to raise and lower their masts at each bridge. It might therefore be appropriate to consider prioritising the provision of facilities at the first bridge boaters encounter during their passage.
- 3.3 On the other hand, at bridges in areas where a high number of masted vessels navigate like Ludham, the provision of demasting facilities is extremely important. Similarly where tide and current is strong like St Olave's having a safe guaranteed facility may be considered to be essential for safety reasons.

- 3.4 Apart from the gap analysis carried out the views of the Broads Authority's Rangers have also been sought and consultation carried out with the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association (NSBA) and Broads Hire Boat Federation (BHBF).
- 3.5 As a general rule, officers consider that bridges with no provision at all should be prioritised, followed in order by bridges with only one facility either upstream or downstream of the bridge and then bridges with one facility each side of the bridge.

4 Officer Assessment of Potential Sites

- 4.1 Taking account of this rule and considering the other factors set out in paragraph 3 to this report officers consider that the three highest priority sites for the provision of new demasting moorings are at St Olave's Bridge, Ludham Bridge and Acle Bridge. Only three sites have been identified for immediate consideration as there is currently no budget set aside for the provision of new demasting moorings.
- 5.1.1 St Olave's Bridge There is only one informal demasting mooring at the pub on the true right bank immediately upstream of the bridge and this is heavily used by customers of the pub. No other facilities exist close to the bridge. In addition there is a history of boats getting into difficulty at the bridge due to the strong current conditions and officers feel that for safety reasons this should be the top priority.
- 5.1.2 Ludham Bridge There is no provision downstream of the bridge as the previously existing formal demasting mooring has had to be closed for safety reasons. Informal demasting takes place upstream of the bridge on the Broads Authority's 24-hour mooring or the staithe but these are heavily used for 24-hour mooring. Given the high level of use of the River Ant by masted vessels some of which have no auxiliary power, the high level of motor boat use and difficulties navigating through an extremely narrow bridge hole, officers consider that this should be the second priority site.
- 5.1.3 Acle Bridge No formal demasting facilities exist close to the bridge. Informal demasting is available at the shop upstream and on the Horizon Craft frontage but downstream no facilities exist apart from the busy pub moorings. Given the tidal strength at this location and the prevailing wind direction officers consider that the provision of a demasting mooring downstream of the bridge on the true right bank is also a priority and this view is shared by the NSBA.
- 5.2 To give some idea of the likely costs involved, at both Acle and St Olave's the most likely means of the Authority successfully providing demasting moorings would be by the installation of pontoons. Normally two 11.5m pontoons would be installed at a site to provide an adequate layby/demasting mooring and this would cost approximately £13,000 per site. At Ludham pontoons would not be a viable option due to river widths so mooring provision would have to be

against existing or repiled edges or against dolphins installed at reprofiled banks after existing piling has been removed.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The provision of additional moorings has been identified as a high priority for private boat owners in the recent stakeholder surveys carried out for the Authority. Furthermore, feedback from regular liaison meetings with the NSBA and BHBF is that demasting moorings remain a priority for both organisations and the NSBA would also like to see additional layby/safety moorings provided in the lower Bure. Members' views are therefore sought on the approach outlined in this report, the priority sites identified in the report and whether budget should be made available to provide new demasting facilities.

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