

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020

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Present

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

In attendance

Emma Krelle - Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Mullarney - Administrative Officer, Angie O'Connor – Asset Officer, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations.

Also, in attendance

Ross Wombwell – British Marine

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Ash and Simon Sparrow.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Ross Wombwell, Head of Technical Services, British Marine to the meeting.

Recordings

The Chair announced that the meeting would be recorded and that the copyright remains with the Authority; however, a copy of the recording could be requested from the Governance team.

Chair announcement

The Chair reported the sad news that Arthur Hindley, a former Broads Authority member of staff had passed away. Arthur had worked with the Port and Haven Commissioner and was a Senior Rivers Inspector for the Broads Authority. Members expressed their condolences.

2. To receive declarations of interest

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

3. To note whether and items have been proposed as 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 the Navigation Committee meeting held on 31 October 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2019 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

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 Chief Executive provided an update on the meeting with Network Rail on 7 January 2020.

Trowse bridge – It was reported that it would be some time before any specific action was taken at Trowse bridge; Network Rail will be examining the business case for any replacement.

Reedham and Somerleyton – The re-signalling of the whole system commences in February. The role of the signal box operator will be solely to open the bridges. After the work is complete, the phone number for the signalling boxes will be made available by Network Rail so the bridge operators can be contacted directly.

One member asked if the bridges would remain open or closed during the re-signalling work, the Chief Executive said he would find out and inform members.

Members noted the report.

7. Chief Executive's report and current issues

Navigation charges for 2020/21

The Chief Executive reported back to the committee following the 22 November 2019 Broads Authority decision for the navigation charges for 2020/21. Broads Authority members shared the views of the Navigation Committee for the installation of pontoons at Peto's Marsh, but preferred the option to do this in 1 year to coincide with the opening of the new visitor centre. Officers had explored the suggestion to install donation posts to help fund the moorings, however evidence suggested the cost of running the donation posts would be unlikely to be met by the income.

One member queried the existing commitment to provide pontoons at Peto's Marsh and asked why the Navigation Committee wasn't consulted on this as part of the mooring priorities. He suggested that matters of joint funding projects in the future be brought to the Committee in a timely fashion. The Chief Executive explained that there was no commitment for the pontoon's to be delivered next financial year, however members had seen it as a good opportunity to provide additional moorings. He added that there was an arrangement with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, as part of the whole project, to use dredged material from Oulton

Broads for the landscaping of the Peto's Marsh site as well as to strengthen the banks. This was an overall benefit for the navigation and provided a solution to an ongoing issue for the Authority.

It was noted that the Navigation Committee had been previously consulted on arrangements at Peto's Marsh in 2018, before some members had joined the committee. The Chair concluded that in the future, discussions about potential projects would be at an earlier stage with all members, to guide the tolls working group.

Members were also informed of the Broads Authority decision to include a differential toll for unpowered, hybrid and electric vessels. The Chief Executive said members felt this wouldn't be sufficient to enable people to make an immediate switch, but was a signal that the Broads Authority was taking climate change seriously, and a signal to toll payers that alternative forms for propulsion were needed in the long run. In response to a member question about hybrid vessels, the Chief Executive said that there was a specific category for hybrid hire boats but new categories may need to be added if other hybrid crafts emerged.

Members discussed electric charging points, and how they were used. It was noted that the existing network would need to expand to support an increase in electric boats; members discussed where this electricity would come from and how it would be funded. No additional income was gained from the electric charging posts as the Authority could only charge at cost.

The Chief Executive explained that the Authority was currently evaluating existing moorings to determine how many had charging points, how many had the potential for charging points, and how close they all were to mains electricity. He said a report on this would be brought to the Navigation Committee in the future. The Chief Executive also mentioned discussions with Hethel innovation centre regarding developing a standalone system to provide electric charging for locations away from the grid. He said the project was at an early stage but would be the first in the country. Members were in support of the Authority leading the way on innovation and said it was important to encourage sustainable transport and develop best practice.

One member said it was important to promote alternative propulsion, not just electric. The Chief Executive agreed and said the important partnership with British Marine was looking at how different propulsion systems would be serviced and supported.

The Chief Executive added that he had been exploring connections with Orkney's, and how the Authority could learn from the work they were doing such as their hydrogen powered ferry. He said the committee would be kept informed on this.

Landscape review

The Chief Executive summarised that the landscape review had few direct implications for navigation. The draft report for the 31 January 2020 Broads Authority meeting had been circulated to all members for comment.

Some members disagreed with the landscape review recommendation to combine the National Park grant and navigation finances. One member said this would simplify the

finances and that costs associated with the use of navigation should come out of the navigation budget. The Chief Financial Officer explained that the Authority currently submits consolidated accounts to Defra and it was noted that the split makes the finances complicated to manage. The Chief Executive concluded that it would be a Government decision whether to combine the finances and said the Authority would wait for the Government's response.

Members noted the report.

8. British Marine work on emissions and green boating

Ross Wombwell gave a presentation on the work of British Marine in reducing emissions and future green boating. It was explained that the objective of the Government's Clean Air Strategy was to have zero emissions by 2050. The Department for Transport's recent call for evidence would ensure that the Government had the right data to know what needed to change for the maritime sector.

The Clean Maritime Plan, looking at the future for vessels operating in UK waters, sets the Government expectation that by 2025 all vessels operating in UK waters will maximise the use of energy efficient options; new vessels ordered for use on UK waters will be designed with zero emission propulsion capability; and zero emission commercial vessels will be in use on UK waters.

To meet these expectations the industry was looking at alternative propulsions; solutions included pure electric systems, Gas to liquids (GTL), pure biodiesel, traditional and alternative hybrids. It was noted that these propulsions also needed to manage upgrades to existing vessels, and Government help was needed to develop propulsion technologies.

Ross Wombwell discussed the differences between the automobile and marine sectors, noting that the marine sector couldn't affect change as quickly. Members were informed that British Marine were in communication with the Government about a full life cycle analysis. He said a long-term strategy was needed to establish how existing vessels transitioned to zero emissions, how this was done within the existing infrastructure, and what the cost of these changes would be. He further explained the difficulty for alternative propulsion systems to be certified as safe and said a change in legislation was required to introduce the right safety standards for new technologies.

Ross Wombwell concluded that expectations for the 2025 target should be managed, and consideration was needed for who would be responsible for changes and how they would be funded. He said alternative propulsion should be encouraged and standardised to create the ability for safe use as quickly as possible.

The Chair thanked Ross for his presentation.

9. Navigation finance

Navigation income and expenditure

The Chief Financial Officer provided members with an update on the figures to the end of November 2019. The actual variance for navigation income and expenditure by directorate had increased to £78,332. The increase variance was due to toll income being ahead of profile. There was no change to the latest available budget or forecast. The earmarked reserves had decreased slightly to £885,797 due to the purchase of the electric van.

Draft budget

The Chief Financial Officer explained that the draft budget incorporated the toll increases and the installation of pontoons at Peto's Marsh. The main adjustment for the Operations budget was to cover the deposit for a new replacement JCB, and it considered the loss of staff recharges to Whittingham Charitable Trust. It was explained that the decrease in the Chief Executive directorate was due to not recruiting to the solicitor post.

The Chief Financial Officer highlighted that there was uncertainty with the pay negotiations, but said the budget made provisions for a 2% pay increase. It was explained that the budget assumes all posts are filled. She added that it was also unknown what the National Park grant would be from 1 April 2020. Members were reassured that the projections maintained the navigation reserves at 10%.

Members discussed member understanding of how the budgets were formed, and toll payer perception of annual toll increases. One member noted that any projects would require an increase in tolls, and suggested the Navigation Committee be involved earlier in the budget review process to advise Officers on priorities. Another member commented that earlier sight of the desirable projects would help toll payers embrace increases. The Chief Executive supported exploring options earlier in the process but said the information on income and expenditure wasn't known until autumn, creating a narrow window for review.

Members agreed that the tolls were good value for money comparative to other navigation authority charges, for example Environment Agency charges will increase by 7.5% a year for the next three years, and discussed how to better communicate with toll payers. It was noted that finance information was publicly available in committee papers and the Broad Sheet publication, with the latter being sent to all toll payers with their toll account. Another member commented on the importance of the monthly briefings enabling people to directly access the information.

A member said rather than listening to a small number of toll payers, members needed perspective of the 10,000 toll payers. The Chief Executive added that the independent sample survey in 2014 of toll payers was very useful and showed that the majority of private boat owners were content. It was suggested this be conducted again soon.

In response to a member question about utilising the extra navigation reserves for projects, it was explained that the reserves were maintained at 10%. Where the reserves were above this level at the end of the financial year it would reduce the amount needed in tolls next year.

The Chief Financial Officer further explained that it was difficult to find solely navigation projects, especially where they were split between navigation income and the National Park grant; whilst the navigation charges could be changed, the National Park grant was set by the Government.

The Chair concluded that there was an opportunity going forward to think more about how to get the message across in the future.

Members noted the report.

10. Powerboat racing

Members were made aware that Steve Birtles, Head of Safety Management, had retired before Christmas.

The Director of Operations introduced a report on the powerboat racing fixture dates for the 2020 racing season.

Members had no comments on the Powerboat racing dates proposed for 2020. Members noted the report.

11. Construction, maintenance and environment work programme progress update

The Director of Operations gave an update on the work programme for the construction, maintenance and environment teams.

It was noted that the highest percentage of construction and maintenance staff time allocated to navigation tasks in 2019/20 was for dredging.

Members were informed of the boardwalk installed at Hoveton; constructed from recycled plastic, it has a 50-year lifespan, and the plastic could be recycled again once finished with.

Members noted the report.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on **Thursday 23 April 2020** at the Dockyard, Griffin Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0SL commencing at 2pm.

13. Exclusion of the public

It was resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the item below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 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.

14. Moorings provision – update

Members received an update on the Authority’s strategy for the provision of moorings, previously reviewed by the Navigation Committee at the 13 June 2019 meeting.

The meeting ended at 4:20pm.

Signed

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests Navigation Committee, 16 January 2020

| Member | Agenda/minute | Nature of interest |
|------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Alan Thomson | - | As previously declared |
| Mike Barnes | - | As previously declared, toll payer |
| Kelvin Allen | - | As previously declared, toll payer |
| Leslie Mogford | - | As previously declared |
| Andy Hamilton | - | As previously declared |
| Harry Blathwayt | - | As previously declared |
| Greg Munford | - | As previously declared |
| Matthew Bradbury | - | As previously declared |
| Linda Aspland | - | As previously declared |