

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2016

Present:

Mr M Whitaker (Chairman)

Mr J Ash

Sir P Dixon

Mr G Munford

Ms L Aspland

Mr A Goodchild

Mrs N Talbot

Mr M Bradbury

Mr M Heron

Mr B Wilkins

Mr W Dickson

Mr J Knight

In Attendance:

Mrs L Burchnall – Head of Ranger Services

Mr A Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Ms E Guds – Administrative Officer (Governance)

Ms M Hammond – Planning Officer

Mr D Hoare – Environment & Design Supervisor

Ms E Krelle – Head of Finance

Ms A Leeper – Asset Officer

Ms A Long – Director of Planning and Resources

Dr J Packman – Chief Executive

Mr R Rogers – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment

Ms C Smith – Head of Planning

Ms T Wakelin – Director of Operations

2/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Kelvin Allen and Alan Goodchild.

The Chair reported that comments received from Kelvin Allen would be incorporated into the discussion.

2/2 To note whether any items have been proposed as matters of urgent business/ Variation in order of items on the agenda

No items had been proposed as matters of urgent business

2/3 To receive Declarations of Interest

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

2/4 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

2/5 To receive and confirm the minutes of the Navigation Committee meeting held on 21 April 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/6 Broads Plan Review: Draft for Consultation – Navigation and Recreation Sections

Members received a report which set out the progress on the current review of the Broads Plan, the key strategic management plan for the Broads. The current Plan was adopted in May 2011 and its review was identified as a Strategic Priority for 2015/16. It was anticipated that the revised Plan would be adopted in March 2017.

A first draft of the revised plan was subject to public consultation between February and April 2016. All responses received from this consultation were considered and a second revised draft Plan was now being prepared.

The report introduced the Navigation and Recreation sections of the proposed revised draft Broads Plan. The full revised draft Plan would be considered by the Broads Authority on 30 September 2016 and would be subject to public consultation between October and December 2016.

Members were informed that the section on navigation had been strengthened and made more ambitious as requested and it was explained that the focus had been on projects which had some degree of certainty. It was pointed out that as a high level plan, the Broads Plan was not just a plan for the Broads Authority but for other organisations as well and that more detail would be added to the Plan at a later stage.

Comments with regards to aligning the Broads Angling Strategy to the Broads Plan were taken on board, pending the outcome of the forthcoming angling meeting and other comments made would be looked at as part of the Landscape Partnership Bid.

Although it was recognised that it was difficult to comment on a Plan which had not been completed yet, Members were pleased that the Plan identified the benefits of sediment removal and included a proposal to review access to closed broads and opening them up for navigation.

Members noted the report.

2/7 Waterways Specification Update, Irstead

Members received a report which summarised the technical and regulatory feasibility of deepening the channel of the River Ant at Irstead Shoals to meet the Waterways Specification of 1.8 m. This would involve dredging the natural river bed rather than the normal removal of deposited sediment and therefore

would be classed as capital dredging with a different suite of regulatory controls to satisfy.

The cost of deepening the channel would be in the order of £60,000. The number of boats affected was very small and the number of times of the year when it was an issue was small.

The Committee was asked for its view as to whether the deepening of this stretch of river should be pursued and its relative priority so that this could be taken into account when officers were compiling the 2017/18 dredging programme, which would be brought to the October meeting for consultation.

One Member believed that there was a considerable risk for vessels to get stuck on the riverbed and another believed it would be justified to spend some funds on tree clearance on the east bank as it would make navigation safer. Concern was raised about the accuracy of the mean water level and the cost involved in deepening the channel. It was clarified that the difference in cost between normal dredging and capital dredging was approximately £30,000, but as the Authority had not scheduled to do any dredging in the Shoals, the real cost would be £60,000.

Members supported the suggested provision of signage to indicate water depth at the Shoals to forewarn boaters and urged the Authority as a priority to improve the signage currently in place, preferably to be replaced by electronic signage at a future date.

Some concern was raised whether removal of the natural gravel bed would have an impact on the river ecology and the majority of the Members questioned the need to deepen the channel where only a very small number of deep keeled craft experienced difficulties. The majority agreed that spending a high level of expenditure on a small stretch of water was not a priority.

Members noted the report.

2/8 Issues on the River Chet

Members received a report which gave a summary of the latest position regarding Norfolk County Council's proposals for the extinguishment of the Wherryman's Way on the true left bank of the River Chet and the results of water level monitoring that the Broads Authority had been carrying out since May 2016. The report highlighted that the BLAF resolved to advise the County Council under Section 94 (4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to place a traffic regulation order (TRO) on the route rather than extinguishing it.

Members were in agreement that working together with Parish and District Councils to find a solution to prevent the bank from collapsing would be the correct approach. They also agreed that hydraulic modelling was essential to get a better idea of what to expect in the future. The BA and County Council

are working on a joint tree scrub clearance project. A meeting will take place in October to explore a number of options. Likely cost of carrying out this work is to be considerably reduced from an initial estimate cost of £3M.

Following complaints, officers have looked into the feasibility and cost of removing the navigation channel markers on the River Chet and Members were invited to comment on the options available.

It was proposed that all 37 posts should be removed, as there was not a significant saving to be made by leaving a small number of them in. Members were informed that because the Environment Agency didn't have the necessary equipment to remove the channel posts the Authority was better placed to undertake the work.

Members were made aware that the Boat Safety Management Group (BSMG) and the Broads Hire Boat Federation (BHBF) had been consulted by email and supported the removal of the channel posts.

Considering the high mobilisation cost involved it was suggested that it would be sensible to see whether there were other tasks in the area could be carried out at the same time.

It was noted that the Environment Agency was willing to discuss making a financial contribution towards the cost of removing the posts and the Head of Planning would continue discussions with the Agency's officers.

Members supported the officer suggestion that the Broads Authority should:

- (i) undertake this work at an estimated cost around £60,000 in the 2017/18 work programme so it would not have any implications on the existing program.
- (ii) remove all posts, given the limited savings which would be achieved through removal of only half of them; and
- (iii) provide the commitment sought by the Environment Agency (outlined at 3.4 (a) – (c)) in order to allow the removal of the posts.

2/9 Purchases from Plant, Vessel and Equipment Reserve

Members received a report outlining the opportunity to purchase a second hand weed-harvester, linkflotes and replacement small tools. The proposal was to spend £166,000 from the Plant, Vessels and Equipment Reserve not previously budgeted in this financial year. This required consultation with the Committee and authorisation from the Authority at its next meeting.

It was clarified that the linkfloats that needed replacement were part of the equipment gifted to the Authority by May Gurney much of which the Authority knew at the time had a limited life.

The replacement of some of the hand held equipment would remove some of the restrictions to its use by staff and volunteers due to vibration hazards.

One of the two weed-harvesters owned by the Authority needed to be replaced and Members were informed that a second hand vessel in good condition, suffering from only minor cosmetic issues, was being offered for sale at £30,000. Although the weed-harvester would have to be transported from Scotland, it was confirmed that transport would only cost approximately £2,000.

Members recognised that having to keep repairing the current weed harvester would not be cost effective and that a new second hand machine could help with the management of water plants on Hickling Broad.

The Committee agreed that it was imperative for staff and volunteers in the field to have suitable equipment available to them to enable them to carry out the challenging tasks they have in front of them. Members supported the additional expenditure and asked for future reviews to identify where changes are made to earlier versions, for improved transparency. In this review, it would have clearly demonstrated that the linkflotes were originally programmed for purchase in 2017/18.

Members noted the report.

2/10 Draft Policy on Waste Collection and Disposal in the Broads National Park

Members were briefed on the current position with relation to waste facilities throughout the Broads and members' views were sought on the proposed policy and actions set out within the report.

Potential ways forward on some of the issues had emerged from discussions with officers from Norfolk County Council and North Norfolk District Council which officers were pursuing.

Members supported the draft policy including the proposal that the Authority should work together with the local authorities and local MPs to put pressure on Defra to amend the Regulations such that waste from hired boats in the Broads is in future classified as domestic rather than commercial waste.

Members strongly expressed the view that it was essential to have appropriate collection and disposal arrangements before the beginning of the 2017 season. A member suggested that a very small surcharge on tolls (e.g. £5) could be introduced if it should be necessary for BA to fund some element of waste disposal.

Members noted the report.

**2/11 Planning application with Navigation Implications:
Variation of Conditions 2, 3 and 19 and Removal Conditions 7, 11, 12, 20
and 24 from Permission BA/2014/0248/FUL**

Members of the Committee received a report which outlined a planning application to vary and remove the conditions of an existing planning permission which allowed for the creation of fen and installation of temporary fish barriers to facilitate the lake restoration at Hoveton Great Broad, Hudson's Bay and Wroxham Island, River Bure, Hoveton and Wroxham. The reason given by the applicant for amending the scheme was that the Wroxham element would not be funded by the HLF or the LIFE funding.

Members in general felt disappointed as one of the advantages and the only public benefit of the initial planning application was that Wroxham Island would be improved, however without sediment it would remain in a terrible state. When queried it was explained that less sediment was now required to be removed and the application stated that the sediment could be accommodated in the three proposed sites within Hoveton Great Broad.

Members of the Committee recognised, reluctantly, that there was no clear planning reason for the application to be refused and accepted that the removal of the approved temporary sediment pumping pipeline from the scheme would result in a marginal benefit to navigation, however they regretted the removal of the Wroxham Island element of the scheme as it was the area that had the most public benefit.

As the Heritage Lottery Fund seemed to be sympathetic to projects with public interest and might recognise Wroxham Island as a restoration project of an important site within a National Park, the Committee suggested that the Chief Executive should consider approaching them.

It was explained that this was not an issue directly relevant to the planning application.

Members noted the report.

2/12 Annual Income and Expenditure Report 2015/16

Members received a report which set out a summary of the Authority's income and expenditure for the 2015/16 financial year, analysed between national park and navigation funds. Original and Latest Available Budget information was provided for comparison.

It was noted that the total navigation surplus for 2015/16 was a little higher than budgeted and higher than forecast, with a result that the balance of the navigation reserve at the end of 2015/16 was slightly above the recommended minimum reserve balance of 10% at 11.3%.

Members noted the report.

2/13 Navigation Income and Expenditure 1 April to 30 June 2016 Actual and 2016/17 Forecast Outturn

Members received a report which provided them with details of the actual navigation income and expenditure for the three month period to 30 June 2016, and provided a forecast of the projected expenditure at the end of the financial year (31 March 2017).

The Committee received a verbal update up to 31 July 2016 which indicated a forecast surplus of £7,080. They were further informed that the Authority would participate in a benchmarking exercise carried out by all National Parks combined. This would enable the Authority to feedback how they compared to other National Parks.

Members noted the report.

2/14 Construction, Maintenance and Environment Work Programme Progress Update

Members received a report which set out the progress made in the delivery of the 2016/17 Construction, Maintenance and Environment Section work programme and included an update on the Hickling Enhancement Project.

With regard to Hickling it was queried whether more work could be done in managing water plant growth, especially at the surface. It was explained that the initial approach had been to gain agreement to the maintenance of the channel across the Broad to the Pleasure Boat Inn. The next step was to look at an agreed process for cutting plants beyond the channel.

A Member asked a question about floating plant material and it was explained that the removal of this did not require consent and could therefore be collected if it was causing difficulties.

It was agreed that a wider discussion around water plant growth and cutting outside the channel in Hickling Broad was needed, involving the Environment Agency and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Members noted the report.

2/15 Chief Executive's Report

The Committee received a report which summarised the current position in respect of a number of projects and events, including decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings.

Members were informed that the Tolls Working Group had now completed its discussions and that a report would be presented at the Navigation Committee meeting in October.

A member asked about the trial stern-on mooring at the Ferry Inn, Horning. Officers agreed to bring a report on the matter to a future meeting.

Members noted the report.

2/16 Current Issues

Reedham and Somerleyton Bridges

Members were updated on how Network Rail was progressing and were informed that the next meeting with Network Rail was on 20 September 2016. As soon as the Authority had more information this would be fed back to the Committee. However it is unclear whether the report will be confidential or published more widely.

Ludham Bridge

It was mentioned that navigation at Ludham bridge was becoming more difficult, especially when sailing with a lowered mast. It was therefore queried whether additional Ranger support would be necessary, especially at busy times.

It was explained that Rangers were aware of the situation at Ludham Bridge and had on occasion moored further up and offered assistance on the bank when issues were arising.

2/17 Items for future discussion

No items for future discussion were mentioned.

2/18 To note the date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 27 October 2016 at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.35pm

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

Code of Conduct for Members

Declaration of Interests

Committee: Navigation Committee

Date of Meeting: 8 September 2016

Name Please Print	Agenda/ Minute No(s)	Nature of Interest (Please describe the nature of the interest)	Please tick here if the interest is a Prejudicial interest
James Knight	2/6 - 2/15	Hire Boat Operator, Toll Payer, member of NSBA, NBYC, RYA, WODYC	
Brian Wilkins	2/6 - 2/15	NSBA Chairman, Toll Payer, various sailing clubs and organisations	
Greg Munford	2/6 - 2/15	Toll Payer, Hire Fleet, Residence Mooring	
Nicky Talbot	2/6 - 2/15	Toll Payer, Member of NSBA and NBYC	
Max Heron	2/6 - 2/15	Toll Payer, Landowner, Member of British Rowing, NRC, NSBA, RCC, Chair Whitlingham Boathouses	
Matthew Bradbury	2/6 - 2/15	Toll Payer, Trustee of WCT, BCU Member	
John Ash	2/6 - 2/15	Toll Payer, Chairman and Director of WYCCT, Trustee of How Hill and NSBCT	
Michael Whitaker	2/6 - 2/15	Toll payer, Hire Boat Operator, BHBF Chairman	