

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2021

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Present

Nicky Talbot – in the Chair, Mike Barnes, Harry Blathwayt, Greg Munford, Simon Sparrow, Paul Thomas (until item 13), Alan Thomson.

In attendance

Essie Guds – Governance Officer (Moderator), Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology, Emma Krelle - Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Mullarney - Governance Officer, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations, Sara Utting – Governance Officer (Moderator).

Also in attendance

Bill Dickson – Chairman of the Broads Authority.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Ash, Linda Aspland, Matthew Bradbury, Andy Hamilton, and Leslie Mogford.

John Ash forwarded comments regarding agenda items, these were read out at the appropriate items and formed part of the discussion.

Remote meeting standing orders and recording

The Chief Executive welcomed everyone to this meeting of the Navigation Committee, which was being held remotely under the Standing Orders for remote meetings adopted by the Broads Authority on 22 May 2020. The meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the live stream accessible from the Authority's website. The Broads Authority retained the copyright of the recording and the minutes remained the formal record of the meeting.

2. Appointment of Chair

The Chief Executive (CEO) reported that nominations for the Chair had been invited in line with the procedure adopted following the 18 May 2018 Broads Authority meeting.

Nicky Talbot had been proposed by Simon Sparrow and seconded by Greg Munford. No other nominations had been received.

It was resolved that Nicky Talbot be appointed Chair of the Navigation Committee.

Nicky Talbot in the Chair.

3. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair reported that nominations for Vice Chair had been received for Simon Sparrow, proposed by Nicky Talbot and seconded by Greg Munford. No other nominations had been received.

It was resolved that Simon Sparrow be appointed Vice Chair of the Navigation Committee.

Chair announcements

The Chair paid tribute to Mollie Howes, who passed away on 10 March aged 90. Mollie was an active member of Horning and Snowflake Sailing Clubs and the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club. The Chair said Mollie was passionate about boating and her enthusiasm for politics and love of the broads made her a regular attendee of Broads Authority and Navigation Committee meetings, and she had served on the NSBA for over 20 years. Affectionately known as 'Mrs Public' she opposed the Broads Bill in the Houses of Parliament fighting for her keenly held beliefs. The Chair said Mollie was a very sociable lady with a wonderful personality and expressed condolences to Mollie's family on behalf of the committee.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest to declare.

5. Matters of urgent business

No items were proposed as a matter of urgent business.

6. Public question time

No public questions were raised.

7. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

8. 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.

It was reported that Network Rail (NR) had committed to a multi million pound refurbishment of Reedham, Somerleyton and Oulton swing bridges. This involved the replacement of lifting and turning mechanisms to make the opening and closing of the bridges more reliable. The CEO commented that it was a substantial piece of work that would make a big difference to the operation of the bridges. He thanked the Director of Operations for his time in building a close working relationship with NR, which he said had been critical for NR to understand the difficulties faced by the boating community.

One member raised concerns with access to the sea as a result of the issues with Haven bridge and the construction of river crossings in Yarmouth and Lowestoft. The Head of Construction, Maintenance, and Ecology (CME) discussed the implications the closure of Haven bridge had for the Authority. Contractors had been tendered to install the marker posts at Breydon water, however they were stationed on the other side of Haven bridge and unable to get through. Given the importance of this task, the Authority's work programme was

reprioritised to allow the operations team to commence the installation of the posts. It was noted that the intention for using contractors was to limit disruption to the dredging programme. The CEO added that the operation of Haven bridge was outside the Broads Authority's (BA) control and said the Authority was doing its best to raise the issue at the highest level with Norfolk County Council (NCC).

The report was noted.

9. Appointment of two co-opted members to the Broads Authority

Members were asked to recommend the appointment of two co-opted members to the Broads Authority until 13 May 2022 as set out in Section 1(2)(c) of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 as amended.

Schedule 4, paragraph 4(3) of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 further states that the Navigation Committee shall elect a Chair from among those of its members who are members of the Authority. Given that Nicky Talbot had been elected Chair of the Committee, she would need to take up one of the seats on the Authority.

Nicky Talbot proposed, seconded by Harry Blathwayt that Simon Sparrow be appointed as a member of the Broads Authority until 13 May 2022. No other nominations were received.

It was resolved that Nicky Talbot and Simon Sparrow be recommended to the Broads Authority for appointment as the co-opted members to the Broads Authority until 13 May 2022.

10. Chief Executive's report and current issues

Carrow Road Bridge repairs

Members had received a copy of the NCC (Norfolk County Council) Cabinet summary report regarding the future maintenance of Carrow Bridge. It was reported that the CEO and the Director of Operations had since met with Grahame Bygrave, NCC Director of Highways and Waste, to discuss the issue of the Carrow Road Bridge repairs. The CEO said it was a productive and informative meeting and highlighted key issues for members.

It was explained that the plywood decking on Carrow Bridge was replaced by NCC every 6 months, which involved drilling into the concrete base underneath. This concrete had reached its end of life and required substantial works to replace it. NCC estimated it would take a minimum 3 months to undertake the work, depending on the condition of the bridge. A road closure would also be required for the duration of the works which the CEO noted would cause serious disruption to the city. He said it was important to consider how the Authority would respond to this.

The NCC summary report also identified fixing the bridge in place, as a temporary solution, in order to undertake necessary investigations to find a permanent solution. NCC had specified the temporary period as a minimum of 5 years. The CEO commented on the legal implications

of fixing the bridge locked for 5 years, as the Act of Parliament required Carrow Bridge to be an opening bridge.

The CEO noted that additional information was required for the Navigation Committee to give a view on the future of the bridge; including the legal background, structural condition of the bridge, different repair options explored by NCC and the cost implications. Mr Bygrave had agreed to work with the Authority to supply this information so a more substantial report could be presented to members at the next committee meeting.

The Chair reiterated concerns for the potential temporary closure, and said the Committee was pleased to be kept informed of the situation and welcomed more information to be presented at a future meeting.

A member said the 5-year closure would set a precedent that British Rail could use for Trowse bridge. The CEO responded that the relationship between the different bridges was significant and the Authority needed to be mindful of this in their response. He added that he had contested the claim in the NCC summary report that there was no demand to open Carrow Bridge. He said the difficulty in opening the bridge had acted as a deterrent for larger vessels coming into Norwich and there would be a higher demand if it could open more readily.

Another member commented on the trend in commercial traffic and the increase in sail powered high super structures that would require bridge openings to access the city. He said it would be upsetting if the navigation options to a significant city were closed.

Safety videos

The CEO thanked Greg Munford and the Head of Communications for the speed in delivering the safety videos. All major navigation and safety bodies had signed up to the project and the videos had received praise for their content and value. It was also reported that the Ranger team had seen a noticeable increase in the number of people wearing lifejackets in and around moorings. The CEO said this was a combination of the videos and hire boat companies having a greater emphasis on safety. He added that safety featured highly in the latest edition of Broadcaster.

A member commented that the safety videos would make a huge difference to every hire company using them and said it was a brilliant initiative by the BA. It was also highlighted that whilst the Authority can do what it can to reduce risk, individuals had a personal responsibility for their actions.

The report was noted.

11. Construction, maintenance and environment work programme progress update

Dredging

The Head of CME explained the dredging work plan for 2021/22. He said the lower dredging volumes marked the progress of the Sediment Management Strategy, as larger volume

projects had been completed in previous years. Projects for the coming year would be more complex and time consuming, and included the river Thurne, Oulton, the river Chet, and upper Waveney.

It was noted that dredging time had been impacted by the decision to deploy the Construction team to replace the navigation posts on Breydon. This had caused a 6-week diversion from the work programme. The Head of CME said it was not a decision that was taken lightly and was balanced across multiple priorities. Alternative contractors weren't financially advantageous or within the budget available, using the Authority's own staff presented the best option.

The Head of CME addressed questions regarding mean low water levels and whether they were higher than 10 years ago. He said the method for calculating mean low water levels was more accurate due to a better and wider network of data available. It was suggested that previous records were too high given the relatively small amount of information and extreme extrapolation that was applied to the mid 90's assessment. Water levels had generally been higher at Potter Heigham over the last two years compared to the previous 13 years, however this was not a trend seen across the broads. In response to a member question, the Head of CME suggested this was a result of rainfall and higher water levels in the aquifers during the winter.

The improved network of data provided more accurate sediment volume figures, and allowed dredging to be better targeted. The Head of CME added that the mapping software was also more accurate and removed offline and non-navigable areas that were previously incorporated in the total. This refined methodology and forward strategy would be outlined in the Waterways and Management Strategy which was in development.

Moorings

It was reported that the lease issues for St Benet's mooring had been resolved and the contractors were on site this week. Lease arrangements for Burgh Castle were in progress with the landowner. BESL was on-site completing works and the handover to the Authority was expected in the early summer. A confirmed opening date for public use would be announced when known.

Navigation hazards

A member reported concern with debris floating around the network following a sunken vessel and asked what measures were being taken to prevent further hazards to boaters. The Head of CME responded that the particular vessel that was causing an obstruction on the river Waveney had been removed. He added that Rangers were on site to gather any debris from the waterways, and regularly remove any hazards when patrolling.

The Chair said it was important to highlight that the cost for the Authority to clear sunken vessels would come from toll payer money. Adding that this should be taken into consideration when assessing the Authority's involvement and use of resources with this task.

The Director of Operations added that there was a set process for responding to sunken vessels, however it was ultimately the responsibility of the vessel owner. The Authority assisted with the removal of wrecks from the water, and always made sure they were safely secured.

Bio diesel fuel

A trial is underway to see if Wherries and excavators could use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), bio diesel fuel. It was explained that the use of HVO represented a 90% reduction in terms of the Authority's carbon reduction targets.

In response to a member question, the Head of CME said compared to Gas-To-Liquids (GTL), the synthetic diesel alternative used by some hire yards, HVO didn't have issues with shelf life. The Authority was seeking partners to collaborate on a bulk purchase of HVO, to reduce the price per litre and delivery costs.

Future reporting of Operation work programme

Members were shown a pie chart representing the proportion of Operation Technician time spent on different navigation work. Dredging equated to 60% of the overall time, mooring maintenance and repair was 20%, riverside tree management, weed harvester, and other navigation works were each under 10%. The Head of CME commented that the committee was routinely updated on dredging projects and asked if members wanted to know more about the wider programme.

A member commented that it would be useful to understand the impact of deferred projects. The Director of Operations explained that these tasks were rolled into the following year's programme. Members supported the suggestion for additional information to be provided in the CME update report.

The report was noted.

12. Navigation income and expenditure 1 April to 28 February 2021 actual and 2020/21 forecast outturn

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) explained that an update for March would be provided to members at the 30 April Broads Authority meeting. However, it was reported that as of 12 April, £1.4 million had been processed in private craft tolls.

Members thanked the tolls team for their work over the last year, noting the extreme pressures they had been working under.

Due to technical issues the meeting was temporarily suspended and the live stream stopped.

The meeting resumed at 15:49.

There were no further updates or questions on this item. The Chair thanked the Chief Financial Officer for her report and **the report was noted.**

13. Annual Safety Audit

The CEO introduced the report on the annual review of marine incidents. He said that the broads remained a safe place for boating but there had been more incidents recorded last year than usual.

The Chair concluded that it was hoped to assess increased awareness from the safety videos over the next season.

The report was noted.

14. Power boat racing review

The Committee was consulted on the power boat racing at Oulton Broad and the proposed fixture dates for 2021.

Members had no comments on the power boat racing dates proposed for 2021.

The report was noted.

15. Committee calendar 2021/22 – Navigation Committee dates

Members were informed that the 2021/2022 committee calendar proposed to change the start time for Navigation Committee meetings to 10am. There were no objections from members. The Chair asked that reminders be sent out to members for the amended time.

The report was noted.

16. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on **Thursday 10 June 2021 starting at 2pm.**

The CEO explained that there was still uncertainty as to whether remote meetings could continue; the Government's decision not to extend the regulations permitting local authorities and bodies such as the BA to conduct meetings remotely was being challenged in the courts. The CEO considered it to be a backwards step if regulations prevented authorities from holding some meetings remotely, noting the benefits for members who would have to travel to meetings as well as the impact on the carbon footprint. Members would be kept informed of future arrangements.

The meeting ended at 15:56.

Signed

Chairman