

# Navigation Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held on 06 November 2025

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## **Present**

Alan Goodchild – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Sue Cadamy, Mark Collins, Peter Dixon, Tony Grayling, Heather Hilburn, Leslie Mogford, Bob Neate, Remus Sawyerr, and Paul Thomas.

## **In attendance**

Matt Dane – Head of Safety Management (item 9), Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology, Bill Housden – Head of IT and Collector of Tolls (item 7), Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Delivery, Callum Sculfor – Assistant Planning Officer (item 10), Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer, Rob Thomas – Head of Governance.

## **1. Apologies and welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies** were received from Daniel Thwaites

### **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 formal 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.

The Chair welcomed Heather Hilburn to the Navigation Committee and that he hoped that she would enjoy the participation.

## **2. 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

## **3. Matters of urgent business**

No items were proposed as a matter of urgent business.

## **4. Minutes of last meeting**

The Chair said that a Member of the Committee had requested that the following words “were invited but” be added to the last paragraph of agenda item 11, page 9 of the minutes, so that it read “...to which Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Broads Authority were invited but did not attend.” Members agreed to this addition.

A Member referred to page 8 of the minutes where a meeting with the NSBA was mentioned by the Chief Executive, and the line "...one of the things that came out of that meeting was that the number of people who would benefit from the proposal to widen the channel at Hickling Broad was relatively small." The Member said that this was a misleading record of what actually happened at the meeting with the NSBA and a misrepresentation of NSBA's position on that matter and, therefore, thought the wording in the minutes should be corrected. The Head of Governance confirmed that it was necessary to record what was said at the meeting, however, would add the Member's comments to the minutes of this meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

## **5. 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. The Chief Executive (CE) said that his impression was that the Network Rail swing bridges had not been a significant issue for navigation on the Broads this year despite the hot weather and Network Rail had spent a lot of money on refurbishing some of the equipment on the bridges. Nevertheless, the Authority should expect in the future that they might be issues with the old Edwardian bridges when they expand in hot weather. In relation to Carrow Road bridge, the CE said that Norfolk County Council had carried out repairs this year and that there was no immediate issue for navigation. Regarding Haven Bridge, the CE said that he understood that Peel Ports and Norfolk County Council were working well at present and, although there were some further improvements that needed to be made to the arrangements, the passage through Yarmouth was working reasonably well.

The CE said that following the last meeting of the Navigation Committee in September, two new items, which had been considered by the Committee, had been added to the Summary of Progress. The first was the Boat Safety Scheme Compliance and the second, Insurance Requirements.

A Member commented that in terms of Haven Bridge, Peel Ports had called a meeting for the Port Users Group on 4 December 2025.

## **6. Chief Executive's report and current issues**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE). The CE said that the report covered three significant items. First, the tragic accident at Oulton Broad which East Suffolk Council were investigating. The CE believed that the Council was close to finalising the report and once completed they would be discussing the findings with the Broads Authority.

The second item was Floating Pennywort. The CE said that this was a major issue for the Broads Authority and that it was a significant danger for boating on the Broads. Over many years whenever Floating Pennywort had been spotted, the Authority, with the help of volunteers, had always got out swiftly to remove and control it. The Authority still did that in

the areas where it had been identified that the Floating Pennywort was present, but it had returned particularly in private dykes and waters. The CE said that there was a meeting on 11 November to discuss the issue and the Authority needed to keep on top of this and do its best to ensure that it did not spread any further.

The third item was a little bit of good news in that the Authority had been working closely with the Environment Agency (EA) about Ludham Bridge moorings which the EA owned. The CE said that he was pleased to say that the Authority had got close to the point where an agreement had been reached with the EA for the transfer of the ownership of the moorings to the Broads Authority to enable the improvement and it being brought up to the Authority's 24-hour mooring standard.

A Member commented that the Floating Pennywort was an extremely dangerous situation which was only getting worse, and asked whether the Authority had considered the introduction of a weevil which had been helpful in controlling Floating Pennywort in other locations. The Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (HCME) said that the Authority's Ecologists were looking into the feasibility of this.

A Member asked for clarification on where the moorings were at Ludham Bridge. The CE said that moorings were upstream of the bridge on the right-hand bank for those travelling up the river. It was an important location for visitors and local boat-users and if the transfer went through, it would be an important addition and improvement for boating on the Broads.

A Member asked whether there was an opportunity to do something similar on the other side of the river, particularly for those who needed moorings to lower masts. The CE noted this.

A Member commented that the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) was very concerned about Floating Pennywort. If it were to get out of hand, it would block drainage pumps and would lead to extensive flooding in boatyards which were right against the river.

## **7. Proposed navigation charges for 2026/27 in the navigation area and adjacent waters**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE), Director of Resources (DR), Head of IT and Collector of Tolls (HITCT). The CE said that he wanted to thank the DR and the HITCT in particular for their help on what was a major piece of work. Thank you also to the Members who attended the briefing meeting in October which was a really helpful event.

The CE said that he wanted to give the Members some updated figures. Table 3 showed the toll income for the year as at 1 October 2025 together with the budgeted income and the predicted income by the end of the year. For private boats, the predicted deficit was £32,764 and for hire boats, the predicted deficit was £41,440. The CE said that he was pleased to say, because of the hard work the tolls team did on chasing late payers they have had some success. The CE added that in 2025 there had been more late payers than previously which had given the team a huge task. The figures for October 2025 were better than predicted and as of 1 November 2025, the predicted deficit for private boats had reduced to ~£18,000, and

for hire boats the predicted deficit had reduced to just under £40,000, therefore the total theoretical deficit had fallen from ~£74,000 to ~£58,000.

Each year, the Broads Authority received a significant sum, in the region of £40,000, from Paddle UK. Their membership, however, had fallen by 16% which meant that the Authority's income from Paddle UK had reduced by £8,000.

The CE said that there had been a briefing with all Members on 7 October where the financial issues for the navigation were looked at. This was the formal consultation with the Navigation Committee, and then the Broads Authority would make a decision on tolls for next year on 28 November 2025.

The CE referenced the decline in boat numbers which were set out in tables 1 and 2. The decline had been quite significant and that had an impact on income. The CE referred Members to appendix 1 of the report and said that this provided annual boat numbers over the last ten years. Members would see that the change was not so great, for example although private motor cruiser numbers had dipped down in the last couple of years, over the last ten years, the numbers were much more stable.

One of the difficulties in setting the tolls was the prediction of how many boats would be on the water next year. Therefore what had been done in the paper was take a fairly prudent approach which assumed that the reduction in private boat numbers seen in 2025 would be matched next year. The CE said that from feedback from those that run the Environment Agency's (EA) waters, the Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) and British Marine, all show that boating was on the decline. However, the factors behind the decline were not known but thought that in part was economic factors, but there was probably a demographic factor in that there were not so many younger people taking up boating and older people were leaving. The Authority was therefore looking at doing some research to find out what the drivers were behind people who have had boats on the Broads no longer do. The costs for this exercise would be between £4,000 and £8,000 depending on the sample size, and the CE asked Members for their views.

The CE referred Members to section 5 of the report and late payment and said that the introduction of a £25 administrative charge for those that had failed to respond to the Authority writing a letter following the issuing of a notice of contravention. The CE proposed that the £25 charge be brought forward one step and the charge be added to the cost of tolls following the notice of contravention being issued.

The CE explained that the Authority had made significant changes to the organisation and had cut out quite a lot of costs. The downside to this was that the Authority would be doing less in 2026 with fewer staff and, therefore, the Authority would have to do less practical work. The combination of the reduction in the National Park grant and the reduction in the Navigation income had meant that the Authority had had to take some serious action in terms of the reduction of the scale of what the Authority could do. The plus side of that was that both the Navigation income and expenditure and the National Park income and expenditure had been broadly brought into balance, and this was the reason why, despite the reduction in the

number of boats, a 2.5% increase in tolls would provide the Authority with a stable position going forward in terms of Navigation. Members would recall, however, when the Member briefing was held, several Members questioned whether a slightly higher increase of 3.5% to put back some of the reduced output was required.

The Chair said that he would open the floor to questions and for any clarification on points. After questions, he would go round the room and ask all Members individually on whether they supported the survey and to give their preference on the percentage toll increase of 2.5% or 3.5%. This would enable a balanced view of what the Navigation Committee's preferences were to be presented to the Broads Authority at the end of the month.

#### **Comments and questions on tolls:**

A Member asked whether £25 late payment charge was exclusively on private boat owners, or did it include hire boats. The HITCT said that it was predominantly on private boats.

A Member commented that the problem of boats that have sunk and then have to be lifted was clearly a significant financial problem and asked whether that problem was going to be resolved by the costs being passed to insurance companies or would it remain an issue for the Authority. The CE said that he recently met with a colleague who was responsible for the Thames and they had hundreds of sunken, abandoned or unserviceable boats and it was a big problem for the agency. The CE went to the Rangers' end of season meeting earlier in the week and all had highlighted the amount of time they spent on sunken, dangerous or unserviceable boats. The features that the Authority was finding were the same in other waters and therefore did not think it was going to get any better and thought there would be costs associated with this issue. The Authority was doing its best to deal with this issue but it would be wrong to assume that the work the Authority was doing in terms of insurance would sort the issue, but what it might do would be to mitigate it. The Director of Delivery (DD) said that Members would remember that a paper regarding the improved Unserviceable Vessels policy had been brought to the committee which was the bridge between boat safety and unsafe vessels. That was bearing fruit and the Authority was working with various owners of vessels that should not be on the water. The DD was working with the EA to find solutions to deal with this growing issue. It was not cheap disposing of a vessel and where possible, the Authority would put the costs back to the owner.

A Member commented that there was a difference between the toll for a private motorised electric sailing craft and private motorised petrol/diesel sailing craft and asked what the justification was for that. The CE said that some of this was historical, and it had been a few years since a review of categories had been carried out. The HITCT said that there was an electric boat discount and an electric sailing boat would pay the same as a non-powered sailing boat. There was a similar reduction for electric motorboats. The Member said that the toll for an electric sailing boat was still lower than that for an electric cruiser. The HITCT said that sailing boats had always been charged less than motorboats, for the fact that most of them did not have a motor and those that did, only used the motor occasionally.

A Member commented that the differences in the tolls was to support sustainability on the Broads and there was a modest reward for those who recognised that. A Member commented that it was a positive decision that was made in 2024.

A Member commented that if the toll rise of 3.5% was agreed, that would raise an extra £44,000 and thought that the Authority should look into the feasibility of extra cutting at places like Hickling.

A Member commented that he believed that during the tolls meeting in 2024 a few types of businesses were identified that did not have the toll increase applied, however, noted that the same had not been done this year and said that he had not seen any economic changes for those businesses and whilst it was a relatively small amount for them, asked whether the Authority should be doing that again. The CE said that whatever decision the Broads Authority took about tolls, it had almost no impact in terms of the decisions made either by individuals or by businesses. The evidence showed that it was a relatively small part of the total costs of running a boat. The CE said that what was happening with the economy and the alternative holiday offers, such as cheap foreign holidays, far outweigh what the Authority did with the tolls. That did not mean that the change that the Authority did last year was not important, because it signalled that the Broads Authority was caring about those particular companies and their future.

A Member commented that the hire boat industry was 10% down this year, although there was roughly the same amount of boats let, they have had to apply discounts which, on top of National Insurance costs, rise in insurance costs, and the rise in minimum wage, had seen a fall in income. The Member believed that hire boat companies may not toll all boats in future and therefore run a smaller fleet.

A Member commented that they were concerned that the communications budget had been cut, amongst other things. The Member commented that it seemed that there were perpetual non-payers and asked the HITCT what the trends were for more non-payers and, from a communications perspective, were toll payers told at the outset what repercussions there would be if they did not pay their tolls, or did that get triggered when they actually did not pay their toll. The HITCT said that the Authority was looking to communicate in the Broadsheet which would be sent in 2026 about how non-payment of tolls was dealt with. Although the Authority found that there were certain people who were non-compliant most years, regrettably non-compliance had been driven by people who could no longer afford to continue boating. There was, however, an element where non-compliance had been encouraged and it was creating a huge amount of work. Since 1 April 2025, there had been 1,835 notices of contravention issued and 1,566 of those did relate to non-payment. So far, this year, the Authority had submitted 70 cases to court and there were ~15 cases waiting. The HITCT said that the Authority may not have communicated well enough about what would happen in relation to non-payment in the past, but it was set out in the schedule of tolls which was sent toll payers at the start of each year.

A Member asked whether a 2.5% toll rise would achieve a status quo in terms of what had been achieved over the last twelve months in terms of resources. The CE said a 2.5% rise

would provide a status quo to what the Authority had at present, which had included the reduction of two operations technicians who did the practical work out on the ground and it would, therefore, be the staffing as it was currently. The Member asked whether a 3.5% toll rise would redress some of that reduction. The CE confirmed that this was correct.

A Member asked if the Authority had any awareness as to what fellow navigation authorities were proposing. The CE said that the CRT had introduced increased above inflation over five years, and he believed that the EA were increasing their tolls in line with inflation. All inland navigation authorities were facing the same pressures on costs as the Authority were, such as the cost-of-living crisis, National Insurance increase and cost of materials.

### **Comments and questions on the proposed survey:**

A Member asked how the survey would work and was it to understand whether there were any common factors which could then be addressed by the Broads Authority and try to attract people back to the Broads as well as what the likely boating numbers would be. The CE said that in terms of predicting the numbers of hire boats, the Authority worked closely with the Hire Boat industry and received figures from them and therefore were reasonably confident about knowing what would happen in that sector. What the Authority did not know was what the ~9,000 private boat owners would do, all of whom were making individual decisions. The survey might show some common factors that affect the Broads.

A Member commented that, in terms of the survey, although generally in favour, the Authority should try to get a handle on whether people would start boating in the future. The CE said that it was very difficult to anticipate what people's future decisions would be about owning a boat. One of the things that the CE thought would be useful to look at through the survey was the extent to which people had given up boats because of the demographics, such as age, and the extent to which it was driven by economic factors. The CE thought that the amount of young people buying boats, rather than paddleboards and canoes, was relatively small.

A Member asked whether the proposed survey could include a cross-section of current boat owners to ask what might make them leave boating, opposed to just restricting it to those that had given up.

A Member commented that a survey could be an asset to the Boat Builders Federation and asked if they would be interested in helping with costs. The Member believed that the demographic was definitely dropping off and older people were leaving boating.

A Member said that they were greatly in favour of a survey and thought that the Authority could learn a lot from it. The Member noted the change in demographics and that older people had left boating, however, would like to point out that the Authority had lost out on getting young people out on the water since having stopped boats having unpowered tenders as part of its registration and believed that the Authority should once again allow unpowered tenders to be included as part of the cost of a motor cruiser's registration.

A Member said that a survey would be very valuable, but the key thing would be to point it in the direction of the encouragement of building of boating on the Broads. The Member commented that asking why people had left boating was a waste of money, and would probably see lots of negative responses. The focus should be on current boaters and ask them about what they would like to see, why they enjoyed boating on the Broads, and how their experience could be improved. Boating on the Broads was not only about budget, but it was also about health and wellbeing, it was about keeping the navigation open, and more effort needed to be put into encouraging boating on the Broads which should be done through the existing boating community.

A Member agreed that the survey should be more focused to those that were current owners of boats, in addition to those that have left, and asked what did the future look like and how the Authority could support the boating community.

The Chair asked each Member in turn what their preferred option of increase would be and whether the Member supported the proposal of conducting a survey. The Chair reminded Members that last year, when the Navigation Committee recommended the increase on tolls to the Broads Authority for approval, which was on the grounds that it was thought this year's increase would be a below inflation figure because of the increases over the last three years. The comments and suggested increase were:

- Supported the higher figure of 3.5% for two reasons. First the extent to which the Authority had got to deal with abandoned boats and no-compliance which would be expensive. Second, other factors that need to be considered such as Floating Pennywort, weed growth and maintaining the navigation. Agreed to the survey, but should be focused on those who still used boats.
- Supported a 3.5% increase on tolls. Agreed to survey with the remit of the inclusion of those that still used boats.
- Supported the survey and looked forward to seeing what the terms of reference would be. In favour of a 2.5% rise.
- In favour of a 2.5% increase. Was not sure on the survey but thought that the Authority should look forward and not back.
- In support of a survey, however, thought that this should come from the National Park budget rather than the Navigation budget. The Authority had gone through a lot of pain to rebase the tolls and would be surprised if the Authority went notably below inflation and therefore would choose a 3.5% increase because there were cost risks ahead. Would request that the Authority considered whether there were any sectors as last year that should be ring-fenced.
- For all the reasons that the Member mentioned above, would support a 3.5% increase and would also support the suggestion of untethered craft included within a boat's toll. Would agree with doing a survey but would like to see it entirely owned by the

Navigation Committee and solely focused on people who were currently boating on the Broads.

- Agreed with the survey, thought there was mileage to be gained with those who had given up ownership, but did agree that the current boat ownership should be the priority. Supported a 3.5% increase for all of the reasons that have already been said.
- A positive yes on the survey and thought that it should be left to the Executive to decide how this went forward. Supported the 3.5% increase, however, felt that there was some forecasting that was missing and looked forward to a discussion about what future proofing of the Broads Authority would help with making decisions going forward, which the survey would help with.
- The survey should cover both reasons why people have left boating as well as current toll payers. The Authority had been through a lot of pain over the last year to keep costs down and was in favour of a 2.5% rise.
- Agreed with the survey across both current boat owners and those who had left and asked if it was possible to include various organisations and clubs and for them to chip in to get the widest possible engagement. Could see an argument for both 2.5% and 3.5% and would prefer a 3% rise, but if pushed would go for 3.5%.
- In favour of the survey. Supported the 3.5% rise so that it gave the latitude to make good investment decisions.
- In favour of a survey and thought it should include boat clubs. Supported the 2.5% increase.

The Chair confirmed that there were eight Members in favour of the 3.5% increase, and four Members in favour of the 2.5% increase for recommendation to the Broads Authority. In relation to the survey, it was unanimous recommendation for a survey, but the detail of that survey needed to be looked at before any commitment to spending.

## **8. Construction, Maintenance and Ecology work programme – progress update**

Members received the report of the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (HCME). The HCME said that there were two substantial items within the report, both of which focused on the Upper Thurne. The area presented complex challenges in the management of the waterways.

The first was the current increase in salinity due to the salt surge following Storm Amy which had hit the Upper Thurne particularly hard. The salt incursion had therefore had an impact on the operational work such as dredging the marked channels at Hickling Broad which had had to pause. The team had therefore looked at shifting resources elsewhere on the system until the salinity dropped below the threshold of 8,400  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ . As of 4 November, the salt levels

where the operations team were looking to dredge were still triple the normal levels which was unprecedented.

The second item was the review of moorings between Heigham Sound and Hickling Broad. The free moorings in question were in remote locations and were used regularly. They provided access to the landscape, which was not available anywhere else on the system, which was why the Authority was looking to continue that provision. The HCME said that when all of the Broads Authority's asset base was considered, the Authority faced some major challenges in relation to 24-hour moorings. A report to the Committee in September 2024 set out future design challenges for moorings, such as being able to adapt to increased water levels, keeping costs down, and how to maintain the quality and safety of moorings.

The HCME said that surveys had shown that a lot of work was required in the next few years at the moorings between Heigham Sound and Hickling Broad. The Authority had a lease with landowner, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, and the Authority was responsible for the steel sheet piling which was of a certain age and it was not in great condition. In terms of maintenance, the Authority had adopted a very proactive approach and the proposal to replace the mooring was to manage risk and keep safety at a high level. At the location, there were areas of good width which offered the width for alternative moorings of pontoons. An application had been made through the Planning Team and the pontoons could be purchased through the capital grant from Defra, which meant that toll payers would not have to pay for this work. It, therefore, provided cost savings which allowed money to be spent elsewhere on the Broads navigation.

A Member commented there was crossover with agenda item 10, so any comments made should be taken into consideration for agenda item 10. The Member commented that that they were not opposed to pontoons but did not think that the location between Heigham Sound and Hickling Broad was the right place for pontoons. That area was primarily used by sail craft and were well used. The area was already narrow, therefore, any reduction in width would make sailing more difficult than it already was. The area was really important for sailing hire yards at Martham and anything that made sailing to Hickling less attractive would be a problem. The Member said that the proposed plans looked like there would be a significant reduction in the length of the mooring, which would be a really big issue. Youth groups access sailing in this area and the reduction in length of the mooring would be detrimental to that demographic. A Member mentioned how beautiful the area was with grassy banks and wooden capping and whaling which blended into the environment. Replacing that with metal pontoons were not as attractive and would not blend into the environment and that felt wrong.

A Member commented that the report said that the replacement of like for like steel piling was very expensive, however, there had not been a cost put on that which and then compared to the cost of the proposal. The Member asked whether there was a huge difference between replacing the mooring with like for like and replacing it with pontoons.

A Member commented that he appreciated the HCME's comments about the importance of the Upper Thurne, however, was dismayed at the last meeting of the Navigation Committee

where there was some suggestion that the Upper Thurne should be disinvested because boats could not get under Potter Heigham bridge and was good to hear that corrected by the HCME.

A Member commented that clarification was needed on what should be discussed at the Navigation Committee and what should be discussed at the Planning Committee in terms of the application and did not believe the Members were getting the right sort of guidance. The Member said that a lot of representations had been made on this planning application, but many were probably not what one would consider material considerations, but this did not mean that they were not important. The Member thought that there should have been more guidance in the paperwork and asked to whom were people writing.

A Member said that pontoons were more suitable in areas with high tidal range. Where the tidal range was not so high in the upper reaches, pontoons were not suitable. The Member said that there had been an independent private sector assessment of the condition of the current moorings and the conclusion from that assessment was pretty clear that the moorings were not considered to be as bad as perhaps being presented to the Committee, and they had got some years of life left in them.

A Member said that he was fully in favour of pontoons, but not at the proposed site, and had real concerns that the mooring was not being replaced with like-for-like in terms of quantity of mooring. Anyone who had tried to tack up that stretch of river in a long sailing craft would know that there was a struggle for area, so was not in favour of any reduction in the navigable channel. The Member commented that this needed to be set in the context of what was happening at Hickling and said that if the area above Potter Heigham was not opened up and with the reduction in moorings, it would make the area less attractive to people that visited the Broads and fewer people would use it. It was important to encourage young people to access all parts of the Broads. Where youth groups were taking out eighteen to twenty boats, it had become an increasing challenge to moor that number of boats in any one place. Therefore, to lose a mooring like the one between Heigham Sound and Hickling Broad, where the whole fleet could potentially be moored would be unthinkable and had to maintain this as an area where there was the same length of moorings without reducing the width of the river.

A Member asked whether pontoons would provide access to land in emergency situations.

The Member who represented such bodies appearing to the Authority to represent the owners of pleasure craft available for hire or reward as it considers appropriate read out a statement from Eastwood Whelpton sailing holidays. The statement opposed the planning application.

The HCME said that in relation to the cost, having looked at like-for-like replacement and raising capping to accommodate higher water levels, it would cost £430,000 to replace the entire 288m length of mooring compared to £170,000, which included installation of pontoons and reprofiling the bank. The £150,000 to install pontoons would be paid for out of the Capital Grant for Defra, however, if the Authority were to replace the moorings like-for-like, then this would be a cost to Navigation. The HCME referred to the independent assessment and said that this had looked at a simple like-for-like replacement, however, this

would not be effective in this location. Any increase in water level would mean that the mooring would be overtopped more frequently. In addition, the steel condition underneath the capping, which could not be seen at present, was not in good condition. The independent assessment did not meet the design standards required and would not be long enough piling.

A Member said that he was getting very concerned about the salinity in the Broads and something needed to be done because it was going to destroy the Broads if the problem was not tackled. The angling community was extremely worried about the loss of fish, and angling was a major economic input to the Broads as a whole. The Member said others were more concerned about invertebrate life and wildlife, not least Chara on Hickling. The Member said that he was concerned that the Broads Authority was not doing enough as a member of the Broadlands Future Initiative (BFI) to push for clarity on what was going to be done about saline incursion. The Member did not believe that a barrier at Great Yarmouth would enable the control of saline incursion and believed that washlands in the lower reaches of the Bure were needed, otherwise the salt water would continue to be pushed up into the upper reaches, killing everything in its sight.

A Member said that the EA's salinity measurements typically showed Potter Heigham had a higher salt level than at Acle Bridge. The salt was not necessarily forced up the river, but there was good evidence that the salt was flowing under the sea walls at Somerton, Sea Palling and Waxham.

A Member asked why the Authority did not dredge when there was high levels of salinity and was the Authority being over cautious as it was costing money having kit in the location not doing anything and would like to see the money better spent. The Member said that he found it hard to understand why a small level of activity, when saline levels were high, would have an impact across the whole system. The HCME said that there was a number of environmental safeguards being monitored, not just salinity, from dissolved oxygen concentration to the abundance of the potentially toxic algae, Prymnesium. The Authority was working with the EA and the EA's teams were out moving fish to alternative locations and dealing with the dead fish across the Broads. Hickling Broad was one of those areas where salinity was most extreme. Once salinity reduced below the agreed threshold, the Operations Team would start the dredging. In terms of staffing, the Operations Team was currently employed on other navigation work across the Broads.

A Member said that it was well known that salt water came in from under the sea walls, however, saline was being held in the Upper Thurne because of tide locking in the lower reaches and therefore there was a requirement for washes. The Member believed that there should be some research carried out on how this could be accommodated on the lower reaches. A Member commented that this issue was being addressed by BFI.

## **9. Hire Boat Code – Personal Flotation Devices**

Members received the report from the Head of Safety Management (HSM). The HSM gave an overview of the report and specifically highlighted sections 2.4 to 2.8 of the report. The HSM said that the Boat Safety Management Group (BMSG) supported the proposal.

The Chair commented that the recommendation, when it was brought to the BMSG, that the use of automatic inflating life jackets should be encouraged but it should not be made mandatory because of the cost implications to the smaller businesses.

A Member said that there was a cost implication to self-inflating life jackets. The Member said that their hire boat business operated health and safety procedures which meant that all life jackets, when being returned by hirers, were thoroughly checked. Unfortunately, customers did not want to wear the orange buoyancy aids, and it was hard to get them to wear any life jacket. However, the Member would lean to using life jackets that both manually inflate and self-inflate.

A Member said that they supported the self-inflating life jackets and added that, although people did not like wearing them, the orange foam life jackets with the head support were as equally as good as long as they were to the right specifications. All hire boat operators could do would be to provide the life jackets and hope that the hirers would use them.

A Member said that he did not believe that any of the hire companies would not be fully appraised of the different types of life jackets and believed that they should be encouraged to supply self-inflating life jackets, but not mandated because of cost.

A Member said that this was a safety matter. There was a risk in relation to manual inflating life jackets, for example if someone hit their head when entering the water and believed that they should mandate the provision of self-inflating life jackets.

The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority had done a lot of work to encourage people to wear life jackets this season. New signage was created and staff had cards which were handed out to boaters. The feedback from the Great Yarmouth Yacht Station staff at the end of the season meeting was that it had made a big difference. Many more people were willing to wear life jackets. The CE said that the Authority needed to keep that pressure up and not underestimate the importance of continuing to encourage the hire industry to push their hirers to wear life jackets, particularly for getting on and off boats, and for young children.

The Chair said that the Authority should continue to encourage the use of life jackets or buoyancy aids, discourage the use of manual inflating life jackets and encourage the use of self-inflating life jackets or buoyancy aids.

The CE said that an alternative suggestion would be to say that the Authority's intention was that, in the next five years, the use of self-inflating life jackets would become mandatory, so that when current life jackets need to be replaced they are replaced by self-inflating ones.

The Chair asked if Members were happy with the CE's suggestion. A Member said that he would make it two years rather than five. This proposal was supported by the majority of the Committee, however, no vote was taken.

## 10. Planning application with implications for navigation – BA/2025/0289/FUL, Heigham Sound, Hickling, Norfolk

Members received the report of the Assistant Planning Officer (APO).

A Member asked for guidance from the Head of Governance (HoG) and whether he was content that Planning Committee Members remained in the room whilst this application was discussed. The HoG said that the Members were present in an individual capacity and were not in conflict as they had not made a declaration in terms of what their beliefs were. Members were still in the process of receiving information, however, if the Members had concerns, they could choose to remain in the room but not participate in the discussion. The HoG clarified the difference between the Navigation Committee and the Planning Committee. The Navigation Committee was a critical part of how the Authority consulted on decisions with may significantly impact on the navigation and it was not a decision-making committee. As part of any planning application significantly affecting navigation, the Authority consulted the Navigation Committee. Members come to the meeting as individuals to provide feedback, evidence and information from Members' skills and experience and full participation was encouraged. This feedback would then be fed into the Planning Committee for them to take into consideration. The Planning Committee had its own code of conduct and had to consider material aspects of the decision. The Member who was not able to take part in this discussion (see Appendix 1, Declarations of Interest) had already made a submission to the planning application in a personal capacity, and had not known that this item would come to the Navigation Committee for feedback, however, that Member did have the opportunity to continue to pursue his view when the application was discussed at the Planning Committee if he chose to.

A Member asked whether pontoons would provide access to the land. A Member said that at the moment the moorings were connected by a path and all of that connectivity would be lost.

The APO said that the paper was brought to the committee for navigation reasons and anything that had been said in relation to the application had been noted by the APO. Site photographs and plans of the proposed pontoons were handed out to the Members

The Chair asked Members to raise anything that had not already been raised in the previous agenda item and thought that the Committee made it very clear their feelings on what the impact of the proposal was likely to have.

A Member commented that it was not clear why there was a planning paper coming to the Navigation Committee as it had already been discussed the Construction, Maintenance and Ecology work programme paper. The Chief Executive said that the application would have always been brought to the Navigation Committee to gather the comments from the members of the Navigation Committee. The Chair said that the Committee would need this information included in the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology's report to enable a thorough look at the implications of the application and what effects it would have on the existing use of those moorings and the future use of the navigation.

A Member asked who would be summarising the views and comments given by the Committee. The CE confirmed that the APO was taking extensive notes these would be included in the report to the Planning Committee. The Development Manager confirmed that the reason why the APO had brought the paper to the committee was because it was a planning application from the Broads Authority with significant implications to navigation.

The Chair said that the Committee needed to focus on the impacts on navigation. The Head of Governance confirmed that the APO was looking for evidence or comments to take away to help them in the consideration of the planning application. The HoG confirmed that item 8 of the agenda related to the programme of work and this agenda item related specifically to the planning application.

A Member asked where the Committee's comments fit within the APO's response. The APO said that as with other planning applications, there was a consultation period which was ongoing happened and as at 6 November, had received about sixty objections. That all forms part of the consultation process and the comments made today by the Navigation Committee would be included in that process.

A Member asked when this application would be put before the Planning Committee. The APO said that no date had been planned at this time.

A Member said that they were uncomfortable that within section 4 of the report it inferred that the Planning department supported the proposal, but the consultation had not finished yet and felt that wasn't really appropriate. The APO noted that and said that it was not the intention.

A Member commented that in section 3.2 where it stated no consultation responses had been received was a misleading statement of fact because there were now 60 objections. The APO said that at time of writing the report on 21 October, no formal consultation responses had been received.

The Chair summarised the committee's views and commented that it was clear that the Navigation Committee was not in support of the application.

## **11. Other items of business**

There were no other items of business.

## **12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on 22 January 2026 at the Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY commencing at 10am.

## **13. Exclusion of the public**

Leslie Mogford proposed, and Sue Cadamy seconded.

**It was resolved unanimously that the press and 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 and 3 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. Exempt minutes of last meeting**

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 12:15pm

Signed

Chairman

## Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 06 November 2025

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Sue Cadamy, Mark Collins, Peter Dixon, Alan Goodchild, Leslie Munford, Bob Neate and Paul Thomas.	7	Private toll payer. The Member Code of Conduct allowed for these Members to participate and vote.
Mark Collins	10	Dispensation for a period of one year that will enable the members to participate and vote at Navigation Committee meetings on matters relating to weed control on Hickling Broad and Planning Application BA/2025/0289/FUL despite an Other Registrable Interest through membership of the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association and the Broads Society.
Peter Dixon	10	Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interest in a personal capacity and was not permitted to take part in this agenda item.