

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2025

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Present

Harry Blathwayt – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, Gail Harris, James Harvey, Tristram Hilborn, Heather Hilburn, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Curig Johnston, Siân Limpenny, Leslie Mogford, Tim Munday, Gurpreet Padda, James Reeder, Matthew Shardlow, Vic Thomson, Fran Whymark.

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, Rob Rogers – Director of Delivery, Natalie Beal – Planning Policy Officer, Matt Dane – Head of Safety, Sue Stephenson – Ecology and Design Manager, Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer, Rob Thomas – Head of Governance.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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 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.

There were no apologies.

2. Chairman's announcements

The Chair confirmed that there was no change to the order of the agenda items and that no members of the public had registered to speak.

3. Introduction of members and 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.

4. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

6. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7. Summary of actions and outstanding issues

Members received the latest summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions at previous meetings. The Chief Executive (CE) said that there were two issues that he would draw Members' attention to:

The CE reported that Norfolk County Council had given notice that Haven Bridge would be closed for two weeks from 1 December to carry out further repairs which included the replacement of barriers and repairs to the paths, parapets, and all timber blocks on the bridge deck. The CE said that this would be a good time of year to carry out these works as the bridge would not be required to lift as often as it would in other months.

The CE said that, in relation to the appointment of a Monitoring Officer, Rob Thomas would be leaving the Broads Authority and the CE wished him well in his new role and thanked him for all the work he had done for the Authority. This, however, would mean that Jonathan Goolden, who was the current Monitoring Officer, would stay in the post until the new Head of Governance, Lorraine Taylor, had completed the Monitoring Officer training to which she had already completed the first part.

A Member commented that there had previously been proposals for the introduction of charges to lift Haven Bridge and asked was there any concern that charges would be introduced in future. The CE said that the main issue had been from a dispute between Peel Ports and Norfolk County Council about the bridge being raised, however, this had now been resolved. The Chair confirmed that there was a transit charge of £20 for leisure boats to enter the harbour but there was no charge to lift the bridge.

The report was noted.

8. Strategic priorities – update for 2025/26 and draft strategic priorities for 2026/27

Members received the report of the Governance Officer. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the report was the regular update on where the Authority was on the strategic priorities for the current year, plus section 3 included draft priorities for the coming year. The CE said that the Defra priorities were listed together with a series of headings of things the Management Team thought Members might think were important issues for the coming year. The CE asked Members for their view on the list and which should go forward and said that detail was not required at this stage. It was quite a long list and Members might wish to remove some of the suggested priorities and once agreed, the detail on each priority would be worked up and presented to Members at the next meeting of the Broads Authority.

The CE referred Members to the final draft priority in the list: Devolution and Mayoral Authority and said that the Government launched its consultation on the proposals for local government reorganisation in Norfolk and Suffolk on 19 November 2025 and it ends on 11 January 2026. The CE said that the Authority had previously taken a view about this issue and explained that in the last couple of days he had leaders and/or chief executives of various local authorities contact him to ask for a meeting with himself and the Chair. The Broads Authority was a statutory consultee and therefore its view would be given some weight. However, the view that the Chair and the CE had taken, and had been discussed with Members previously, was that the Broads Authority was a non-political organisation and therefore did not think it would be appropriate for the Authority to give an opinion of preference of one particular pattern of local government over another. The response provided previously was to pick out what were important to the Broads Authority such as biodiversity loss, climate change and welcoming a pattern of local authority which would make local government more streamlined for the Authority to engage with but not giving any indication of preference. The CE said that he thought it important to ask Members if they were still content with that approach and, working with the Chair, a response would be made to the consultation. In the meantime, the CE and Chair would be meeting with chief executives and leaders in Norfolk and Suffolk.

A Member said that everyone as individuals should reply to the consultation as it would affect everyone in Norfolk and Suffolk.

A Member asked whether conversations had been had with other National Parks who were already working with devolved authorities. The CE said that there were two separate issues in this regard, the first, a move away from a two-tiered local government structure to a unitary structure and the CE believed that should be welcomed by the Broads Authority because this would mean a reduction in the number of authorities that the Broads Authority would have to engage with, but critically it would bring some of the services that the Authority had interests into one body and would create new opportunities. The second issue was the move to a joint Mayoral Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk and the CE thought that this would be more significant for the Broads Authority because whoever the mayor would be, they would have some significant powers, responsibilities and funding for services that related closer to the Broads Authority such as economic development, climate change, and biodiversity loss which went across Norfolk and Suffolk. It would be important to engage with the new mayor and the new leaders of the unitary authority/authorities as they develop.

A Member asked whether the strategic priorities for other National Parks compliment the strategic priorities for the Broads Authority and was there a thread that wove them all together. The CE said that he did not know whether other National Parks did the same process, however, it did not mean that things not on the list were not important and the Authority was not doing them. The Broads Authority had been reporting on strategic priorities for a number of years and it provided Members with a regular update on where the organisation was at in relation to Broads Authority-specific priorities that involved significant amounts of money or policy so that Members were able to track those priorities during the year. The CE said that the strategic priorities had to balance ambition with realism. The CE

said that some of the draft priorities were very important. The Broads Plan was a significant piece of work and the information and data management project was a large project and to get on top of that would be important.

A Member asked whether the CE had concerns on being able to deliver some of the proposed priorities and were there any that could be removed from the list. The CE said that the Authority would have to do all of the priorities listed. For example, the Local Plan would need to be submitted for the Inquiry and the Authority had received money from Active Travel and would therefore have to deliver that, however, these might not need to be reported on at every meeting.

A Member commented on the devolution draft priority and said that it was important to keep a high profile during the process and make sure that the relationship with the Broads Authority was built into whatever plan going forward so that the Authority did not fall between the gaps.

A Member commented that the Authority should not forget the risk that once Devolution and Mayoral Authority happened in relation to the appointment of Members by the new authorities, and added that it would be important to work hard to develop new relationships with the new authorities.

A Member commented that underpinning all of this was funding and it was important to create a good relationship with the new Mayor.

A Member said that the draft priorities for 2026/27 was a good list but was interested to know how those priorities were selected. The Member was particularly interested how the Authority responded to the Cunliffe review and the Corry review which would have implications for the Authority, both opportunities and risks, and would not want the reviews and the implementation of those to get lost. Defra were keen on enabling economic growth and through the planning responsibilities there was an opportunity to be proactive in meeting Defra's needs. Finally, one of the strategic priorities had to be about diversifying income and ensuring sustainable funding model beyond 2026/27. The CE said that he believed that was less of a priority than it was for planning for how any capital income would be spent going forward. The reason being was that there had been a big piece of work carried out by a major firm of consultants for the National Park Authorities, and despite them having looked under every rock and every stone, they struggled to identify significant sources of other funding and therefore there was a real challenge in this regard. It was possible that the Authority would get further capital funding over the next three years and the Authority had come to the end of a list of potential projects. The Authority owned very little in terms of economic development opportunities, therefore, the CE said that the Authority would need to think imaginatively if it received further capital money and would need to look at what opportunities were possible. At the recent Risk, Audit and Governance (RAG) committee meeting the CE and the Head of Resources (HoR) agreed that they would work on what any opportunities would be and how the Authority could generate income from them and report back to both RAG and the Broads Authority.

A member commented that a Member had made a good point about how the list of strategic priorities was structured and responding to climate change, for instance, was a long-term aspiration, whereas the new data management project was a time-limited item.

In relation to the Access for All priority, a Member commented that it was a very important issue and was a high priority for the Government. The Member said that in addition to the Active Travel England funding partnership, the Authority should have a separate priority about increasing access and agree a specific target for 2026/27 which would make it clear that the Authority was looking at access in a lot of ways, not just through the Active Travel England opportunity. The CE said that this would fit under the Landscape Connections programme which the Head of External Funding would be working up over the next two years, with a further eight years to deliver. The project was about connecting the landscape to improve biodiversity but also about engagement with local people and getting them into the Broads National Park.

A Member said that Landscape Connections was really important but did not want the Authority to lose focus on the wider Nature Recovery strategy.

A Member commented that navigation was not reflected in the set of draft strategic priorities as much as the other two statutory purposes and wondered whether a priority should be added which linked directly to navigation. The CE said that there would be some navigation elements under Landscape Connections and there would be some important elements within the Broads Plan in terms of looking at the future. The CE said that much of the Authority's responsibility in terms of navigation rested within Section 10 of the Broads Act which was about the maintenance of the system which was the Authority's main job and the focus needed to remain on that. This year the Authority was able to spend some capital money to make improvements which would benefit navigation and it was hoped that any further capital money could be used in this way, but that there was not a big project for navigation over and above what was already being done in terms of dredging, maintenance and refurbishment of moorings. The Navigation Committee had an equivalent version of priorities and there was a lot of work that had to happen which was reported to the Committee at each meeting, and the committee.

A Member asked whether it was worth looking at the strategic priorities once the Planning and Infrastructure Bill had been passed in December. The CE said that what the Member reminded him of was the recent debate with Ministers about furthering National Park purposes where there was the suggestion that it should be removed, however, Ministers backed down on that. It emerged as an issue this week, that the report into Sizewell and the Development of Nuclear Power recommended the removal of the priorities given to National Parks and protected areas. The CE said that he hoped that recommendation would be ditched because that would be the clearest signal, one way or another, that the Government's intentions were around the balance of economic growth and the protected landscapes.

A Member said that there had been some priorities over the last few years that the Authority had struggled to fully address, such as electrification of the Broads where it had struggled to get funding. The Member said that the list should not include the projects that would be done

anyway and that there should be a small number of priorities and make sure that was where change was happening.

A Member commented on Defra's growth plan and priorities and asked how any new opportunities could be explored to bring new funding streams in the appropriate way, and how Members could bring any further comments and ideas to the CE. The CE said that the Member could call him or send him an email. In the CE's mind, it was very much focused on what the grant from Defra would be combined with the latest round of discussion as to how do precious landscapes relate to economic development.

A Member commented that they agreed on the forward priorities listed, and said that there was a need to focus on data security which was an increasing concern. In addition, there were two things to consider in regard to climate change, the first the good work that the Broadland Futures Initiative was doing regarding sea level rises and flooding, and the second other climate change impacts that would affect the Broads Authority.

A Member commented that broader priorities were sensible, and agreed that cyber security was vitally important, added to that how the AI element could increase productivity for the Broads Authority.

A Member asked about the continuity from the 2025/26 priorities to the 2026/27 priorities and how certain priorities would impact the Authority over a long period of time – which ones were complete, which ones were new, and which ones were rebadged. The CE said that he recognised the imperfections in the list as it had a mixture of things that were ongoing and some were one-off items, however, the 2026/27 list identify specific actions that would need to be taken within the next year.

A Member said that it would be important to include a specific strategic priority that related to navigation and accepted that there was not a major project coming up but added that there was a risk to navigation in respect of ageing assets, sea level rise, flooding, and plant and tree growth. The Member believed that there was an existential threat to the Broads as a navigation area as it had been known over the last fifty years and accept that some of the navigation priorities fitted into other priorities elsewhere, but thought they were pulled together in such a way that people who pay tolls could see that the Authority was taking it seriously. The Member added that there was a need to recognise the way the waterways were used and it was important that this was articulated. The CE said that of the issues on the draft strategic priorities list, he thought that the decline in boating numbers was the Authority's biggest threat. Both the Canals and Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency thought that the decline was a demographic shift and it was therefore important to look at what the decline would look like in future years, what the trends were and to understand what the implications of any trends would be.

A Member commented if a survey was carried out of current toll payers and previous toll payers, then that should form part of any priority and could form part of an access to waterways priority.

A Member commented that with the decline in boating there was an opportunity to explore demographics.

A Member commented that raising navigation to a strategic level could bring further opportunities.

The Chair said that he thought that there was a massive opportunity for the Authority to involve young people in the Broads and it was really important that the Authority look to the new generation.

The CE said that the discussions had been very helpful and would allow the Management Team to take away the comments and suggestions and bring a more detailed report back, with manageable priorities, to the next meeting.

9. Statement of Accounts 2024/25

Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR said that Members received the draft Statement of Accounts at the 25 July 2025 Broads Authority meeting and the report in front of Members went to the Risk, Audit and Governance (RAG) Committee on 25 November 2025. The Audit had been going on since July 2025 and the DoR was pleased to report that there were no changes to the outturn surplus of £585,914 as previously reported.

The main audit adjustments identified had been mainly around IFRS 16, where the Authority had for the first time adoption of leases, and the pension fund. The DoR referred Members to table 1 of the report and noted that the main difference on the income side was the addition of peppercorn leases in the Government Grants row under 'other operating expenditure, finance & investment income and Government Grant' heading. The change of £7,000 related to the amended valuations to the IFRS 16 leases. The Authority had an actuary report for the pension fund and that would get reissued when the figures are finalised after year end and an asset ceiling was calculated. As a public fund, the Authority cannot recognise the full asset and this asset ceiling looks to restrict that. The format between the reports being issued for the 2023/24 accounts and the 2024/25 accounts had changed which meant that the initial draft, which Members saw in July, did not include the asset ceiling. This, therefore, had now been corrected and had reduced the pension asset by £10,857,000.

The Auditors, EY, attended RAG on 25 November where they talked about the process of getting the accounts signed off. Members would recall that the 2023/24 accounts had a disclaimed audit opinion due to the large backlog of audits of local government accounts. EY confirmed that they were still waiting for guidance to be agreed by the Financial Reporting Council as to whether the Authority could move from a 'disclaimed audit opinion' to a 'qualified except for'. They hoped that the guidance would be published in January 2026 which would mean that the accounts would not be able to be signed off at this meeting. The DoR asked Members if they would give delegated permission to the Chair and the DoR to approve the accounts outside of committee.

The Chair of RAG commented that this matter had been discussed at some length at the committee meeting on 25 November and that the opinion for 2023/24 and what was

expected for 2024/25 and was not a reflection on the confidence in the work of the Authority, but the work of the external auditors and audit capacity. It was hoped that the trajectory of the opinion was looking good in terms of getting a qualified opinion for 2024/25 and essentially this was about the opening balances and the confidence in those balances. The Chair of RAG added that Members should acknowledge the huge amount of work the finance team had put into this and supported the recommendation made by the DoR.

A Member commented that to give Members some comfort, his appointing council was having the same issue and it was nothing to do with the organisation itself. The Member added that if the auditors did not take the risk of moving from disclaimed opinion to qualified, then it would never be done and believed that every organisation who was in this position should put as much pressure as they could on the external auditors to get to qualified opinions.

A Member said that it should be put on record, the Committee's thanks to the Finance team for their great progress.

A Member asked whether there were any outstanding audit actions or qualifications that the Committee should be aware of. The DoR said that auditors were still going through the accounts and there was slight query on how the asset ceiling was disclosed in the notes to the Statement of Accounts, but ultimately this would not affect the balance sheet. The DoR said that she hoped to get that resolved as soon as possible as the ledger needed to be closed. There was a recommendation, that went to the RAG Committee on 25 November, about having a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy which was how debt was accounted for through the accounts. In the past, the Authority's debt had been so tiny, because there were only two small loans, it had not been picked up before. However, because IFRS 16 came on the balance sheet as of 1 April, the capital financing requirement went up by some margin and, therefore, the Authority now had a lot of lease liability which was technically shown as debt on the balance sheet. It was a recommendation that a MRP was formalised which would then go to RAG Committee in February 2026. The HoR said that when EY looked at IFRS 16, there were three leases that they were not happy with how the Authority had calculated the discount rate to get the lease back to zero. EY had done some calculations that meant that there was a possible error of about £12,000/£13,000 in the accounts, but when the HoR asked for calculations to demonstrate what that meant, it was just something that they had put through their system so it had been agreed not to correct that because it was immaterial and did not have an impact.

A Member asked how the Authority proposed to use the reserve surplus. The HoR said that the reserves were split between Navigation and National Parks and it was difficult to know what to do with any surplus until it was known what the National Park grant from Defra would be. The Chief Executive (CE) said that if things went well, and the Authority got a flat cash award and a commitment to capital funding over three years, the Authority could then have a discussion with Members on how any surplus could be spent.

A Member asked whether the external auditors adjusted the audit fee. The DoR said that in EY's audit report, they had indicated that there would be additional fees and which the DoR

would dispute. The CE said that this was something that the Authority regularly raised with Ministers and officials and said that for an organisation of the Authority's size the level and costs of audit was completely disproportionate. The HoR said that there was some legislation coming that would amend the bands for auditing, however, Defra believed that the Broads Authority would not move bands. They may, however, move to a risk-based audit approach and the Authority might get lower audit fees.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Gail Harris.

It was resolved unanimously to grant delegated permission to the Chair and the Director of Resources to sign off the Statement of Accounts 2024/25.

10. Financial performance and direction

Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR said that the report in front of Members was up to the end of September and would provide a verbal update to the end of October. Table 1 of the report, the actual variance had moved to £789,841 which was favourable and there was no change to the Latest Available Budget in table 2. The forecast was likely to change as the Head of IT and Collector of Tolls would provide a close of play update later that day. Earmarked reserves in table 4 of the report were increased to £3,794,423 and this was mainly due to the receipt of the first 50% from the Lottery in relation to the development grant.

The DoR referred to paragraph 5.2 and asked Members to approve additional expenditure of £17,500 from the Plant, Vessels and Equipment Reserve to fund works at Reedham Marshes. In addition, in paragraph 6.4, Members were asked to approve the waiver of Standing Orders Relating to Contracts for ABPmer for the safety management systems.

Table 5 of the report contained the Prudential Indicators which are required to report to the Members and in relation to the balance, as set out in the previous agenda item, had been in because of IFRS 16.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Stephen Bolt.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. Note the actual income and expenditure figures and prudential indicators.**
- ii. Approve the additional earmarked expenditure for Fen Management in 2025/26 as set out in paragraph 5.2.**
- iii. Approve the waiver of standing orders relating to contracts regarding the Port Marine Facility Safety Code as set out in paragraph 6.4.**

11. Proposed navigation charges for 2026/27 in the navigation area and adjacent water

Members received the report from the Chief Executive (CE). The CE thanked the Director of Resources (DoR) and the Head of IT and Collector of Tolls (HITCT) for this was a major piece of work each year and they had spent a lot of time working on the reports.

The CE reminded Members of the process, a briefing note was circulated to all Members in September, followed by a meeting with Members on 7 October 2025, and then the formal consultation with the Navigation Committee on 6 November 2025. Included in the report in front of Members was a copy of the report which was presented to the Navigation Committee together with the relevant draft minutes so that Members could see the information the Navigation Committee received and the views that they had. The report contained updates on various things that had happened since the Navigation Committee meeting. The CE said that he recently attended the Inland Waterways Conference where he was able to speak to colleagues at the Environment Agency (EA) and the Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) and confirmed that the EA had increased their charges by 3.8% and the CRT by 4.85%.

Section 2 of the report showed income as at 1 October 2025, however, the HITCT had provided the CE with an update of income as at 1 November 2025 and the good news was that the income received during that period was greater than anticipated and said that he would like to pay tribute to the HITCT and the tolls team for the hard work they had been doing in respect of catching up with people who had failed to pay their tolls. The CE added that the internal audit findings had just been received and that the tolls team should be congratulated as they achieved a 'substantial' opinion which was the highest level achievable. The CE thanked the tolls team and said that given the pressures that the team had been under, it was a huge achievement. The good news was slightly offset by the fact that Paddle UK, who share some of their income with the Broads Authority, had seen a 16% reduction in their membership.

Section 4.2 of the report sets out the formal consultation with the Navigation Committee where two options which the committee looked at, with eight in favour of a 3.5% increase, and four in favour of a 2.5% increase.

The CE said that he would like to draw Members' attention to section 5.1 of the report and the issue of non-compliance, the cost of recovering toll fees, and the cost of dealing with sunken and abandoned vessels. The CE said that Members should commend the HITCT and the tolls team for their hard work in dealing with non-compliant vessels and recovering unpaid tolls. To date, the HITCT had submitted eighty cases to court for prosecution, of which eighteen had been resolved out of court, and a further eight-five to be dealt with – a significant increase on previous years. This year a £25 late payment charge had been issued to those that had been issued a 'second letter', however, the proposal in the report was to issue the £25 late payment charge on the receipt of a Notice of Contravention stage. The CE said that he thought that this was fair and reasonable and thought it was unfair that the boat users who paid their tolls on time and, in effect, funded those that did not pay.

A Member commented that the £25 late payment charge did not seem high enough as it was clearly not covering the costs and asked whether the cost be increased. The HITCT said that considerable time was spent dealing with non-payment from the Ranger filling out the Notice of Contravention to the various administrative stages. The HITCT said that he thought an initial £25 charge at the Notice of Contravention stage as per the proposal, but asked whether a second charge at the second letter stage should also be introduced. If the case went to court, generally costs would be awarded to the Broads Authority so it was possible to recover some costs at that stage.

A Member commented that an initial charge of £25 followed by a second charge of £50 should be considered.

A Member said that it was interesting to look at what the DVLA had recently done, in that if someone did not pay their road tax by the start of the next month, by day seven there was a charge of £25 and if not paid by the end of that month, there would be an extra £50 charge. The Member said that he thought that the Broads Authority could learn from that.

The CE said that the idea of a second charge of £50 seemed reasonable but with a caveat that the Authority would need to be very proactive in communicating this charge as it would be unfair that toll payers would not know about the charge. It could, therefore, be publicised in the Broadsheet and other communications and make it clear that this was the way some of the costs of non-payers was being recovered. A Member commented that communication around the charge was essential and would be very proactive in talking to people such as the EDP and get the message out through the newspaper. The CE added that it would be good if the EDP could make the point that late payment as well as unserviceable and sunken vessels was an issue for the Authority as it was for the EA and CRT.

A Member asked whether there was a correlation between the introduction of a late payment charge and the increase in non-payment and did the introduction of the £25 charge cause the problems. The HITCT said that the introduction of the £25 was only on the second letter stage but believed that the number of notices of contravention coming in was a reflection on external factors and there was no evidence either way.

A Member asked whether there was a slowing in the decline of boat numbers. The CE said that over the last two or three years it looked as if the numbers had gone down significantly, however, having looked at the numbers over the last ten years, to some extent some of the figures had drifted back to where they were before. However, next year would be significant one considering the cost of living and the changing age of boat owners and the Authority was unsure whether ownership would be further reduced or it would level out.

The Chair commented that the Navigation Committee came to the conclusion that a 3.5% would be appropriate and the Broads Authority had taken that on board and added his thanks to the Navigation Committee for their input and help with this.

The Chair said that Members were asked to note the report to the Navigation Committee and the feedback from the members of the Committee in the extract from the draft minutes for the meeting.

The Chair said that he would split the vote into two parts, the first to decide on the increase of tolls for 2026/27, and the second to approve the introduction of an administrative charge being applied at the Notice of Contravention stage.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Stephen Bolt.

It was resolved unanimously to approve an increase of 3.5% in navigation charges for 2026/27 in the navigation area and adjacent waters in line with the majority view of the Navigation Committee.

Fran Whymark proposed an amendment to the recommended decision of “the introduction of a £25 administrative charge being applied at the Notice of Contravention stage to cover the additional costs of late payment” and that the Board should approve “the introduction of a £25 administrative charge being applied at the Notice of Contravention stage and an additional £50 charge at the second letter stage”. James Harvey seconded the motion.

The amendment was not carried by 10 votes in favour and 11 against and would therefore revert back to the original proposal.

The Chair asked whether the HITCT thought that the tolls team would face any aggressive behaviour following the introduction of an additional charge. The HITCT said that regrettably this already happened.

Tim Jickells proposed that the Board should approve the introduction of a £25 administrative charge being applied at the Notice of Contravention stage and an additional £25 charge at the second letter stage”, seconded by Tony Grayling.

The proposal was carried by 18 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions to approve the introduction of a £25 administrative charge being applied at the Notice of Contravention stage and a further £25 charge being applied at the second letter stage to cover the additional costs of late payment of tolls.

12. Land purchase at Barton Turf

Members received the report of the Ecology and Design Manager (EDM). The EDM said that the land at Barton Turf was just under 30 hectares and was a significant area which was a priority habitat and home to many protected species. In recent years it had suffered from lack of management and was currently classified as in ‘unfavourable condition’. However, now the land had been purchased, the Authority would be able to ensure that the management needs are met and, importantly, secured into the future.

Since the purchase in September, the focus had been on two main activities: First, the assessment of the site and of the management needs such as relearning the site because it had been twenty five years since the Authority had been involved, and looking at access and what the various issues were that would need to be resolved. Second, talking with Natural England (NE) and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) regarding the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which would offer both revenue and capital funding options for delivery of wetland

management. Most of those options would be on a five-year basis, but some were longer, and the EMD was working on a five-year management plan with NE and RPA.

A Member commented that this project was absolutely brilliant and thought the Authority should do as much of this as possible, and asked whether there were opportunities in the future for public access to the land in a way that was compatible with looking after the land. The EMD said that potentially there was an opportunity, but there was a way to go before this could happen as the land had not been managed well prior to the Authority's purchase and access was difficult. Any access would need to be safe and in a way that would not disturb the features of the site.

A Member congratulated the EMD and said that it was great that the Authority had purchased the land and commented that they assumed the rationale would be for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) but was interested in opportunities for public access and flood risk opportunities. The Member asked whether there was an opportunity to extend the five-year Countryside Stewardship and, if not, what were the expected costs and was the Authority planning for that possibility. The EMD said that it was not know what would happen after the five years, but all indications were that there would be something but it was not known if that would be exactly the same.

A Member asked whether there was an opportunity to sell BNG credits to developers. The EMD said that this was not possible because of the existing biodiversity value of the land. To be able to sell BNG credits, the land would need to be enhanced and it was already a protected and designated site, and although NE classified that the land was in unfavourable condition that did not change its underlying inherent value. The Member asked whether this meant that the Authority could not increase biodiversity on this land. The EMD said that the Authority could increase the biodiversity, but it was not possible to use it for BNG credits.

A Member asked, given the existing commitments across the 400 hectares of fen, did bringing Mallow Marsh into management require any change in staff reprioritisation across existing areas. The EMD said that the total area that the Authority managed was done on a rotational management programme which was spread out over a number of years with different requirements and there was a complex work planning process that covered this. The key thing from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and external funding was that it provided 74% of the cost of the management of the area.

A Member asked what the expected carbon biodiversity gains from the acquisition of the land would be, and how would the site feature in a story about its broader role in nature recovery, net zero. The EMD said that although the Authority owned a small proportion of the 400 hectares it managed and the addition of Mallow Marsh was something to be celebrated and it would be important to communicate this. In terms of the current carbon storage, it was a deep peat site, part of the floodplain and was in a designated site which meant the site came with value but it was important to get effective management on it now and into the future was what would secure its value.

A Member asked whether there were any examples where the *Crassula helmsii* had been successfully eradicated and was there a plan for that work. The EMD said that the Authority was part way through and that there were two current sites where there had been some success where it had definitely been managed, however, eradication was another question.

A Member asked whether the EMD could confirm that this was an example of using capital money to generate revenue which would outstrip the extra cost incurred to the Authority. The Director of Delivery (DoD) said that there was a small pot of money National Park grant to pay for some of the fen management, but 74% of this was funded through external funding, but this was a vital part of the Authority's 30 by 30 duties. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority was using the capital money from Defra for the purpose it was given.

A Member asked whether NE provided a structure, how the Authority would structure and quantify the improvements, and what the quantifiable data would look like. The EMD said because the site was designated, the scheme came from the management plan for the site which was developed by the Authority, NE and the RPA. Each option had a series of prescriptions that the Authority would have to meet over the five-year period. There would be some monitoring and recording requirements that would need to be reported each year and at the end of the agreement. The Member asked whether this data would be publicly available. The EMD said that the data was shared through internal communication with NE and the RPA.

A Member asked whether there was a risk to saline incursion at this site. The EMD said that it was a risk, but it would probably be one of the latter places that any saline incursion would happen.

A Member asked if there was access to the site, would this be from the land. The EMD said that there was a track to the site but because of the beet harvesting, the track was very muddy and difficult to access at present. The Authority did not own the track but had a right of access, so it would be down to the farmer to make any improvements, however, there was a small section of unregistered land. The Member asked whether the Authority should look into registering the land before anyone else did. The DoD said that if the Authority could, it would do but the Land Registry was taking a dim view of people trying to register unregistered land. A Member asked if nobody claimed the land would it deteriorate. The DoD said that the Authority would work in partnership with existing landowners to get an agreement on how to manage the unregistered land.

The report was noted.

13. Local Plan – Regulation 19 re-consultation

Members received the report of the Planning Policy Officer (PPO). The PPO said that Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan was consulted on over the summer and around 270 comments were received. It had become apparent that a couple parts of the Sustainability Appraisal were missing and it seemed prudent to reconsult with an improved Sustainability Appraisal. The Local Plan would not be changed. The consultation would be for seven weeks

and, if the Board approved, would start following the meeting. The PPO said that the Planning Committee had endorsed this at its meeting on 7 November 2025.

The PPO said that as a point of clarification, Members would note from the papers that in order to make sure that the Local Plan was submitted as soon as possible, the recommendation was to delegate authority for submitting the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Broads Authority and Chair of the Planning Committee, if needed. This was slightly different to the recommendation presented to the Planning Committee.

The Chair of the Planning Committee said that the Planning Committee went through this and it was a logical step to avoid issues at the planning inspector stage and believed this was a sensible approach and it did not materially delay anything.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Stephen Bolt.

It was resolved unanimously to endorse:

- a) The Local Plan, amended Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment for consultation;**
- b) The proposed approach to consultation;**
- c) Any minor changes or amendments be delegated to the Head of Planning; and**
- d) The fallback position, if required, of delegating authority for submitting the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Broads Authority and Chair of the Planning Committee.**

14. Hire Boat Code – Personal Flotation Devices

Members received the report of the Head of Safety Management (HSM). The HSM said that the report highlighted safety information on the manual and automatic self-inflating type of Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and how these devices varied. The Broads Authority Hire Boat Licencing Officer conducted a survey of all Broads hire boat operators during the 2025 season in relation to compliance to the Hire Boat Code. Information was sought to establish what type of personal flotation devices were used by those who had hired boats. From the survey, it was found that the majority of hire boat operators were either using self-inflating or the foam type PFDs. Three operators, however, used manual PFDs, one of which was a small operator who only had two day boats.

The HSM said that there were big differences between the self-inflating and manual PFDs. The self-inflating PFDs provide a layer of safety for anyone on board a vessel as they automatically inflate upon contact with the water, ideal for situations where someone was unable to pull a cord through injury. The HSM noted that there was an additional cost to hire boat operators to have self-inflating PFDs, however, this was estimated at about £30-£40 per life jacket over a five-year period.

The report had been presented to the Boat Safety Management Group and the Navigation Committee, who recommended that where inflating PFDs were issued by hire boat operators, these should be of the automatic type. The Navigation Committee proposed that operators should be given a deadline of 1 April 2028 to phase out the use of manual type of PFDs.

A Member commented that April 2028 sounded entirely reasonable and asked whether that fitted with the replacement cycle of PFDs and would not lead to too many early write-offs of existing inventory. The HSM said that there were only three operators that had been identified as using manual inflating PSDs and life jackets would need to be serviced every year. It was likely that the operators might have some life jackets which would have been in use past April 2028, so it was likely that there would be some impact, however, thought it was a sensible deadline for the operators to change.

A Member asked whether there had been any feedback from hire companies on this proposal, because the numbers of hirers had dropped whilst costs had gone up. The HSM said that he had not received any feedback directly, but the Hire Boat Licencing Officer had received some comments. The Director of Delivery (DoD) said that the majority of hire boat operators already did provide self-inflating PFDs and the Boat Safety Management Group and the Navigation Committee felt strongly that this was very much a safety issue.

A Member said that they agreed with the proposal, and asked although it was some way off, how did the Authority plan to monitor and influence compliance with the new requirement. The HSM said that this was part of the role of the Hire Boat Licencing Officer who would carry out checks throughout the season, and it would be part of the checks before any hire boat licences were issued. The DoD said that the Authority was talking to British Marine to see if they were looking into buoyancy aid standards as part of the Quality Assured Boat Scheme to provide an extra level of checks.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Leslie Mogford.

It was resolved unanimously to approve that all Broads hire boat operators be given a deadline of 1 April 2028 for the conversion from manual to automatic self-inflating personal inflation devices.

15. Annual Partnership Register

Members received the report of the Head of Governance (HoG). The HoG said that there had been a few movements over the last year in terms of partnerships, in particular, the partnership with the Lottery as the Chief Executive mentioned previously. The report was presented to the Risk, Audit and Governance Committee on 25 November 2025.

A Member commented that this was an excellent report and it helped to understand all the ways that the Broads Authority was collaborating with partners, in addition it helped partners understand who else the Authority was working with. The Member suggested that the report should be shared with the Authority's partners.

A Member asked where the Authority was in relation to National Parks England. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority was a member since Defra had agreed to fund the subscription and that the Chair of the Authority had been appointed as a Director of National Parks England. The Member said that this should be added to the list.

The report was noted.

Martyn Hooton left the meeting.

16. Items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

The Head of Safety Management (HSM) provided an update on the investigation process of the fatal power boat incident at Oulton Broad on 24 July 2025. The HSM said that the Broads Authority suspended all racing after the incident for the rest of the season and until the investigation had concluded and any recommendations received. On 12 November 2025, the Authority received correspondence from East Suffolk Council (ESC) which stated that on the information available, they would not be pursuing any further action. However, from both ESC and the Broads Authority's perspective, if any new information was to come to light, then appropriate action would be taken.

The annual Racing Review meeting was held on 17 November 2025 and at that meeting the Broads Authority, with East Suffolk Council's advance approval, recommended that a provisional set of 2026 racing dates could be put together by the club and circulated with a very big proviso that a pause button might need to be pressed at any point, and stressed that any actions from the Authority's meeting with ESC to discuss the outcomes from the investigation on 3 December 2025 would need to be fully reviewed. A follow up meeting to confirm arrangements, review risk assessments, dates and investigation information, and any recommendations for 2026 would be planned in the new year with stakeholders and the club, once more information had been clarified.

A Member asked what the decision-making process was as to whether power boat racing would be held in 2026. The Chief Executive (CE) said that if Broads Authority officers were not satisfied that the racing could be managed safely, then it had the powers under the Broads Authority Act 2009 to stop it. ESC also had a decision to make as they were in investigating body so there was two parts to the decision, however, it had been made clear to them that the Broads Authority, as the Navigation Authority, had a duty to assess the risks of . The Member commented that, to the extent that this involved an incident where someone died, there was an ongoing risk which needed to be managed, and asked whether this was fair that this was a delegated matter and whether it should be dealt with by the Board. The CE said that officers were making this sort of decision every day, so it was something that officers were used to doing and it was the responsibility that the Navigation Officer had.

A Member commented that they believed that the accident happened because of a houseboat in North Bay and the driver was unable to stop. The CE said that the houseboat had been there for many years and was well-known. There was a very clear course which

ensured the racing boats kept clear of any obstructions. The investigation looked at why the boat did not make the turn.

The Director of Delivery (DoD) said that on race days the Authority's Rangers have the ultimate say in whether the conditions were correct to hold the event. There were ongoing measures with the Rangers and the safety team to keep it as well mitigated for safety purposes as possible.

A Member asked whether there was a policy around wind levels and other weather conditions. The DoD confirmed that there was a policy which included wind level, wave height and visibility which all got taken into consideration. The racing club was very responsible on wave height, wind and tidal conditions and they would cancel a meeting if they thought the conditions were out of their scope.

17. Member report on outside bodies – How Hill Trust

The Members received the report from Tim Jickells (TJ). TJ said that, for new Members, any Member appointed to an outside body are required to report back to the Board yearly. How Hill was a wonderful Arts & Craft thatched building which was run by a Trust, essentially for educational purposes. There were two notable events that needed to be brought to Member's attention: The first was that a new Director had been appointed following Simon Partridge's, who had run How Hill for the last fourteen years, retirement. Lynsey Skeates had now been appointed as the new Director; and the second was that Turf Fen Mill on the other side of the river was in the process of being renovated. TJ pointed out that there were still two wooden Mills in the area which still needed attention.

How Hill Trust had 2,000 children come through its doors for a three-day stay each year. In addition there were a number of organisations who provided access for children and suggested that the Authority brought these partners together and collate the access provided by them and report to Defra.

TJ commented that How Hill Trust was a well-run organisation and always looked for more Trustees, and asked if anyone was interested to get in touch with him.

A Member said that they would like to commend TJ and the How Hill Trust as they did a magnificent job and to hear that they had 2,000 children visit the site was wonderful. This was the future, and to have those children visit this amazing site to see the house, the nature reserve, landscape and the heritage was fantastic.

A Member asked whether the 2,000 children were local to Norfolk. TJ said that historically it had been a Norfolk facility, but they were reaching further afield. What was really exciting, however, was the idea of children from less advantaged schools in Norwich visiting the site. The Spring sessions were always full, however, the challenge was to get children visiting in the Autumn term.

A Member said that the Authority managed some land in the vicinity of How Hill and asked whether there was any link up between How Hill and the Broads Authority. TJ said that the link up was very extensive and productive. The Wherry Trust also used the area.

A Member thanked the Trust for their engagement with children from Norwich and said that there was an opportunity to work with Norwich Pride in Place funding. TJ asked the Member to send him an email with the details so he could explore further.

18. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Risk, Audit and Governance Committee – 23 July 2025

Navigation Committee – 4 September 2025

Planning Committee – 12 September 2025

19. Other items of business

The Chair said that the Broads Authority would be saying goodbye to Rob Thomas, Head of Governance and this would be his last meeting. The Chair said that the time had been too short and wished him the very best of luck for the future.

20. Formal questions

There were no formal questions of which notice had been given.

21. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 27 February 2026 at 10.00am at Club 101, Norwich City Football Club, Carrow Road, Norwich, NR1 1JE.

There would also be an extraordinary meeting of the Authority to be held on Friday 19 December 2025 at 10am at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY.

22. Exclusion of the public

Stephen Bolt proposed, and Gurpreet Padda seconded.

The Authority **resolved** to exclude the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved 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.

22. Exempt minutes of last meeting

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2025 were confirmed and would be signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 12:25pm

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 28 November 2025

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Alan Goodchild, Curig Johnston, Siân Lempenny, Leslie Mogford	11	Private toll payer. The Member Code of Conduct allowed for these Members to participate and vote.