

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 09 May 2025

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Present

Harry Blathwayt – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Paul Hayden, Tristram Hilborn, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Siân Limpenny, Leslie Mogford, Michael Scott, Matthew Shardlow, Vic Thomson and Fran Whymark.

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Natalie Beal – Planning Policy Officer (item 13), Matt Dane – Head of Safety Management (item 12), Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, Rob Leigh – Head of Communications (item 12), Rob Rogers – Director of Operations (items 1 – 23), Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer, Rob Thomas – Head of Governance and Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services (items 1 – 23).

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.

Apologies were received from Alan Goodchild, Gurpreet Padda, and Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

2. Chairman's announcements

Related Party Declarations

The Chair reminded Members to complete their Annual Related Party Declarations and return them to the Finance Department as soon as possible. The declarations were an important part of the Statement of Accounts which the Auditors checked in detail and it was important that they were returned.

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Board

The Chair advised Members that the Governance Team would be sending out an email in June inviting nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair who would be appointed at the July meeting. In addition, the Authority would be confirming its appointments to committees and outside bodies. Members would receive a further email in June inviting them to confirm whether they were happy to remain on the committee(s) or request to move.

Secretary of State appointees

The Chair announced that this was the last Board meeting before Paul Hayden and Michael Scott finished their terms of appointment, and said that he was sad that they had both decided to leave after their four-year term.

The Chair said that he particularly valued Michael Scott's contribution on Diversity and Inclusion, both at the Broads Authority and at the Broads Local Access Forum, which he had attended on behalf of the Authority, and wished him well for the future. Michael thanked the Chair and said that it had been a privilege and a pleasure and wished the Members well.

The Chair said that he would miss Paul Hayden and thanked him, not only for his contribution to the Broads Authority, but also his contribution to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust which would be remembered for a long time.

3. Appointment of two co-opted members from the Navigation Committee to the Broads Authority

The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Head of Governance (HG) who brought great experience to the role.

At its meeting on 3 April 2025, the Navigation Committee appointed Alan Goodchild as Chair and Peter Dixon as Vice-Chair and had recommended that both be appointed as the two co-opted members to the Broads Authority for one year.

Leslie Mogford proposed, seconded by Tony Grayling.

It was resolved unanimously to appoint Alan Goodchild and Peter Dixon to the Broads Authority for one year, until 15 May 2026.

4. Introduction of members and declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered.

5. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

6. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

7. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. 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 some of the items had either been completed or would get removed for the next update and would therefore be a shorter list.

A Member noted that the Wherryman's Way item would be removed and commented that he hoped that this would only be temporary and the item would be brought back to committee as and when any notable update was available. The CE said that he and the Director of Strategic Services had a meeting on 7 May with a colleague from Norfolk County Council and there was some movement on this issue. Although this was not in the public domain at present, the CE hoped to learn more in due course.

A Member said that there was an electronic version of the Norfolk Trails Map, which was now available, which they would send through for distribution to the Members. The map enabled users to choose to either see highways or footpaths, or both.

A Member commented that on Norfolk County Council's list of streets, Wherryman's Way was not an adopted highway and asked whether this meant that the council would not be compelled to repair the footpath. The CE said that it was a right of way which the council had a responsibility to maintain, however, the particular section in question across Hardley Flood was in an extreme location and the council had been looking for some time about what the options were. A Member commented that Wherryman's Way would not be on the council's list of streets, but would be on the electronic map mentioned earlier.

A Member said that they were pleased to see that an extension to the funding for FibreRoads had been successful, that the appeal to the Department for Transport had concluded and ruled in favour of the Authority.

The report was noted.

9. Strategic priorities – update

Members received the report of the Governance Officer. The Chief Executive (CE) said that this was the first update on the new strategic priorities agreed by Members and was happy to report that all were on track.

The report was noted.

10. Financial performance and direction

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF said that the report in front of Members provided a draft set of figures and there were a number of adjustments that needed to be processed.

In table 1 of the report, the draft consolidated income and expenditure had now moved to a net surplus of £552,334, a favourable variance of £223,055 compared to the forecast in the

paper. This was due to several year-end adjustments being processed including accruals and stock. Officers had been given one last chance to review the figures before this became the Statement of Accounts.

The DF said that there was a small mistake in the report, table 3 should read 'surplus' not 'deficit'. Table 4 of the report contained the earmarked reserves and the balance had moved to £3,492,194 which was mainly due to the Fen Management Income having been transferred to the earmarked reserve. The balances would increase further at year end when interest was transferred across the reserve balances.

Section 9 of the report contained the carry forward requests made by Officers and none of the year-end adjustments had changed these. If Members approved the carry forwards, these would be added to the 2025/26 revised budget.

A Member commented that the Authority should investigate how it could spend the Upper Thurne Reserve, and suggested that the Authority, given the lack of moorings in that area, create some 24-hour moorings. The Director of Operations (DO) said that there were plans in the pipeline to do this.

Tim Jickells proposed, seconded by Leslie Mogford.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. **Note the draft income and expenditure figures, prudential indicators in section 6.**
- ii. **Approve the recommended carry forward request in 9.2 and added to the 2025/26 budget as additional expenditure.**

11. Revised Budget for 2025/26

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF said that as a result of the letter received from Defra regard the National Park Grant, the paper provided an updated budget. The DF said that Change Control Notice was still outstanding and until that was received the Authority could not claim for the first quarter of the National Park Grant.

Table 1 of the report provided a high-level overview of the revised budget which included the carry forward that Members approved under item 10 of the agenda. Table 2 of the report provided details of the adjustments between the budget Members approved in January and the revised budget. The £1,160,000 included £20,000 awarded for the National Park England subscription, a £35,000 swap between FiPL and the capital revenue, a £280,000 reduction to revenue, plus £1,385,058 of capital.

Some of the earmarked reserves had been used to fund some National Park activities, this included £46,000 cancellation of contributions to the reserves and site maintenance. Interest rates as of 8 May 2025 remained higher than what was originally budgeted and there had been an adjustment on investment income. The Planning Delivery Grant would look to fund some officer time in relation to the Local Plan.

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Members should note from table 2 that £75,000 had been included to remove the sunken vessels. The original plan was to fund this from the 2024/25 Navigation surplus, however, due to timing, the boats were unable to be raised before the end of the financial year – Navigation had ended in a better position but this would need to be put into the budget for 2025/26.

Based on the year end position, National Park reserves stood at £1,011,606 and Navigation £503,391, both of which were above the minimum level.

A Member asked for confirmation that the FiPL money would still be spent following the swap between capital and revenue. The DF said that, as agreed with Defra, some of the National Park capital money had been swapped with FiPL revenue – the total amount of FiPL money had not changed but with an increased capital component. The DF added that the majority of the FiPL projects were capital projects.

Paul Hayden proposed, seconded by Tony Grayling.

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the revised 2025/26 budget and earmarked reserves.

12. 2024/25 Health and Safety Review and internal audit recommendations

Members received the report of the Head of Safety Management (HSM). The HSM said that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the review of marine incidents in 2024/25 and the recommended annual safety audit programme for 2025/26. The HSM said that reported incidents remained low considering the number of visitors that enjoyed the waterways each year.

Of the fatalities in 2024/25, two were heart attacks and four were drownings through inadvertently entering the water. The common factor in the drownings was the lack of a personal floatation device being worn. The highest reported incident in 2024/25 was the inadvertent entering of the water.

The Chair said that there was a need to highlight the importance of personal floatation devices being worn as much as possible.

A Member said that there was a lot of effort invested in the production of the health and safety videos and asked whether they were being shown to people and whether they had a positive effect. The HSM said that because of surveys carried out by Rangers, he did know that a high number of people did watch the videos, however, even after watching the videos they did not always wear life jackets, so there was some work to be done in that regard. The Communications Team and Ranger Team worked hard in several ways to enforce the message and new signage had been put in place at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station.

The Head of Communications (HC) said that the safety videos were hosted on YouTube as well as the Broads Authority website and the content was continually refreshed. Because of the different versions, it was difficult to track exactly how many times the videos were watched, but there were very healthy viewing numbers on YouTube. In addition, Hire Boat companies

were reminded at the start of each season to encourage their hirers to watch the video before they arrived on the Broads so that they got the most out of handover.

The Communications Team concentrated on two main aspects of water safety: the wearing of life jackets; and avoiding the consumption of alcohol (don't drink and drown campaign). Considerable amount of work had been undertaken this year to revise signage at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station. The Authority did try some high impact methods in 2024 where CCTV footage was used showing things that went wrong without anyone having been seriously hurt, which got a lot of coverage in national and local media. The Communications Team planned to ramp up the coverage about the consequences of not wearing a life jacket. A Member said that the Board could take comfort in knowing that this remained a high priority.

A Member asked whether it was possible to make the wearing of life jackets on hire boats mandatory. The Chief Executive (CE) replied that under the current Act, the Authority did not have the power to enforce the wearing of life jackets. The Director of Operations (DO) said another issue would be how the Authority could enforce any requirement and how it would be policed.

A Member commented that the wearing of seatbelts in vehicles on the road was regulated, and this should be the case with life jackets.

A Member commented that he took great notice whilst navigating the Broads the amount of people that were not wearing life jackets. He noted that most hire boat operators were very safety conscious, however, he often saw people, including children, sitting on the front of moving hire boats with no life jackets on. The Member added that the Authority should do everything it could to get all new boats to have safety rails on the back and asked whether this could be put before the Boat Safety Scheme committee. The DO said that the figures presented to Members were not just on hire boats, it also covered private boats. Under the new Hire Boat Code of Practice, the company had to complete a risk assessment for handrails, and they had to provide grab rails around the contact points on the boat. The DO added that, overall, the number of incidents around the Broads was remarkably low.

A Member asked whether an increase in Rangers would help. The DO said that there was no direct correlation between the number of rangers and the number of incidents. The example a Member gave about people sitting on the bow of a boat without wearing life jackets, if Rangers see this type of behaviour, they did stop the boat and provide words of advice about safety. There were 126 miles of water to cover, so unless the Ranger numbers were increased significantly it would be very difficult to catch everybody.

The Chair asked whether there was any evidence that private owners were keeping their life jackets maintained. The DO said that there was no evidence available.

A Member asked whether there were any statistics on wild swimming in terms of accidents. The DO said wild swimming did happen in the Broads, however, on the Broads Authority's website it advised against swimming in the Broads but if someone wished to swim the advice was for them to follow several rules, which included swimming with groups or part of an organised event and wearing bright swimming hats so they are easily seen from a boat.

The report was noted.

13. Belton with Browston, Burgh Castle and Fritton with St Olaves Neighbourhood Plan – adoption

Members received the report of the Planning Policy Officer (PPO). The PPO said that the plan had gone through all the various stages and had been taken to the Planning Committee on 2 May 2025 where it was endorsed for the Broads Authority to make/adopt the plan.

Leslie Mogford proposed, seconded by Tim Jickells.

It was resolved unanimously to make/adopt the Belton with Browston, Burgh Castle and Fritton with St Olaves Neighbourhood Plan.

14. Annual summary of formal complaints 2024/25

Members received the report of the Governance Officer. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority had a process for dealing with formal complaints which were reported to the Board on an annual basis. In the last year, the Authority had received four formal complaints, none of which went to the Local Government Ombudsman. The CE said that he had looked back at the last thirteen years and 2024/25 was one of the lowest number of complaints received in that period which showed that the Authority were getting most things right.

The report was noted.

15. Standing Orders relating to contracts – annual report on requests for waivers

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF referred Members to section 4.1 of the report and said that there was a small error on the second line and should read "...to the thirteen in 2023/24". The DF said this was the annual report on waivers and it provided the reasons why waivers were approved.

The report was noted.

16. Annual report of the Standards Committee

Members received the report of the Governance Officer. The Head of Governance (HG) said that the Governance team would keep a watching brief on any changes to the national Code of Conduct.

The Chair said that the Standards Committee would be looking for new Members in July and added that it was not an onerous commitment.

The report was noted.

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

There were no matters to report under this item.

18. Merger of the Broads Charitable Trust with the Broads Society

Members received the report from Paul Hayden (PH), the Member appointed by the Broads Authority to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust. PH said that he had reported in November 2024 that the Broads Charitable Trust had entered a strategic partnership with the Broads Society to look at ways to save money and to deliver better outcomes for the people of the Broads. That work indicated that the best way forward was to bring the two organisations together and have a single, stronger and more strategically focused NGO that was interested in Broads matters, and this had now been achieved and the Trust thereby had been dissolved. The Trust's cash, together with its visitor giving scheme, 'Love the Broads' and its Discovery Hubs, were transferred to the Broads Society. PH added that there was an opportunity for greater partnership between the Authority and the Broads Society.

The Chair thanked the Broads Society for their work on this merger.

The Chief Executive (CE) said that he would like to thank PH for his work on the merger. It was a positive move for the Broads. The Charitable Trust, which the Broads Authority were involved with the Broads Society in setting up, never fully fulfilled the ambitions that the two organisations had for it. The CE said that he really appreciated the time that PH had spent reviewing the arrangements and, on behalf of the Officers, looked forward to a very constructive relationship in the future with the Broads Society.

A Member said that they had sat alongside PH and members of the Broads Society whilst the work to merge the two organisations and they have done a sterling piece of work to push this merger through.

A Member said that he welcomed the merger, however, without a Trustee reporting back to the Broads Authority, there was a need for the Authority to work closely with the Broads Society in the future on key projects.

PH said that Members of the Authority were welcome to join the Broads Society if they wished. He added that he thought it would be worth putting something in place, such as a reporting mechanism to ensure the relationships did not drop away over time.

The Head of Governance said that if Members did join the Broads Society then they would be required to update their Register of Interests accordingly.

The report was noted.

19. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Navigation Committee – 9 January 2025

Planning Committee – 7 March 2025

Planning Committee – 4 April 2025

20. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

21. Formal questions

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

22. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 25 July 2025 at 10.00am at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH.

23. Exclusion of the public

Stephen Bolt proposed, and Martyn Hooton seconded.

It was resolved unanimously to exclude the Press and public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the item below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by: Paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual); Paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)); and Paragraph 4 (information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006, 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.

24. Proposed Response to the Grant Settlement

Members received the report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finances which set out a series of proposals as to how the Authority can align its income and expenditure to protect the organisation's future, and consider how the Authority can make the most of the opportunity provided by the capital allocation.

A summary of the discussion is contained in the exempt minutes.

The meeting ended at 12:27.

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Signed by

Chairman

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