

**Construction & Maintenances Output 2014/15  
and Work Plan for 2015/16**

Report by Environment and Design Supervisor and Director of Operations

<b>Summary:</b>	This report summarises the operational work achieved by the Construction and Maintenance teams during 2014/15, as supported by the volunteers, Fitter team and Environment & Design team. The work plan for 2015/16 is also summarised.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That members note the contents and detail of this report, and consider the implications set out in Section 6 for the Authority's ongoing ability to deliver all practical work areas, with changes to budget and staff time allocations.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Since the establishment of the Operations Directorate in 2011, which brought all practical work together in an integrated manner, the works programme has been designed to follow the agreed apportionment of costs between Navigation expenditure and National Park Grant (NPG). Until this year, the agreed allocations have been set at 60% Navigation and 40% NPG, with the NPG element being further subdivided at 20% Conservation and 20% recreation activities.
- 1.2 Practical work completed by the Operations Technicians in 2014/15 was delivered according to plan, with 61.9% of time spent on Navigation focused work and 38.1% spent on National Park focussed activities. Some variations from the original 2014/15 work plan occurred due to a case of long term staff sickness, gaps in recruitment and some individual project slippage. All major work areas were delivered as planned, with management of individual projects being adaptive to staff availability, weather and some delays at the project planning stage.
- 1.3 As part of the Financial Strategy setting process to address the reduction in National Park Grant it was agreed that the percentage allocation of practical work time spent between navigation tasks and National Park tasks would change from 2015/16 onwards. This is to reflect the variation in budget availability for these work areas and the need for staff time to adjust accordingly. As well as achieving the required savings to National Park expenditure, a review of the split of NPG resources was also completed, and agreed that conservation work would be the priority area. Figure 1 summarises the percentage allocation of Operations Technician work time to meet budgetary requirements. The plan by 2016/17 is to reduce the amount of practical work delivered by the Construction and Maintenance teams in the visitor site/recreation project areas and increase the time spent on navigation management. The time spent on conservation management will remain the same.

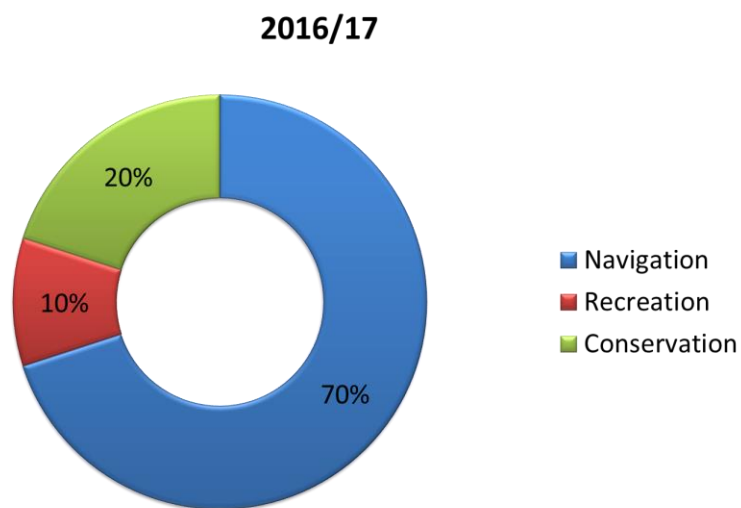
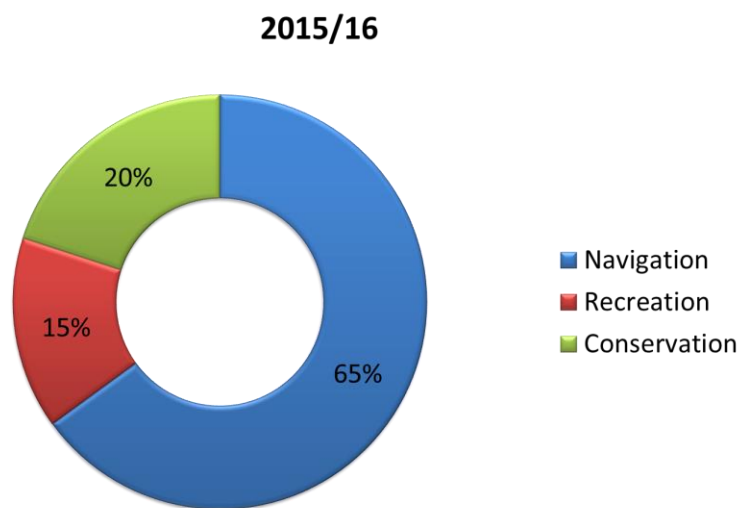
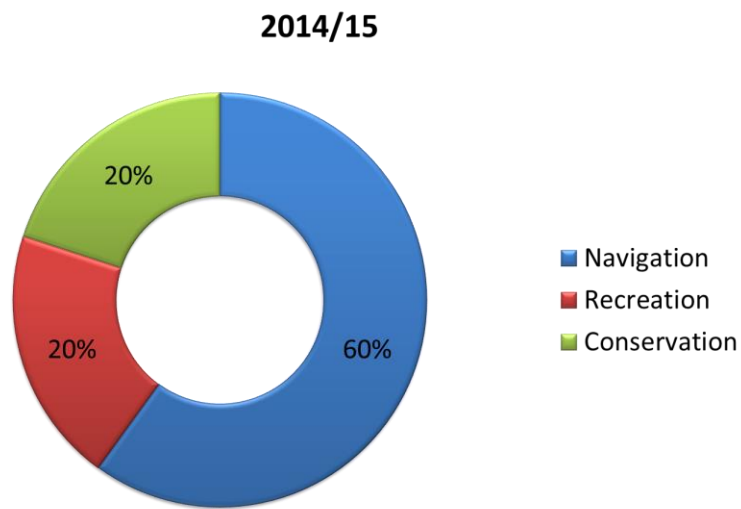


Figure 1. Changes to percentage Navigation: National Park practical work allocation for Construction and Maintenance teams

## **2 Navigation Work 2014/15**

- 2.1 Dredging is always the highest priority within the navigation works plan, and has occupied over half the agreed allocation time (See Table 1) Total dredge volume achieved during 2014/15 was 46,320m<sup>3</sup> which was a small shortfall from the 50,000m<sup>3</sup> target. The largest area of sediment removal was from the mid Bure between Horning Hall and Thurne Mouth, with nearly 17,000m<sup>3</sup> dredged. These arisings were either placed in setback areas or used to strengthen the flood bank upstream of Thurne Dyke. Variations from the original dredging plan were due to the deferment to 2015/16 of mechanical dredging on the Upper Bure upstream of Coltishall necessary to gain all required consents and avoid fish spawning time; and also the removal of over three times more sediment from Haddiscoe Cut as resource time and opportunity presented the ability to do so.
- 2.2 24 Hour Moorings that received refurbishment work from a mix of staff and contractors were Langley Dyke, Thorpe River Green, How Hill, and Commissioner's Cut. Staff were mainly involved in on-going maintenance throughout the season on all moorings including grass cutting, reactive repairs and installation of safety features.
- 2.3 The repiling of Turntide Jetty and the on-going repairs to Mutford Lock have also been significant areas of work for the Rivers Engineer. The Turntide Jetty re-piling tender was issued and mobilisation to site occurred in March. The project plan and budget for this work straddles two financial years, so timing of delivery has been kept to plan well. The strategy for dealing with the failing lock gates at Mutford Lock has been to investigate and deal with the known minor issues first. Divers have completed investigations of the concrete sills, gate pins and sluice valves. The latter have been completely replaced as they were no longer operating. Specialist lock engineers have now been engaged to assist with the more fundamental problem of the main gates not sitting correctly and forming an adequate water seal, and a full report will be provided the next Navigation Committee.

## **3 Recreation and Visitor Site Maintenance 2014/15**

- 3.1 Maintenance of facilities and infrastructure at visitor sites involved Operations Technicians time throughout the year, particularly at the hub sites of How Hill, Whitlingham Country Park and Hoveton Riverside Park. Approximately 27 km of footpaths were also mown to a good standard throughout the summer season. Repairs and decoration of the Tourist Information Centres themselves represented a significant investment of staff time, with most of this work being performed in the closed winter season.
- 3.2 In 2014/15 several projects were completed to enhance visitor sites the Authority is responsible for. This included Acle path bridge replacements, Belaugh Slipway rebuild, Cary's Meadow portage installation and facility enhancements at Bridge Green, Potter Heigham.

Table 1. Summary of Operations Activities during 2014/15 and plan for 2015/16

	2014/15			2015/16	
<b>Number of Operations Technicians FTE</b>	<b>23.6</b>			<b>22.6 plus apprentices</b>	
<b>Total work days available</b>	5286			4814 <sup>b</sup>	
<b>Navigation Allocation</b>	<b>3172</b>	<b>60%</b>		<b>3129</b>	<b>65%</b>
	<b>Actual Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>	<b>Volunteer Days with Op Techs</b>	<b>Planned Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Dredging	1807	35.6	23	1814	37.7
Moorings	263	5.2	62	318	6.6
Weed harvester	82	1.6	6	99	2.1
Bankside scrub removal	32	0.6	73	114	2.4
Channel markers	157	3.1	4	205	4.3
Signs & boards	47	0.9	5	40	0.8
Navigation obstructions	36	0.7	0	14	0.3
Reactive navigation works	27	0.5	7	60	1.2
Share of corporate work <sup>a</sup>	692	13.6	21	465	9.7
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3143</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>3129</b>	<b>65</b>

<sup>a</sup> – Corporate work is split as per the Navigation:National Park allocation. Work time includes training, meetings, sickness, vessel & equipment maintenance and premises maintenance

<sup>b</sup> – total Operations Technicians days are less in 2015/16 than 2014/15, but apprentices will contribute

	2014/15			2015/16	
<b>Recreation Allocation</b> (days available)	<b>1057</b>	<b>20%</b>		<b>722</b>	<b>15%</b>
	<b>Actual Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>	<b>Volunteer Days with Op Techs</b>	<b>Planned Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Site management	239	4.7	165	161	3.3
Footpath maintenance	45	0.9	30	52	1.1
Projects	267 <sup>a</sup>	5.3	4	295 <sup>b</sup>	6.1
TIC maintenance	100	2.0	0	86	1.8
Other visitor/access work	11	0.2	2	20	0.4
Share of corporate work	230	4.5	7	108	2.2
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>15</b>

<sup>a</sup> – 2014/15 recreation projects included Acle path bridge replacements, Belaugh Slipway rebuild, Cary's Meadow portage, Potter Heigham enhancements and St Benet's interpretation

<sup>b</sup> – 2015/16 project work is only planned to be the replacement of Cockshoot boardwalk

	2014/15			2015/16	
<b>Conservation Allocation</b> (days available)	<b>1057</b>	<b>20%</b>		<b>963</b>	<b>20%</b>
	<b>Actual Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>	<b>Volunteer Days with Op Techs</b>	<b>Planned Days</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Fen management	683	13.5	194	656	13.6
Grazing Management	53	1.0	12	28	0.6
Lake/Riverbank habitat projects	33	0.7	8	23	0.5
Invasive species monitoring & control	44	0.9	27	113	2.3
Share of corporate work	230	4.5	7	143	3.0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1043</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>20</b>

## **4 Conservation Work 2014/15**

- 4.1 Fen management in terms of regular vegetation cutting and dyke clearance made up the greatest proportion of the conservation work delivered by the Authority in 2014/15. In addition to the fen and meadow sites the Authority owns and manages, the Authority is engaged in medium-term management agreements (5-10 years) with 14 different third-party landowners across the Broads. This managed land area comes to approximately 240 hectares. 2014/15 has also seen the Authority gain several small contracts for specialised fen management with a range of Broadland landowners. The new fen harvester has been in operation at areas of Barton Fen and South Walsham Fen and the fen excavator employed at Acle Doles.
- 4.2 The external income derived from fen management currently runs at about 40% of the total expenditure by the Authority on practical conservation delivery. The remainder is funded through the National Park Grant, with the majority of costs being staff and equipment time. The aim over the next two years is to increase this proportion of external (non-National Park grant) funding to 50%. This will be achieved through the Environment Officers maximising opportunities for alternate income sources and actively seeking other Defra grants for agri-environment delivery. There is also a large potential for working with the volunteer service to increase volunteer input on conservation tasks and reviewing the way in which the Authority attracts and engages volunteers.
- 4.3 Working closely with landowners and focussing Authority conservation delivery to specialised areas that the Authority can deliver in a sustainable way, helps keep the Authority in a position to deliver against objectives set in the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy. Future updates to the Broads Authority will summarise the area of land managed for conservation purposes under management agreements and the breakdown of costs and income for this area of Authority work.

## **5 Summary of 2015/16 Work Plan**

- 5.1 The largest work areas for Construction and Maintenance teams in 2015/16 are:-

### **Navigation**

- Dredging
  - River Ant – Irstead - to end April (1,500 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Chet - to end April (1,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Bure - Coltishall Lock - to mid May (2,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Bure – Coltishall to Belaugh Oct-Nov - (3,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Bure – Horning Hall – May-Jul (8,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Bure – Acle to Stokesby – Sep-Oct (7,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - Oulton Broad – May-Aug (10,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
  - River Yare – Whitlingham – Sep-Oct (4,500 m<sup>3</sup>)

- River Yare – Seven Mile to Berney – Nov-Feb (5,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
- Hickling channel (Subject to gaining all consents) – Nov - Feb (10,000 m<sup>3</sup>)
- 24 Hr Moorings
  - Bramerton Common – timberwork & surfacing refurbishment
  - Wayford Bridge – refurbish timberwork
  - Womack Dyke – Timberwork, surfacing, posts & safety chain
  - Aldeby – refurbish timberwork and replace tie rods
  - Cantley – replace fendering
  - Reedham Quay – replace safety chains and fendering
  - Horning Marshes – refurbish surfacing and fill holes
  - Cockshoot – temporary repairs to tie rods
- Channel Markers
  - Barton Broad – 10 replacement marker posts
  - Breydon Water - 10 replacement marker posts
- Tree clearance
  - Main focus on River Ant and upstream of Horning on the River Ant.

## **Recreation**

- Cockshoot boardwalk replacement (STA)
- Priority footpath maintenance
- Visitor hub maintenance
- TIC maintenance

## **Conservation**

- Fen management
  - Cary's Meadow – scrub control
  - Common Fen – fen mowing & scrub control
  - Irstead Marsh – dyke maintenance
  - Barton Fen - dyke maintenance
  - Burgh Common - fen mowing & dyke maintenance
  - Buttle Marsh – fen harvesting
  - Decoy Carr - fen mowing & scrub control
  - Hall Fen - fen mowing
  - Mill Marsh - fen mowing & scrub control
  - Little Reedham - scrub control
  - Geldeston Meadow – fen harvesting
  - Hulver Ground - fen mowing
  - How Hill - fen mowing, scrub control, fen harvesting & dyke maintenance
  - Repps Meadow - fen harvesting
  - Rollesby Common - scrub control
  - Stanley Carr - fen mowing
  - Whitlingham Marshes - fen harvesting & dyke maintenance
- Grazing Management
  - Pony grazing at Snipes Marsh, Buttle Marsh, Clayrack Marsh, Rollesby Common, Repps Meadow, Hickling NWT.

- Cattle grazing at Cary's Meadow and Trowse Meadow
- Waterbody habitat enhancements
  - Maintain biomanipulation areas at Barton and Ranworth Broads
  - Maintain erosion protection structures at Rockland Broad, Irstead and Womack
- Invasive species control
  - Priority control work at sites with swamp stonecrop, parrot's feather, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed

A full, timed version of the Construction, Maintenance and Environment section work plan is available from the Environment and Design Supervisor.

## **6 Future implications for allocation changes**

6.1 With the planned changes in work allocations across navigation and National Park work areas (see Figure 1), the impact on the Authority's ability to deliver as much variety of special projects and visitor site enhancements is now being seen within the practical teams work plans. 2015/16 is the transition year with the allocation moving to 65:35 Navigation: National Park for Construction and Maintenance teams. 2016/17 will see the National Park allocation reduce to 30%. During this period the Ranger team work time allocation will remain at the 60% Navigation and 40% National Park split.

6.2 Future implications for the Authority to consider when prioritising construction and maintenance work include:-

- Delivery of access projects, e.g. the replacement of Cockshoot boardwalk. At current allocations this high priority project is the only project possible to be completed by the Maintenance team during 2015/16 given the restricted time available. Progress at the Cockshoot boardwalk this financial year also depends upon the successful renegotiation of the lease agreement with Rotac Farms, Woodbastwick although if this is not achieved alternative smaller projects could be brought forward. During 2016/17 the 10% allocation available for Recreation work will be fully focussed on maintenance of existing Authority managed visitor sites, priority footpath maintenance and TIC upkeep, with no capacity for any new projects at all.
- The results of the stakeholder survey results indicate a strong visitor preference for greater access opportunities into the Broads landscape and high quality amenities during their visit. The level of Authority involvement in creating and maintaining visitor infrastructure, with a reduction of 10% of the time available by 2016/17 for these types of project, will therefore be severely limited.
- A greater level of Ranger team involvement in day to day visitor site management is possible from 2015/16 onwards. 2014/15 figures suggest that more Ranger team time can be spent on land-based sites, including support with maintaining visitor hubs and footpath mowing. 2014/15



figures for the Ranger term came out as 66% Navigation:34% National Park, against a target of 60:40.

- Table 1 shows the amount of volunteer input to various areas of Authority practical work with Construction and Maintenance teams. There is a good spread of volunteer time spent across the three work areas, although in percentage terms the greatest input is in supporting recreation and conservation tasks. There is potential to further develop certain volunteer work areas, such as more woodworking and construction based skills, as these are the areas that have so far had less volunteer input. Increasing volunteer capacity in the heavier construction work would aid both the Recreation and Navigation work areas. A review of the Volunteer Strategy is being planned which will address these issues, alongside providing the full value of the work that Volunteers give to the Authority as a whole e.g. Ranger support..
- Training three apprentices within the Construction and Maintenance teams is a plan being developed in conjunction with the HR team in 2015/16. The resource for this scheme is through not recruiting an Operations Technician post that is currently available. Again, the areas apprentices can support and gain valuable skills is predominantly in land and water based construction work, such as timberwork, groundworks and boat handling.

Background papers:	None
Author:	Dan Hoare
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Broads Plan Objectives:	NA2; NA3; TR1; TR2; BD1; BD6
Appendices:	None