

# Broads Authority

## Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2023

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# Present

Bill Dickson – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Paul Hayden, Siân Limpenny, Kevin Maguire, Leslie Mogford, Greg Munford, Michael Scott, Matthew Shardlow, Vic Thomson, Fran Whymark

## In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Jonathan Goolden – Monitoring Officer, Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, Rob Rogers – Director of Operations, Nick Sanderson – Education Officer (item 12), Vicky Short – GIS Officer (item 11), Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services and Sara Utting – Senior Governance Officer.

## 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.

The Chair added that he had the right to remove any person that may act in a way that might disrupt the meeting.

**Apologies** were received from Harry Blathwayt, Peter Dixon, Tristram Hilborn, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Keith Patience, and Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro.

## 2. Chairman's announcements

The Chair confirmed that there was no change to the order of the agenda items, however, there were two items of very good news.

First, a presentation to Andrea Kelly, the Environment Policy Advisor. The Chair said that it was a significant year for Andrea as she celebrated an important anniversary with the Broads Authority, with 25 years of service.

Andrea's skill in building partnerships with landowners, farmers, charities, universities, and public bodies had taken the Broads Authority into many exciting ventures. Most recently there had been huge progress towards peatland restoration, and the Authority would not be where they were without Andrea's dedication and forward thinking. The planning permission

for peatland restoration at Buttle Marsh at the last Planning Committee was a good example of Andrea's achievements for the benefits of the Broads. Her capacity to adapt and evolve with the fast-changing framework around national environment policy was brilliant and she was rightly recognised by colleagues in DEFRA and across the National Parks as a conservation leader and were fortunate to have her working for the Authority.

The Chair added that behalf of all Members, it was his pleasure to present a small token of the Authority's appreciation to her and hoped that she would wear it with pride. He thanked Andrea for all that she had done and asked that she accepted good wishes on the anniversary of her employment with the Broads Authority.

Andrea thanked the Chair and the Members and added that it had been great working for the Authority on a number of projects, obtaining funding to work on restoration, nature and climate which were the part of the Authority's key priorities under the Broads Plan.

Second, the Chair offered congratulations to Andrew Farrell (Programme Manager – Water Mills & Marshes), Kate Knights (Historic Environment Manager) and Tom Allen (Heritage Carpenter) for their win in the conservation category at the Design and Craftsmanship Awards on 16 November 2023.

The award was in recognition of the restoration work at Mutton's Mill. They were in good company with entries from all the major Norwich architecture firms. In addition, they also won the overall award for sustainability. The Chair said that it was fantastic achievement by Andrew, Kate and Tom, and said a big thank you and congratulations to them and to everyone else who had been involved in delivering a great project.

The historic Mutton's Mill, situated in Halvergate marshes, had been the scene of a five-year project to restore it to its former glory. Andrew, Kate and Tom, as part of the Water, Mills and Marshes project and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, had been working on restoring and conserving this valuable part of the Broad's history. He further commented that Members would remember the site visit to Mutton's Mill back in July and were fortunate to see the millwrights working on the sails, which had now been completed.

As part of the restoration, heritage skills using traditional materials and techniques were taught to students at City College, Norwich – including Tom Allen. Tom became a Broads Authority apprentice and then went on to become the site supervisor for the Water, Mills and Marshes project. The Chair congratulated Andrew Farrell and Kate Knights who were present and asked them to hold up the two awards for the Members to see.

Kate thanked the Chair and Members and said that it had been fantastic to work on the project and that the Mill was visible across a wide area of the marshes and could be clearly seen when travelling the A47.

### **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 22 September 2023 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) noted that in respect of the final, the reduction in office space at Yare House, the tenders had been issued on 8 November 2023 and the closing date was 15 December 2023. It was hoped that the work would start early in the New Year.

A Member asked whether the 'no further update' on Wherryman's Way meant that there was nothing happening or that the previous actions were still ongoing. The Director of Operations (DO) confirmed that it referred to previous actions that were still ongoing and that the habitat assessments were in the process of being done.

**The report was noted.**

## 8. Strategic priorities for 2024/2025 and update on strategic priorities for 2023/2024

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO) setting out the strategic priorities for 2024/2025 and an update on latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2023/24.

The Chief Executive (CE) said that things were going well in terms of the priorities that had been agreed for the current year. The big issue was the Authority's response to Climate Change and biodiversity loss. The recent flooding had really highlighted to Members and members of the public what the significant risks were to this part of Norfolk. He added that the Authority was continuing to work closely with the Environment Agency on this matter.

A Member commented that there had been talk on a number of occasions about holding a Member workshop on climate change and the sea level rise. He asked whether the Authority would commit to a workshop being held in 2024. The Director of Strategic Services (DSS) confirmed that a workshop would be held in 2024, however, it was likely that it would be later in the year.

A Member commented that it was good to see that the Authority would be reviewing the biodiversity crisis response next year and asked whether the milestone in relation to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in Norfolk and Suffolk was right. The CE replied that this was a really important piece of work, and it was something that Norfolk County Council (NCC) was leading on with Suffolk County Council (SCC) and that they had accepted that it had been a bit slow. NCC recently appointed a new Head of Environment (HE) and the CE confirmed that he had been involved in that appointment. He added that in a recent meeting with the DSS and the new HE, the HE understood the frustration that the CE and DSS expressed about the speed at which the critical piece of work had been moving. The CE said that he was pleased to say that he thought that there would be a significant uplift in the councils' activities. The Member replied that he would like to have had a proper discussion about this subject to understand what the Authority thought its priorities were. The CE replied that both councils needed to progress the strategy further and then the discussion could take place.

A Member said that they could not see anything in the report regarding connecting and inspiring communities, or the historic environment and asked whether they were to take it that work would continue on those themes but were not considered priorities. The CE replied that only a few actions were picked from the Broads Plan each year to report on at every meeting so that Members could see the progress. He confirmed that work would continue on the themes identified by the Member, and the big challenge was setting up for a large-scale lottery bid for the next round of funding.

A Member commented that the last proper audit the Authority carried out on biodiversity was in 2011 and suggested that this needed to be revisited.

A Member asked, in respect of the recent flooding, was the Authority still working on the system to reduce field run-off. The CE replied that the Authority was, and it had pioneered a successful system that was a piece of equipment to attach to the back of tractors which would cut lines in potato fields to prevent run-off. The Authority was still working within the top part of the catchment in areas where farmers were growing sugar beet or where the fields were very open. This was where the FiPL project was critical in leading farmers to pioneer new ways of arable farming which would reduce run-off.

Stephen Bolt proposed and Siân Limpenny seconded.

**It was resolved unanimously to agree the strategic priorities for 2024/2025 and note the progress in implementing the 2023/2024 priorities.**

Having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Greg Munford left the meeting for item 9.

## **9. Proposed navigation charges for 2024/2025 in the navigation area and adjacent waters**

Members received the report from the Chief Executive (CE), Director of Finance (DoF) and Collector of Tolls (CoT). The Chair commented that the decision on charges was the most significant of the year and that there had been a lot of public interest in this agenda item. He

said that there was an excellent paper to guide Members and that they had been presented with three options, all of which were deliverable but carried different consequences in terms of safety and contributions to the earmarked reserves, and that it was now up to the Members to which of the options they wished to collectively to settle on. He added that there was a thorough discussion at the workshop for all Members and co-opted Members on 13 October 2023, at which no clear consensus emerged. At the Navigation Committee on 2 November 2023, six Members voted for Option C and 4 Members voted against.

The Chair proposed that the Members handled the item in two parts, following the process broadly adopted by the Chair of the Navigation Committee. The Chair said that he would ask the CE to introduce the paper and after that, he would first invite any specific questions relating to matters of fact concerning next year's tolls. For the second part, the Chair proposed to go around the room and ask each Member in turn to speak briefly and state which option they supported. At the end, the Chair said that he would summarise the number of preferences against each option and would then ask for a proposer and seconder and move to the vote.

The Chair invited Alan Goodchild (AG), Chair of the Navigation Committee to comment on behalf of the Committee. AG said that the subject of tolls was discussed in great detail at both the workshop and the Navigation Committee. He added that it was a difficult subject but that there was a lot of debate and careful thought before the Committee recommended Option C and on balance it was a reasonable choice.

The CE introduced the paper and said that some boat owners had complained about the setting of this year's tolls ten months after the Authority's decision in January 2023. He confirmed that the Authority followed the statutory process in consulting the Navigation Committee and had not used navigation income to fund National Park activities. An evidence-based review of the allocation of resources between National Park and navigation budgets took place ahead of the toll-setting process last year and this ensured that the splits were accurate and fair. He added that it was worth remembering that the Authority held a workshop for all Members in October 2022, so that they were well briefed on the issues, at which there was unanimous support for the 13% increase and retention of the additional seasonal Rangers. Following that was the formal consultation with the Navigation Committee where the proposed increase was supported by nine votes to one against, and one abstention. At the Broads Authority meeting the decision was unanimous.

The CE brought to Members' attention Appendix 3 of the paper where the Monitoring Officer had set out the legal background.

The CE then commented on the charges for 2024/2025. He said that the advice of last year's Navigation Committee was to look at the cash increase rather than just the percentage increase. Appendix 2 gave examples of the impact of the three options on the different-sized craft. Most of the boats on the Broads were small and nearly 70% of all private craft were 20m<sup>2</sup> or less, and 530 (5%) were over 40m<sup>2</sup>. The charges for a large private motorboat of 40m<sup>2</sup> had increased substantially since 2007 by 147% and now stood at £680.80. That was because, in November 2016, Members decided to make the charging structure fairer. Over

the same toll period (2007-2023), for a 5m<sup>2</sup> motorboat the costs rose from £77.70 to £85.10 – an extra £7.40, or about 40p per year. Similarly, a sailing dinghy paid £51.46 in 2007 and £52 in 2023 – an extra 3p per year. When considering that long period, expenditure should also be looked at. The Authority had increased tolls, but it had also used European funding to transform the management of the waterways. On 1 October 2007, the Authority took on the direct responsibility of the practical maintenance of the Broads from May Gurney. The Authority bought the Dockyard in Thorpe, the two newer wherries, took on their staff and May Gurney handed over the rest of the equipment, much of which needed replacing. Since then, the Authority had completely modernised and professionalised the dredging operation using hydrographic surveys and long-reach excavators mounted on Nato floats and greatly reduced the dredging backlog. The total length of free 24-hour moorings provided by the Authority had increased and ensured that all sixty sites were well-maintained and in a safe condition.

Following the tragic accident at Great Yarmouth in 2020, the Authority had increased the number of Rangers so that the service provided to the public was the best it had ever been. Additionally, the Authority had increased its safety messaging in the ever-popular Broadcaster and produced, constantly updated and improved the safety videos, seen on YouTube and the Broads Authority website over 43,000 times last year alone.

Maintaining the Broads had always been expensive and difficult and recognised the owners of larger private boats were now paying a greater proportion of the cost, yet the number of private motor cruisers remained constant at around 5,000. The Authority's costs were rising above the consumer price index and the retail price index. The Authority had considered how best to reduce its expenditure and minimised impact on frontline services. Next year the Authority would be shrinking its occupation of the Yare House office by 60% and the work would be funded by the additional National Park grant received right at the end of the last financial year. The ongoing cost to navigation would be reduced as a result.

Options for next year's increase in tolls were set out in the report for Members to consider. Last year there was general agreement on the approach to be taken, however, this year it had proved to be trickier. All the options in the report were fully deliverable but carried different consequences and it was for the Authority Members to decide which of these options and consequences they wished to pursue. That required a judgement about the ability of the hire boat companies and private boat owners to pay the higher tolls required for the Authority to fulfil its statutory duties maintaining the waterways and responding to safety needs.

A Member asked for clarification on whether Members were being asked to set the toll or to support one of the three options in the paper, because when the workshop was held some Members did not believe that it represented the full range of options that Members might have wished to consider. The CE replied that Members were being asked to set the toll for next year which was normally done at this time of year to allow the Collector of Tolls time to prepare. The Monitoring Officer (MO) confirmed that this was the point at which Members were being asked to set navigation tolls in accordance with the statutory consultation process which Members had before them with the options which were put to the Navigation

Committee. He added that the process was open to Members to propose an option which was not on the paper but clearly Members would be mindful that those were the options which were considered by the Navigation Committee.

The Chair commented that if the Board did not follow the advice of the Navigation Committee, it was required to provide the reasons why.

A Member said that although he was not at the workshop this year, he did not believe that the Members had been provided enough information to properly go through the figures and had not realistically drilled down into the budget. He added that the Navigation Committee were not a decision-making body; they make a recommendation to the Board and the Board makes the decision and he did not feel that the Members had ever had enough information to make the hard decision and felt that Members should be able to go through the figures line by line to understand what and where savings could be made.

The CE responded that the significant addition to the paper was table 1 which set out the direct pressures on the budget. Following the toll increase last year, obvious places where significant savings could be made were looked at carefully. The first area was a significant reduction in the office space at Yare House. The second area was because of a large capital injection from DEFRA and although that was specifically for biodiversity and improvements, there were benefits for navigation in relation to the purchase of the weed harvester and the 360° excavator which could be used for navigation purposes. Therefore, it was felt that it was possible to go one year without putting money into the earmarked reserves. He added that there were areas that would need to be funded such as replacement of Ranger launches. In addition, the cost in relation to the maintenance and repair of moorings had become increasingly expensive due to the cost of steel and timber being high.

The third area was the difficult decision about Rangers. Following the tragic accident in 2020 the Authority received a MAIB report that drew attention to a number of areas, particularly weaknesses in the hire boat industry. Following that report, the Authority prepared additional videos that went out to the public in advance of them visiting the Broads which had been hugely successful. The hire boat companies were also required to join British Marine's QAB scheme. The other element was to increase the presence on the water by employing additional seasonal Rangers which meant that boats were out patrolling a lot more. One of the Navigation Committee Members had made the comment that with increased use of the water by inexperienced people on paddleboards and kayaks, having more Rangers on the Broads had been a real benefit. Because the level of Ranger patrolling had been increased, it was thought that reducing patrolling was another area that could be looked at.

If one wanted to go further, the CE explained that this would be difficult territory for the Authority because finances were managed tightly and there was very little room for manoeuvre and in terms of the navigation budget, it would mean effectively having to start cutting back on some of the activity at a time when users wanted more, when climate change and improved water quality meant that there were more demands on the Authority.



The CE went on to say that the third water plant cutter was critical this year and water plants were likely to be a bigger feature going forward. The fact that private boat owners bought bigger boats and the hire boat industry had been building bigger boats meant that the value of the moorings available had diminished due to the size of the boats on the Broads.

The CE said that the Authority had a statutory role to maintain the navigation for the safe use of visitors to the Broads and private boat owners. If Members wanted further options, then it would be necessary to look at cutting back on some of the services provided. If that was what Members wanted, then officers would need time to prepare before presenting at a future meeting, because they were not in the position to do so at the meeting today. Officers believed that the options that Members had in front of them were realistic; that they delivered on value for money and the actual cash increase was relatively low for the 70% that owned boats up to 20m<sup>2</sup>. However, it was acknowledged that this was not the case for large boat owners.

A Member commented that there had been a lot of correspondence around this matter and noted the concerns people had around the increases; the Broads depended on tourism for funding for the area and, in particular, the vulnerability of the private hire industry. However, in the long term, safety was just as important for tourism businesses around the Broads to thrive. He said that there was concern that navigation was being used to underpin the planning operation and asked whether the CE could clarify how much of the navigation fees covered the planning operation. The CE replied that the planning function was entirely funded from the National Park Grant; it did not receive any income from tolls.

The Member then asked what the risks were to the Authority if there were nil contributions to the earmarked reserves. The Director of Finance (DF) replied that one of the benefits of the capital grant received last year was that the Authority could bring forward some of the replacement of equipment that was planned for future years, which meant that the Authority was in the fortunate position of being able to stop contributions into the earmarked reserves for one year. The DF added that there was a risk in relation to increased maintenance on older equipment, but officers were working to a 10-year plan for replacing that equipment and therefore it was achievable to not contribute to the earmarked reserves next year.

A Member said that there were unpalatable choices and that his recollection of the workshop was that the officers would explore some other options, such as less weed control and less dredging, and part of that was to say that these options would be even more unpalatable in terms of biodiversity and navigation. To put them there as another option would show that all options had a downside but did not see any of that in the report. The CE responded that this was done in part, and said that if one looked at the reports to the Navigation Committee, the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (HCME) had completed some analysis of the balance of practical work and identified that there was the potential of a shift away from some of the dredging operation and onto other practical activities, but the HCME did not believe that there was any scope for reducing the total cost as we were likely to run the risk of having created problems for Broads users in the near future. The CE added that one of the things that the Authority would be doing next year was replacing channel markers in Breydon

Water which was a safety critical area and would be able to do that with some of the equipment currently used for dredging.

A Member said that the role that the Rangers played was going to be increasingly important with climate change and extreme weather hitting the Broads area and safety was paramount. He asked whether there was an opportunity for volunteers to fill the gaps. The Director of Operations (DO) responded that the Authority currently had a number of volunteers, however, they supplemented the service provided but did not replace the service. Under the rules of volunteers, the Authority could not use them for paid services. There were a number of volunteer Rangers who worked alongside and complemented the service rather than replaced it.

A Member commented that the CE had mentioned earlier that a Navigation Committee Member had mentioned the benefits of increased Rangers and asked whether he would provide further feedback from all Broads users and give an indication whether they would value more, or fewer Rangers being needed in the future. The CE replied that he thought that if the Authority were to poll private users there would be some very different views, i.e. those who were very experienced did not get much benefit from Ranger services, however, he added that both he and the Collector of Tolls met with an owner of a large boat earlier in the week and the owner said how much of a benefit the Rangers were to him where they helped him and gave him guidance in navigating from the Southern Broads to the Northern Broads. In terms of visitors, the CE thought that the Rangers were critical and that holiday-makers saw them as essential, as did kayakers and paddleboarders.

With no further questions, the Chair moved on to the second part of the of the process and asked each Member in turn for the option that they supported as recorded below:

- Member: Recognised all the financial pressures and the need to maintain services, however, would like to see in detail how costs could be cut. They added that with the reduction in boats on the Broads, there would be less safety issues and would therefore choose option C.
- Member: As a statutory body, there were things that could not be ignored and that an organisation that dug into reserves would not have a future. They strongly felt that the Authority needed to think about its reserves and the need to function safely. Chose option A.
- Member: The priority should be the level of service and safety on the Broads and therefore chose option B.
- Member: There were three major considerations: the first could the Authority provide a good level of service and safety; second was the Authority putting themselves on a sustainable financial footing; and third what was the impact on the hire boat industry, and added that the toll was a small fraction of owning a boat and therefore chose option A.

- Member: They were unable to support option C and thought that the Rangers did an exceptional job and added that from a private boat owner's perspective, the toll was value for money. Supported option A, but could support option B.
- Member: Safety was paramount and that there was a need to maintain the current patrolling, therefore would support option B.
- Member: Reiterated everything that was discussed at the Navigation Committee and wanted to remind Members that large boat owners could not use nearly 2/3rds of the Broads, so would choose option C.
- Member: Shared the views of the Navigation Committee and chose option C. They commented that they were fearful of a knock-on effect to the hire boat industry and that there were potential savings if the Authority looked at where Rangers were deployed.
- Member: They wanted to ensure that the reserves were looked after and did not want to see the National Park reserves to again underpin navigation functions, but it sounded like that, from a machinery perspective, it was possible to hold off contributing to the earmarked reserves for the year. They were not happy to see a reduction in patrolling. They added that it was lucky that the area had not seen major storms and sea breaches in the Broadland area and thought that there would be a major event in the near future that would need all of the Authority's resources to fix, therefore, it was the wrong time to be reducing manpower. Preference would be option B.
- Member: Must maintain the Rangers on safety grounds and could take a reserves holiday in light of the capital grant received. Option B.
- Member: Thought that it was unfortunate that the Members were not having a debate about the tolls at this meeting and thought it undemocratic. Thought that the Board should look at other proposals beyond the three options and referred to the maximum 2.99% increase which applied to local authorities and that this should be put on the table as a figure to start with. Thought that the hire boat industry was in serious risk and was declining year on year and rises would put significant pressure on them. Did not agree that the Board should look at the options at the meeting, should really drill down on numbers and look at other options. If forced to make a decision, would go for option C.
- Member: The original Broads Act separated navigation and National Park income, however, realised over time things had to change slightly but the rule still applied. At the moment there seemed to be a one-way subsidy from navigation to the National Park function. Believed that there would be a bigger problem if the Board chose option A as that would reduce boats on the water and therefore income. The Member thought that the Board should look more closely at the National Park funding, for example the planning department had income of £100,000 but £500,000 expenditure

and said that that was not a good business model. The Member chose option C as a maximum but would like more information on the points raised.

The CE replied to the Member's comments regarding subsidies and confirmed that there was no subsidy of National Park functions by navigation and traditionally the subsidy had always worked the other way – for example the Rangers had been funded 70% from navigation and 30% from National Park, but actually only did 20% National Park work. The accounts separated very clearly the navigation from National Park functions. He added that there was no navigation money that went to the planning function and similarly there was not National Park money that went to the collection of tolls. There were a number of areas where there was a shared cost and those were shared fairly on the basis of time or expenditure. Therefore, the suggestion that tolls were propping up National Park functions was entirely erroneous.

In terms of planning, one of the distinctions between the Broads Authority's planning operation and a district council's was that the Authority did not charge for pre-application advice. The reasoning behind this was that the Authority was expecting a higher quality of development in the National Park and therefore providing free pre-application advice was really positive. It also meant that by the time the application was ready for determination, there were generally no issues outstanding, and therefore the Authority's performance figures were very good. The Government recognised that the standard of planning in a National Park area was subject to higher levels of requirement than a mainstream local authority and that was why National Park funding was used for the planning function.

The Chair commented that it was incumbent upon him to now state his preferred option since he had asked Members to declare theirs. He understood all of the issues, and his clear preference was for option B, because safety was paramount. He added that he did not see any correlation between fewer boats and safety, and cause and effect was very difficult to demonstrate in this case. The increase in paddleboarding, which was extremely welcome, introduced an extra burden on Ranger resources.

The Senior Governance Officer (SGO) summarised the options choices stated by Members: of the 13 Members in the room, option A was 3, option B was 5, and option C was 5.

It was proposed by Alan Goodchild, seconded by Leslie Mogford that navigation tolls increase by 6.9% for 2024/2025 as set out in Option C in the officer report.

A Member asked whether the Board was being asked to vote just on the tolls being set at 6.9% or what was detailed in the report under option C. For example, could Members vote for the option of a 6.9% increase but not a reduction in Rangers and officers being tasked with finding savings in another way. The Chair responded that the vote would be for option C in all its entirety.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) confirmed that the Board had a proposal on the table, which was option C as identified in the paper, however, that it was open to any Member to propose an amendment.

Paul Hayden proposed that the 6.9% increase in tolls put to the Navigation Committee was supported, but that officers would be tasked with further review on how that could be achieved without a reduction in Rangers/safety.

The MO advised that the Chair could now ask the original proposer of the motion whether he would accept the change in wording, however, the proposer did not have to. Bearing in mind that the amendment was in essence suggesting a refinement, that was something that the Chair could ask the proposer to consider. The proposer said that he would support that amendment as the Navigation Committee thought that there were savings that could be made which were not clearly identified in the paper.

For clarity, the MO confirmed that the proposal was option C (6.9%) with a request that officers closely examine whether there was the opportunity for savings to be made which would enable Ranger services to be maintained.

Therefore, the proposal by Alan Goodchild, seconded by Leslie Mogford was that navigation tolls increase by 6.9% for 2024/2025 as set out in option C in the officer report, and officers be asked to closely examine opportunities for savings to be made to enable Ranger services to be maintained.

Member asked would there be further proposals coming back to the Board regarding what the cost savings should be or was this being delegated to the officers. The MO replied that the intent of the discussion was to set the tolls at the meeting and request officers to look closely at the figures and there would be a report back to Members.

The CE confirmed that the Authority was required to consult the Navigation Committee on the draft budget in January and it would be brought to the Board for approval later that month.

A Member commented that before option C was proposed, he was about to propose option B. Had he done so, the Board would be voting on that without amendment, and asked whether that possibility had disappeared.

The MO responded that there was a proposal on the table of 6.9%, however, the Member was able to propose an amendment to that which could be one of the other options. The Board would then vote on that amendment and if that failed would go back to the substantive motion. He clarified that there was a proposal on the table of 6.9% (the substantive motion), and that a Member expressed a wish for that to remain the proposal but for the officers to do some extra work behind the detail of the figures. The refinement of the proposal was accepted by the original proposer of option C and that was the proposal that was on the table. If any Member wished to put forward another option, the means of doing that was to propose an amendment to the substantive motion and that would need to be seconded. The Members would be asked to vote on that and if that was passed, that would become the substantive motion which the Members would then need to vote on. The MO added that there were two options to Members, vote on the proposal on the table and if that was not carried, Members would get the opportunity to propose another option, or Members could propose an amendment to the current proposal.

An amendment was proposed by Stephen Bolt, seconded by Michael Scott that the words “6.9% for 2024 as set out in Option C in the officer report” be replaced with “8.5% for 2024 as set out in Option B in the officer report” and remove the words “Officers be asked to closely examine opportunities for savings to be made to enable Ranger services to be maintained”.

**The amendment was carried by 8 votes in favour and 5 against and that became the substantive motion.**

The SGO confirmed that the motion on the table now was for option B, as the substantive motion, and Members were required to vote on that motion or propose an amendment.

**It was resolved by 7 votes in favour and 6 against to support Option B – Nil contributions to Navigation Earmarked Reserves for property plant and equipment and an 8.5% increase in navigation charges across the board for 2024/2025 in the officer report.**

The Chair commented that the Board was required to give reasons why it had not agreed with the Navigation Committee’s recommendation. He summarised the discussions as: Members wanted to retain the seasonal Rangers in the interests of public safety particularly in light of the tragic accident in Great Yarmouth in 2020, the increase in paddleboarding, and the increased risk of climate change.

A Member commented that it was important to highlight that the Navigation Committee looked carefully at patrolling and that a reduction was not seen to be of concern and would not affect the safety in Great Yarmouth. A Member responded that he did not feel that the level of reduction in resources proposed in option C could feasibly be met by other measures.

The meeting adjourned at 11.45am and reconvened at 12pm.

Greg Munford re-joined the meeting.

## **10. Financial performance and direction**

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF confirmed that the information in the report was up to the end of September and updated Members on the variance as at the end of October. In the report there was a favourable variance of £80,393 and at the end of October this had moved to an adverse variance of £57,231. This was due to a combination of factors across all directorates; however, the latest available budget had remained the same.

A Member asked whether the DF would confirm that the underspend noted on pages 43 and 44 (Operations and Finance & Support Services directorates) would be spent. The DF confirmed that the biggest underspend in the report presented was salaries because the Authority budgeted for the pay rise to be from 1 April and that was only agreed in November, therefore it would be backpaid to all staff in the December payroll and would remove the salary variances from the report. The other variances were through timing differences.

A Member asked whether the Authority was still in the external audit delay and asked whether there was anything that could be done to expedite it. The DF confirmed that that there was still a delay, and nothing could be done to expedite at present.

**Members noted:**

- i. the income and expenditure figures**
- ii. the latest on the pay agreement for 2023/24 in paragraph 4.2**
- iii. the latest position on external audit for 2022/23 and**
- iv. the prudential indicators in paragraph 6.1.**

## 11. Digital Boundary

Members received the report from the GIS Officer (GISO) accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. She advised that, since the report had been published, Natural England published the complete dataset on 17 November 2023. This meant that the Authority now had a consistent interpretation of the boundary that could be used but reiterated that the paper map was still the legal boundary.

Members congratulated the GISO on the great work undertaken and how valuable it was.

A Member asked whether neighbouring authorities were happy with the new digital boundary. The GISO confirmed that, from a GIS point of view, she often got requests from GIS colleagues in other authorities asking which version they should use. Her response had always been that the paper map was the legal boundary, and it was up to others to determine which version they used, so she thought that they would appreciate this work.

A Member asked whether any issues had arisen in terms of the Broads' functions as a result of differences/arguments over where lines had been in the past. A Member added that he had previously had issues relating to the planning function of the council that he represented, in terms of the line of the boundary. The Director of Strategic Services (DSS) commented that the Authority had just provided training for Planning Committee Members and one of the first things that was considered in a planning application was whether the property was within the Authority's boundary, so this work would be very helpful to the planning team.

A Member asked what the next stage of the project would be and would there be any opportunity to use other digital datasets to help with decision making, for example mobile datasets to show the intensity of visitors to the National Park. The GISO confirmed that the Authority could now start to do things publicly with the GIS data and said that there was different data available but there would be added costs. The Chief Executive (CE) added that the Authority had some experience looking at mobile data and it could be used to track how many visitors the Broads area had potentially got, and the digital boundary made that a bit easier.

A Member asked if the paper map would be adjusted to reflect any differences in the new digital boundary. The CE replied no, and his understanding was that Natural England's interpretation through the process of creating the digital boundary would assist any debate over boundaries and becomes a substantive piece of data to help resolve any issues.

The Chair, on behalf of all Members, congratulated the GISO on the project which had been ongoing for twelve years.

**The report was noted.**

## 12. Education strategy

Members received the report from the Education Officer (EO). The EO provided Members with an insight into the Education and discovery work that the Authority provided and highlighted the objectives of the strategy through a PowerPoint presentation.

The Chair commented that the presentation was brilliant and that the EO's commitment and enthusiasm radiated through. He congratulated the EO on his great work.

A Member commented that he was aghast to see how low the number of children who go on school visits was. He asked if Children's Services at the County Council was part of the EO's remit. The EO confirmed that it was.

A Member said that he welcomed the strategy and commented that it was in line with the Authority's statutory purpose, and asked how funding opportunities were being sought. The EO said that he was working closely with the new Partnership and External Funding Manager to look for new opportunities. There was also talk in other National Parks' Education groups to raise a successor project to Generation Green, but it was currently going through a period of development. He added that there were a number of opportunities that they were looking to explore.

A Member said that within the strategy, there did not seem to be any numbers on what the Authority's aspirations were. The current figures on the numbers of children going on school visits to the countryside was 6/7%, but felt it was important to include numbers of schools etc. so that there was something to aim for. The EO said that he could look at the numbers and talk to partners.

A Member commented that the long-term plan talked about people from all walks of life and ages and asked whether the EO had considered a programme for older people into the strategy. The EO replied that the strategy was a snapshot and that there was already learning opportunities for adult groups, including organisations such as Age UK and community groups. He added that although it was not written into the strategy it was implicit in the work that was delivered.

The Member who represented the Broads Authority on the Broads Trust suggested that there might be a potential partnership opportunity there and would discuss it at the next Trust meeting on Monday 27 November 2023.

The Chair commented that it was clear, from what had been said by Members, the depth of appreciation and admiration on how much the EO had achieved with so few resources.

Paul Hayden proposed, and Vic Thomson seconded.

**It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Broads Education Strategy 2023-2028.**



## 13. Corporate partnership register

The Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO).

A Member asked for confirmation that all the items in the partnership register were not statutory or legal partnerships where the Authority was bound into a partnership for a long time and were effectively voluntary relationships that we had with other organisations. The Chief Executive (CE) replied that these were proper partnerships where there was a commitment of some sort and agreed strategy.

A Member asked whether there was the potential to work with European partners again now that the Horizon funding was available. The Director of Strategic Services (DSS) said that she was not aware of anything. The CE replied that the Authority had been fortunate to receive European funding in the past and had really added to what the Authority had been able to do over recent years. He said that the Authority had strong links with lots of universities and were currently working with the East of London University on a really interesting £3.5 million bid. He thought that Horizon was very much a research-based programme, so it might well be that one of the Authority's existing university partners would provide that opportunity, but it would not be around the practical work that had already been done such as dredging and peat management. A Member said that it was worth noting that there might be funding opportunities through the Emerald Network.

**The updated Corporate Partnerships Register was noted.**

## 14. Member report on outside bodies – Broadland Futures Initiative update

Members received the report from the Authority's representative on the Broadland Futures Initiative, Matthew Shardlow. The Chair thanked Matthew for his clear and succinct report which made very sobering reading.

A Member commented that the workshop on climate change planned for 2024 should be held early in the New Year. The Director of Strategic Services (DSS) said that the workshop would depend on when the hydrological model was ready and this work could not be rushed, so did not think early 2024 would be possible.

**The report was noted.**

## 15. 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. The Director of Operations (DO) commented that the Port Marine Safety Code was being audited and that a report would be coming to the Board in the New Year.

## **16. Minutes to be received**

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Navigation Committee – 8 June 2023  
Planning Committee – 15 September 2023  
Navigation Committee – 7 September 2023  
Planning Committee – 13 October 2023

## **17. Other items of business**

There were no other items of business.

## **18. Formal questions**

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

## **19. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 26 January 2024 at 10.00am at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH.

The meeting ended at 13:02pm

Signed by

Chairman

## Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 24 November 2023

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Stephen Bolt, Bill Dickson, Alan Goodchild, Leslie Mogford, Michael Scott	9	Private toll payer. The Member Code of Conduct allowed for these Members to participate and vote.
Greg Munford	9	Commercial hire boat operator. Disclosable pecuniary interest (employment, office, trade, profession, or vocation carried out for profit or gain) and left the room for this item.