

Navigation Committee

16 April 2026

Agenda item number 11

Operations work programme - progress update

Report by Head of Operations

Purpose

To provide the Committee with an update on the Authority's management activities to maintain public navigation, develop mooring facilities for public use and demonstrate the effective use of available resources in managing the Broads waterways.

Broads Plan context

C1: Maintain navigation water depths to defined specifications, reduce sediment input, and dispose of dredged material in sustainable and beneficial ways.

C2: Maintain existing navigation water space and develop appropriate opportunities to extend access for various types of craft.

C3: Manage water plants, riverside trees and scrub, and seek resources to increase operational targets.

C4: Maintain and improve safety and security standards and user behaviour on the waterways.

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1. Achieving Waterways Specifications

1.1. The detailed breakdown in Appendix 1 gives the figures and volumes for the current dredging programme for 2025/26 (April 2025 to the end of February 2026). A total of

9,460 m³ of dredged sediment has been removed from the prioritised sites. This figure represents 35% of the programmed target of 27,380 m³ for the year.

- 1.2. The dredging on the Upper Thurne has been completed for the season, and all equipment has been demobilised from the area at the time of writing. Progress has been slower than planned, with a delayed start and periodic pauses caused by very high salinity. However, 2,860 m³ of sediment has been removed from the River Thurne and placed within the Chara Bay reedbed restoration area, alongside the removal of the damaged erosion protection curtain from the Studio Bay area of Hickling Broad.
- 1.3. Within Hickling, salinity (measured via conductivity) remained high throughout the winter (see Figure 1), only dropping below the safe operating threshold at the end of February. This five-month period of elevated salinity meant none of the planned dredging could be carried out. Following the initial tidal surge and salinity peak, the conductivity measurement on the River Thurne at Martham Ferry remained variable, though at slightly lower levels than at Hickling (see Figure 2). On the River Thurne, a total of nine weeks of dredging was possible. The cumulative impacts on the work programme have meant that the planned dredging in the marked channel in Hickling, Martham Dyke, and Somerton Dyke has had to be deferred, with work restarting in October 2026.
- 1.4. Figure 1 – Conductivity at Hickling Broad. (blue line is the precautionary threshold for protection of freshwater fish)

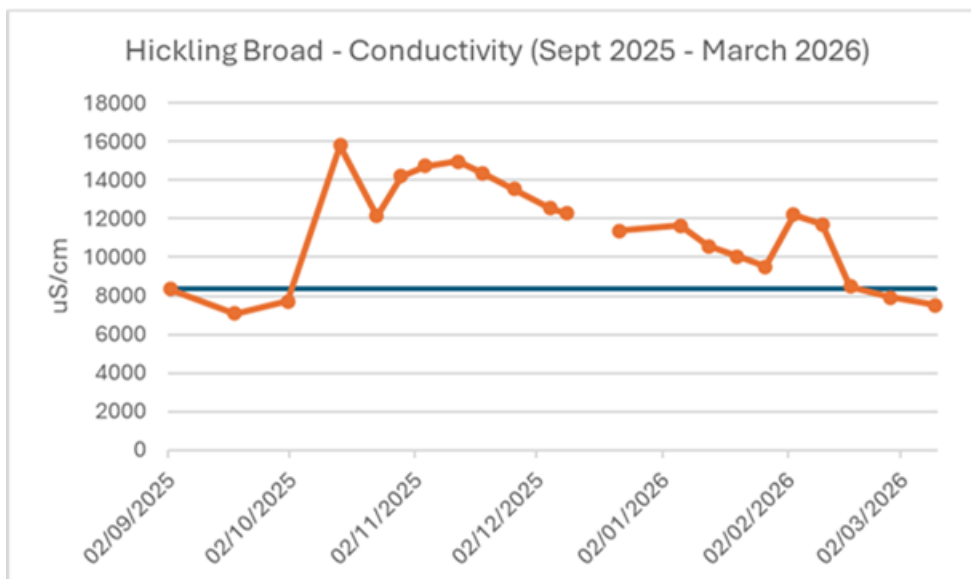
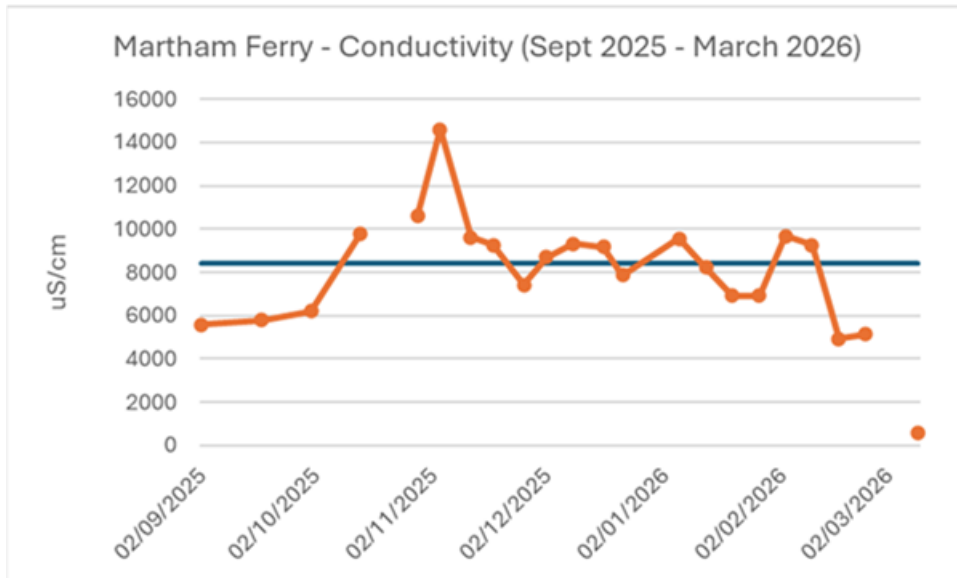


Figure 2 - Conductivity at Martham Ferry. (blue line is the precautionary threshold for protection of freshwater fish)



- 1.5. The start of a more major campaign of dredging in the mid Bure, between Wroxham and Horning, was due to start over winter 2025/26, with preparatory works and an erosion protection scheme on Wroxham Broad island. Due to additional time required to complete all necessary checks on planning consent and the applicability of Biodiversity Net Gain rules, this work has been pushed back to a new start date of June 2026.
- 1.6. In the lower Bure at Great Yarmouth, the Construction Team spent three weeks trialling a cutter suction head attached to an excavator on a pontoon. This type of set-up has been used before in small projects during the EU Interreg-funded PRISMA project. This time in the Bure, the approach was hydrodynamic dredging, whereby the sediment was fluidised using the pump and allowed to travel downstream on the fastest-flowing portion of the ebb tides. The hydrodynamic approach has been used in the lower Bure before using water injection dredging equipment and was shown to be effective.
- 1.7. We await the comparison of the pre- and post-dredge bathymetric surveys in this area to allow comparison of net sediment movement following the trial. This will provide some quantification of the approach's effectiveness and whether it is worthwhile to use again in the future.
- 1.8. The dredging plan for 2026/27 is now composed of the following projects:-
 - Upton Dyke – April
 - Yare - shoals between Postwick to Trowse – arisings to Postwick Tip – April - July
 - Bure – near Wroxham Broad (dredgings to Wroxham Island) June-July
 - River Chet, Haddiscoe Cut, lower Yare – priority shoals – September -March
 - Thurne – Somerton Dyke, Martham Dyke, shoals in Hickling marked channel – October - January

2. Riverside Tree Management

- 2.1. Please see the maps showing riverside tree management areas for Year 4 (2025/26) of the five-year consented plan. All areas were completed, except the most upstream section identified on the River Waveney. This will be undertaken in winter 2026/27 by a contractor. The planned section on the River Ant near Wayford Bridge had to be cancelled due to issues with old piling containing asbestos in the riverbank. The work time was reallocated to a section of similar length closer to Barton Broad.

3. Maintaining safe public mooring facilities

- 3.1. The intended piling work to extend the 24-hour mooring and tidy the frontage to the thatched building at Acle Bridge has been delayed. The combined challenge of encountering asbestos-containing materials within the historic piling and discovering that the ground structural quality at depth was significantly poorer than indicated by the ground investigations has meant pausing this project is the best option. Additional ground investigation and a revised design to deal with the poor ground conditions are required.
- 3.2. The mooring repiling and timber quay heading refurbishment plan for 2026/27 is composed of the following projects:-
 - Potter Heigham demasting – full repiling with steel sheets and new timberwork
 - Potter Heigham staithe – repiling and site renovation (see separate report in this April meeting agenda)
 - *Ludham Bridge Staithe – timber refurbishment – *(subject to new lease agreement with the Environment Agency)
 - Horning Marshes, Herringfleet and Martham Bank (Potter Heigham) – all for timber refurbishment.
 - Castle Marshes – new pontoon installation
 - Chedgrave – re-piling the short sections of piling returns to prevent further erosion at the ends of the mooring.

4. Channel Markers

- 4.1. At Turntide Jetty, the remaining historic timber structure has been removed. This now leaves the relatively new steel piled structure that acts as a river training wall to help manage water depths at the junction of the rivers Yare and Waveney.
- 4.2. The yellow marker post at the junction will remain in its long-established position until water flow and sediment movement around the end of the training wall stabilise. A shallow area persists where the old timber structure once stood, marked by yellow buoys on either side; these will remain in place until natural scouring removes the shoal, or, failing that, until autumn 2026, when a dredging rig is scheduled to pass

through and can clear any remaining sediment. Once the shoal has disappeared, the arrangement of marker posts and buoys can be reviewed, with the intention of moving the yellow post closer to the junction.

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[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: C1, C2, C3, C4

Appendix 1 – Annual dredging progress 2025/26 (to end February 2026)

Appendix 2 - Operational staff time spent on all work types 2025/26 (to end February 2026)

Appendix 1 – Annual dredging progress 2025/26 (to end February 2026)

Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broads Authority dredging weeks completed/ planned	Planned volume removed m ³	Actual volume removed m ³	Planned annual project cost ¹	Actual project cost
River Yare Bargate Broad	8/8	2,400	1,800	£56,260	£54,730
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use site – started in 2024/25, completed in 2025/26</i>					
River Yare Postwick Viaduct to Trowse Swing Bridge	10/9	6,480	4,630	£74,880	£57,760
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use site - complete</i>					
River Yare Hardley Dyke	-	-	170	-	-
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use site - complete</i>					
River Thurne Hickling channel Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes Somerton to Candle Dyke	0/8 0/4 9/10	6,000 1,300 6,200	0 0 2,860	£175,420	£68,600
<i>Hickling channel (Chara Bay re-use site) – October to November (postponed)</i> <i>Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes (sidecast) – January (postponed)</i> <i>Somerton to Candle Dyke (Chara Bay re-use site) – December to February</i>					
River Bure Wroxham Broad	0/5	3,000	0	£33,940	£4,060
<i>Wroxham Island – postponed until June 2026</i>					
River Bure Lower reaches	3/4	5,000	*	£35,270	£29,800
<i>Cutter suction head dredging on ebb tide – complete</i> <i>*Volume to be determined following post-dredge hydrographic survey</i>					
River Bure Mid-Bure	-	-	-	£3,000	£0
<i>Lagoon preparation costs</i>					

Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broads Authority dredging weeks completed/ planned	Planned volume removed m³	Actual volume removed m³	Planned annual project cost¹	Actual project cost
Site restoration	-	-	-	-	£27,810
Future site preparation Survey, mitigation & set-up	-	-	-	-	£3,020
Dredging support activities	-	-	-	-	£53,890
Total	30/45	27,380	9,460	£378,770	£299,670

Appendix 2 – Operational staff time spent on all work types 2025/26 (update to end February 2026)

Work type	Planned - Days	Planned - % of annual total days	Actual - Days	Actual - % completed
Navigation (60%)	2,664	60	2,341	53
Italics are proportion within Navigation				
<i>Dredging</i>	<i>1068</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>884</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Mooring maintenance & repairs</i>	<i>687</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>523</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Riverside tree management</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Water plant cutting</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Other navigation works¹</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Corporate allocation²</i>	<i>450</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>19</i>
Recreation (10%) ³	444	10	363	8
Conservation (30%) ⁴	1,332	30	1175	26
Total	4,440	100	3,879	87

1 – includes raising & disposal of wrecks, channel markers & buoys, gaugeboards & signage

2 – includes premises & equipment maintenance, training, sickness & gaps in recruitment.

3 - National Park funded work to facilitate public access and visitor services.

4 – National Park funded work to carry out priority fen management and other biodiversity restoration projects