

# Navigation Committee

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## **Present**

Nicky Talbot – in the Chair, Linda Aspland, Mike Barnes, Harry Blathwayt, Andy Hamilton, Leslie Mogford, Greg Munford, Michael Scott, Simon Sparrow, Paul Thomas and Alan Thomson

## **Officers in attendance**

Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance & Ecology, Bill Housden – Collector of Tolls, Linda Ibbitson-Elks – Head of Safety Management, Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, Rob Leigh – Head of Communications, John Packman - Chief Executive, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations, Cally Smith – Head of Planning (for item 9), Sara Utting – Senior Governance Officer and Tom Waterfall – Senior Communications Officer

## **Others in attendance**

Bill Dickson - Chair of the Broads Authority; Mark Collins, Peter Dixon, Alan Goodchild, Bob Neate, Remus Sawyer and Daniel Thwaites – recommended candidates to the Navigation Committee and Ben Falat for item 4

# **1. Apologies and welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the five new members who were being recommended for appointment to the Navigation Committee wef 1 April 2023, and were in attendance to observe the proceedings.

**Apologies** were received from Stephen Bolt.

## **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 formal record of the meeting. She 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.

## **East Coast Floods – commemorative event**

A member referred to the forthcoming 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the East Coast floods in 1953 when 307 UK lives had been lost, with a further 224 UK lives lost at sea, and a grand total of 2,551 lives across the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. A Commemoration event would be taking place on 29 January at Sea Palling church at which the Bishop of Norwich would be leading the commemorations for the lost lives. With global warming and rising sea levels, the Member felt that the Committee should be conscious of all of this in its deliberations.

# **2. Declarations of interest**

Members declared interests as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes and in addition to those already registered.

Having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 8, Andy Hamilton, Greg Munford and Simon Sparrow advised that they had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to participate/speak and vote on that item.

### **3. Matters of urgent business**

No items were proposed as a matter of urgent business.

### **4. Public question time**

Two questions had been received from Ben Falat, Chair of the Norfolk & Suffolk Boating Association. It was confirmed that Members had received a copy of the questions and supporting statements and therefore, Mr Falat was invited to read out just his questions. The Chair provided the Authority's response as set out in Appendix 2 to these Minutes.

### **5. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

### **6. Summary of actions and outstanding issues following discussions at previous meetings**

Members received a report summarising the progress of issues that had recently been presented to the Committee.

A member referred to the lack of mention in the report on the issue of staithe; he recalled at a previous Navigation Committee that this had been referred elsewhere for consideration approximately four years ago but had not seen the outcome report. The Head of Construction, Maintenance & Ecology responded that the work had been completed, with the staithe report published on the Authority's website. Any subsequent action would be picked up by the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF), although no particular projects or ideas for those staithe had been brought forward by those members since. One of the Authority members appointed to BLAF confirmed that the report had been received by BLAF but no subsequent issues had arisen to be dealt with. He considered that the report should be presented again to BLAF to enable a re-appraisal.

### **7. Chief Executive's report and current issues**

Members received the report on significant matters relating to the maintenance and management of the waterways. The Chief Executive (CE) reported at the meeting that, since the report had been written, the Authority had received some significant news. Defra had confirmed it would be awarding the Broads Authority a capital grant of £1.3m to be used to improve the bio-diversity in the Broads. This was a first for the Authority and was extremely welcome. In the main, the grant would be used to purchase equipment, such as a Truxor, which would enable staff to access the very wet and difficult areas to manage them. Last year,

improved water quality, together with a warm summer, resulted in water plants growing more rapidly. Currently, the Authority had to rely on equipment which had been purchased second hand and this funding would enable the purchase of a new water plant cutting machine which would be welcomed by navigators. He concluded by thanking Defra and highlighting the benefits the machinery would bring to staff, volunteers and partner organisations such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and RSPB.

In response to questions, the CE advised that the equipment would only be used by existing staff, not volunteers. The Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (HCME) prioritised staffing for the maintenance of navigation and these were multi-skilled staff who were able to remove trees, repair moorings, operate the weed harvester and replace posts such as at Breydon water etc. However, resources were limited and there was a continual pressure, which was at the heart of the tolls-setting, boat owners wanted more and more from the Broads Authority. The HCME prioritised and scheduled work, for example dredging which was planned over a five-year period to allow for the necessary consents and agreements, as well as managing sudden events such as removing trees damaged by storms, alongside the regular repairing of moorings. The brand-new machinery would require work to be re-planned and re-programmed but the effects of climate change would also need to be taken into consideration. The HCME added that the availability of three machines would allow for staff to better manage increased water plant growth and having a brand-new machine provided long-term security and an assurance that a minimum level of service could be provided to users of the navigation system every year.

A member commented that, with the same amount of equipment and people, less work could be carried out and that people did not necessarily want more but just the same. He considered toll-payers were concerned that navigation was not being maintained. The CE responded that he had been referring to the comments received from surveys: they wanted more patrolling, more dredging etc. Currently, the Authority had responsibility for maintaining over 60 moorings which was the highest number for many years. The member responded that there should be KPIs to demonstrate this and particularly for those moorings which were not in use. The HCME advised that the Waterways and Recreation Officer would be reviewing moorings and assimilate the Moorings Strategy into the Integrated Access Strategy. This would look at issues such as their distribution, length, capacity and location etc. to ensure needs were being met which would hopefully resolve a lot of the issues and queries received from the public. A member added that the perception of less linear length of moorings could be due to the increased size of boats which took up more space, resulting in less mooring.

**The report was noted.**

## **8. Proposed draft budget and charges for 2023-24 in the navigation area and adjacent waters**

The Chief Executive presented his report, supplemented by a presentation, seeking the Committee's views on the draft budget for the coming financial year, the navigation charges

in the navigation area and adjacent waters, and other charges. The final decision would be made by the Broads Authority at its meeting on 20 January 2023.

The CE also referred to the numerous pieces of correspondence which he and/or the Chair of the Committee had received in relation to this matter, as follows:

- Tony Howes, Secretary of the Hire Boat Federation
- Margaret Kilner, Commodore of the Yare Sailing Club
- Simon Philips, Honorary Secretary of the Yare Valley Sailing Club
- Jo Farrow, Vice-Captain of the River Cruiser Class and in a personal capacity as tollpayer
- Philip Martin, Honorary Secretary of East Anglian Cruising Club
- Owen Keane, personal tollpayer
- Colin Chettleburgh, personal tollpayer
- Ted Hill, Vice-Commodore Royal Norfolk & Suffolk Yacht Club

A summary of the issues raised was as follows:

1. Concern over the proposed increase in charge for using Mutford Lock from £15 to £17 and the adverse effect this would have on local yacht clubs.
2. Concern over expectation that toll-payers will bear a higher proportion of the Authority's overheads.
3. The increase in costs would discourage people from boating and reduce the number of boats.
4. The additional money being used to prop up non-navigational activities.
5. The proposed new charges for mooring at Ranworth and Reedham equate to a 3% increase so, taken with the 13% increase in tolls, equated to a 16% increase.
6. There should be a more moderate increase or stage the proposed increase over 2-3 financial years.
7. Recommend a short-term raid on reserves rather than raising the tolls by so much.
8. The proposed charges for mooring at Ranworth and Reedham would put users off and therefore have a detrimental effect on shore-based businesses at those locations and at Reedham could have unsafe consequences.
9. It was an attempt to use current inflationary factors to justify a considerable increase in navigation contributions to the Authority's shared costs, rather than being realistic about the services which could actually be funded and the functions which could and should be performed.

The CE advised that, in recent years, officers had refined the process for the setting of tolls: all members of the Authority, and the co-opted Members of the Navigation Committee, had been invited to a briefing/workshop in early October as the inflation figure for August was used as a guide together with the number of registered boats as at the end of September, to indicate what the future income might be. Members had received a presentation, similar to today's, on the key ideas and pressures and the report before the Committee today reflected members' input. Inflation had a big impact on the Authority plus a salary increase of 2% had been budgeted for and the Authority had no control over the figure which had been agreed

through the local government settlement scheme (flat rate of £1,925 which equated to an increase overall of 6.2%). Staffing made up 65-70% of the Authority's total costs; the price of materials and fuel had all increased as well as the utility bills. Conversely, the real value of the NP Grant had continued to decline, which was accelerated by increases in inflation. In 2009/10, the grant was £4.4m which meant if you took into account inflation, it should be £6.5m today but only £3.2m had been awarded, which equated to a flat cash settlement plus there was the pressure of increased inflation on top.

A number of years ago, a Resource Allocation Working Group (RAWG), comprising a group of members, had looked at how the balance of shared costs should fall, noting there were some obvious categories such as planning service (NP) and dredging (navigation) but a lot fell between the two and consideration was given as to how to distribute the shared costs. As there was concern over the level of tolls, the RAWG had deliberately used its discretion to see whether some NP grant could be used to underpin some Navigation activity. A classic example was the yacht stations where 25% of the costs were now borne by the NP Grant as opposed to 100% by navigation expenditure previously. However, the on-going reduction in the value of NP Grant had reached a point where there was a need to review and correct the allocations for the shared costs, and these were detailed in the committee report.

Added to this were the rapid increase in External Audit fees and continuing loss of weekly hire craft: the majority of toll income came from just two classes, with approx. 55% of all toll income from private motor boats and 23% from weekly hired cruisers. Boat numbers for the past ten years were detailed in the appendix to the report. It was worth highlighting that the weekly hire had dropped from 800 to 660 vessels and so a loss of nearly 200, each currently paying approx. £1,800-£2,000 resulted in a huge loss of income. Therefore, at the briefing, two options had been looked at which would maintain existing services, including the reallocation of shared costs.

A 10% increase in tolls would mean existing requirements would be met but the Authority would not be able to continue to fund the additional patrolling by Rangers, previously agreed by the Authority. The CE referred to the two tragic accidents which had occurred at Gt Yarmouth, together with the increased issues during Covid, a result of the increase in visitors to the Broads, following which it had been agreed to increase the Ranger profile to ensure they were patrolling for the majority of their time and visible to users. This had been in place for the past two years and, whilst it was not possible to directly link with safety, the Authority had received improved positive feedback.

A 13% increase was required to maintain services including the additional safety provision and this had been unanimously been supported at the briefing in October so this was why a 13% increase was being proposed. There had been huge uncertainty in October with issues such as pension costs (the Norfolk Pension Fund was revalued every three years) and this was why the decision had been delayed to January. It had been feared the Authority's costs would increase

but thankfully this had not materialised since the member briefing and so the information before members today had not changed since then.

The CE provided more detailed information on the current situation as follows:

- The number of boats on the Broads was at a record high and therefore, this made a relatively positive position.
- Interest rates were higher than anticipated.
- However, additional costs for fuel and materials together with inflation and increased salary costs, resulted in the level of outturn being broadly as predicted.
- Closing Reserves were forecast to be lower than budgeted for at year end.
- Minimum level of reserves was set at 10% of navigation budget and National Park was £100k + 10%. Whilst the Authority was above those minimum levels, it had been using its reserves which was why the report referred to the need for a balanced budget.
- Due to other pressures, it was likely another flat cash settlement from Defra would be received and not just for this year but going forward.
- Capital funding welcome, but doesn't help with revenue costs.
- Predicting a loss of 15 hire boats equating to £20,000 loss in toll income.
- Private boat numbers hard to predict and so no provision had been made for either an increase or a decrease. During the 2009/10 recession boat numbers were anticipated to fall but they actually increased.
- If increase of 13% was implemented, some toll-payers might give up their boats or, alternatively, in the current economic conditions might take the opportunity to use their boat more rather than holidaying abroad.
- Budgeting was quite difficult as minor variations in some factors can lead to quite significant differences, therefore adopted cautious approach and the Authority did not over-commit itself.
- Whilst inflation was likely to fall going forward other costs were likely to remain high such as energy costs.
- Yare House was the Authority's biggest overhead – a range of alternatives had been explored but it had been decided this was the best site for the offices and so the decision had been made to significantly reduce floorspace. This was an ambitious plan but reflected the increase in staff working from home. Trials had proven successful: staff adapted and were well supported by the IT infrastructure.
- Increase to charges at yacht stations from £13 to £16.
- Pre-payment cards for electricity had recently been amended to take account of increased charges.
- Increase to charges for Mutford Lock in line with inflation. The costs of maintenance and risks were huge, with 900 users, and so there was no way navigation charges could recover the costs. It was questionable if this increase to £17 would deter users.
- Looked at mooring locations to see if charges could be applied. Under pressure from the neighbouring landowner at Ranworth to charge, which had been resisted for a number of years. The Authority owned the site and the advice was it could apply charges. Currently, for locations where the Authority provided a service a fee was

charged to go towards offsetting the costs. Ranworth was a good example as it was very popular which meant it could be difficult to moor at during peak periods with boats competing for spaces. Staff at the Ranworth Visitors Centre could take on a strong navigation role and assist people with mooring and some of the costs met from proposed mooring charges.

- At Reedham there was a seasonal staff member and they received many positive plaudits every year. It was a difficult place to moor and tested boaters. An overnight fee of £10 was unlikely to put people off from mooring or adversely impact on local businesses. It was understood one of the Public Houses already charged for mooring.
- £4.26m to be raised from tolls, equating to 13% increase.
- Shared costs – switching costs from NP to navigation otherwise would have to strip out a lot of NP work. Acknowledged this will also impact on navigation.
- Looking at private boat numbers as at 1 November 2022, the number of smaller craft has grown rapidly, ie kayaks and canoes and whilst this was a positive move, it did not result in much of an increase in income.
- Ongoing decline in weekly hire boat numbers – approx. 50 years ago around 2,000 significantly reduced to approx. 673 from ten years ago. Some of this was positive, ie businesses restructuring and older boats had been replaced with boats which attracted more hirers. Loss of boats had a big impact on income.
- Rather than focus on the percentage figure, which presented a distorted view, should look at in terms of cash, eg a small sailing craft would pay an additional £6 p/a.
- Tolls were structured to favour smaller boats and the focus on sustainable boating meant that sailing boats pay less than the equivalent size of motor boats.
- Biggest contributors were motor boats so biggest cash increases came from the bigger craft.
- Hire boats pay a higher fee as they used the system more than most private boats.
- Some private boat owners may feel the increase more than others, for example pensioners. Considered to be a hobby so the reduction in boat numbers may not be as significant as anticipated.
- Canals and River Trust, despite receiving grant-aid for its navigation, had agreed a 13% increase. Environment Agency was able to cross-subsidise its navigation costs from different budgets.
- The Authority was budgeting for a deficit of £55,320 in navigation Reserves.
- One suggestion was to raid the Reserves even more but this would expose the Authority to greater risk plus the Auditors would expect the Authority to rebuild those Reserves at some point which would mean an impact on tolls in the future.
- The toll was a relatively small part of the total costs of owning and running a boat – insurance, maintenance and mooring costs were significantly higher in proportion. Considered that for many the small increase in cash amounts would not put people off from continuing to own a boat and enjoy the Broads.
- The fleet consisted of a large number of smaller boats and therefore the cash impact on most of users would be relatively small. Accepted that the cash increase for a large motor cruiser would be considerably higher.



- Accepted this was a contentious and difficult issue but presented it in an honest and open way so members fully understand the pressure officers are facing to ensure the Authority maintains the fantastic work it is doing on behalf of toll-payers and looking after the Broads.

The Chair thanked the CE for his very thorough presentation and said the Authority welcomed the views of its toll-payers. She reminded Members that they had received the briefing back in October and so much of what was presented today would not be new to them.

A member commented that the pressure had been generated by Defra in not increasing the NP Grant which was disappointing but the Authority needed to cut back otherwise the situation of flat-cash settlements would continue. Regards the split, whilst he found it useful, he considered that there was a degree of judgement and opinion involved. In addition, he agreed that the split between NP and navigation was artificial but it was not possible to completely separate navigation costs from NP costs. For example, incoming tourists from day hire boats would be a NP element but conversely took up Rangers' time, costed to navigation.

The CE responded that he would like those people who had made representations to the Broads Authority to also contact their local MP to lobby Defra with the decline in NP Grant which was outrageous. Defra should fund the Authority for both National Park and navigation functions, recognising the huge amount of value from tourism to the local economy, whilst looking after this precious place. Regarding the split, the aim was to try and keep the tolls down but officers had reached the point where this was no longer possible. Navigation was the dominating element, compared to National Park function. That was partly down to the fact that navigation was inherent in the special qualities of this National Park and how people enjoyed it and also down to the reduction in income. The Broads Authority was doing less on NP side. The Authority was very focussed on what it could and couldn't do because of reductions in funding. The split was artificial as all navigation was National Park 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose "enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities" therefore justified some NP funding to support the management of these waterways.

The member asked about the plans for reducing costs and increasing revenue, to which the CE responded that officers were looking into the ability to raise additional revenue. Discussions had taken place with Defra. A NP example would be under the Water Mills and Marshes project where staff had developed specialist skills and knowledge in repairing windmills. Norfolk County Council had money to repair windmills and it might be a possibility that the Broads Authority could act as a contractor for the repair of windmills, covering not only its costs but making a profit. Similarly, on the navigation side, staff had expertise in managing the Broads that no-one else had such as dredging, maintenance of moorings etc. Some of this resource could potentially be used in a commercial way in the Broads such as for the Environment Agency or even private businesses. The difficulty was around the legislative requirements and would probably require a separate trading company being set up taking into consideration legal advice and clearly the views of the Navigation Committee. The Member then asked what action had been taken to cut costs as this was not visible to

members or the public. The CE referred to the office accommodation and the decision to drastically reduce the floorspace which was not an easy decision and would affect both staff and Members.

The comment was made by a Member that the average increase would equate to 14 pence a day in cash terms which he considered to be a small amount. Boat maintenance was a much higher cost and he did not consider that such a small increase would have an effect, as next year the level of inflation would be much lower so this year's increase would be short-term issue.

Another member commented that tolls had historically risen above inflation, stating that inflation from 2017 to 2022 was about 22% but tolls had risen by 39%. The Authority had taken on a number of capital items recently, such as Peto's Marsh, and so there had been above-inflation increases previously but were justified by gaining something material. This year it was just to stay still. For the larger hire boat yards, this would be a big increase and could potentially result in the loss of one or two jobs which was a concern. Inflation was forecast to fall to approx. 2-3% by the end of 2023 and questioned if this would allow for any movement in the toll increase.

A Member thanked the Chair for the response to the question regarding levies for local authorities, commenting that councils should not be required to subsidise people's hobbies. There were a number of issues which were not the fault of the Authority, such as the war in Ukraine, Brexit etc plus other inflationary pressures. He referred to the Internal Drainage Boards increasing their charges by 13% and the figure for inflation for construction was currently at 21%. Whilst he did not necessarily like the idea of having to pay more, he acknowledged it would be a small additional cost and therefore expressed his support for a 13% increase.

Whilst acknowledging the unanimous support for the additional Seasonal Rangers, a Member commented that he did not feel there was a correlation with a reduction in accidents and instead this was down to the videos and improved hand-over arrangements. He also referred to the increased number of paddleboarders and the risk they posed due to irresponsible behaviour by a number of them which he put down to lack of knowledge/ability. He felt there should be patrols 7 days a week to deal with some of those issues. In relation to the costs of boat ownership, he commented that there were other cruisers besides river cruisers, such as historic vessels. These were made of timber and the Mahogany and Teak were no longer available, for good environmental reasons, and the substitute materials were considerably more expensive. He considered that the increase in tolls could be the last straw for such boat owners and would result in a loss to that part of the fleet. For those cruisers which were 50+ years old, the Authority should consider them in the same way as the built heritage and keep a register etc.

A member referred to the quoted fuel costs in comparison to the price paid at the pumps and questioned if this was because officers were using HVO. The HCME responded that the base price for diesel had gone up by approx. 40% and the costs quoted were for the total amount of fuel used in a particular budget and not the unit price. Vehicles using HVO were costed

under a different budget for the fuel. HVO was 30-35% more than the base price for diesel and was not entitled to a rebate. Some equipment was on rebated red but this was exclusively for agricultural purposes (fen harvester and land drainage management) with transporting of construction and dredging vehicles unable to use rebated HVO. The Member commented that he considered the use of HVO to be a luxury which the Authority should review, particularly as the money was currently not available. The HCME responded that the Authority could get rebated red HVO which was used in the tugs and barges.

It was noted that a member had drawn up a long list of questions to ask at the meeting and consequently it was agreed that the Chief Executive would respond via email and share with all members of the committee.

Alan Thomson proposed, seconded by Michael Scott and

**It was resolved by 9 members voting for, one against and one abstention to support the draft budget for 2023/24; the navigation charges in the navigation area and adjacent waters, and the other charges for 2023/24 as outlined in the report.**

The Committee adjourned at 11.45am and reconvened at 12pm when all of the members listed above were present.

Simon Sparrow and Paul Thomas left the room for the next item.

## 9. Consultation on appointments to the Navigation Committee

Members received the report by the Chair of the selection panel, consulting the Committee on the recommended appointments to the Navigation Committee with effect from 1 April 2023, in accordance with the provisions of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988.

As part of its deliberations, the panel took the view that participating in the annual member review process was an important part of a member's continual professional development as a member of the Committee. Therefore, it was also recommending that the terms of appointment for all newly appointed members should include the requirement to have an annual review, carried out by the Chair of the Navigation Committee, and this would be taken into account as part of any future re-appointment to the committee.

All appointments would be for a four-year term, with the exception of Simon Sparrow who was being recommended for a two-year term, making a total of eight years.

It was noted the final decision would be made by the Broads Authority at its meeting on 17 March 2023.

The Chair commented that she was pleased to see a combination of new and familiar faces, together with a good cross-section of private and hire boat owners.

Nicky Talbot proposed, seconded by Harry Blathwayt and

**It was resolved unanimously to support:**

**i) the following appointees be appointed to serve on the Navigation Committee:**

Category A

Daniel Thwaites and Simon Sparrow

Category B

Peter Dixon

Category C

Mark Collins

Category D

Bob Neate

Category E

Remus Sawyer

Category F

Alan Goodchild

**ii) the terms of appointment for all newly appointed members of the Navigation Committee should include the requirement to have an annual review, carried out by the Chair of the Navigation Committee and this would be taken into account as part of any future re-appointment to the committee.**

Simon Sparrow and Paul Thomas re-joined the meeting.

## 10. East Norwich – update on redevelopment masterplan

The Head of Planning presented her report, supplemented by a presentation, providing an update on the stage 2 work for the East Norwich regeneration area, which included costs and viability and also sought the Committee's views on a number of issues as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

A draft Delivery Strategy had been prepared which considered three main elements: infrastructure requirements; costs and funding, and sequencing and timings. These elements were all linked and changes in one would affect the others. The total cost of the infrastructure was calculated at £153m at May 2022 with the costs applied proportionately across the development/developers. In addition, there were abnormal site costs and, added to the infrastructure costs, these totalled £225m. The Strategy did not specify whether the new bridges over the River Wensum would be fixed or opening structures and this detail would be a matter for any planning application. The different impacts and costs associated with both a fixed and opening bridge were set out in the costs and funding section of the Delivery Strategy. The report also included information and costings on the other bridges being proposed as well as the two marinas.

A number of members expressed the view that the bridges over the River Wensum must remain as an opening bridge, acknowledging the legal obligation on the Broads Authority to protect the interests of navigation. It must be recognised that Norwich was still a port, even

though it was not currently used as such, but this could easily change with a change in circumstances. A fixed bridge would limit the height of any boats wishing to access the city by river. A member expressed concern at the proposal to build housing immediately next to the aggregate plant at the Deal Ground site which was noisy, dusty and smelly, and adjacent to the railway sidings on the Utilities Site, and that residents would have a poor quality of life. He also suggested finding alternatives to the bridges over the railways, such as routes crossing the railway tracks.

Overall, Members felt they were unable to comment in detail on certain aspects due to the lack of information available, such as the marina. There was also concern that the marina might be removed from the proposals to finance the provision of open bridges.

Regarding moorings, a Member questioned if these would be provided by the Broads Authority or if the developer would take the opportunity to receive revenue from these sites. He was concerned at the potential impact on Norwich Yacht Station and the consequential financial impact on the toll-payers by the provision of additional mooring facilities in that area. Another Member commented that, based on the sketchy details provided of the proposed moorings, they would be unsuitable for hired craft and would be for residents only. He suggested the provision of pontoon moorings along the River Wensum from Carrow Road Bridge to Foundry Bridge on the city side which could be managed by Norwich Yacht Station on behalf of the Broads Authority.

A Member said the Authority should encourage waterside development between Carrow Road Bridge and Trowse Bridge, seeing it as an opportunity to bring something back to that area, particularly the riverbank in front of Norwich City Football Club. He was sceptical about the provision of a marina.

**The report was noted.**

## 11. Construction, maintenance and ecology work programme – progress update

Members received the report of the Head of Construction, Maintenance & Ecology (HCME) and Ecology & Design Supervisor providing 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.

A member queried the final cost for the dredging working for the River Waveney, which was showing as over twice the projected cost, despite only a small increase in the amount of sediment removed. The HCME agreed to investigate and report back.<sup>1</sup>

A member reported that Potter Heigham bridge was remained closed to road traffic due to a perforation in the decking. He emphasised the need to maintain navigation underneath the

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<sup>1</sup> The HCME subsequently advised that there was an error in table 1 of the report – 13 weeks were originally planned but 23 weeks were completed, therefore costs were more than in the original baseline. This would be corrected in the next report.

bridge whilst repairs were being carried out. He considered that this provided an opportunity to improve the area as a whole, making it a more attractive pedestrianised area. It appeared that the damage to the bridge was due to heavy traffic.

**The report was noted.**

## 12. Boat Safety Management Group update

Members received the report of the Head of Safety Management (HSM) providing an update on significant matters discussed at Boat Safety Management Group meetings.

**The report was noted.**

## 13. Powerboat racing review

Members received the report of the Head of Safety Management (HSM) on the management of powerboat racing on Oulton Broad for the 2022 race season and the proposed race schedule for 2023.

In response to a Member's reference to the accidents which had occurred, the HSM advised that the events had a very good safety record, particularly for the speed with which incidents were dealt with and, based on the type of sport, it was inevitable there would be incidents. No casualties required hospitalisation, with first aid and immediate treatment being provided, if required, onsite. The Chair commented that this was very reassuring.

**The report was noted.**

## 14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on Thursday 13 April 2023 at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH commencing at 10am.

## Closing remarks

As this was the Chair's last meeting of the committee, she took the opportunity to thank the members whose term of office would end on 30 March 2023, with this being their last Navigation Committee meeting. She thanked them all for their contributions, which she greatly appreciated and referred to the various site visits etc which the Committee had undertaken, as well as challenges posed by issues such as remote meetings, which had demonstrated the Committee's "can do" attitude and adaptability. She thanked Members for contributing their time, from reading the committee papers, attending meetings, working with officers to resolve navigation issues. There was a good team approach which meant the Committee's views were considered by the full Authority to the benefit of users and visitors to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. She concluded that she would be leaving the Committee in good hands.

The Chair of the Authority added that he considered this Committee was one of the most effective there had been, with its recommendations being recognised consistently as well

considered and effective as part of the Authority's decisions. As Chair, he appreciated and welcomed the contributions to the sound management of the Broads; the Committee worked well together with both Members and officers. He commended the Chair, being the first female Chair of the Committee, acknowledging the time, effort and commitment she had given. He concluded by thanking all those Members who would be leaving the Committee and welcomed the new appointees who would be joining the Committee shortly.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee then thanked the Chair for her service and commended her chairing of the meetings.

The meeting ended at 1pm

Signed

Chair

## Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 12 January 2023

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Linda Aspland, Mike Barnes, Harry Blathwayt, Andy Hamilton, Leslie Mogford, Michael Scott, Simon Sparrow, Nicky Talbot, Paul Thomas and Andy Thomson	8	Private toll-payer. The Members' Code of Conduct allowed for these members to participate and vote.
Andy Hamilton, Greg Munford and Simon Sparrow	8	Hire boat operator. Disclosable pecuniary interest. Granted a dispensation by MO to participate and vote.
Simon Sparrow and Paul Thomas	9	One of the recommended candidates. Left the room for this item.
Leslie Mogford and Simon Sparrow	10	Owner of a boat which would be affected by the loss of a swing bridge into the city of Norwich.
Mike Barnes		Member of NSBA and EAC
Harry Blathwayt		Member of the Wherry Trust and Old Gaffers Association.



## Appendix 2 – Public Question Time: Navigation Committee, 12 January 2023

### **Review of BA Budget proposals for 2023/24      Public Question-1**

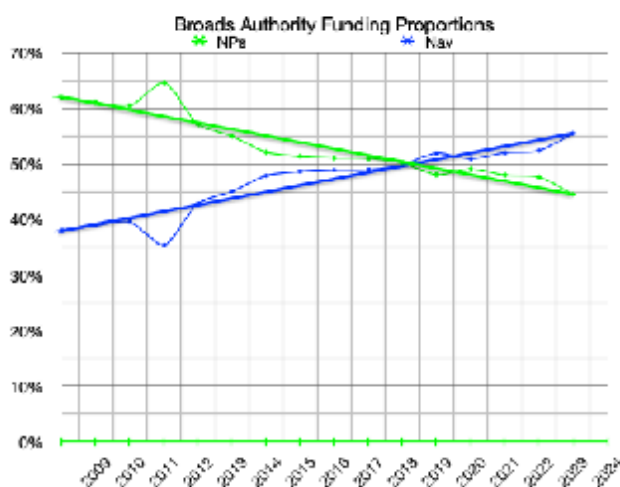
Attached graph, taken from online public available data, represents a history of funding the BA between DEFRA (NPs) & Tolls (Nav), including Trend-lines.

In 2008 the funding ratio was **62:38** towards the greater NP grant;

**Parity** was achieved in 2018; since then central government grant has remained a, “flat cash settlement”, with nil recognition of increasing cost for salaries, materials et al.

This ratio has been in reversal for some years and for 2023/24 is reversed into **45:55**.

**This is simply NOT EQUITABLE**, for the funding shortfall of the BA as a whole to become increasingly borne by Toll-Payers.



- (i) In order to revert to 2018 ratios either central government must step-in with its own **13%** increase, and zero onto Tolls, or BA's running costs need to reduce by **£440k**.
- (ii) In order to revert to 2010 ratios either central government must step-in with its own **36%** increase, and zero onto Tolls, or BA's running costs need to reduce by **£1.24m**.

It is suggested that the “Luxury” of maintaining a split-site, purely on basis of the convenience to bus & rail is no longer tenable within current financial climate (Reference Budgets Art 5.3 (page-31)).

A potential “Spend-to-Save”, might be to initiate a new offices installation at the existing Griffin Lane site and wholly to give up the Yare House facility.

#### **Question-1 :-**

- (a) Considering annual funding shortfall of **£(hundreds-of-thousands)**, even potentially rising to **£1.2m** against 2010 levels, does Navigation Committee subscribe to the continued ‘luxury’ of maintaining split-site offices when perhaps single-site provision could be effected at Griffin Lane ... as a spend-to-save ?
- (b) If negative, then will NavCom advise The Authority soonest, with a strongest statement that more stringent strategies should be considered which relatively do not so much pain the Navigators ?

**Funding Sources:**

At inception of The Broads Bill 1985 it was envisaged that, "Around three-quarters of [BA]'s non-navigation income will come through [DEFRA] and the remainder will be met by the eight local Authorities ...".

This provision still rests within the latest version of The Broads Act (see Appendix) and is tied to appointments to BA (non-elected) by the eight local Councils (locally elected) requiring a majority vote by these appointees within the general vote; with additionally, "... Central government, in making its appointments, will ensure a balance is maintained in the national interest between the representation of navigation, recreation and conservation ...".

The due local councils' provision appears never to have been taken-up.

Extract from gov.uk.Broads Act (Latest) Art.14:-

**Authority's power to make levies on participating authorities.**

- (1) The Authority may, in respect of each financial year beginning after it is established, make levies on each of the participating authorities—
  - (a) to meet that part of the Authority's estimated expenditure in that financial year for which provision is not otherwise made;
  - (b) to enable it to discharge in that financial year any liabilities for the discharge of which provision is not otherwise made; and
  - (c) to meet contingencies, and provide an adequate working balance, during that financial year.
- (2) In determining any amount to be raised for any financial year by way of levy under this section, the Authority shall not be required to treat any reserve which is maintained by it as available to be applied by it during that year.
- (3) In determining the amount which it requires to raise by way of levy under this section for any financial year, the Authority shall determine the aggregate amount which it so requires to raise.
- (4) Norfolk County Council shall contribute 30 per cent. of that aggregate amount and the seven other participating authorities shall each contribute 10 per cent.
- (10) No resolution of the Authority relating to the amount to be levied under this section, in respect of any financial year, shall be valid unless at least **[F1five]** of the members of the Authority who voted in favour of the resolution were appointed as such members by one or other of the participating authorities.

**Question-2 :-**

- (a) What consideration has The Authority made for addressing its Statutory provision to encourage a due annual levy from local councils against its estimated expenditures ?**
- (b) Has BA ever taken up this provision ?**
- (c) If negative, is this simply due to (*the inherent representational pre-determination of ...*) being unable to raise the requisite five appointee votes ?**
- (d) If negative on any count, will NavCom proceed to advise The Authority to seek attempted remedy ?**

## Questions submitted by Ben Falat and response from Nicky Talbot, Chair on behalf of the Authority

### Question 1:

- (a) Considering annual funding shortfall of £(hundreds-of-thousands), even potentially rising to £1.2m against 2010 levels, does Navigation Committee subscribe to the continued 'luxury' of maintaining split-site offices when perhaps single-site provision could be effected at Griffin Lane ... as a spend-to-save?**

High levels of inflation on the Authority's costs and the ongoing reduction in the value of the National Park Grant are putting pressure on the organisation. We are conscious of the impact on our toll payers and are working hard to reduce our overheads and increase other sources of income in order to maintain the services we deliver to the public and keep tolls down. The fact that the Canal and Rivers Trust has raised its charges by a similar amount indicates the pressures on the sector as a whole.

The potential of moving the Authority's offices to the Dockyard at Thorpe was considered when we first acquired the site. Unfortunately, it isn't possible.

The Dockyard provides the deep-water base for the heavy plant and equipment used to maintain the Broads and houses the Construction, Maintenance, Fitter and Ranger Teams including Broads Control which we have recently relocated from Yare House.

The site has no mains water (water supplied by a private borehole) and no mains sewage (provided by an anaerobic digestion plant). The main limiting factor is the very poor road access with a narrow bridge hole prone to flooding.

Creating a suitable Head Office at this location would require major capital investment to upgrade utilities, communications, infrastructure and critically the access to the site which would be very difficult.

- (b) If negative, then will NavCom advise The Authority soonest, with a strongest statement that more stringent strategies should be considered which relatively do not so much pain the Navigators?***

Rapidly increasing costs in the essential components for maintaining the waterways: steel, wood, aggregate and fuel for the plant are putting huge pressure on navigation expenditure. Staff costs have also risen at over 6% when, like many authorities, we had budgeted for a 2% increase. At the same time the number of weekly hired cruisers is continuing to fall reducing our income from that important sector.

The Broads Authority is making significant changes to reduce its overheads by radically reducing its occupation at Yare House and increasing its non-tolls income to reduce the impact on navigation charges.

A 10% increase in tolls would be feasible next year if the additional patrolling by Rangers ceased. The additional cover in the summer was a response to safety concerns following accidents at Great Yarmouth and in the briefing held for Members in October there was a reluctance to cut back on this.

Feedback from navigators is that Broads Authority priorities should focus on dredging, aquatic plant management, mooring provision, mooring upkeep and bank side management and these areas are prominent within the work programme and the 2023/24 Budget.

The Authority continues to seek cost-saving measures and alternative grant funding to supplement our valuable work in the Broads. A good example of this is a recent capital grant, secured from Defra late in 2022.

Budget Review Q2

**Question 2:**

***(a) What consideration has The Authority made for addressing its Statutory provision to encourage a due annual levy from local councils against its estimated expenditures?***

Prior to 1989, the Broads Authority received most of its funding from the constituent authorities and the Countryside Commission. Section 14 of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act makes provision for the Authority to make levies on each of the participating local authorities and the three main sources of income for the Broads Authority from 1 April 1989 were Grants from the Department of Environment, Constituent Authority Grant, Tolls and Work Licences.

2004/05 was the first year when levies from constituent authorities stopped as Defra started to pay 100% of grants to National Park Authorities. There is no longer an option for the Broads Authority to levy the constituent local authorities.

***(b) Has BA ever taken up this provision?***

The response to question 2a explains that levies were applied from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 2004.

***(c) If negative, is this simply due to (the inherent representational pre-determination of ...) being unable to raise the requisite five appointee votes?***

***(d) If negative on any count, will NavCom proceed to advise The Authority to seek attempted remedy?***

The response to Questions 2c and 2d is that the National Park Grant is paid directly from DEFRA and the Authority works closely with DEFRA officials to secure the maximum funding possible, disappointingly the National Park grant will be a 'flat cash' settlement which represents a real term reduction in funding.