Navigation Committee

05 November 2026
Agenda item number 7

Operations work programme progress update

Report by Head of Operations and Ecology & Design Manager

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 2026/27 (April 2026 to the end of September 2026). A total of 12,350 m³ of dredged sediment has been removed from the prioritised sites. This figure represents 49% of the programmed target of 25,210 m³ for the year.

1.2. Dredging along Martham Dyke has started in October. All this sediment will be spread on the adjacent banks. In early November, targeting dredging of sediment accumulations between Candle Dyke and West Somerton, will be undertaken using floating plant. This sediment will be taken round to Chara Bay in Hickling Broad, as capacity exists in that area habitat creation area. Small individual shoals will also be removed at the entrance to Meadow Dyke and the entrance to Catfield Dyke. Sediment dredged from the Somerton Dyke stretch will be side cast onto the floodbank behind the footpath.

1.3. On the River Yare, from November onwards, shoals will be dredged in the Brundall area, either end of Haddiscoe New Cut and at the confluence of the Yare and Waveney, with sediment being taken to a floodbank set back area at Cantley. On the River Chet downstream of Hardley Flood to the River Yare, the largest shoals and areas of encroaching reed will be dredged in the window available in late February and March, before the Easter holidays and the start of the 2027 hire season. Plans to dredge the narrow sections adjacent to Hardley Flood, working with the Environment Agency to top up floodbanks with dredged material, have been deferred to November 2027 to allow appropriate ecological mitigation and site preparation.

1.4. The Notices to Mariners are here Notices to Mariners and will have the most up to date information on navigation restrictions.

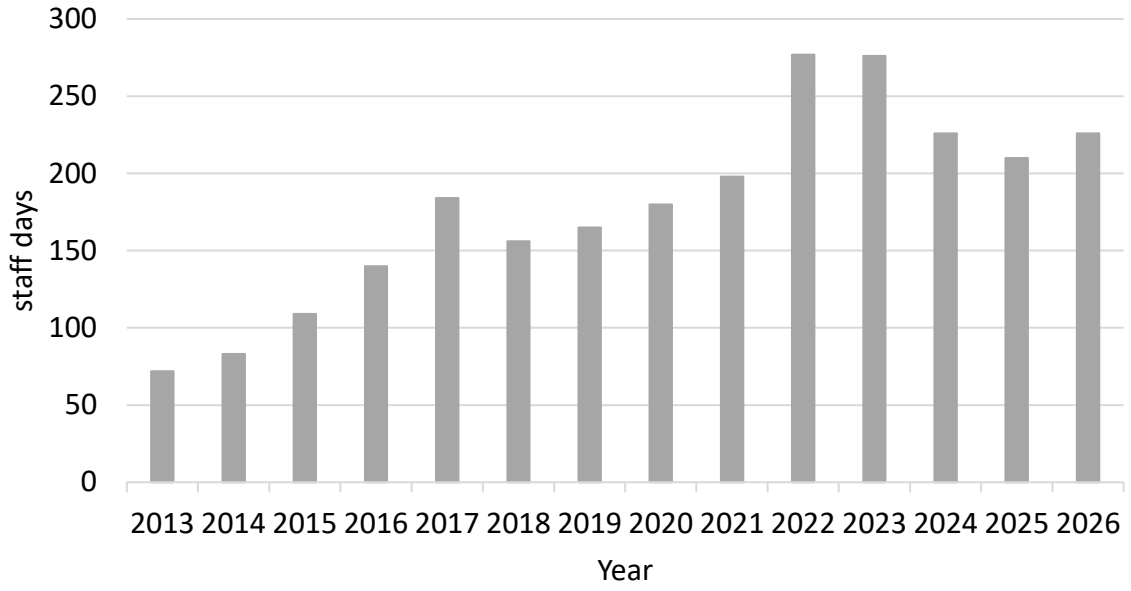
2. Water plant management

2.1. During the 2026 season, water plant cutting was carried out in the marked channels of the Upper Thurne (excluding Hickling Broad); the River Bure upstream of Wroxham; the Waveney between Beccles and Geldeston, the River Ant around Wayford Bridge and Dilham; Thorpe River Green and in the channels of Rockland and Bargate Broad on the River Yare; and the River Wensum upstream of Trowse.

2.2. Water plant growth in Hickling Broad in 2026 failed to reach the growth thresholds that required any direct management to maintain navigable access in the marked channel.

2.3. The annual trend in the total number of days the water plant harvesters are operated to maintain navigable access is shown in Figure 1. Over the past five years, total effort has exceeded 200 workdays per year, reflecting increased volume and the spread of plant growth across all Broadland rivers.

2.4. Figure 1. Total number of water plant harvesting days per year



3. Maintaining safe public mooring facilities

3.1. At Acle Bridge, the improvement plans across the whole site, including the river frontage, the thatched building, and the toilet block are progressing as one integrated project. Because the thatched building's footprint overlaps with where anchoring piles will be required for the riverfront piling, the timelines for each work element are interlinked. Planning consent has been applied for the redevelopment of the thatched building, including the demolition and the collection of asbestos-containing sheds. Landscaping and path levels around the toilet block will be improved, creating better access across the whole site. Riverfront re-piling and extension to the 24-hour mooring are planned for September 2027, with construction of the new thatched building following.

3.2. At Commissioner's Cut 24-hour mooring at Thorpe St Andrew on the River Yare, the condition of the sheet piling is at the end of its useful life, with some significant structural failures starting to occur. Given the restricted width of the Cut, fully re-piling both sides does not provide value for money for the length of mooring retained. Alternate options include:-

- remove the site as a 24 mooring;
- replace piling on one side; (downstream side)
- widen the Cut and install a pontoon mooring along the length of the Cut; and
- pile across the Cut, infill the area with dredged sediment and install a pontoon mooring in line with the river edge.

Each option needs further feasibility work over the next six months to determine costs, mooring capacity, meeting Integrated Access Strategy objectives (distance between moorings, access to land-based facilities etc.), planning consent requirements, flood risk assessment and ecological considerations.

4. Riverside Tree Management

4.1. The areas for management over this winter (2026/27, Year 5) have been drawn from the five-year plan (2022/23 to 2026/27). Please see the webpage Riverside tree and scrub management, which includes the maps showing riverside tree management areas for Year 5 (2026/27). Key areas for this winter are on the Yare near Bramerton (to be completed using the tree shears); Waveney (just upstream of Beccles); and on the Ant (along Tyler's Cut).

5. Electric charging at moorings

5.1. A series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have now been published on the Authority's webpage, which gives details of what the replacement of the pedestals will entail, and how users will be able to activate supply at the point of use. See Upgrade to Broads Authority electric charging points

5.2. Installation is due to start by the end of November, with a full programme of installation dates to be confirmed once the installation contractor is confirmed. The aim is to minimise the downtime of electrical supply at individual moorings.

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Broads Plan strategic objectives: C1, C2, C3, C4

Appendix 1 – Annual dredging progress 2026/27 (to end September)

Appendix 2 - Operational staff time spent on all work types 2026/27 (to end September 2026)

Appendix 1 – Annual dredging progress 2026/27 (to end September 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 Trowse Eye to Brundall	17/19	9,000	11,400	£127,480	£130,030
Postwick Tip – April to August					
River Bure Upton Dyke	3/2	770	950	£18,360	£28,520
Oby Setback – April to May					
River Yare & Chet Lower Yare Chet (shallows)	 0/11 0/5	 7,000 4,000	 0 0	£134,720	£8,940
Cantley Setback – November to March					
River Thurne Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes Somerton to Candle Dyke	 0/2 0/12	 1,300 3,140	 0 0	£158,450	£3,700
Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes (sidecast) – October to November *Somerton to Candle Dyke (Chara Bay re-use site, Hickling Broad) – November to February*					
River Bure Mid-Bure	-	-	-	£3,270	£9,100
Lagoon preparation costs					
Site restoration	-	-	-	-	£42,880
Future site preparation Survey, mitigation & set-up	-	-	-	-	£4,430
Dredging support activities	-	-	-	-	£20,620
Total	**20/51**	**25,210**	**12,350**	**£442,280**	**£248,220**

Appendix 2 – Operational staff time spent on all work types 2026/27 (update to end September 2026)

Work type	Planned - Days	Planned - % of annual total days	Actual - Days	Actual - % completed
Navigation (56%)	**2850**	**56**	**1518**	**30**
Italics are proportion within Navigation				
Dredging	**1335**	**47**	**603**	**21**
Mooring maintenance & repairs	**630**	**22**	**224**	**8**
Riverside tree management	**50**	**2**	**0**	**0**
Water plant cutting	**240**	**8**	**215**	**7**
Other navigation works[1]	**176**	**6**	**69**	**2**
Corporate allocation [2]	**419**	**15**	**407**	**14**
Recreation (9%) [3]	**446**	**9**	**277**	**5**
Conservation (35%) [4]	**1796**	**35**	**820**	**16**
Total	**5092**	**100**	**2615**	**51**

1 – includes raising & disposal of wrecks, channel markers & buoys, gauge boards & 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