

BROAD SHEET



Looking towards a better 2021

As we are writing this edition of Broad Sheet, the UK is in the midst of a third national lockdown and most activities in the Broads have been curtailed following continued Government instructions to stay at home.

As you will be aware, this has been the case for the majority of last year, with the exception of a very condensed and busy summer season. We welcomed an influx of new visitors to the area, including those who had never been paddling or set foot on a boat before.

This surge in activity over the summer months was very positive for our colleagues within the tourism industry. However, it also brought a number of challenges for our staff including litter problems at beauty spots, incidents of antisocial behaviour, and most significantly the tragic string of fatal accidents which occurred during the summer.

However, during periods of Government-imposed restrictions, the response from the vast majority of our boat owners and visitors to the area has been exceptional. While the

emptiness of eerily-quiet rivers has been an unfortunate sight, it has been a welcome reminder of the unity and patience exhibited by our toll payers as they have eagerly awaited the chance to safely return back onto the water.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who have played their part in helping to reduce incidents on the water, curb the spread of the disease and ultimately protect the NHS during these difficult months.

Despite the challenges of the past year, we have made significant progress in a number of areas. Our programme of maintenance and improvements to moorings, paths and other infrastructure has continued throughout the entirety of the pandemic, and our office staff have shifted to a new way of working that means we can continue to

provide a high-level of service to our stakeholders.

For the Authority, 2021 presents some new opportunities, including a new package of measures to improve the safety of our visitors, the re-opening of our tourist information centre at Ranworth, and most of all the well-overdue return of boaters, paddlers, anglers and everyone else to our beautiful waterways.

Please look after yourselves in the meantime and we look forward to welcoming you back soon. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and please remember you can get in touch with us through our website if you have any questions.

John Packman
Chief Executive - Broads Authority



Managing trees to improve navigation

In October, the Authority resumed its annual programme of riverside tree and scrub management, which runs until the end of February.

The total length of trees managed this winter is 3,548 m – around the length of 71 Olympic swimming pools. This is over 500 m more than was cleared last year. Their removal will result in navigation improvements for boaters, particularly on river bends and narrow channels.

The work requires a detailed survey beforehand to ensure that navigation improvements are balanced with maintaining a healthy riverside ecosystem.

The efficiency of tree management has improved over the last few years following the purchase of mechanised tree shears that are operated by an excavator on a floating pontoon.

The additional purchase of new sections of floating pontoon has enabled this complex operation greater flexibility to manoeuvre into once-inaccessible riverside locations.

Locations of this season's works programme include sections of Belaugh, heading upstream to Coltishall; along Fleet Dyke on the upper Bure; upstream of Barton Broad to Stalham on the Ant; upstream of Potter Heigham Bridge and along Catfield Dyke on the Thurne; upstream of Beccles Lido, and Slutton's Dyke on the Waveney; near Bargate Broad at Brundall and upstream from the A47 bridge on the Yare.

For further information and maps of management locations visit: www.broads-authority.gov.uk/trees

Celebrating World Ranger Day

Saving wildlife, herding deer across the river, rescuing tourists and tackling invasive plants – it's all in a day's work for our Rangers.

During World Ranger Day (31 July) the Authority joined in global celebrations to recognise the great work of our Rangers, who look after the 125 miles waterways and help visitors to stay safe.

Last year (between June 2019 and June 2020) Broads Control, who handle calls from the public, dealt with 34,599 calls, which Rangers often responded to, including:

- 16 people reported to have fallen in the water,
- 15 sunken or abandoned vessels (dealt with by the Authority),
- 20 pollution reports investigated,
- 27 reported injuries and illnesses (including broken bones, dislocations, cuts & bruises, head injuries and medical emergencies),
- 61 fallen trees,
- 93 hazards to navigation removed from the river.

But there is more to the role than just cruising along patrolling the water. Most Rangers start at the Authority with a good knowledge of the Broads but then need to build up their expertise on nature conservation, first aid, radio use, boat handling, how to respond to pollution incidents, and countryside management.

The landscape of the Broads requires constant maintenance and conservation work. While the summer is busy keeping visitors safe, in winter Rangers manage the countryside sites around the water. This includes tackling invasive plants, riverbank surveys of trees and vegetation and carrying out surgery at the top of giant trees, where necessary.

Photo taken pre COVID-19



Navigation improvements on the Broads

Ordinarily, the Authority's navigation expenditure is sourced from tolls paid for the 12,000 boats used on the Broads waterways. In light of an increase in accidents last year and with safety a priority as we anticipate a very busy tourism season, members of the Authority agreed to fund a package of safety measures including on-line training videos for hirers and increased Ranger patrols of the waterways.

To maintain the existing level of service together with the new safety measures, an increase of 7% in tolls was required. The Authority requested to use the 'National Park Grant' reserves for safety initiatives and DEFRA authorised this exceptional one-off transfer. With that assistance the decision was taken to increase tolls by 4% in 2021.

This year £130,000 of National Park funding will be used to employ

additional Rangers and produce new safety videos. A further £120,000 the following year will support the higher level of patrolling, which will be reviewed at the end of the 2022 season.

A new Senior Ranger is working on Compliance and Safety to follow up on prosecutions and compliance with the Boat Safety Scheme. This will free up time spent by Rangers preparing case files for offences such as speeding and non-payment of tolls.

In addition, four new Assistant Seasonal Rangers will maximise launch presence during the peak visitor season, allowing Rangers to help new and experienced visitors.

In cooperation with the Broads Hire Boat Federation, the new safety videos are designed to help new hirers and new private boat owners get the most out of their time on the Broads. Hirers will be emailed a link to the videos

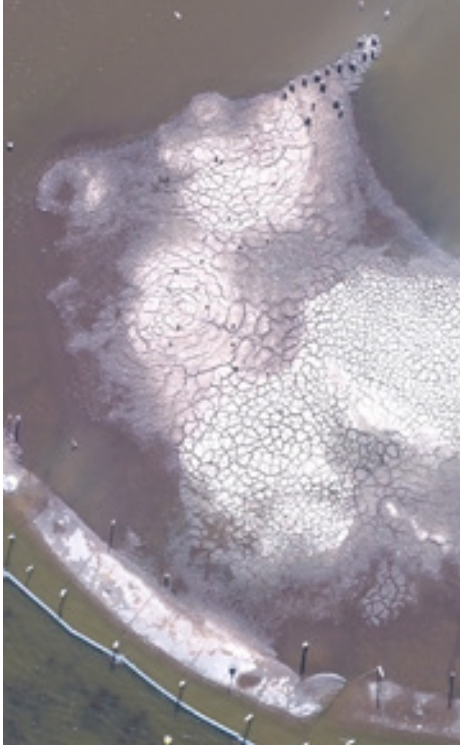
before their holiday.

Each year, a small number of private boat owners delay payment of their tolls until they receive a final letter threatening prosecution. For these individuals, a first and final letter will be sent.

The 4% increase in tolls from now on will see two-thirds of all private boats pay less than an extra £10 per year. A typical unpowered dingy will pay an extra £1.40 and a small motor boat £2.80. A popular sized sailing boat (11 m²) will pay an extra £3.74 and a private motor boat (38 m²) £21.28.

The Broads Authority is the only major inland navigation authority usually entirely dependent on income from tolls to fund maintenance of the navigation.

All toll charges can be found at: broads-authority.gov.uk/annual-toll



Third and final stage at Hickling

This winter saw the return of the Authority's Construction and Maintenance Team to Hickling Broad for the third and final phase of the EU Interreg-funded CANAPE project. This three-year project uses dredged sediment to restore one hectare of reedbed habitat.

In 2018/19, the outer boundary of reedbed known as Chara Bay was created using geotextile tubes in an oval shape with an open water lagoon inside.

Last autumn/winter the lagoon area started to be filled with dredged sediment. These works will continue this winter until the end of March or once Chara Bay is full of sediment.

Furthermore, a mixture of reed rhizomes and pre-planted coir

mats will be placed onto the top of the lagoon edge to start the reed growing process. Over time, the planted reeds will thicken and spread into the interior. The final reedbed habitat will become a haven for biodiversity and lock in carbon as peat slowly accumulates in the area.

CANAPE is an EU project involving 14 partners across 5 countries and Norfolk Wildlife Trust who own and manage Hickling Broad.

Photo taken pre COVID-19



The Return of Happy Times

'The Burgh Castle Almanac' was a three-year wellbeing program involving a group who met regularly with artists, archaeologists, writers, naturalists and musicians at Burgh Castle Roman fort on the River Waveney. The project, part of Water, Mills and Marshes, aimed to improve wellbeing through learning new skills and being immersed in nature.

The project culminated in an inspirational film 'The Return of Happy Times', produced by Lowestoft-based photographer and filmmaker Julian Claxton, together with members of

the group. The film captures how a connection with nature can empower people to improve their mental health and highlights the important support and friendships which grew during the project. The title, The Return of Happy Times, is taken from a saying on a Roman coin that the group found at the fort.

The final Burgh Castle Almanac will be produced this year, alongside an exhibition at the Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth. The film is out now on YouTube:

bit.ly/3q3E9rQ

The project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Community Fund.

Find out about the many other projects at:

watermillsandmarshes.org.uk

Managing water plants

The Authority's annual programme of water plant management helps to maintain a balance between the requirements of boaters for navigable channels and conserving habitats to support wildlife.

Last year, plant cutting took place at the following locations:

- **Bure** – Coltishall Lock (head of navigation) down to Wroxham
- **Ant** – Tyler's Cut to downstream of Wayford Bridge
- **Upper Thurne** – Somerton Dyke down to Martham Ferry; Waxham Cut; Catfield Dyke; marked channel in Hickling Broad
- **Wensum and Yare** – New Mills (head of navigation) downstream to Thorpe St Andrew
- **Waveney** – Geldeston to downstream of Beccles

Further information on our water plant management programme can be found on our website.



Photo taken pre COVID-19

Apprentices graduate with flying colours

For the last five years, the Broads Authority has run a successful apprenticeship scheme for budding environmentalists and Rangers to gain hands-on experience of working in the Broads National Park. Apprentices learn the wide range of skills involved in Broads management and conservation, from how to use a chainsaw through to how to pilot a Ranger launch.

Congratulations to last year's Environmental Conservation

Apprentices, Eloise, Emily and Becky, who all passed their apprenticeships with flying colours, and with praise from their tutor and their Authority supervisor. They have subsequently been taken on as Trainee Operations Technicians for a year and started their new roles in September.

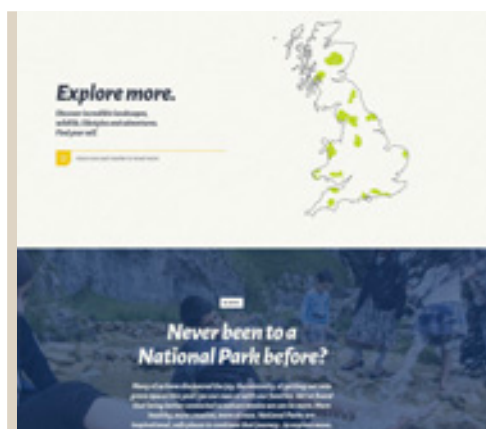
Since then, they've been busy installing mooring posts at our 24-hour moorings, helping to move workboats and removing fallen trees from the navigation. Their conservation work included scrub removal, reed mowing and removing and treating invasive plant species such as New Zealand Pygmyweed.

Last year, the apprenticeship scheme was postponed due to COVID-19 but the Authority hopes it will run again this autumn.

New and improved moorings

It's been a busy year for the Maintenance Team, who have adapted their work programme around COVID-19 restrictions. The team have constructed new moorings and refurbished existing mooring sites, working either in-house or with external contractors. While it's impossible to list everything, the work includes:

- **Ant: How Hill**, 100 m new quay heading and path refurbishment about to commence; regeneration of **Stalham Staithe** with 6 new moorings; **Gaye's Staithe**, surfacing reinforced; **Sutton Staithe, How Hill & Neatishead**, posts and capping replaced. **Paddy's Lane**, path and quay-heading timber replaced.
- **Yare: Hardley Cross**, refurbished moorings. Topping up of **Rockland/Cantley** mooring paths underway now.
- **Thurne: Potter Heigham, Martham Bank**, path topped up. Staithe area drainage installation; **Potter Heigham Repps Bank**, mooring posts replaced; **Deep & Deep Go Dyke**, raised paths, new mooring posts installed and capping repaired.
- **Bure: Hoveton Viaduct** improved path; **Acle Bridge**, renewed piling, a new mooring path and 3 electric charging points installed; corroded fixings at **Scare Gap** replaced and topped up mooring path; **Wroxham** (Castle moorings) quay heading repaired, new mooring posts, safety equipment and mooring signage; **St Benet's Abbey** refurbishments (scheduled for March to May).
- **Waveney**: Raised path and timber refurbished at **Haddiscoe West** demasting mooring; new path at **Beccles Marshes**, and **Somerleyton**, replaced mooring cappings.



New UK National Parks website

The 15 UK National Parks have an all-new website: nationalparks.uk and a new monthly newsletter Postcards from the Parks. Sign up via the new website.



Dredging programme

Around 10,500 m³ of sediment has been dredged from between Brundall and Trowse Eye and from South Walsham Broad on the River Yare.

The first phase of a three-year major work programme at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve began last autumn. Around 8,000 m³ of sediment is being dredged from Oulton Broad and then used to create Peto's Marsh, a new 1-hectare wetland.

In October 2020, the dredging rig returned to Haddiscoe New Cut, disposing again within a setback on the Raveningham Estate. The 5,000 m³ of material previously dredged here was used to strengthen the flood bank.

The final phase of the CANAPE project, which began last October, will be completed in April 2021. This

phase uses 21,000 m³ of sediment from Horsey Mere, Catfield Dyke and the Upper Thurne, between Martham Ferry and Candle Dyke, to create a new reedbed habitat at Hickling Broad.

Early January saw the completion of the second phase of dredging at Waxham Cut, upstream of Brograve Mill to Bridge Farm Basin. Sediment will be placed on the western bank providing additional material for flood-bank strengthening. Dredging and associated tree work will improve the navigable channel.

2021 dredging projects

Lower Bure/River Yare: During February and March the Authority will use a plough dredging technique in the lower reaches of the River Bure at Great Yarmouth. Mechanical dredging

will take place on a large shoal at the confluence of the River Yare.

Upper Bure: November 2021 onwards, planned dredging between Coltishall Common and Hoveton Viaduct (tbc) will move 20,000 m³ of sediment onto the Trafford Estate for agricultural benefit.

River Chet: November 2021, approximately 6,000 m³ of sediment will be dredged between Loddon to Chet Mouth and used at Hardley Flood to help improve the Wherryman's Way footpath.

River Waveney: From April through to the summer, approx. 5,000 m³ of sediment will be dredged at Geldeston, downstream to Beccles and placed at Geldeston Marshes.

Oulton Broad: Dredging will resume in spring 2021 to complete the second phase of the habitat creation project at Carlton Marshes.

Peto's Marsh habitat restoration at Carlton Marshes

A three-year collaboration between the Authority and Suffolk Wildlife Trust will see new wetland habitat created at Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve.

The first mud was pumped into Peto's Marsh at the junction of Oulton Dyke and the River Waveney in Suffolk, back in September last year. The work at Peto's Marsh is taking approximately 20,000 m³ of sediment from the Authority's dredging work (which is

improving water depth for navigation) at nearby Oulton Broad to create approximately one hectare of new reedbed.

The new wetland will include reedbeds and waterway pools, complementing the existing reed beds, open-water pools, dykes and ditches created by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. These habitats are loved by wildlife species such as dragonflies, freshwater snails, bitterns, common cranes, marsh harriers, avocets and lapwings.

Given that a few years ago the whole of Peto's Marsh was ploughed and drained as marginal arable land, it has been a dramatic transformation of this site into the Broads' newest wildlife sanctuary and carbon store.

A new visitor centre opened last autumn, with plans for additional grazing marshes, viewing platforms and a new pontoon mooring for boats, transforming the area into a gateway to the southern Broads.



Stay safe on the water

The Authority is committed to improving the safety of all visitors to the Broads. Following the tragic incidents last year, where four people sadly lost their lives, we are working with partners in the Broads Hire Boat Federation to improve safety measures, which include increasing Ranger presence on the water and creating online videos as part of a comprehensive safety campaign for visitors. Expect to see the following messages out on the Broads.

Remember that accidents happen to even the most experienced of boaters and this advice is to help keep all crew members safe.

- **Wear a life jacket to keep safe** – and always wear one when you are on deck, getting on and off or tying up your boat.
- **Plan ahead** – prepare for low bridges, tides and other challenges.
- **Don't jump when mooring** – plan where and how to moor safely, and share this plan with everyone on board.
- **Don't drink and drive or sail** – you need to stay in control to stay safe.
- **Hold on when moving around** – boats are affected by tide and wind. Be especially careful near the back of your boat.
- **Don't swim** – never put yourself in danger by entering the water, especially from or anywhere near boats, as boat propellers can cause serious injuries.



After the storms

A succession of extreme weather and storms between late September and November last year resulted in widescale damage throughout the Broads from wind, rain, fallen branches and toppled trees. Every member of the Ranger team, alongside staff from the Construction and Maintenance teams and additional contractors, rallied together in what became a mass clean-up operation to clear the navigation and footpaths.

3 October was the wettest day on record since 1891 and, in addition to the damage caused by the strong winds during storm Alex (2 to 4 October), Storm Aiden on 31 October and subsequent wet and windy weather in early November resulted in weeks of additional work for already busy Rangers.

Besides the damage from fallen trees and branches, Breydon water was closed to hire craft (2 November) and there were many calls to Broads Control to report high water-levels restricting bridge clearances, boats taking on water, sunken vessels, boats breaking free from moorings and unwanted objects in the navigation – including a trampoline.

Areas affected by fallen trees included the rivers around How Hill, Coltishall, Horstead, Wroxham, Trowse, Thorpe St Andrew, Hardley and the upper reaches of the River Waveney. Hoveton Viaduct boardwalk and Barton boardwalk were closed to visitors until repaired. Some trees blocked the navigation completely, while others partially. The navigation was cleared within a week, but we continued the wider clean-up operation into December.

Future fuels of the Broads

The Government is phasing out the production of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030. While advances in boating technology are closely linked to the motoring industry, as yet there is no date when this will apply to boating.

As part of the Authority's commitment to tackling climate change, our own work programme and transport aims to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Over the last two years, we have purchased more efficient and cleaner replacement engines in a number of patrol launches, and two thirds of the Fitter Team vehicles are now electric. There are twenty 24-hour mooring sites with electric charging points and we are looking to expand this network,



alongside fitting electric power in some Ranger launches.

We have been working with British Marine, Hethel Innovation and a working group of boat builders, hire boat companies and suppliers (the 'Electrifying the Broads' group) looking at how the transition to more efficient fuels and propulsion in the Broads could take place. Among the options being explored are electric boats and hydrogen fuel. The potential use of biofuels is also being investigated to plug the gap in the shorter term until low-carbon propulsion options are affordable.

The Authority is seeking boaters' views on what would enable them to switch to low carbon boating so that we can build the infrastructure around the Broads to support it. Please look out for an online survey on our website and social media later this year.

Yare House closed

Our busy Tolls Team are still working hard, but in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 the office remains closed to the public and it is not currently possible to pay boat tolls at Yare House.

The easiest way is to register to pay online at:

tolls.broads-authority.gov.uk

or call 01603 756080 to pay over the phone.

Stay informed

For information on tolls, bridge heights, boating and other Broads Authority news:

www.broads-authority.gov.uk

To inspire your visit to the Broads:

www.VisitTheBroads.co.uk

Sign up to receive your monthly e-newsletter Broads Briefing:

bit.ly/3qGo0J5

You can also follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.



Be on high alert for invasive Floating Pennywort

During 2020, the floating pennywort plant was found on the River Ant, between Tonnage Bridge and Wayford Bridge, and between Wayford Bridge and the confluence with Stalham Dyke.

This invasive species spreads rapidly in water, creating a dense raft of vegetation which clogs up streams and rivers.

Please remain vigilant and if you spot pennywort, do not disturb it. Where

boaters spot any plants in the river area please try to manoeuvre around them, if possible with the engine off. Boat propellers chop up the plant allowing small fragments to spread through the waterways. Avoid motoring through patches of river plants. Remember to **check, clean and dry** your vessel after use to help control the spread.

Any sightings should be emailed to the Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative: NNNSI@norfolk.gov.uk with the exact

location of where it was seen.

Be aware that the floating pennywort is often confused with a harmless native plant, the marsh pennywort. A guide on how to identify them both can be found at the NNNSI website: nnnsi.org

The Authority is working with partners to monitor and control the spread of the plant.

Image above by James Manners