

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2025

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Present

Harry Blathwayt – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Tristram Hilborn, Curig Johnston, Siân Limpenny, Leslie Mogford, Tim Munday, Gurpreet Padda, James Reeder, Matthew Shardlow.

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Andrea Kelly – Environment Policy Adviser (item 10), Steve Kenny – Development Manager (item 23), Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, Harry Mach – Sustainability Manager (item 11), Rob Rogers – Director of Delivery, Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chair explained that the meeting was being audio-recorded. All recordings remained the copyright of the Broads Authority and anyone wishing to receive a copy should contact the Governance Team. The minutes remained the record of the meeting. He added that the law permitted any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of public meetings of the Authority. This did not extend to live verbal commentary. The Chair needed to be informed if anyone intended to photograph, record or film so that any person under the age of 18 or members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed could be accommodated.

Apologies were received from Gail Harris, Heather Hilburn, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Vic Thomson, Fran Whymark.

2. Chairman's announcements

New Members. The Chair welcomed the new Secretary of State appointed members, Curig Johnston and Tim Munday who were present, and Gail Harris and Heather Hilburn who were unable to attend the meeting.

Twenty-five year service. The Chair said that there were three members of the Construction, Maintenance and Ecology (CME) team who had reached the landmark of twenty-five years' service with the Broads Authority:

Ian Walker - Ian joined the Authority in October 1999 as a Project Team Supervisor. A year later Ian was promoted to Field Base Manager based at Ludham Field where he managed a project team of six construction operatives. Some of the highlights of this time were the boardwalk installation at Barton and enhancement projects at Cantley Staithe and Horstead Mill. Ian moved to his current role as an operations technician in May 2011, where he worked as part of the construction team, carrying out dredging and fen management, along with many other tasks across the CME team.

Ian has made a very much appreciated contribution to the work of the Authority. His extensive experience, knowledge, humour, wit, and strong work ethic would be greatly missed when he retired at the end of September. The Chair congratulated Ian on reaching the milestone of 25 years' service and expressed best wishes on his retirement.

James Watts - James started work at the Broads Authority as a New Deal Volunteer Supervisor, helping 18 to 25 year olds improve their life skills, gain qualifications and experience in the working environment. When the programme finished, James was redeployed in what was the Projects Team, using his skills of footpath construction, fence building and general maintenance to good use and had a continuous helping hand from volunteers which has enabled him to build up some lasting relationships, some of whom still work with James today.

In 2010, James became a Senior Operations Technician putting some of his passion for wildlife and conservation to good use. Over the last few Years, James has been a mentor for the Apprentice scheme and his willingness and passion has helped young people to gain the qualifications and support required to get them through the scheme, some of whom had subsequently been employed by the Authority.

The Chair said that James was a valued member of staff and was a fantastic communicator whether that was with staff, volunteers or public.

Mark Rudrum - Mark started work as a Senior Projects Technician working on various projects and one of his first projects was the construction of wooden boardwalk at Barton.

Over the years Mark has put his hand to many jobs, from helping maintain the Authority's old office buildings at Colgate Street in Norwich to working on the Tourist Information Centres and Yacht Stations. In 2010 Mark, became Senior Operations Technician in the new CME team. As well as continuing with his technical timber skills, installing fences, gates and quay heading and repairs, Mark has also put his conservation interests to good use with fen management, mowing, tree felling, and installing and maintaining many owl boxes.

The Chair said that Mark was a valued member of staff, with a good eye for detail and was pleasure to work with.

The Chair presented Ian, James and Mark with small gifts of thanks for their 25 years' service.

3. Introduction of members and declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered, and as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

4. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

6. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7. Summary of actions and outstanding issues

Members received the latest summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions at previous meetings. The Chief Executive (CE) explained that, for the benefit of the new Members, rather than going through minutes and picking up issues, these were logged and reported to Members via the summary of actions update. The CE said that there were no further updates to the items listed.

The report was noted.

8. Strategic priorities – update

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE). The CE explained that, for the benefit of the new members, every year the Board adopted a set of strategic priorities which related back to the Broads Plan that covered a five-year period, and the progress on these priorities were reported back to the Board at every meeting. The CE said that the priorities were on track with all priorities.

A Member asked what the plan was for the FibreBroads project for commercial orders and the continuation of grant funding. The Environment Policy Adviser (EPA) said that the Government had announced in the spending review to 2030, £85m for peat restoration, including paludiculture. The Authority was forming a Peat Partnership and had provided an early market response to Defra. There were ~£2m worth of projects, similar to the £2.4m gained from 2021-2025, and projects focused on the implementation stage. There was a lot to do on this, and the EPA expected to be able to report back to Members in Spring 2026.

The report was noted.

9. Financial performance and direction

Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DR). The DR said that the report in front of Members covered up to the end of July and provided a verbal update to the end of August. Table 1 of the report now showed a variance of £293,300, a reduction of £44,942. The overall adverse variance on income was now £60,636, a reduction of £68,426. There had been no change to table 2, the latest available budget, however table 3 showed an increased deficit mainly due to the proposed redundancy payments which would be partially offset by the increase in planning fees. The earmarked reserves in table 4 had reduced to £3,749,630 due to a reduction of £65,475 as a result of project spend moving forward.

The result of the overall movements in the forecast indicated that the National Park reserve balance, before year-end adjustments, of £1,019,466, and Navigation Reserve balance of £559,798. After the year-end adjustments, which was where interest would be transferred, the National Park reserve would be 23.9% and 10.2% Navigation reserves.

A Member commented that the National Park reserve exceeded the recommended reserve threshold and asked the DR to clarify what plans were in place to utilise any surplus and were there any strategic priorities that would benefit from this surplus. The DR said that the Authority did not have any indication of what the National Grant funding would be for the next three years and it was likely that there would be some draw down on the surplus. It was difficult to comment at the moment with so much uncertainty on future funding. The Member said that they appreciated the uncertainty and hoped that a three-year settlement in relation to the National Park grant would provide some certainty going forward.

A Member commented on the cash balance and the £167,000 interest thereon which suggested that it was a 3% return and asked where the money was invested. The DR said that this was governed by the Treasury Management Policy which restricted the Authority to short-term investments, but that could be changed when the policy was reviewed. The balance did look high, however, this included the £1.3m capital grant which would need to be spent in 2025/26. Other areas of long-term treasury management was looked at by the Risk, Audit and Governance committee, however, this had not been progressed due to the costs outweighing any returns.

A Member asked, what budget timings on external grants would explain the forecast movements, and asked whether there were any risks in delivery of projects where external funding had been awarded. The DR said that the forecast movement was mainly as a result of the budgeted 4% pay increase for staff which was negotiated on the Authority's behalf by the National Joint Council for Local Authorities and had recently been agreed at 3.2% which had resulted in an adjustment to the forecast outturn. In regard to the delivery of projects, they were mainly on track.

A Member thanked the DR for the report, the comprehensive figures within it, and the DR's responses to questions and commented that it gave him great confidence that the Authority was in a secure position.

10. Local Nature Recovery Strategy final draft

Members received the report of the Environment Policy Adviser (EPA). The EPA provided an overview of the report and said that the Broads Authority's role was that of Supporting Authority and that Local Nature Recovery Strategy's (LNRS) purpose was to prioritise nature recovery, map the most valuable existing areas for nature and proposals for creating or improving habitat. The strategy was now at its final stage which was the 28-day public consultation. The EPA referred Members to the habitat map which was released on 19 September and explained that there would be a dashboard and provision of GIS data which would be available to the planning team to enable them to integrate it into their recommendations and decisions. The map was favourable to the Broads with 87% of the

Broads being prioritised which included areas that were important to the biodiversity as well as areas that could become important to biodiversity.

A Member commented that both the Norfolk and Suffolk LNRS were impressive pieces of work and there was great potential to enable the Authority to have a more strategic approach to nature recovery in Norfolk and Suffolk through the mapping exercise and prioritisation of species and habitats. The Member congratulated the EPA for the input into these strategies. The EPA thanked the Member and said that it was a great first step and it was now important to translate this into action.

A Member commented that during engagement he noted that some people did not approve of the strategy asked if it was known what the objections were and was there a theme to those objections. The EPA said that some of those objections were about the length of the strategy and that it was too long, some were confused around the mapping and not understanding that this was not a statutory designation of land, and there were quite a few comments about the presentation and how the document was set out. The EPA said that these were reasonable points and compared with other LNRSs around the country, the Norfolk and Suffolk LNRS had a favourable response.

A Member asked whether the Authority's Local Plan was adequate to have regard to the LNRS, or would the Local Plan need to be updated. The EPA said that the Planning Policy Officer was not present to be able to answer that question, however, there was join up on both the Local Plan and LNRS.

A Member thanked the EPA for an excellent piece of work and commented that it was important how it set out biodiversity priorities. It was already well known about species shift change due to the impact of climate change and asked how the habitat map and strategy would evolve in response to unpredictable changes such as flooding. The EPA said that the habitat map was based on national open source data, therefore, the macro data set to allow it needed to be repeatable. Therefore, pieces of research that would inform where species might go were unable to be incorporated in this type of work. It did look at pressures on habitats and created mapping based on those pressures but this was largely on where water flowed, where nutrients flowed, where agricultural land could put pressure on sites, and where to put Nature Based Solutions, such as planting hedgerows, trees or buffer strips. In terms of flood risks, the Broadlands Future Initiative and the in-depth knowledge and modelling of the Environment Agency would be far more important for the Broads than the Nature Recovery Strategies could hope to achieve.

A Member said that the Suffolk LNRS was approved by Suffolk County Council (SCC) Cabinet on 9 September and said that Officers at SCC welcomed and appreciated the support of the Broads Authority team and the collaborative approach. They felt that there was a lot of exciting opportunities in the future and would be transitioning to delivery and implementation to make a difference on the ground and the Broads was a key landscape for that.

In a response to a question about how the LNRS would cover the areas outside of the Broads area, the EPA said that modelling enabled areas beyond the boundary to be prioritised however, agricultural land would focus more on boundary enhancements and regenerative farming. The LNRS prioritises areas such as the coast, the Brecks, and woodlands in the clay lands by looking at existing habitats and designated sites and linking those up using national data sets. Natural England used large data sets to ensure that there was a network that was robust.

In a response to how the habitat maps would be used in conjunction with the Authority's GIS data, the EPA confirmed that these would be embedded with the GIS maps.

A Member asked, considering the current uncertainty regarding the proposed unitary authorities, was there any future planning on what protections would look like and the impact of a change of political landscape. The Chief Executive (CE) said that under the new mayoral combined authority was due to be in place in May 2026, and one of the responsibilities of the new mayor would be for the environment across Norfolk and Suffolk. Therefore the LNRS might fit well within that new framework. One of the critical things that the Authority would look for would be how the new mayor viewed that environmental role and how the Broads Authority and the LNRSs could help deliver that. To some extent, the big plus point of having LNRSs that ran across both counties was that it would fit into the new structure. In terms of engagement with the new local government structure of unitary authorities, this would be easier for the Authority.

A Member commented that he had concerns about the impact the new Planning Bill might have on the LNRS.

James Reeder proposed, seconded by Matthew Shardlow.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the final Norfolk LNRS and Suffolk LNRS.

11. Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Members received the report of the Sustainability Manager (SM). The SM said that the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) was the framework for England which covered National Landscapes and National Parks and set ten outcomes and targets to be delivered across those landscapes. Three of these targets have already been included in the Broads Nature Recovery Strategy, approved by the Board in November 2025. As part of the process, the Authority was required to incorporate these targets into the Management Plan. The Plan was not due for review for another year, and as a stop gap, it had been agreed that the targets could be added as an appendix to the existing Management Plan until the full review took place.

The SM said that Appendix 2 of the report sets out further detail around each target. Some of the targets had clear and concrete targets, however, some were still in the development stage and there would be some changes made as to how these targets would be measured and achieved.

A Member commented that he liked the level of aspiration but asked how realistic the targets were. The Member was conscious that the Authority had certain levers at its disposal and funding was a challenge and these were not all in the Authority's gift to resolve and was concerned that this was setting the Authority up to fail. The SM said that the Management Plan was a partnership process and target 3, for example, was a target for the Authority to support Natural England (NE) and it very much depended on NE's work as to whether the Authority met the target. They were all nationally imposed targets tied to national delivery of the 25-year Environment Plan and Peatland targets.

A Member asked how the Authority would track these targets and actively feed back to Defra during conversations around funding. The SM said that approximately every four months, the Authority received baseline data from Defra and there would be an annual report which would include data from National Parks and National Landscapes. The Environment Policy Adviser (EPA) said that nationally, the Authority was working with NE and Defra to try and get more involved with condition assessment of SSSIs (one of the targets) which was a huge programme of work which included the assessment of fen ditches and grazing marsh ditches which had not been assessed for over fifteen years. It was unlikely that NE would have the staff or resources to do this work and therefore the Authority was looking to support NE on this and have just entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in respect of water plant data which was collected by the Broads Authority. The EPA said that this was a huge challenge and were very ambitious targets and there was a need to create a new conversation with NE and Defra around budgets associated with the PLTOF and how the targets were put in place. The SM said that National Parks England had set up a performance management group to look at all the indicators that National Parks had to report against and would therefore have a single voice in communication with Defra.

A Member commented that he supported the proposal but the Authority did need to be in the position to have dialogue with Defra around funding to support the achievement of the targets.

A Member asked whether the local National Landscapes, which were previously AONBs, were more involved in the PLTOF than the Broads Authority. The SM said that they were not more involved, however, they had been involved in setting local targets on wildlife rich habitats. The EPA said that she was aware that National Landscapes had national officers who were forecasting resources around certain elements of the protected landscape targets and thought that might be repeated for National Parks.

A Member commented that with the forecast that sea level rise could be as much as 40cm by 2050 which could scupper the targets completely and asked, although it was nice to have these targets, did Defra take sea level rises seriously in this regard. The SM said that it was a big worry about what would happen to the Broads with the rise of sea levels and thought that this was a question for the Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI). The Chair commented that the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee was gathering evidence regarding sea level rise, coastal flooding and coastal erosion and he hoped that BFI would have an input into

that. The EPA said that the pumped infrastructure was critical, however, there would be a funding challenge to maintain and replace the infrastructure to deal with any future flooding.

A Member commented that this report, and the previous report on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), were very interesting but thought that it was underestimated how nature recovered itself and neither the LNRS nor PLTOF took that into account. The SM said that the LNRS and PLTOF would reflect what the Authority did and what it delivered in terms of areas where an intervention was required or a where a hand's off approach could be taken and allow natural rewilding to happen. The EPA said that in terms of rewilding, this was not the policy in the Broads Plan as this was about managing, farming and the continued management of ditches, rivers and reed beds. This all required effort, funding and prioritisation. It was vital to reinforce how important it was to manage the Broads and provide people with a viable income for farming whilst looking after nature that was so important to the area and it was important that landowners and farmers had the right incentives going forward. A Member commented that nature did recover but had become increasingly common that it was the invasive species that were doing well, but the more specialist and endangered species struggled.

Tony Grayling proposed, seconded by Stephen Bolt.

It was resolved unanimously approve the draft appendix for inclusion in the Broads Plan.

12. National Park Capital Programme 2025/26 – update

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE). The CE provided some background information for the benefit of the new Members. In 2010, the Authority received £4.4m National Park revenue grant and at that time the Authority did not receive any capital money or had a capital programme. Over the last six years, the revenue grant had been held at flat cash and this year received an 8.2% cut in the revenue grant which reduced the grant to £3.1m. However, in 2023 the Authority was successful in persuading Defra to give some capital money which had now been extended to the other nine National Parks in England and for the last couple of years the Authority had had a capital programme. Although it was good to have capital money, 70% of the Authority's costs were people and, with some few exceptions, it was not possible to fund people from capital money.

It was a challenge for the Authority to spend £1.3m of capital money by the 31 March 2026. The CE said that the report in front of Members provided an update on the status of the National Park Capital Programme and was pleased to announce that the programme was on track. The first item, the purchase of some fen and woodland at Barton, had now been completed.

The CE said that during the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology's (HCME) review of projects, the conclusion was that a tug was required to help with operational activities and was a higher priority than a new long-reach excavator. The HCME was now in the process of trying to source a tug.

The CE said that if capital funding became a long-term programme, then the Authority would need to have a ready list of things that money needed to spent on. This was difficult to do unless there was some form of forward programme and the CE had therefore put to Defra that a five or ten year programme was required.

A Member asked whether the Broads Authority would provide more detail on what the purchase of land at Barton would deliver. The CE confirmed that this was currently being worked on and would report back to the Board at a future meeting.

A Member asked would there be a chance to extend the mooring in that area. The Director of Delivery (DD) confirmed that the Authority was looking to extend the moorings through the installation of pontoons.

A Member asked whether the first item on the reserve list would get moved further up the list. The CE said that the list had been prioritised using Defra's priorities, however, there was an ambition to move this up the list, but would need to see how other things progressed.

A Member congratulated the CE on the purchase of the land and commented that they looked forward to seeing a more detailed report on how that land would be used.

Members noted the progress made in delivery of the Capital Programme.

13. Boat Safety Scheme - compliance

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE) and the Head of IT and Collector of Tolls. The CE apologised for a complicated report and confirmed that the report went to the Navigation Committee on 4 September who unanimously supported the recommendation.

The report set out the existing arrangements under the 2009 Broads Authority Act to ensure a boat that requires a Boat Safety Certificate (BSC) had one. The 2009 Act made insurance compulsory and provided a vehicle for adopting the National Boat Safety Scheme. In 2006, the Authority had a Byelaw which required vessels to have a certificate of compliance and if the vessel did not hold a certificate of compliance the Byelaw gave the Authority powers to address this immediately. The 2009 Act adopted a series of clauses which allows the Authority to ensure that vessels did have a BSC but the process for dealing with non-compliance was not a smooth one.

The CE was therefore requesting that the Authority's Byelaws should be amended to incorporate part of the 2006 Byelaw to ensure that, if an owner had a boat that required a BCS and does not comply, the Broads Authority could take immediate action rather than going through a longer process.

A Member asked how many non-compliant cases there had been over the last few years. The Director of Delivery (DD) said that at the beginning of the year there were 400 non-compliant boats, and to date, this had been brought down to 200. Of those 200, some were quite complex cases. The DD said that the BSC was only one of the safety requirements, if there was a boat with a hole in it, this would not fall under the BSC but would be determined as

‘unserviceable’. Having a Byelaw would make any non-compliance much simpler to deal with any unsafe vessel.

A Member asked what would happen if a boat did not have a BSC but was moored in a privately owned dyke, as at present it would not need to be tolled or insured. The CE said that the Byelaw would cover the Broads navigation area and adjacent waters, and if there was a private dyke with lots of boats moored within it, then the boats would need to have a BSC, insurance and a toll. However, a person had their own dyke and it was only their boat kept in it, then it would be up to the owner as to whether they had a BSC, until they entered the navigation.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Leslie Mogford.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the principle of amending the Broads Authority’s byelaws to support compliance with the Boat Safety Scheme.

14. Code of Conduct Update on Member Volunteering

Members received the report of the Head of Governance. The Chief Executive (CE) said that the Authority was an open and transparent organisation and actively encouraged Members to get out with officers, therefore, if a Member wished to go out with an officer, he would be happy to arrange that. The report, however, sought to address concerns by staff where Members were volunteers.

Members expressed concerns regarding the proposals and asked for clarity on what the definition was on member volunteering. A Member commented that Members had a lot of expertise which brought benefits to the Authority. A Member said that he had not come across any other organisation that prohibited volunteering by Board Members and added that the Canals and Rivers Trust encouraged Members to volunteer.

It was suggested that each request from a Member to volunteer should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Members agreed that this matter was not one to be addressed at the meeting and it should be brought to the Standards Committee to look at this matter in more detail before it came back to the Broads Authority.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Tony Grayling.

It was resolved unanimously to take a paper to the Standards Committee on 12 March 2026.

15. Update of Constitutional documents

Members received the report of the Governance Officer. The Chief Executive (CE) said that following the changes made to the organisation following the cut in funding by Defra, there was a need to make very simple changes to a number of documents.

A Member asked for clarification that there was no changes to the decision thresholds or powers. The CE confirmed that it was just Directorate titles that were changing.

A Member asked whether the CE was content that, with the change of Data Protection Officer role to the Head of Governance, there was no issue with GDPR. The CE confirmed that he was content.

James Harvey proposed, seconded by Matthew Shardlow.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the amendments to the Scheme of Powers Delegated to the Chief Executive and other authorised officers and the Committee Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3;**
- b) Delegate the Head of Governance to make the Directorate amendments to all documents set out in Appendix 1 and any other documents, policies, strategies and action plans that might be required; and**
- c) Delegate the Head of Governance to update the Whistleblowing Policy and Broads Authority Corporate Risk Register to reflect the change in the Data Protection Officer.**

16. Items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

The Director of Delivery (DD) said that, as reported at the last meeting, there had been a fatality at an Oulton Broad Power Racing event. The Broads Authority had taken a decision to suspend the final five races of the racing schedule in 2025 on safety grounds and until the outcome of the ongoing investigation by Suffolk County Council was known.

17. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Broads Local Access Forum Committee – 4 June 2025

Planning Committee – 18 July 2025

18. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

19. Formal questions

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

20. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 28 November 2025 at 10.00am at Club 101, Norwich City Football Club, Carrow Road, NR1 1JE.

21. Exclusion of the public

Tony Grayling proposed, and Gurpreet Padda seconded.

The Authority resolved to exclude the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1 ,2, 3, and 4 of Part1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public benefit in disclosing the information.

The public left the meeting and the recording was suspended.

22. Update to the Grant Settlement

Members received the report of the Chief Executive. A summary of the discussion was contained in the exempt minutes.

23. Approval of legal costs

Members received the report of the Development Manager. A summary of the discussion was contained in the exempt minutes.

The meeting ended at 12:25pm

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 19 September 2025

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Peter Dixon	14	Broads Authority volunteer. Non registrable interest. Granted a dispensation by MO to participate and speak but not vote.