

Navigation Committee

03 September 2026

Agenda item number 9

Operations work programme progress update

Report by the 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 July 2026). A total of 11,260 m³ of dredged sediment has been removed from the prioritised sites. This figure represents 45% of the programmed target of 25,210 m³ for the year.
- 1.2. The spring and summer 2026 dredging programme has focused on shoals along the River Yare between Trowse Rail Bridge and Surlingham. All sediment from this work has been taken to the Authority's licensed disposal site at Postwick. Testing continues to identify legacy mercury contamination downstream of Whitlingham, although concentrations are declining in the recently accumulated sediments now being dredged. The Postwick site has finite capacity, but recent assessment indicates that it can accommodate the most contaminated sediments expected to require dredging over the next twenty years or so. Where environmental surveys confirm that sediment is below the mercury thresholds, not requiring disposal at the licensed site, it is being re-used in other ways, including floodbank maintenance.
- 1.3. Upcoming dredging work through to March 2027 includes the Lower Yare, with sediment being taken to a floodbank set back area at Cantley; dredging priority shallow areas on the River Chet, with the material being used by the Environment Agency to top up the adjacent floodbanks; and the continuation of last winters cancelled dredging in the River Thurne upstream of Martham Ferry, including along Martham Dyke and Somerton Dyke. Appendix 2 shows that all navigation work areas are currently on track at this stage in the year.
- 1.4. Appendix 3 gives the summary of dredging activity over the whole 2025/26 year. Most of the commentary for this year was reported at the 16 April 2026 Navigation Committee meeting. Less dredging than planned occurred across the whole of the year (see Appendix 4). The impact of the salt incursion to the Upper Thurne and the resultant fish deaths had a significant impact on the ability to continue dredging. Also the start of a major project on the River Bure near Wroxham needing to be deferred to 2027/28 to allow more time for the various permits and consents required. The trial of the cutter suction head on the lower Bure at Great Yarmouth was useful, but not as productive as hoped, generating less than half the volume planned in the time allocated.

2. Water plant management

- 2.1. The 2026 season has been steady in the main rivers with the three water plant harvesters active since May. There has been a noticeable decrease in the amount of water plants in Hickling this summer compared to last year. Early season monitoring in May showed that approximately 24% of the bed of the broad was covered with water plants. This contrasts with the coverage of 79% in May 2025.

3. Maintaining safe public mooring facilities

- 3.1. Since April mooring refurbishment of the capping and waling has been completed at Repps Bank at Potter Heigham. At Worlingham on the River Waveney, the end of the 24-hour mooring has been reconstructed and strengthened where heavy erosion had occurred and some historic phases of piling and repair work have been improved and made safer.
- 3.2. Piling works planned at Authority moorings this year include the full replacement of the Potter Heigham demasting mooring. Following preparatory ground investigations and design work, installation is scheduled for winter 2026. Plans are also being developed for Potter Heigham Staithe, which the Authority owns and where design options have previously been consulted on. Further ground investigations and design work are planned for early autumn to progress this project. Additional ground investigation and design requirements are also being progressed at Acle Bridge, where previous repiling works were paused following multiple site issues and barriers to completion.
- 3.3. At Paddy's Lane 24 hour mooring at Barton Turf, sections of the mooring have been closed to the public. Due to the age of the construction and the very soft and deep peat substrate behind the mooring, the anchor piles and tie rods that retain the steel sheets on the front have failed in places. This is despite previous repairs and reconnecting some tie rods. The Design team are monitoring the condition of the mooring regularly to assess the extent of any further movement. A project plan is currently being drawn up to determine the best value solution for rectification of the whole of this mooring. Solutions to bring the site within acceptable standards will require major excavation and full replacement of at least the anchors and tie rods, as well as the main sheet piles.. Due to existing budget and work programme commitments, this work cannot be started until 2027/28 at the earliest. Some on-going impact to mooring will be experienced in this location this year and into next.
- 3.4. For 2027/28 and beyond, other 24-hour mooring locations which will require regular and on-going structural assessment to ensure facilities are safe to use, includes Commissioners Cut on the River Yare and Deep Go Dyke, Deep Dyke and Whiteslea in the Upper Thurne.

4. Electric charging pillar replacement

- 4.1. The Authority is replacing the existing electric charging pillars because the current pre-paid card system is increasingly outdated, inflexible and difficult to administer. Feedback from users, staff and stakeholders has highlighted that cards rely on in-person sales during outlet opening hours, credit is tied to individual pillars, and the older pillars have experienced reliability issues linked to tampering and flooding. The change responds directly to those operational and customer-service challenges and is planned for installation over autumn/winter 2026, ready for the 2027 boating season.

- 4.2. The new system will provide a more flexible, resilient and user-friendly approach to accessing shore power across the Broads. Users will be able to hold credit centrally rather than on a specific pillar, meaning remaining balances can be used at other participating 24-hour moorings and electricity will be paid for only as it is used. The new pillars are designed to be more robust and secure, with electronics positioned higher within the bollards, additional protection in flood-prone locations and improved tamper resistance. The project is being funded through a DEFRA capital grant, with no navigation income used to fund the works.
- 4.3. For users, the process will move from purchasing and loading physical cards to using the Meter MACS online portal. Boaters will create an account using a smartphone or computer, add credit in advance or during a visit, and then activate a charging pillar using the portal, their user ID and PIN. The pillars use a roaming SIM to connect to the strongest available network and establish a local connection with the user's device, helping the system operate even where phone reception is limited. More communications on the change and guidance for users will be provided in September. Installation of the new pillars will start in November, with the programme shared so that users can prepare.

5. Boating News and navigation restrictions

- 5.1. Recent public communications via [Boating News](#) and Authority's social media routes have highlighted several temporary and sudden navigation restrictions such as heat disrupting the normal opening of rail swing bridges. These cases are where provision of immediate updates has been challenging, especially when these occur outside normal office working hours.
- 5.2. Where formal requirement and sufficient advance notice is given, the [Notices to Mariners](#) webpage is used. Notices to Mariners are required as part of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 and could mean, for example, creating a severe height or width restriction or the need for a river closure, due to infrastructure or planned repair works. These formal Notices require at least 35 days lead in time and printed publication of the Notice in a local newspaper.
- 5.3. Officers continue to liaise with asset owners and contractors to ensure that navigation impacts are minimised, appropriate safety measures are in place, and timely updates are via the most effective communications routes provided where works affect the public navigation.

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

Background Papers: [April 2026 Operations work programme - progress update](#)

[Potter Heigham Staithe re-piling and mooring space - options for the two existing small mooring cuts](#)

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

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

Appendix 3 – Final annual dredging figures 2025/26 (to end March 2026)

Appendix 4 – Final operational staff time spent on all work types 2025/26 (to end March 2026).

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

Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broad Authority dredging weeks completed/ planned	Planned volume removed m³	Actual volume removed m³	Planned annual project cost¹	Actual project cost
River Yare Bishops Bridge to Postwick Postwick to Brundall	15/19	9,000	10,310	£127,480	£115,280
<i>Postwick Tip – April to August</i>					
River Bure Upton Dyke	3/2	770	950	£18,360	£24,060
<i>Oby Setback – April to May</i>					
River Yare & Chet Lower Yare Chet (shallows)	0/11 0/5	7,000 4,000	0 0	£134,720	£7,340
<i>Cantley Setback – November to March</i>					
River Thurne Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes Somerton to Candle Dyke	0/2 0/12	1,300 3,140	0 0	£158,450	£1,010
<i>Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes (sidecast) – October to November</i> <i>Somerton to Candle Dyke (Chara Bay re-use site, Hickling Broad) – November to February</i>					
River Bure Mid-Bure	-	-	-	£3,270	£1,060
<i>Lagoon preparation costs</i>					
Site restoration	-	-	-	-	£25,850
Future site preparation Survey, mitigation & set-up	-	-	-	-	£3,020
Dredging support activities	-	-	-	-	£15,400
Total	18/51	25,210	11,260	£442,280	£193,020

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

Work type	Planned - Days	Planned - % of annual total days	Actual - Days	Actual - % completed
Navigation (56%)	2850	56	907	18
<i>Italics are proportion within Navigation</i>				
<i>Dredging</i>	<i>1335</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>551</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Mooring maintenance & repairs</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Riverside tree management</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Water plant cutting</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Other navigation works¹</i>	<i>176</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Corporate allocation ²</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>238</i>	<i>8</i>
Recreation (9%)³	446	9	211	4
Conservation (35%)⁴	1796	35	402	8
Total	5092	100	1520	30

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

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

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

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

Appendix 3 – Final annual dredging figures 2025/26 (to end March 2026)

Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broad Authority dredging weeks completed/ planned	Planned volume removed m ³	Actual volume removed m ³	Planned annual project cost ¹	Actual project cost
River Yare Bargate Broad	8/8	2,400	1,800	£56,260	£54,730
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use site – started in 2024/25, completed in 2025/26</i>					
River Yare Postwick Viaduct to Trowse Swing Bridge	10/9	6,480	4,800	£74,880	£61,900
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use site - complete</i>					
River Yare Hardley Dyke	-	-	170	-	-
River Thurne Hickling channel Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes Somerton to Candle Dyke	0/8 0/4 9/10	6,000 1,300 6,200	0 0 2,860	£175,420	£73,580
Hickling channel (Chara Bay re-use site) – October to November (postponed) Martham & Somerton Boat Dykes (sidecast) – January (postponed) Somerton to Candle Dyke (Chara Bay re-use site) – December to February					
River Bure Wroxham Broad	0/5	3,000	0	£33,940	£5,460
Wroxham Island – postponed until June 2026					
River Bure Lower reaches	3/4	5,000	2,200	£35,270	£37,460
<i>Cutter suction head dredging on ebb tide – complete</i> <i>*Volume to be determined following post-dredge hydrographic survey</i>					
River Bure Mid-Bure	-	-	-	£3,000	£1,260
<i>Lagoon preparation costs</i>					

Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broads Authority dredging weeks completed/ planned	Planned volume removed m³	Actual volume removed m³	Planned annual project cost¹	Actual project cost
Site restoration	-	-	-	-	£27,810
Future site preparation Survey, mitigation & set-up	-	-	-	-	£7,460
Dredging support activities	-	-	-	-	£63,450
Total	30/45	27,380	11,830	£378,770	£333,110

Appendix 4 – Final operational staff time spent on all work types 2025/26 (to end March 2026).

<i>Work type</i>	<i>Planned - Days</i>	<i>Planned - % of annual total days</i>	<i>Actual - Days</i>	<i>Actual - % completed</i>
Navigation (60%)	2,664	60	2575	58
<i>Dredging</i>	<i>1068</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>818</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Mooring maintenance & repairs</i>	<i>687</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>573</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Riverside tree management</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Water plant cutting</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Other navigation works¹</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Corporate allocation ²</i>	<i>450</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>738</i>	<i>28</i>
Recreation (10%)³	444	10	494	11
Conservation (30%)⁴	1,332	30	1367	31
Total	4,440	100	4,440	100

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

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

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

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