

Broads Authority

Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2011

Present:

Mr L Betts	Mr P Durrant	Mr J Knight
Mrs S Blane	Mr A Goodchild	Mr A S Mallett
Mr D A Broad	Mr P Greasley	Mr P E Ollier
Sir Peter Dixon	Mr M Heron	Mr M Whitaker

In Attendance:

Dr J S Johnson – Chair of Broads Authority
Mr S Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Mrs L Burchnall – Deputy Head of Ranger Services
Mr A Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer
Ms R Evitt – Administrative Officer
Mr R G Holman – Director of Change Management and Resources
Mr S W P Housden – Head of ICT and Collector of Tolls
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance and Executive Assistant
Mr R Rogers – Head of Construction and Maintenance
Mr A Vernon – Head of Ranger Services
Mrs T Wakelin – Director of Operations

2/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Frost.

2/2 Appointment of Chairman

The Chief Executive requested nominations for the appointment of Chairman of the Committee. Mr Broad was nominated and seconded. There being no other nominations, Mr Broad was duly elected as the Chairman

2/3 Items of Urgent Business and Chairman's Announcements

There were no Items of urgent business.

2/4 Declarations of Interest

Members expressed their declarations of interest as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

2/5 Public Question Time

No questions had been received.

2/6 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following change:

(1) **Item 1/16 Paragraph 2, Construction and Maintenance Work Programme: Progress Report 2011/12**

'The Head of Construction and Maintenance reported that figures were slightly down compared to those projected because the team had started their winter dredging programme and a substantial amount of dredging waste was **coming out of** Postwick Tip'.

Should be amended to read '..... **going into** Postwick Tip'.

2/7 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussions at Previous Meetings

(1) **NPAPA**

Members noted that a copy of the draft National Park Authorities Performance Assessment (NPAPA) report had been received and would be considered after the Navigation Committee meeting by a small group of members. A copy of the final report would be sent to all members when received.

(2) **Swing Bridges**

Members noted that a local liaison bridge update meeting had taken place. It was noted that the work had been successful but had also revealed further necessary work at Somerleyton. The extra maintenance was scheduled to take place in February 2012 during the half term week. As yet, Network Rail had not formally applied for a notice to mariners, but it was expected that the bridge would be closed for five days. A notice to mariners and an early warning for members would be issued when the work had been confirmed. The closure would be for swings only, all hire vessels would be able to pass at appropriate tides.

2/8 Tolls Review 2012

Members received a report which sought the views of the Committee on the scope, process and timetable for the 2012 Tolls Review.

Members reviewed the scope, composition and methodology for the previous reviews of tolls and navigation expenditure, noting that the last comprehensive review of the tolls system was conducted in 2005. Members noted that the proposed scope of this review included: the relative charges for different sized

boats, multipliers for hire boats and passenger boats; incentives to encourage greener boating; status of tenders on larger vessels; clarification on the application of short visit and partial year tolls; and work/safety boats and river maintenance vessels.

Mr Greasley commented that he was in agreement with the report in principle but was concerned that the key objective that the outcome from the review should be 'revenue neutral' limited the overall process. However, members noted that this objective was intended to allow the Authority to conform to the agreed three year financial strategy, which had targets for toll income within the budgets. The Committee considered, however, that keeping the review revenue neutral should be an expectation rather than a key objective. Members considered the proposed process for the review which would start with a workshop, followed by two or three meetings of a working group. Members strongly supported that the workshop should involve key stakeholders guided by an independent facilitator. Members also felt that the findings of the 2005 Review should be the starting point for this workshop. To assist the workshop's considerations, members considered that it would be essential to gather evidence as to how tolls were applied elsewhere within the country and that evidence should also be drawn from the 2012 Survey of Broads Boat Owners where feasible.

Members also supported the establishment of a working group with representatives of all the different stakeholders, to be chaired by an independent person. The proposed representation of the working group was supported, on the understanding that Canoe England and British Rowing were given separate representation; it was also noted that the Norfolk and Suffolk Boatbuilders Association was now called the Anglia Boatbuilders Association. Members also asked officers to consider whether there was a representative group for work/safety boats which could be included on the working group.

Members reviewed the proposed timetable for the review. This was supported and it was hoped that the workshop could be held in advance of the Navigation Committee meeting on 7 June 2012, to allow the Committee to be appraised on this stage of the review.

In conclusion members supported the proposals for the scope, process and timetable of the review subject to:

- (i) the requirement for the outcome from the review to be revenue neutral should be an expectation, rather than a key objective;
- (ii) Canoe England and British Rowing were given separate representation on the working group, and the representation of the Norfolk and Suffolk Boatbuilders Association was amended to read the Anglia Boatbuilders Association; and
- (iii) the inclusion of work/safety boats interests on the working group, if a suitable representative group could be identified.

2/9 Survey of Broads Boat Owners 2012

Members received a report which sought the Committee's views on the process and content for the regular survey of Broads' boat owners to be conducted in February 2012, including the opportunity to use an electronic questionnaire.

Members noted that the survey was a good opportunity for the Authority to gain an insight into what boat owners thought as well as collecting up to date statistical analysis. It would help to understand boat owner's priorities, issues and expectations for the coming years.

Mr Greasley commented that there was a large group of stakeholders, consisting of visitors who hired craft, who used the system but were not being engaged in this process.

The Chief Executive replied that a separate survey facilitated this through the tourism strategy. The Director of Operations reported that over the last ten years the Authority had also produced a questionnaire which had been distributed to all boat yards over a two week period in high season, which had looked at what the hirers felt the priority on the system should be. She continued that there was always the possibility of looking at this again as it was last carried out in 2006.

Members noted that an important element of the 2012 survey was whether to retain the paper version, which could be included with the tolls renewal/ application form, or to progress to an online version. An online version would save money in terms of postage and in analysing the information gathered. It was also noted that encouraging wider internet use would promote use of the online tolls facility.

Mr Mallett commented that he was concerned that the demographic of current boat owners showed that the majority were of a certain age and may not have access to the internet or the experience to confidently use this technology. He suggested that the paper version be sent out as usual with the option to complete the survey online. He was concerned that valuable information could be lost if only an electronic response could be made.

Mr Knight commented that an online form should be the priority with the option of a paper response for those who felt more comfortable using that medium. He suggested that there could be an incentive for completing the form online – such as a prize or a free toll.

Though some members were concerned that toll payers were not ready for this method and it could reduce the number of people wishing to engage, other members considered that the cost savings of the on-line method, together with the availability of internet facilities in local libraries, would not make this so much of an issue. However, it was considered important to stress the cost saving rationale for the on-line method to toll payers.

Members highlighted their concern about access to the online form and it being used inappropriately. The Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls reassured the members that access would be limited to toll payers by using their toll registration numbers as a check.

There was general consensus from members that the survey should be completed online with a caveat that people could request a paper version if they preferred. Members also supported that there should be some form of incentive for completing the survey online and that the survey literature should reinforce the cost savings of using the online method.

The Chairman asked the Committee for opinions on how the survey should be structured and what questions should be asked.

Members provided several topics for consideration to help provide evidence for the tolls review, which included:

- identification of the age range of the toll payer;
- identification of clubs/organisations to which the toll payer belonged;
- the amount of use toll payers made of their boat(s);
- identification of the most important topics of interest;
- geese management;
- use of Breydon Water;
- electric charging points;
- views on a potential 'user payback' scheme to fund particular projects; and
- use of yacht stations and moorings.

In conclusion, members agreed that the Chief Executive would draw up an example survey, following specialist advice, as to how the topics identified by members might be incorporated, and forward this to members for comment.

The Committee volunteered to test run a pilot version of the survey online as part of this process and it was agreed that this would provide valuable feedback to improve the final result.

2/10 Navigation Income and Expenditure: 1 April 2011 to 31 October 2011

Members received a report which summarised actual income and expenditure for the seven month period to 31 October 2011, compared to the revised budget approved by the Broads Authority at its meeting in June. The report provided a list of major variances and reasons for these variances where income or expenditure is less than 45% or more than 70% of the approved budget.

A member commented that only 43% of the Operations budget had been expended at a point when the Authority was 58% through the year and was concerned that this would result in a substantial underspend. The Director of Operations replied that much of the maintenance work would be undertaken during the winter months which should address the balance. It was also intended to provide more correct profiling for future budgets, to enable

members to have a more comprehensive understanding of when income and expenditure was anticipated. Members also noted that the estimated outturn was included within the report on the 2011/12 (revised) budget.

2/11 Navigation Income and Expenditure 2011/12 (Revised) – 2012/13

The Committee received and considered a report seeking views on the navigation income and expenditure budget for 2011/12 (second revised budget) and 2012/13, which had been prepared as part of a consolidated budget for the Authority. The figures built on the work of the Resource Allocation Working Group, as set out in the Authority's Business Plan, and would contribute to the strategy agreed by the Authority to retain navigation reserves at a minimum of 10% of net expenditure and achieve a balanced budget by 2014/15.

It was noted that a further £2,400 would need to be expended on additional financial support and £29,700 on the acquisition of four new vehicles for the Construction and Maintenance and Ranger Teams, following an analysis of through life costs.

Mr Durrant enquired whether it was realistic to meet the target for operational expenditure as detailed in the report. The Director of Operations commented that she believed it was.

Mr Greasley raised his concerns regarding the report and budgeting to a deficit. He commented that the Authority was presenting the wrong impression to toll payers if it was making a profit. He continued that asking for more money from the toll payers was inappropriate if we were making a significant underspend against the original budget.

Mr Mallett commented that the Authority had developed a three year financial strategy and that this had been reflected in the preparation of the budget. It was important to remember that circumstances do change and that there was a need to prepare for the worst. He accepted that the Authority had a culture of being conservative in its budgetary projections.

Mr Durrant suggested that this could be resolved by not having a revised budget in the future and to avoid some of the reserve accounting.

It was agreed that officers would investigate this as there was a general consensus that comparisons were best made against the original expectations.

2/12 Wakeboarding Trial Findings and Review Panel Recommendations

Members noted the report which set out the findings of the trial of recreational wakeboarding including 'getting air' on the River Yare and the views of the Water Ski Review Panel.

Members' views were sought on the proposals set out in section 7 in the report.

Mr Heron expressed concern that the Rowing Clubs had not been duly consulted. Members noted that this was part of the process and a full consultation would be taking place.

Members supported the recommendations subject to the consultation of the rowing clubs and suggested that maps and plans of the compartments should be included with agenda so they can be identified more easily.

2/13 Hire Boat Licensing Audit

Members noted the report which set out the background to the introduction of the Hire Boat Licensing regime and the findings of audits undertaken to date.

The Vice Chairman enquired whether the cost of this audit was met by the fees. The Director of Operations commented that the intention was to be cost neutral and any changes in the licensing fee would be subject to a review of costs and income. Officers will provide a more detailed report at the next meeting.

2/14 Broadland Flood Alleviation Project

(1) General Update

Members noted that there were no current planning applications for any of the compartments. It was requested that a map of the compartments be given to the new members for their information and reference.

Members enquired about recent flooding incidents. The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer reported that the over topping was working as planned and reacting well to the hydraulic modelling. He continued that specific banks were designed to over top on these occasions and in some cases for large over topping to occur to protect more sensitive areas.

Members requested that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee to confirm that flooding was occurring in the correct places and that this report included an official update on the recent flooding events.

2/15 Construction and Maintenance Work Programme: Progress Report 2011/12

Members noted that the Construction and Maintenance Team was back on schedule for the removal of 50,000 cubic metres of sediment and that the PRISMA money was being used to trial barge and excavator issues working with new configurations.

The PRISMA start up conference in Rotterdam had been very successful and it had been confirmed that the next meeting would be held in the Broads in the summer of 2012. Members noted that this was an excellent opportunity for them to meet other PRISMA partners.

Mr Mallett requested that the dredging performance was also reported as a percentage of the Broads which met the required specification within the Sediment Management Strategy. It was confirmed that this would be possible and that this information was already provided in the Action Plan.

Mr Greasley commented that the incident concerning the tree fall on the River Bure could have been more problematic if a temporary diversion had not been available. It was noted that this incident had been prolonged due to the evidence of this having bat roost potential, with bats being a legally protected species. The Head of Construction and Maintenance confirmed that a review was being undertaken to determine lessons to enable a similar incident to be progressed more promptly in future and that training was being considered for obtaining in-house expertise for bat surveys.

Some members commented that they had heard that the Authority had turned down offers for land for dredging disposal. It was confirmed that this was not the case and if any offers of land were made to any of the members they should pass this information on to the Director of Operations.

2/16 Boating Safety Management Group

(1) Update

The members received the notes of the Boating Safety Management Group meeting held on 8 November 2011.

Members noted that there had been an issue with water quality in that certain water points were not reaching the required standard. The Group has recommended that there should be labelling on the water points with the message that water should be boiled before drinking as the drinking water quality cannot be guaranteed. It was confirmed that the Group was currently in discussions with the various authorities to see if any changes had been made recently that could have caused this.

Members noted that there was still an issue with electric points and that more were needed. The Group had agreed to look at the cost of pillars and look into an extra range of electricity points in the Broads, believing that higher charges to amortise the cost of installation would be justified and acceptable.

The Head of Ranger Services confirmed that there had been several incidents including breaks and strains, caused by people jumping on and off vessels.

Members noted that there had been over 320 vessels turned back from the Vauxhall Bridge due to the height of vessels in relation to the tides and the bridge height. Members discussed possible solutions to this including an early warning text system, an electronic sign at the location and the possibility of using the staff already employed at the Bridge.

(2) **Power Boat Racing**

Members noted the report which outlined the background to power boat racing on Oulton Broad and summarised the proposed procedures to be adopted.

Members noted that the system had worked well in 2011 with no incidents. There were no additional dates added to the 2012 timetable.

2/17 Chief Executive's Report

Members noted the report which summarised the current position in respect of a number of important projects and events, including decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings.

2/18 Current Issues

There were no current issues to report.

2/19 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 23 February 2012 at Dragonfly House, Norwich, commencing at 2.00pm.

2/20 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public benefit of disclosing the information.

Members of the public left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

Summary of Exempt Minute

2/21 Breydon Water and Lower Bure

The Committee received a report seeking its views on the transfer of responsibility for navigation on Breydon Water and the Lower Bure from the Great Yarmouth Port Authority to the Broads Authority.

Members noted that Breydon Water and the lower parts of the River Bure are within the Executive Area of the Broads Authority with the boundary just seaward of the confluence between the rivers Yare and Bure. However, the responsibility for the navigation has remained with the Great Yarmouth Port Authority (GYPA).

It was noted that these arrangements had worked reasonably well for many years. However, more recently the Port Authority had reduced its maintenance activity in the area and sold its in-house dredger with which most of the maintenance works had been undertaken. As a result the Broads Authority has struggled to get necessary work done to a satisfactory and safe standard. This change in circumstances had made it necessary to take another look at the agreement and the possibility of a transfer of responsibility.

It was noted that the transfer was subject to a full understanding and financial appraisal of the liabilities that would follow from taking over responsibility for the area. The Committee was asked to comment on whether the additional costs and liabilities passing to the Broads Authority were justified by the improvements to public safety that could follow from taking responsibility of the navigation area.

A report on this matter would be considered by the Broads Authority at its meeting in January.

The meeting concluded at 13.55

Chairman

Code of Conduct For Members

Declaration of Interests

Committee: Navigation Committee

Date: 8 December 2011

Name Please Print	Agenda/ Mins No(s)	Nature of Interest (Please describe the nature of the interest)	Please tick here if the interest is a Prejudicial interest ✓
A S Mallett	All items	Toll payer, Appointed Broadland District Council Member BA Planning Committee, Vice Commodore Norwich Frostbite Sailing Club, NSBA	✓
A Goodchild	8 – 21	Toll payer, ABA, ME Chairman, BMF Committee Dredge Contractor	
M Whitaker	8/12 – 14/17, 21	Toll payer, NHBF Committee, Hire Boat Operator	
D A Broad	8, 10/11 – 15/16	Toll payer, Great Yarmouth Port Consultative Committee, Chairman of Ropes Hill Dyke Residents Association	
L Betts	8 – 21	Toll payer & Landowner	
P E Ollier	8/12 – 14/17, 21	NSBA committee member, toll payer, member of BA Planning Committee, member of Broads sailing clubs	
P Greasley	8 – 21	Toll payer, Boat Hirer and Operator, BHBF Chairman	
P Dixon	8 – 17	Toll Payer, Sailing Club, RYA, SEV	
M Heron	8 – 19	Toll Payer, Chair Whitlingham Boathouses, Member Norwich RC, British Rowing, NSBA, NBYC, RCC, Landowner	
J Knight	8 – 21	Toll payer, Boat Hirer and Operator	