

**Launch Replacement Programme**  
Report by Head of Ranger Services

**Purpose:** This report alerts the Committee to the need to consider the future replacement policy for the Authority's patrol launches and seeks the views of the Committee on the essential requirements for a replacement vessel.

**1. Review of Patrol Launch Requirements**

- 1.1 The Broads Authority's Ranger patrol launches are an iconic part of the Broads and a recognised part of the history of the area. However, while these traditional Thames launches have many positive features: a low wash hull, attractive appearance with polished brass and wood, low air draught, two steering positions etc. they are expensive to maintain and not suitable for all the roles the rangers undertake, for example the mowing of 24 hour moorings. The Ranger Team carry out a wide range of essential maintenance and bank-side improvement works throughout the year in addition to patrolling and engagement with the public and the age of the current fleet has prompted the question about whether there are more appropriate modern designs for their replacement.
- 1.2 The most recent patrol launches, while incorporating improvements such as better access around the deck and electric sockets, are ultimately limited by their design and height of the freeboard and therefore not able to accommodate the wide range of tasks required. These tasks include mowing, bankside tree work (particularly emergency work in the summer), sign and gauge board cleaning, marking hazards and recovering sunken objects. As such, to carry out maintenance tasks the team often need an aluminium workboat working alongside the launch or use of one of the larger workboats. However this takes these resources away from other teams and volunteers who also require their use.
- 1.3 The replacement schedule for the current launches is attached (Appendix 1). The current launch vessels require an annual refit including both checks and works carried out to both the internal workings and external appearance. The annual refit currently costs £6,700 per vessel (not including additional works as required) which could potentially be reduced with a vessel requiring less maintenance.
- 1.4 The cost of building launches has increased, the most recent launch the ML Aiken Clarke cost £105,000. The launches are bespoke and built as required from a mould owned by the Authority. Given the increasing costs and the need to find a vessel able to cover the wider range of tasks carried out by the

Rangers one of the priority tasks for the Team for the coming year is to undertake a wider review of suitable launch vessels.

1.5 The initial draft essential criteria developed by the Ranger Team for the new vessel are as follows:

- Economic to run at low speeds
- Manoeuvrable
- Low wash
- Shallow draught,
- Low air draught
- Recognisable as a patrol launch
- Low maintenance requirements
- Wide, flat workspace (ideally front and back),
- Low freeboard (able to recover items from water)
- Minimum 6 person capacity with cabin space for visitors
- Robust hull construction or hull protection,
- Storage, toilet, basic kitchen facilities
- Outside steering/talking position – good communication with crew and public
- Able to load and carry mowers, brush cutters, etc.

1.6 The initial task will be to review all the available vessels currently on the market against the list of essential criteria to identify a shortlist. Our work programme envisages this being completed by May 2019 and a report on the outcome provided to the June meeting of the Committee.

## **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 The purchase of replacement patrol vessels is funded from a Vessel Replacement Fund which currently stands at £47,307. A contribution of £18,000 is made into this fund in the first quarter of every year. Prior to 2016 the annual contribution was £25,000. In 2016 the estimated life of the launches was increased from 35 to 40 years. Estimating the life of the launches is not a precise art and therefore a range from 35-40 years is used in the Appendix. The boats are intensively used and the Yare launch in particular needs replacement sooner rather than later. It is therefore proposed in the draft Financial Strategy to increase the contribution to £30,000 in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

## **3. Summary**

3.1 Members are asked for their comments on the draft essential criteria for a replacement vessel.

Background papers:	None
Author:	Lucy Burchnell
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Appendix:	Appendix 1 – Launch Replacement Strategy (updated October 2018)

## Launch Replacement Strategy (updated October 2018)

Item/ built	Condition	Replacement date (35 - 40yrs)
M/L Yare	Ageing hull and structure requiring on average an extra £1,000 per annum on refit. The significant issue that has recently become apparent is the thinning of the gel coat which will require a major repair. This is the last of the 'wooden top' design.	2016 - 2021
M/L Waveney	Problems ongoing with checker-boarding on top of wood leading to rotting, general wear and tear on engine.	2020 - 2025
M/L Ant	Hull and structure in fair condition, some wear and tear, steering cam replaced in 2016.	2023 - 2028
M/L Wensum	Hull and structure in good condition, ongoing intermittent problems with gear linkages. In 2018 it needed replacement of fendering.	2026 - 2031
Charles Collier 1997	Hull and structure in good condition, Ongoing works required on electrics associated with electric motor. A major rewire may necessary in the future.	2032- 2037
Spirit of Breydon 2013	Hull and structure in good condition, Replacement parts required for the engine are on a long delivery time which has compromised operational availability.	2041 - 2046
Martin Broom 2013	Overall in good condition. Electric motor removed this year because of performance issues.	2048 - 2053
Aiken Clark 2016	Overall in good condition	2051 - 2056