Navigation Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 03 September 2026

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Present

Alan Goodchild – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Sue Cadamy, Mark Collins, Peter Dixon, Heather Hilburn, Leslie Mogford, Bob Neate, Remus Sawyerr, Paul Thomas, and Daniel Thwaites.

In attendance

Sarah Cowley - Chief Executive, Dan Hoare – Head of Operations, Emma Krelle – Director of Resources, Rob Rogers - Director of Delivery, Joseph Balaam – Governance Officer, Lorraine Taylor – Head of Governance.

1. Apologies and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed the new Chief Executive to her first Navigation Committee. Due to this, reports that were typically presented by the Chief Executive would instead be presented by the Head of Governance.

Apologies were received from Tony Grayling

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 formal 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.

Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed the committee that Colin Sanderson had sadly passed away last week. The Chair extended condolences to Colins' family and friends, on behalf of the Members and Officers of the Authority.

2. Declarations of interest

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

3. Matters of urgent business

No items were proposed as a matter of urgent business.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2026 were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

5. Summary of actions and outstanding issues following discussions at previous meetings

Members received a report summarising the progress of issues that had recently been presented to the Committee. The Head of Governance (HoG) asked Members if they were willing to amalgamate the three bridge related items. A Member expressed concern that combining the reports could create a lack of precision. The Director of Delivery emphasised that the report was a summary of the action the Authority had taken and the Communications team provided updates to navigators advising of any changes and restrictions. Consequently, the Members agreed to combine the three bridge related items.

A Member asked if there were any navigation related funding items included in the National Park Funding Update report to the Broads Authority in July. The Director of Resources said additional revenue funding from DEFRA would enable the Authority to upgrade some of the Authority's computer systems and purchase land and equipment. The Authority had recruited the services of a Capital Project Manager to assist with the development process of the numerous proposed capital expenses.

A Member asked if the funding the waterways item on the summary remained necessary. The HoG said the item was originally added to make a case to DEFRA to use allocated funds for waterways maintenance. This goal had been achieved and Members were happy for the item to be closed.

A Member requested the addition of an item relating to the Broads Plan. The HoG said updates were provided at Broads Authority meetings and papers were available to all co-opted Members. The Navigation Committee summary of actions report only referenced items brought to the Navigation Committee. At present the Broads Plan was at the evidence gathering stage and would be brought to the Navigation Committee at a later stage in the process.

6. Chief Executive's report and current issues

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE). The Head of Governance (HoG) thanked the Head of Ranger Services and the Head of IT/Collector of Tolls for producing the statistics provided in the report.

A Member asked for an update on a sunken vessel located near St. Benet's. The Director of Delivery (DoD) said the process was ongoing, but the vessel had been made safe and a notice issued.

A Member thanked the tolls team for their work on prosecutions but believed the ratio of verbal warnings to prosecution may be too low. The Member had witnessed multiple instances of reckless behaviour on the Broads, particularly in relation to speeding, which they believed were becoming more common. Due to this the Member believed it may be necessary to prosecute more cases. The DoD acknowledged that the verbal warning figures were high but commented that this was not unusual. The Broads Authority would prosecute the worst

cases but a verbal warning from Rangers was usually sufficient for first offences. The Member showed concern for the financial burden placed on the Authority in relation to sunken vessels. The Member had previously supported an increase to tolls in order to fund the increasing cost of removing and destroying these vessels. The DoD said this was a national issue that was not specific to the Broads. The DoD added that the Authority was ahead of the field in dealing with such vessels and had been contacted by the Environment Agency and the Canal and River Trust for advice regarding the management of sunken vessels.

A Member was sympathetic to the issues faced by the Authority in relation to sunken vessels but expected the issue would not improve unless legislative changes were made. The Member added they believed increasing prosecutions in relation to speeding would be a mistake and favoured the current approach used by the Authority.

A Member asked if persistent speeding would result in prosecution. The DoD confirmed this was the case.

7. Annual Income and Expenditure 2025/2026

Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR said the report provided a summary of accounts from the previous financial year against the budget. The DoR said the audit was ongoing but believed the process would be completed in time to allow the accounts to be approved at the November Broads Authority meeting.

A Member asked if the Authority had given thought to the reduction of large cruisers. The Member said that they had received a report which showed that numbers of large cruisers had declined by 436 since 2019 which represented a reduction in tolls income of approximately £283,000 annually. The DoR replied that she had not seen this report and would therefore not be able to comment further. The report was not produced by the Broads Authority, and it was unclear on what evidence the report was based. The DoR emphasised that both private and hire boat tolls between, 1 April to end of August 2026, were above the profiled expectations.

8. Navigation income and expenditure 1 April to 31 July 2026 actual and 2026/27 forecast outturn

Members received the report of the Director of Resources (DoR). The DoR provided an update on tolls up to the end of August; hire boat tolls were £24,258.78 above the predicted value and private toll income was also £32,536.25 higher than forecasted. The DoR said the annual pay increase had been agreed at 3.3%. This increase had been included in the current budget and would be processed in the October payroll.

A Member asked if the pay rise was always negotiated annually. The DoR said this was the case in recent years.

A Member asked if the Authority had examined the changes in larger vessel numbers as they believed the Broads were losing large boats due to infrastructure issues. The DoR said

variations to tolls were reported at the November meeting each year. A Member commented the Authority monitored this closely and confirmed the figures had been made available to members of the Navigation Committee in an annual report.

9. Operations work programme progress update

Members received the report of the Head of Operations (HO) and the Ecology and Design Manager. The HO thanked the Ecology and Design Manager for their efforts in co-authoring the report.

The HO outlined the upcoming dredging schedule in section 1 of the report. Narrow areas of the River Chet and several locations on the River Yare would feature in the programme. The HO said appendix 1 and 2 provided figures on dredging and staff time for the current year. These statistics were seasonally effected, with activities such as water plant cutting, taking place at specific times during the year. Appendix 3 and 4 detailed the final summary of figures from the previous year.

The HO provided an update on a new mooring the Authority would install. Funds from DEFRA had been allocated to install a pontoon mooring at Castle Marsh, Worlingham. Installation of the pontoon was expected in October; however, this date was subject to the completion of land transfers.

The HO highlighted section 4 of the report and commented the electric charging pillars would be the same as used by the Canal and River Trust. The HO said this system was more efficient and allowed boaters to pay for the exact amount of electricity used and retain any unused credit for future transactions. A series of FAQs would be posted to the Authority website in preparation for the November installation of the electric pillars and the HO advised boaters not to stock up on the old cards.

A Member suggested the Authority provide guidance on when boatyards should stop selling the old cards, which would not be compatible with the new system. The Member asked if retailers would be reimbursed by the Authority for any unsold cards. The HO confirmed that retailers would be reimbursed. The Member asked if a lack of phone reception could impact use of the pillars. The HO said the connection was between the boaters phone and pillar which had its own signal. A lack of GSM signal would not be an issue as long as the user had credit on their Meter-Macs account.

A Member asked if the dredging schedule for the upcoming year would enable the Authority to complete items outstanding on the previous years schedule that had been delayed due to salinity levels. The HO said the current programme does not expand dredging activity, but that the postponed areas will be prioritised in subsequent schedules to ensure they are addressed.

A Member asked what costs were associated with dredging schedule items that could not be completed. The HO said that permits from the Environment Agency, sediment sampling, staff time, and various landowner work agreements were all items of expense that were required prior to carrying out any dredging. These were all part of the project preparation, which could be up to eighteen months in some cases.

A Member asked if future dredging would be impacted by salinity levels, which were likely to worsen. The HO said the Ecologists were monitoring salinity, and discussions had taken place with the Environment Agency regarding safe salinity threshold levels to protect fish whilst dredging works were being carried out. The Member commented Himalayan Balsam was out of control on the River Chet and asked whether this would impact dredging. The HO did not anticipate dredging to be affected. A Member asked if the claim relating to Himalayan Balsam had been substantiated. The HO said the Authority did not closely monitor the presence of Himalayan Balsam on private land. The HO acknowledged that whilst some landowners actively managed Himalayan Balsam, it was not the policy of the Authority to do so on the specific stretch of waterway. The HO reiterated the presence of Himalayan Balsam in the area would not impact the Authority's dredging schedule.

A Member expressed concern regarding section 3.3 and 3.4 of the report. The Member commented that the closure at Paddy's Lane deprived boaters of valuable mooring space which could be further exacerbated by potential future closures of 24-hour moorings should structural issues be found. The Member was concerned that work at Paddy's Lane would not begin before 2027/28 and asked if there was an approach to be taken which would allow the Authority to anticipate future mooring maintenance needs. The HO said the issue at Paddy's Lane was sudden and due to soft peat in the area. This made the structure vulnerable, an issue that was discovered by Rangers during safety checks. The closure at Paddy's Lane was a partial one which had reduced the number of moorings available rather than remove them entirely. The HO said the provided timescale presented the earliest possible opportunity due to the long process of conception to delivery of the project.

A Member agreed with the importance of mooring availability and requested an update on the Potter Heigham staithe project. The Member commented that the committee had acknowledged the importance of the Staithe at a previous meeting and wondered how the design was progressing. The HO said stakeholder and members of the community had been consulted for their views on the project, and the selected option of a central pontoon provided wider access to vessels and would adapt to changes in water levels. The project was at the design stage and the HO assured Members that the pontoon would be strong and stable when finished. To achieve this, ground investigations were underway and the Authority was working with a design contractor to integrate the pontoon with the new piling, to make the structure as sturdy as possible. The Member asked if planning permission would be required. Having consulted the Planning Team on the matter, the HO said that the statutory process was not required.

A Member asked whether credit on a boaters Meter-Macs account could be used to pay for other associated mooring costs. The HO said the credit was not multi-functional and could only be used for electricity.

A Member had noted that the growth of water plants at Hickling appeared to have slowed. The Member asked if this was related to the Authorities dredging activities. The HO said that water plant surveys had confirmed that cutting was not required and expected this may be due to high salinity levels over the winter and not due to any dredging activities. The Member

asked if any additional silt removal had been undertaken following the experimental use of the Cutter Suction Dredger in the River Bure at Great Yarmouth. The HO said the cutter suction pump had worked well in areas where sediment was soft but was not suitable in some locations where heavy debris would create challenges.

10. Oil Spill Contingency Plan

Members received the report of the Head of Ranger Services (HRS). The Director of Delivery (DoD) said the plan was out for consultation as part of the plans five-year review.

A Member asked what the maximum volume of oil spill the Authority could manage, should it need to do so. The DoD said the Authority did possess booms and mats to handle oil spills and retained a national contractor for any larger spills that could not be managed internally. The DoD believed there was a low risk of large oil spills originating on the Broads.

11. Reedham Swing Bridge

Members received the report of the Director of Delivery (DoD). The DoD said Reedham Swing Bridge was now operational, two weeks ahead of schedule. The DoD thanked Network Rail for undertaking the sizeable construction work and added the speed in which the work had been completed was commendable.

A Member asked if the Authority had the right to request regular testing of swing and lift bridges to assess their performance and determine whether any maintenance was necessary. The DoD said a number of different organisations were responsible for the bridges across the Broads. Due to this the bridges level of maintenance, opening schedules and challenges all differed. Swing bridges in Reedham and Somerleyton were complex in their construction which made it hard to visually examine potential faults.

A Member asked what lesson the Authority had learned from the experience with Reedham Swing Bridge. The DoD said he was now involved with the Emergency Weather Action Team for Network Rail. This provided the Authority with a forum to raise issues relating to Network Rail assets.

A Member asked if there were any updates regarding proposed bridges at the Coleman site. The DoD said the position of the East Norwich Development Board was that any proposed bridge over the navigation would need to have the ability to open to allow larger vessels passage. The cost associated with this appeared to reduce the developers desire to install bridges at the site and there were no further updates as a result.

A Member commented Reedham Swing Bridge had faced multiple closures and asked if all the issues relating to these closures had been addressed. The DoD said the issue of thermal expansion had not yet been addressed. Spraying the tracks with water had previously been trialled but this caused the bridge to rust. Sensors and monitors were in place at the bridge to monitor tract temperature. The DoD intended to raise this as a separate issue with Network Rail via the Emergency Weather Action Team. A Member commented that thermal issues were inevitable with moving bridges.

A Member said they had witnessed some individuals engage in unacceptable radio communications with bridge operators. The Member commented that operators performed to the best of their abilities.

12. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Navigation Committee would be held on Thursday 5 November 2026 at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH commencing at 10am.

The meeting ended at 11:12am

Signed

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Navigation Committee, 03 September 2026

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Alan Goodchild, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Sue Cadamy, Mark Collins, Peter Dixon, Leslie Mogford, Bob Neate, Remus Sawyerr, Paul Thomas and Daniel Thwaites	11	No interests to declare but advised that they had received an email from the Broom Owners Club regarding item 11 on the agenda