

# Broads Authority

## Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023

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## **Present**

Bill Dickson – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Nigel Brennan, Andrée Gee, Gail Harris, Paul Hayden, Tristram Hilborn, Tim Jickells, James Knight, Leslie Mogford, Michael Scott, Matthew Shardlow, Simon Sparrow, Nicky Talbot

## **In attendance**

John Packman - Chief Executive, Natalie Beal - Planning Policy Officer (item 12), Michelle Glover - Governance Officer, Emma Krelle - Director of Finance, Rob Rogers - Director of Operations, Marie-Pierre Tighe - Director of Strategic Services and Sara Utting - Senior Governance Officer.

## **Also in attendance**

Markella Papageorgiou - Head of Strategy & Policy, Norfolk County Council (item 13).

# **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 Matthew Bradbury, Melanie Vigo Di Gallidoro, Tony Grayling, Greg Munford, Vic Thomson and Fran Whymark.

# **2. Chairman's announcements**

The Chair reminded members that in regard to item 13, Consultation on the County Deal, the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to members to participate and vote at any Broads Authority or committee meeting on the proposed Deal for Norfolk.

The Chair thanked Nicky Talbot and Gail Harris for their excellent work on behalf of the Authority. Nicky Talbot and Gail Harris thanked everyone and said that they had greatly enjoyed and valued their time in the Authority.

# **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.

James Knight and Leslie Mogford announced that this would be their last BA meeting. Andrée Gee also announced that this could be her last meeting. The Chair thanked them all for their work and wished them well for the future.

#### 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 20 January 2023 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) updated members on the appointment of trustees to Whitlingham Charitable Trust (WCT). WCT would be meeting this week to discuss their strategic plan and they planned to update the CE soon as regards identifying the skills and knowledge that they felt new trustees appointed by the BA might bring.

**The report was noted.**

#### 8. Strategic direction - draft Annual Business Plan 2023/24 and strategic priorities update for 2022/23

Members received the report presenting the draft Annual Business Plan for 2023/24 and the final update on this year's set of strategic priorities. The CE thanked the Senior Governance Officer for their work on the report. The CE commented that the Annual Business Plan combined the Strategic Priorities with the financial information from the budget.

The CE updated members as regards external funding bids.

On 1 March 2023 the "FibreBroads" bid was submitted to the Paludiculture Exploration Fund (PEF) for £390,499.69. This was about exploring the potential for more paludiculture (wet farming) in the Broads area and the products derived from the crops.

If successful, the PEF bid would be 100% funded by Natural England and run from May 2023 until March 2025. The Authority would be informed on 9 May if it was one of the selected projects. This was a partnership within the Broads Catchment and Norfolk Fens, aiming to develop different elements of paludiculture including crop cultivation, examining water management issues and product development.

The ambition was to create knowledge and networks, connecting growers with construction businesses, to encourage viable market chains supporting carbon neutrality and nature recovery. The Norwich University for the Arts would be involved to work with the architecture element, to consider how products from the wetter parts of the Broads might be used by the construction industry.

From the Electrifying the Broads feasibility study, the next step would be a project involving the building of a trial boat and installing more charging points, which could be put into action if the funding was available.

The total project cost was approximately £781,000 to run a pilot. Shortly after the feasibility study was completed it was anticipated that the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition would be able to fund phase II. However Round 2 was restricted to 'out of water' testing, and round 3 had a minimum spend of £2million.

The Zero Emissions Vessels and Infrastructure (ZEVI) competition had favourable terms but a £3 million minimum project size. Officers had spoken with the Environment Agency (EA), and the Canals and Rivers Trust to see if there would be the possibility of a larger joint project across the three navigation authorities which could potentially reach the threshold. However, tight timelines for the competition would not enable putting a viable bid together in time for this competition.

However, a positive outcome from those discussions was that the Canal and Rivers Trust was interested in working with the Authority on developing a wider business case to put to DEFRA and the Department of Transport (DfT). Conversations were also planned with the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities. Much had been gained from the first piece of work and it was ready to move ahead, so it was now just a case of finding the right funding.

One gap in the Broads Plan programme was how to connect marginalised communities and the issues around mental health. Following the completion of the successful Burgh Castle Almanac delivered as a part of Water Mills and Marshes from 2018-2021, the Programme Manager of Water Mills and Marshes had been developing an ambitious project called Norfolk Landscapes for Wellbeing (NLW) with The Restoration Trust, University of East Anglia (UEA) and Norfolk Citizens Advice Bureau.

An application for project development funding was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in February 2023. The project would involve people who have been disproportionately affected by Covid and include such groups as young people; people with pre-existing mental health problems; people living with poverty; isolation and disadvantage; people from racialised communities; and traumatised health and social care staff.

For the development phase the project had requested £408,891. The total cost with the match funding was £553,025. For a potential delivery phase, there would be a bid of £1.192m with total delivery costs of £1.78m. This was all being led by the Restoration Trust and the UEA. The Authority was partnering on the access and wellbeing aspects in the Broads.

A date was being planned for a biodiversity workshop. The weeks beginning 19 and 26 June were pencilled in. The CE asked members to advise him on any dates that they were not available for during that two-week period.

There had been regular discussions with Broad Plan partners about water and the challenge that Norfolk was facing in the next 10-15 years and around biodiversity. The recent objectives had been to move actions to enhance and protect biodiversity away from focus on small plots where the aim is to protect individual species, to a landscape scale change.

The response from partners had been very positive, with a greater willingness than ever to work together. In recent discussions one consideration was to make a bid for a Landscape Recovery (LR) project.

Feedback from the CANAPE Project demonstrated that the reason why it worked well was because there was a long period of preparation, engagement and building partnerships. It was thus important to build good relationships with landowners for the LR application.

The Partnership agreed to target a substantive innovative bid for spring 2024 at a Broads catchment scale. Significant commitment from partners had been received: Norfolk County Council was doing work on mapping land ownership; Natural England was contributing supportive work; and there were some existing LR projects who were keen to give advice and help. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) had also committed one of their senior staff to work with the Authority two days a week on this project. A Project Manager could be created within the BA to oversee the project which would facilitate a prompt start. The CE would update members as appropriate.

The Chair asked for clarification on the water levels needed for paludiculture. The CE confirmed that paludiculture was concerned with having enough water of the right kind in the right location which was becoming more and more of a challenge. There was great demand for water for agricultural, domestic and industrial use, and technical issues involved in raising the water level enough to grow the necessary crops for the future. Despite the fact the flooding was an issue generally, the shortage of water was also an issue that this region faced.

The Chair commended the huge effort involved in raising funds.

The CE confirmed that Anglian Water, as well as Essex and Suffolk Water were partners in the project.

A member congratulated the team on the 2022-23 achievements but questioned the delays on the BFI work for 2023-24 and counselled urgency in addressing it. The Director of Strategic Services (DoSS) agreed that it was frustrating. The delay was because of the complexity of the modelling work being developed under contract by consultants. The next meeting of the Elected Members Forum was 4 April and there was a community engagement planned for June.

A member acknowledged the hard work of the team and their achievements in putting bids together and using funds in extremely demanding time frames.

A member commented that ideas could also be suggested for enhancing biodiversity on a small scale: for instance, guidance could be given to companies about what they could do to contribute on an individual level, and this could be discussed in the June workshop. The CE agreed and said that the DoSS would follow this up with the Environment Policy Adviser.

A member commented that under 4.1 Strategic Services Directorate, Table 4, row SD9 on the Annual Business Plan 2023/24, which mentioned priority species and invasive species, it would be beneficial to have actions listed.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Andrée Gee and

**It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Annual Business Plan 2023/24 and to note the final 2022/23 strategic priorities update.**

## 9. Capital funding progress report

Members received the report providing the regular update on the progress in implementing the capital funding programme.

The CE updated members that the new weed cutter and Whaley boats had arrived this week, and thanked the team for the assistance in spending the money wisely and at speed.

The Chair commented that it would be of interest for members to be able to see the new equipment at work when possible.

**The report was noted.**

## 10. Financial performance and direction

Members received the report providing a strategic overview of current key financial issues and items for decision.

The Director of Finance (DoF) updated members at the meeting. The additional National Park Grant money would likely be received early April 2023. Each English National Park would be receiving £440,000. The Authority would also be receiving an additional £26,807 for biodiversity net gain, which all local planning authorities would also be receiving, and a further £3,000 for The Access for All project. However, although this was good news, all the amounts needed to be spent in 2022-23.

The Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee added that it was agreed at the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) earlier that week that the additional grant money should be placed in a new earmarked reserve to give time to consider how to spend it. In terms of the biodiversity net gain money, members supported delegating authority to the DoF to consider how that money might best be accounted for.

The DoF made members aware of an error in the report relating to the income and expenditure figures: on page 93 it stated that there was an “underspend” within Strategic Services, but this should have read “overspend”.

On Table 1, page 92 of the combined papers, it showed that at the end of January there was a favourable variance of £37,306. At the end of February this had increased to £905,800 but this was due to the receipt of the capital money from DEFRA. This would decrease by the end of March, and as of 16 March £600,000 of the capital money had already been spent.

Paragraph 8.2 on page 97 of the papers asked members to approve the Standing Orders relating to contracts on scaffolding at Muttons Mill. The DoF made members aware that the Authority's Standing Orders relating to contracts currently stated that any contract that was extended above 10% needed to come back to Board approval. As part of the renewal of documents this would be checked that it was consistent with what other national parks and local authorities do, and the plan was to take an updated version to ARC in July.

The DoF updated members on the Annual Capital Treasury and Investment Strategy. At the previous ARC it was suggested to undertake some soft market testing on whether a treasury advisor should be employed and the DoF would research this.

The DoF pointed out that under paragraph 10 on page 9 of the report, under Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, this was adopted at the ARC with one minor change: in the appendix on page 134, paragraph 3.1 had been amended to make it clear that it included members. A new version was now available on the website.

In regard to the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy, no further amendments were suggested from ARC.

A member commented that he was disappointed that tolls were increased on the pretext of having to change the shared allocation cost percentages to move Navigation money into the National Park account because the National Park account had been flatlining for 5 years. It was clear that that decision was predicated on the fact that the National Park grant was insufficient. It was disappointing that members had not been asked to reconsider whether it was right to push so much Navigation money into the National Park fund.

The Chair responded that it was inadvisable to use the word "pretext" and asked the member to withdraw that word, as it was not a pretext.

The DoF confirmed that the £440,000 and the biodiversity net gain was a last-minute notification from DEFRA. The toll accounts had been printed and were already issued as this information came in. It was also very clear that this funding was only to be used for National Park purposes and it could not be used to support Navigation.

The CE suggested that talks could be had with DEFRA to discuss possible support specifically for Navigation. Some capital funding would make a difference and may also ultimately assist with the issue of tolls. It would be useful to draw up a list of possible capital projects for Navigation.

A member supported the idea of approaching DEFRA about capital funding for Navigation and a member added that given the demanding time scales recently experienced, it would be advisable to also have a business case ready as well as a list of projects and items.



A member commented that the money was to help the Authority adapt to having less money in the future.

Members agreed to add an extra recommendation to this item: that the extra money should go into an earmarked reserve called 'medium term financial planning'.

Michael Scott proposed, seconded by Matthew Shardlow and

**It was resolved unanimously:**

- i. To note the outcome of the National Park Grant settlement for 2023/24 and the additional National Park Grant provided for 2022/23.**
- ii. To note the income and expenditure figures.**
- iii. To approve the waiver of Standing Orders relating to contracts as set out in paragraph 8.2.**
- iv. To adopt the Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategy.**
- v. To adopt the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy.**
- vi. To place the extra money into the Medium-Term Financial Planning earmarked reserve.**

## **11. Broads Peat extension**

Members received the report providing an update on progress with the Broads Peat project, funded through the Peatland Discovery Grant.

The DoSS updated members that in section 7.2 the UK Peatland Code was published last week.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Andrée Gee and

**It was resolved unanimously to:**

- i. note the updates and;**
- ii. Subject to the extension being funded by Natural England, approve waivers of Standing Orders relating to contracts, to commission additional activities (section 5.5).**
- iii. Approve the officer's commencement of extension activities before the Control Change Notice is received, following Natural England's notification via email.**

## **12. Oulton Neighbourhood Plan - adoption**

Members received the report which proposed the adoption of the Oulton Neighbourhood Plan, following the referendum on 2 February 2023.

Gail Harris proposed, seconded by Harry Blathwayt and

**It was resolved unanimously to make/adopt the Oulton Neighbourhood Plan.**

### 13. Consultation on the County Deal

Members received the report setting out the proposed arrangements for a Norfolk Leadership Board and the principles underpinning the delivery of the County Deal for Norfolk.

The CE commented that this was an important development in Norfolk but the Deal itself was a political issue which would require approval by the government and the County Council. Although it would be inappropriate for a non-political body to debate the merits of the Deal itself, it was important for members to consider the processes that the County Council were thinking of putting in place if the Deal was successful which would involve the Broads Authority.

If the Deal was successful, it would have potential benefits for the Broads Authority (BA) in terms of its potential influence that it could exert on behalf of the Broads, and could open the way to some potential funding for the future.

A member asked what the anticipated timeline was for the Deal. The Head of Strategy & Policy (HoSP) from Norfolk County Council (NCC) confirmed that the most critical date was 12 December 2023 at which point the NCC would have a vote at full council to adopt the Deal. It was important to realise that the Deal was entirely conditional on the NCC changing its governance model. From then on, the NCC would implement parts of the Deal at different stages.

A member asked who would be setting the agenda for the committee and whether members would be able to propose items. The HoSP confirmed that details were still being worked on but the intention was for it to be a collaborative meeting where members could add items to the agenda.

A member raised a concern that the Deal did not have sustainability at heart, and did not show a balance with, for instance, community groups or environmental organisations and concerns which go beyond that of just looking after businesses. The HoSP agreed that on the devolution framework that was published the green agenda seemed limited. However, the Norfolk Investment Fund would enable more in-depth items on the agendas and identify projects and activities at a local level.

A member commented on the importance of the Authority being present at the Deal meeting, and that although the amount of money that had been talked about was small, it was important to know how any money would flow down to the Authority.

The HoSP agreed that it was important to have as many diverse voices around the table as possible as it concerned what was best for the County as a whole and therefore they were looking to expand membership. The framework would also give an opportunity to the Broads Authority as a planning authority to be more actively involved in some of the decisions around development.

A member supported having a strong voice at this table for the benefit of the environment.

A member commented that the consultation was premature as the details were not developed and urged the Authority not to send a consultation response at this time. The CE agreed that it did not seem appropriate for the Authority to send a response.

The Chair thanked the HoSP for attending the meeting.

Members were content with the 'joint working principles' that were proposed to underpin the implementation, planning and delivery of the Deal, and with the proposal, including the draft Terms of Reference, to establish a Norfolk Leadership Board which would build on the Norfolk Public Sector Leaders' Board.

## 14. Appointments to Navigation Committee

Simon Sparrow left the meeting for this item.

Members received the report recommending the appointment of co-opted members to fill the eight vacancies on the Navigation Committee.

A member endorsed the applicants but added that it was disappointing not to have a more diverse range, and that more effort should be applied to this matter ahead of the next round of recruitment, in order to attract a broader group of candidates.

Nicky Talbot proposed, seconded by Tim Jickells and

**It was resolved unanimously to accept the recommendations of the selection panel, endorsed by the Navigation Committee, and appoint the individuals named in paragraph 4.1 as co-opted members to the Navigation Committee.**

Simon Sparrow returned to the meeting.

## 15. Committee calendar 2023/24

Members received the report on the proposed meeting dates for the 23/24 year.

Andrée Gee proposed, seconded by Stephen Bolt and

**It was resolved unanimously to approve the committee calendar in Appendix 1, subject to consultation with the Navigation Committee.**

## 16. Member report on outside bodies - Norfolk and Suffolk Charitable Trust

Members received the report by Paul Hayden, one of the members appointed by the Broads Authority to the Norfolk and Suffolk Charitable Trust.

The Chair reminded members appointed to outside bodies to submit a report if they haven't already done so, and email reports to [committees@broads-authority.gov.uk](mailto:committees@broads-authority.gov.uk).

**The report was noted.**

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

There were no matters to report under this item.

## 18. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

[Audit & Risk Committee – 29 November 2022](#)

[Broads Local Access Forum – 30 November 2022](#)

[Planning Committee – 9 December 2022](#)

[Planning Committee – 3 February 2023](#)

## 19. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

## 20. Formal questions

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

## 21. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 12 May 2023 at 10.00am at The King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich.

The meeting ended at 11:35am.

Signed by

Chairman

## Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 17 March 2023

<b>Member</b>	<b>Agenda/minute</b>	<b>Nature of interest</b>
Harry Blathwayt Nigel Brennan Andrée Gee Gail Harris James Knight Leslie Mogford	Item 13: Consultation on the County Deal	Other registrable interest through membership of a Norfolk local authority. The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to participate and vote at any Broads Authority or Committee meeting.
Andrée Gee	Item 12: Oulton Broad Neighbourhood Plan - adoption	Member of East Suffolk Council, other registerable interest
Simon Sparrow	Item 14: Appointments to Navigation Committee	One of the recommended candidates. A non-registerable interest which related directly to his wellbeing. Left the room for this item.