

Navigation Committee

09 January 2025

Agenda item number 10

Construction Maintenance and Ecology work programme progress update

Report by Head of Construction, Maintenance & Ecology, and Ecology & Design
Supervisor

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. Maintaining water depths for navigation

- 1.1. The detailed breakdown in Appendix 1 gives progress and volumes for the dredging programme for 2024/25 (April 2024 to end November 2024). A total of 17,330 m³ of dredged sediment was removed from the prioritised sites. This figure represents 47% of the programmed target of 36,630 m³ for the year.
- 1.2. The dredging in the River Bure between Wroxham Viaduct and Coltishall Lock has been completed. The final volume removed reflected the maintenance dredging requirement to take out the sediment deposited in recent times. Three areas had variations to the original dredging plan. This was at Bridge Broad where 2,900 m³ was removed from the target, following the landowner taking back management of this site from the Broads Authority; 1,000 m³ was found to be hard gravel inside the marker buoys at Caen Meadow and therefore outside the scope of purely maintenance dredging; and 1,200 m³ upstream of Coltishall Rising Sun, again where patches of natural gravel bed were within the channel. The gravel features are not included as part of the maintenance dredging programme, as these very upper reaches are where the River Bure retains some characteristics of its original chalk stream heritage.
- 1.3. Stalham Staithe dredging is due to start in the second week of December and run until Christmas. During the dredging works, Stalham Staithe 24-hour mooring will also be closed. The Notice to Mariners of the navigation and 24 hour mooring closure is [here](#).

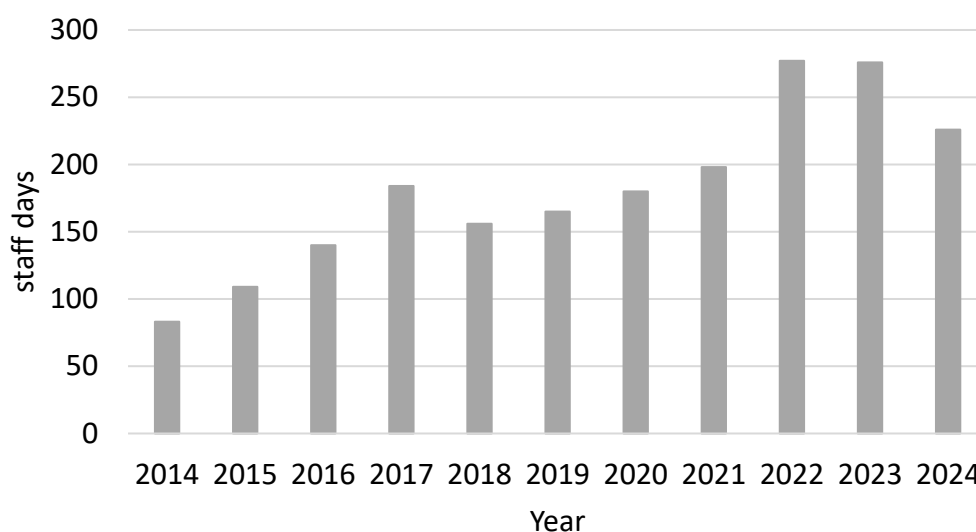
2. Maintaining safe public mooring facilities

- 2.1. Refurbishment of the timber capping and waling at North Cove 24 hour mooring on the River Waveney is underway. Essential maintenance is being carried out on the timbers and the pathway, from Monday 9 December to Monday 23 December, with the mooring closed to the public during these times. More information can be found on the [Boating News page](#).
- 2.2. For the more detailed reports on the minor mooring maintenance work completed, these are included in the Chief Executive's regular public [Broads Briefings](#).

3. Water Plant Management

- 3.1. The water plant cutting season during 2024 has ended with another successful year of continued maintenance of the river reaches and marked channels where water plants commonly grow. Cutting has continued in the marked channels of the Upper Thurne; the River Bure upstream of Wroxham; the Waveney between Beccles and Geldeston, the River Ant around Wayford Bridge and Dilham; Thorpe River Green and in the channels of Rockland and Bargate Broad on the River Yare; and the River Wensum upstream of Trowse.

Figure 1. Total annual workdays spent on water plant cutting in the Broads



- 3.2. In 2024, slightly less time was spent cutting water plants compared to 2022 and 2023. However, the overall trend shows that the current level of cutting to maintain access throughout the Broads public navigation is more than twice as much as it was ten years ago. As water quality and clarity continues to improve throughout the Broadland rivers, this trend of increased water plant growth is also set to continue.

4. Riverside Tree Management

- 4.1. Work over the coming autumn and winter (2024/25) will be the third year of the Authority's five-year programme (2022/23 to 2026/27) aimed solely at maintaining safety and clear visibility within the navigation. Prioritised sections for management in 2024/25 are shown in the maps on the Authority [website](#). The landowners of these stretches have all been contacted and agreements are in place for the work to be carried out this winter.
- 4.2. The remaining stretches of riverside tree management to be completed in the final years of the plan are shown in another set of [maps](#), with indications of which year each stretch will be targeted.

5. Our resources

- 5.1. At Mutford Lock in Oulton Broad, one of the penstock sluices failed entirely on the set of gates on the freshwater side. These steel framed sluices regulate water from one side of the lock gates to the other, with each individual gate leaf having one penstock each. The lock has been able to operate adequately with one penstock in this affected set of gates, but a longer-term fix is essential. To enable the repair, the first set of gates on the freshwater side needs to be lifted out entirely, which is not a simple or quick task. Once they have been lifted, we are using this opportunity to inspect the wooden gates, make any required repairs to the timbers and replace both penstocks in the set.

- 5.2. A 60-ton crane is booked for the lift. It has more than enough capacity to lift each gate leaf and can do so from a safe distance to protect the lock walls from excessive additional ground pressure. During the works, and to allow time for repairs to the gates, Mutford Lock will be closed for all vessels from Monday 3 February until Friday 28 March. To avoid disruption to those seeking entry to the Broads from the North Sea, the closure at Mutford Lock has been planned to be after the expected maintenance which will prevent lifting of Haven Bridge at Great Yarmouth. Mutford Lock is aimed to open again before the Easter Holidays. A Notice to Mariners will be issued prior to Christmas.
- 5.3. Following the 2024 Tolls Review and the Broads Authority decisions for 2025/26 budgeting, the allocation of operational staff time has changed to a time split of 60:40 (National Park: Navigation). The shift from the previous 70:30 split effectively means a reduced amount of time available in 2025/26 for Operations Technicians to carry out navigation maintenance tasks. In real terms, this reduction is the same as reducing the Operations Technicians posts by a 1.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) on navigation tasks.
- 5.4. The allocation between National Park and Navigation activity is managed through detailed work programming and tracking through the year via timesheets. The main area that will be reduced from the Navigation allocation will be dredging, with 405 Operations Technician workdays removed from the programme. As the total number of employed staff has not changed, the time available will be added to the conservation management programme, as additional funding has been made available over the next five years via the agri-environment schemes the Authority delivers in the biodiversity rich fens.

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

Appendix 1 – Annual dredging progress 2024/25 (April 2024 to end November 2024)

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Project title Dredge site and sediment re-use location	Active Broads Authority dredging weeks completed/planned	Planned volume removed m ³	Actual volume removed m ³	Planned annual project cost ¹	Actual project cost
River Bure (continuation from 2023/24) Juby's Farm to Hoveton Viaduct	28/27	17,900	12,810	£190,710	£191,920
<i>Lagoon re-use site</i> <i>NB: Planned volume includes Bridge Broad (2,870m³) which is no longer part of the work programme</i>					
River Yare Rockland Broad (channels & dykes)	8/26	13,500	4,520	£190,020	£55,380
<i>Rockland Short Dyke & Postwick Marshes re-use sites & Postwick Tip. Running December to March</i>					
River Ant Stalham Dyke	0/3	830	0	£37,140	£1,810
<i>Hunsett Mill re-use site; work planned to start December 2024</i>					
River Yare Bargate Broad	0/4	2,400	0	£45,150	£1,920
<i>Postwick Marshes re-use & Postwick Tip. Running in February 2025 concurrently with Rockland dredging</i>					
River Thurne Catfield Dyke	0/4	2,000	0	£27,350	£580
<i>Deferred to 2025/26 due to delays in completing the Upper Bure project</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	-	-	-	-	£3,750
Future site preparation Survey, mitigation & set-up	-	-	-	-	£3,640
Dredging support activities	-	-	-	-	£4,980
Total	36/64	36,630	17,330	490,370	263,980