

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025

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Present

Harry Blathwayt – in the Chair, Stephen Bolt, Peter Dixon, Andrée Gee, Alan Goodchild, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Paul Hayden, Tristram Hilborn, Martyn Hooton, Tim Jickells, Siân Limpenny, Leslie Mogford, Gurpreet Padda, Michael Scott, Matthew Shardlow.

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Emma Krelle – Director of Finance, Kate Knights – Historic Environment Manager, Rob Rogers – Director of Operations, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services, Lorraine Taylor – Governance Officer, and Sara Utting – Senior Governance Officer.

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 Vic Thomson, Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, and Fran Whymark.

2. Chairman's announcements

The Chair confirmed that there was no change to the order of the agenda items.

Related Party Declarations

The Chair said that Members should have received an email from the Finance team that asked Members to complete their annual related party declarations and added that the declarations formed an important part of the Statement of Accounts which the Auditors checked in detail. It was therefore important that they were returned by 3 April 2025. Any queries should be directed to the Director of Finance.

Presentation to Adrian Stevens

The Chair reported that Adrian Stevens, better known as Ady, had completed 25 years of service to the Broads Authority. Ady had shown exceptional commitment to his work, gaining extensive knowledge and expertise in all aspects of managing the Broads area.

Ady joined the Authority in March 2000 and spent the first few years working as an Assistant Project Supervisor for the New Deal for Young People scheme, designed to reduce unemployment by providing training. At this time Ady worked with James Watts and Phil

Heath based out of the field base at Oby where teams of young people were brought into the world of outdoor work by Authority staff.

On becoming a permanent member of staff in 2002, Ady took on more responsibility as a New Deal Volunteer Supervisor for the then Navigation Works Team. After the Authority's involvement with New Deal ended, Ady joined the Navigation Works team as a Technician. For a while he was the main person carrying out water plant cutting, using the Authority's first 'cut and collect' vessel called "Horace". This was in the days when plant cutting was focussed only in the Upper Thurne and a few small sections of the upper Bure.

Ady's competence, skills and friendly manner soon saw him promoted again to Senior Navigation Work Technician in December 2009. This job role changed to a wider remit in 2011 when all the works teams were integrated and Ady was one of the Maintenance Team's Senior Technicians. During this time Ady successfully led the on-site delivery of numerous practical projects and played a key role in mentoring apprentices and volunteers, demonstrating his ability to guide and support others.

Then only six months ago, Ady stepped up again to his current post of Maintenance Manager, managing the work carried out by a team of 11 staff, three apprentices and all the volunteers who work with the Maintenance team. Who knows what some of those volunteers had been inspired to go on to in their careers?

Ady was a good all-rounder with a great array of practical skills, extensive knowledge of the Broads, and his ability to get on with pretty much everyone helps ensure smooth communication, cooperation, and successful project completion. These qualities reflect his dedication, impact, and contribution to the Broads and the Broads Authority.

The Chair thanked Ady and presented him with a small token of the Authority's appreciation for his 25 years' service.

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.

The Senior Governance Officer (SGO) reminded Members that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members, particularly local authority Members where their Register of Interests stated that they were members of local authorities, to participate and vote on item 13 of the agenda: Consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk.

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 24 January 2025 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) said that the Authority had still not heard anything from the Department of Transport about the ongoing Appeal under Section 31 of the Harbours Act 1964. However, the appeal was listed as a contingent liability in the Statement of Accounts and the Director of Finance therefore wrote to the Department of Transport and commented that, given it was listed in the Statement of Accounts, the Authority would appreciate an outcome from that appeal. There had been no response to date.

The Director of Strategic Services (DSS) said that the Authority had been successful in one of the bids for a Water Restoration Fund (WRF) grant in the amount of ~£200,000. The Broads Authority would be partnering with the Norwich University of the Arts and the River Waveney Trust. The output of the project would be to deliver some immersive visualisation and simulation of the impact of climate change on farms and to do some Citizen Science around water monitoring with support from the Broadland Catchment Partnership. The DSS said that this helped deliver some of the objectives from the BFI workshop for Members held in January. Further updates on the WRF project would be provided to Members in due course.

The report was noted.

8. Strategic priorities update for 2024/25

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The Chief Executive (CE) said that this was the last time that Members would see this set of strategic priorities as it was coming to the year end. The CE said that everything that was promised for 2024/25 had been delivered. Of particular importance to note was the completion of the replacement of the online tolls system and said that this was something that the Management Team had identified as a significant risk. The Authority collected over £4,000,000 through the Tolls Team each year and the online system was an integral part of that operation but the software had not been supported. Bill Housden, Head of ICT, and Steve Linford, IT Project Officer, embarked on a project to update the software and a substantial sum of money had been put aside. The CE said that the project had come in significantly under budget and it had been delivered on time and with just over a week into the process of renewing tolls, an additional 350 people had already signed up to pay online. The big advantage of those extra people having paid online was that it saved the Authority money – over 7,000 toll reminders were sent out electronically for a total cost of 83p, which compared to postage costs of £1.23 per letter – and it made the whole process of paying tolls online a much simpler process. The CE thanked both Bill and Steve for all their hard work to get the software up and running on time.

A Member asked what the timescale for phase 2 of the online software project was. The CE said that there were two ICT projects that needed to be completed before work started on phase 2, these were an update to the Ranger's App and an upgrade of the Authority's planning application system.

The report was noted.

9. Draft Annual Business Plan 2025/26

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The SGO referred Members to section 3.1 of the report and confirmed that the Authority was still awaiting confirmation of the National Park Grant and therefore the wording to section 3 of the Draft Plan, page 41 of the papers, correctly reflected the current situation and no change was required at this stage.

A Member commented on the importance of Ranger Services in terms of health and safety, and noted that the budget was cut by approximately £100,000 and asked how any cuts were achieved without compromising safety. The Director of Operations (DO) said that the Authority had realigned the Ranger team to ensure that the same level of Ranger services provided pre-Covid and confirmed that there would still be Rangers on the water. The Authority was confident that a good Ranger service would still be provided.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Tony Grayling.

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Annual Business Plan 2025/26.

10. Financial performance and direction

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF said that the report provided the latest figures because the February figures were in the process of being prepared.

Members noted:

- i. the latest position on the National Park Grant settlement for 2025/26.**
- ii. the actual income and expenditure figures and prudential indicators.**

11. Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategy 2025/26

Members received the report of the Director of Finance (DF). The DF said that this was an annual strategy that the Broads Authority was required to have. At its meeting on 11 February 2025 the Risk, Audit and Governance (RAG) Committee recommended the Strategy to the Broads Authority for approval. The DF said that the Strategy set out the Authority's investments, borrowing, capital expenditure and prudential indicators for 2025/26. The prudential indicators would be reported quarterly to Members at the appropriate Broads Authority meeting.

A Member commented that the Authority was rightly very risk adverse, however, a huge amount of money was kept in instant access accounts and asked whether some of that money could be invested on a longer-term basis to maximise the income. The Member added that not many organisations would keep a cash balance as high as the Authority does. The DF said that the instant access did look high, however, this went up and down at various points throughout the year, and the aim was to keep it at a minimum balance. Although the Authority's expenditure was known, with the uncertainty around National Park grants, the income was less so. The DF said that she did not wish to tie the money up in fixed-term accounts that the Authority was not able to access if needed. The policy was risk adverse and it did limit investments to less than a year. This was discussed at the RAG Committee in February and it was agreed that longer term investment would be looked at once there was some certainty what the National Park settlement might mean in future years.

Leslie Mogford proposed, seconded by Matt Shardlow.

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategy.

12. Broads Authority Design Guide and Code SPD - Endorsement

Members received the report of the Heritage and Design Manager (HDM). The HDM said that the Broads Authority Design Guide and Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was endorsed by the Planning Committee on 7 March 2025. The HDM gave an overview of the report and said that the Design Guide and Code had previously been presented to Members to approve for consultation. Responses to the consultation had been considered and where appropriate, the document had been amended to incorporate suggestions made by consultees.

A Member congratulated the HDM on an impressive document. A Member said that this would be a very useful aid when putting in a planning application.

In response to a question on whether the document provided the Authority with greater protection in relation to planning appeals, the HDM said that it would be a material consideration during the planning decisions and also appeals. The Inspector would have the Design Guide and Code SPD in their suite of documents that they would refer to when making their decisions.

Andrée Gee proposed, seconded by Martyn Hooton.

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Broads Authority Design Guide and Code SPD.

13. Consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (CE). The CE said that the consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk was an issue that the Broads Authority needed to keep a watchful eye on. It was important to maintain contact with our county and district councillors to understand as the situation became clearer as to what impact the pattern of

local government in the future would look like and what impact it would have on the Authority.

The interesting thing for the Broads Authority was it was one of the few bodies that already stretched across Norfolk and Suffolk, therefore whatever pattern the future of local government was, the Authority would be dealing with more than one unitary authority rather than the current pattern of two county councils and six district councils. The CE thought that there was a potential benefit for the Broads Authority in the medium term as there would be fewer bodies to interact with. The Authority would need to make sure that strong relationships were built with those new bodies.

The CE said that the consultation made no reference to the Broads Authority and asked a series of questions that, as a non-political organisation, the Authority had to be circumspect about how it engaged.

The CE said that there were two items for Members to consider: the first for the Chair and CE to keep a watching brief on things as they developed and engage with colleagues in the constituent local authorities as and when appropriate; and second to ask Members for their views on the consultation response. The CE, therefore, asked Members to comment on how they thought it best to respond to the consultation.

The Chair reminded Members appointed by local authorities that they were at the meeting to represent the interests of the Broads Authority rather than their own particular districts.

Members' observations and comments were as follows:

- The Authority should be cautious and if a response was sent, it should be focused on how it related to the statutory purposes of the Authority and should not feel obliged to answer all questions if not appropriate.
- Would like to be led by the Authority's officers on how the consultation was approached.
- Asked whether it was necessary to provide a response as the Authority was not political, and whatever response given might not reflect the views of all of the Authority's Members.
- It would be good to make clear what the Broads Authority's objectives were to whatever organisation came into control and to emphasise that the Authority would look forward to work with them to protect the environment and protect navigation across the whole of the Broads area.
- Thought that the Authority should respond and point out that the new authorities would be required to appoint members to the Broads Authority and that ought to be considered as the plan was developed.
- A general response should be provided to highlight the Authority's statutory obligations and this was an opportunity that should not be missed.

- Reading through the consultation it would be difficult for the Authority to answer some of the questions, however, thought that any concerns or things to 'have regard to' should be considered.
- Would it be useful to develop an evaluation framework to link the goals and objectives of the Broads Authority to the activities, outcomes and impact. It was an opportunity to reflect on what outcomes were sought and to talk about things like EDI.
- Should not answer questions one and two. However, in respect of the other questions, if the wording 'through the Mayoral Authority' was removed, it was all the things that the Broads Authority already did.

A Member asked whether the Authority had a clear view of how the planning function would be affected under any new authorities. The CE said that he did not anticipate any significant impact or change in that. He added that the biggest change would be the membership of the Authority, and engagement with a unitary authority would present the Authority with a number of opportunities by opening up more connections and the chance to engage across a broader field of activity.

The CE said that he had received a series of emails from leaders and chief executives of local authorities asking for the Broads Authority's views and he confirmed that he had not responded with any particular view.

The CE proposed that a generic answer was constructed in that if the reorganisation proceeded with the establishment of a combined authority and unitary authorities, then the Broads Authority would want to develop strong relationships with the new organisations and for them to acknowledge the recent change in the Act which required them to go beyond 'having regard' to 'further the Authority's purposes'. The generic answer, once prepared, could then be distributed to the local authorities setting out the Broads Authority's statutory purposes, ambitions, and challenges faced. In addition, it was important to emphasise that whatever the new local government looked like, the Authority would be very keen to maximise its relationship with those new organisations. It did not seem appropriate to respond to the specific questions raised in the consultation.

The CE said that, if Members agreed, a response would be prepared in consultation with other officers and the Chair of the Authority.

Leslie Mogford proposed, seconded by Tim Jickells.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i. That the Chair and Chief Executive to keep a watching brief on how the devolution deal develops and engage with colleagues in the constituent local authorities as and when appropriate.**
- ii. To agree that the Chief Executive prepare, in consultation with officers and the Chair, the Authority's response to the government consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk.**

14. Member Code of Conduct

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO). The SGO said that this was part of the periodic review of the constitutional documents. The Standards Committee reviewed the Member Code of Conduct at its meeting on 20 February 2025, the details of which were set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report. The SGO said that all the amendments were shown as tracked changes in Appendix 1 to the report and Members were asked to adopt the revised code as shown.

The Chair of the Standards Committee confirmed that the Code of Conduct was reviewed in great detail and there was constructive and in-depth discussion on the document.

A Member commented that on page 4 of the Member Code of Conduct it highlighted that, as Members, they impartially exercise responsibilities in the interests of the local community and said that Members did that. The Member asked whether this could be amended to include 'due regard to national priorities' because as Members, they did not just take account of local community interests, but also the national priorities. In addition, on page 5 of the Code where it stated, 'I treat other members and members of the public with respect', the Member asked whether this could be strengthened and include the wording 'and also challenge behaviours where they were deemed to be disrespectful' to make the Code of Conduct much more proactive. The Member said that they felt very welcomed on the Broads Authority board and had not seen any disrespectful behaviour, but felt that they would like to be empowered to challenge behaviour.

The SGO responded that the Member Code of Conduct was a replica of the national model code, however, confirmed that it would be possible to add the wording suggested by the Member.

A Member commented that they wanted to reflect on their short period of being a Member of the Broads Authority and said that they had felt really welcomed by everyone.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Siân Limpenny.

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Members with the following further amendments:

- i. **Page 4, 1st bullet point to read: I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community and give due regard to national priorities.**
- ii. **Page 5, item 1. 1st bullet point to read: I treat other members and members of the public with respect and also challenge behaviours where they were deemed to be disrespectful.**

15. Appointment to the Navigation Committee

Members received the report of the Senior Governance Officer (SGO) on the appointment of Sue Cadamy as a co-opted Member of the Navigation Committee with effect from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2027.

Alan Goodchild proposed, seconded by Peter Dixon.

It was resolved unanimously to accept the recommendation of the selection panel, endorsed by the Navigation Committee, and appoint Sue Cadamy as a co-opted member to the Navigation Committee for an initial two-year term to 31 March 2027.

16. 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.

17. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Standards Committee - 21 June 2024

Broads Local Access Forum - 20 November 2024

Risk, Audit and Governance Committee - 27 November 2024

Planning Committee - 10 January 2025

Planning Committee - 7 February 2025

The Chair commented that it was unfortunate that the Broads Local Access Forum meeting on 5 March 2025 was not quorate and said that he would work with the Chair of that body to ensure that did not happen again.

18. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

The Chair said that, sadly for him, this was the Senior Governance Officer's (SGO) last meeting as she would be taking early retirement which he hoped would be long and happy. The Chair said that to say that the SGO had been invaluable to him as a new Chair was a huge understatement and thanked her very much.

19. Formal questions

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

20. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 09 May 2025 at 10.00am at the King's Centre, 63-75 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1PH.

The meeting ended at 11:05am

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests: Broads Authority, 14 March 2025

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
All local authority members	Item 13: Consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk	Other registrable interest. The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to participate and vote at any Broads Authority or Committee meeting on a proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk.