NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSE BOARD
NAVIGATION AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES 15 APRIL 2026

PRESENT:	Jamie Finlay	Chair
	Brian Archibald	Commissioner
	Hugh Shaw	Commissioner
	Dick Welsh	Commissioner
	Mike Bullock	Chief Executive
	Phil Day	Director of Operations
	Mairi Rae	Director of Business Services
	Peter Douglas	Navigation Manager
	Ewen MacKerchar	Marine Operations Manager
	Joe Jeffrey	Delivery and Planning Manager
	Paul Hudson	Programme and Renewals Manager
	Joe Hothersall	Asset Manager
	Gillian Burns	Navigation Officer
	Jennifer Matthews	Coastal Inspector
	Adam Lewis	Coastal Inspector
	Karen Charleson	Senior Executive Assistant (Notes)

ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Navigation and Operations Committee met on 15 April 2026. The agenda covered key areas including:

- Navigation, Operations and Business Services reports
- Recent marine incidents and assessment of AtoN adequacy
- NLB lighthouse tender fleet status and helicopter operations
- Climate change operational adaption measures

The Committee can confirm that assurance was received in relation to all key issues.

- The Executive provided the necessary assurance that every effort was being made to attain, or exceed, the IALA recommended CAT 1 AtoN availability level.

- The Capital and Maintenance Programme remains under review and is subject to modification as operational priorities change.

- The Risk Cards for Aids to Navigation Provision, Asset Loss or Damage, Information Technology and Operational Technology, Technological Change and Obsolescence and Natural Events have been viewed by the Committee and are updated on a regular basis.

The Committee wishes to draw the Governance Board's attention to the following issues:

- **AtoN Availability.** The AtoN Category 1 availability is at **99.93%** and exceeds the IALA recommended level. This reflects the teamwork and tremendous commitment, dedication and effort by all those contributing to operations from across the organisation. Category 2 and 3 availabilities are well above the IALA standards.

- **Navigational Incidents.** Two incidents have been reported since the last meeting:
  - The 24 metre workboat MV HEADCORN sank at its moorings in Oban Bay on 3 March. POLE STAR's emergency wreck marking buoy was retrieved and deployed by a local vessel. MV HEADCORN has since been raised.
  - The 18metre tour vessel CUMA ran aground and sank in Loch Roag, Lewis on 21 March. The Harbour Authority have marked the wreck.

Neither incident was as a result of AtoN failure.

- **AtoN Inspections.** At the end of March 2026,1,522 LLA AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 2,428 (62.7%) during this reporting year (provisional figures). This is below the target of 70% which is due to only having one vessel for a period of time. This is the first time that the target has been missed and is strong evidence that NLB requires 2 vessels. 142 AtoN are recorded as not inspected within the last 3 years. 404 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 491 (82.3%). One NLB AtoN is currently outwith the 3-year maximum inspection period.

- **Planned Maintenance.** Overall planned maintenance overdue continues to reduce (328 at end of March 2026), demonstrating the value (and success) of the plan of action briefed to the committee in August 2025.

- **Vessels.**
  - PHAROS experienced 10 days of downtime since the last committee meeting due to defect rectification. The Committee noted the update on the windlasses and main crane.
  - POLE STAR has a number of warranty defects which are being progressed. Concurrent activity such as local light inspections by road, familiarisation and training are taking place whilst she is alongside.

- **Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code implications for Oban Base.** The PMFSC published last year provided additional obligations to its predecessor code, with ramifications for the Oban Base. NLB have declared full compliance with the code (31 March) and have developed an Operating Procedure document which was discussed by the Committee.
  - A standing agenda item will be added to NavOps Committee meetings going forward to monitor.
  - PMFSC places ultimate responsibility upon a Duty Holder – after discussion, the Committee agreed the Duty Holder would be undertaken, on behalf of the NLB Governance Board, by the Co-opted Commissioners who sit on the NavOps Committee, and who are appointed for their specialist maritime knowledge in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, Schedule 8 2(2), who will subsequently report to the Governance Board.
  - PMFSC requires the appointment of a Designated Person – this will be the Navigation Manager.

- **Oban harbour area.**
  - The HRO remains with Transport Scotland to determine but there are positive indications post-election that this will occur.

- Following the sinking of the Headcorn on its mooring, resultant oil leaks led to significant community concern. NLB intervened to highlight this to MCA and the owner took action to boom the wreck and plug leaks. At NLB's request, an OBMG meeting was held with the MCA and owner which helped in community understanding.

- **Resilience.**
  - The conflict in the Middle East, coupled with conflict and instability elsewhere around the world, has highlighted the need for resilience across organisations. NLB's Global Instability Risk Register is being used to track developments and highlight key risks. Ship and helicopter fuel may be affected by these issues and the Committee discussed mitigation measures. NLB features in the national emergency plan for fuel.
  - The Chief Executive presented a series of initiatives NLB is using as part of resilience building including tri-GLA discussions, local community relationships, and the use of GRAD. This all adds to NLB's corporate planning and considerations pertaining to finance, and the resilience of supply chains, cyber infrastructure, and security.

- **Neist Point.** The Committee received a presentation on the condition of the former keeper's cottages at Neist Point which are owned by a neighbour and are in serious disrepair. Given the safety concerns involved (RLK, technicians, heli ops and general public), the Committee agreed a proposal to purchase the cottages from the neighbour at minimal cost. If successful, NLB would make them secure, safe, wind and watertight as well as protecting any NLB reputational risks.

- **Rova Head.** Pilot reports of an unreliable sector have been received and will be investigated by an NLB vessel, and then a meeting with Port Authority arranged to follow up.

- **CDM-T Lamps.** 6 stations use specialist 20W lamps which have been discontinued. The Committee approved a proposal to change 3 of these 6 stations back to a 35W lamp in order to manage stocks of the remaining 20W lamps until such time as all stations are upgraded to LED lamps during capital refurbishments. This change will not affect range and there are no NTM considerations.

- **ASP.** 3 suppliers remain in the process with CAB submission being 21 April 2026. Contract award is still anticipated as being mid-July 2026.

- **Scottish Government Frameworks.** Final written confirmation from DfT is still required but confidence is high that NLB will be able to utilise the agreements as published in SPPN 5/2026.

- **Scottish Government Elections – 7 May 2026.** The Committee discussed the need for the Executive, supported by Commissioners, to engage with the new administration following the elections and brief on NLB's role.

- **Risk Cards.** Cards 8, 9 and 16 were reviewed. Cards 5, 6, 10, 12 and 15 were noted. One new risk was escalated to the Committee:
  - POLE STAR crane manufacture (Sormec) has been slow to respond and/or assist with warranty claims to date. There is a high probability it is likely that this will continue

after the warranty period. The key mitigation is to find a long-term UK maintenance partner beyond the guarantee period to provide support.

- **Navigation Manager.** The Committee took the opportunity to thank the Navigation Manager for his years of service to NLB.

Escalated Matters
There are no matters escalated to the Governance Board.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the April 2026 NavOps Committee.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Commissioner Charteris and Karl Davies (Coastal Inspector).

Declarations of Interest
There were no declarations of interest highlighted at the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the NavOps Committee meeting held on 28 January 2026 were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the update provided within the meeting pack. There were no open actions for discussion.

4. NAVIGATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The Committee noted the report and discussion took place on the following items:

Incidents

- The 24 metre workboat MV HEADCORN sank at Cardingmill moorings in Oban Bay on 3 March 2026. The POLE STAR's emergency wreck marking buoy was retrieved and deployed by a local vessel. The sunken vessel was raised on 4 April and taken to the Clyde. The wreck marking buoy has therefore been removed.

- The 18 metre tour vessel CUMA ran aground and sank on the East side of Pabay Mor in Loch Roag, Lewis on 21 March 2026. This is a harbour area and the wreck has been marked by the Harbour Authority. It was noted that it is the Harbour Authority's responsibility to resolve any issues around the wreck however NLB Navigation Team are in touch with the harbour to ensure that they are following that they need to do.

It was noted that none of these incidents were as a result of an AtoN failure.

GLA Risk Response Criteria Review (RRCR).

The RRCR working group has been established to update the document in 2026. The group met on 7 January and 2 April and has another meeting scheduled for 17 April to progress.

Aids to Navigation Inspections
At the end of March 2026,1,522 LLA AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 2,428 (62.7%) during this reporting year (provisional figures). This is below the target of 70% which is due to only have one vessel for a period of time. This is the first time that the target has been missed and is strong evidence that NLB require 2 vessels.

142 AtoN are recorded as not inspected within the last 3 years, however this includes newly established and occasional AtoNs, as well as some not visible from inspecting ships.

404 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 491 (82.3%). One NLB AtoN is currently out with the 3 year maximum inspection period (Ve Skerries light).

Audit
CMAL were audited on 17 February 2026, Tarbert (Loch Fyne) were audited on 17 March 2026 and Argyll & Bute Council were audited on 18 March 2026. No significant non-conformances were identified.

GNSS Update
GPS satellite III-9 was launched from Cape Canaveral on 28 January 2026 and is now operational.

2025 AtoN Review
The Committee noted the 2025 AtoN review tracker.

Commissioner Archibald asked if Corran Narrows NE/Highland Council was on track to complete. The Coastal Inspector advised that they are undertaking geotechnical/geophysical surveys around constructions sites. The Asset Manager added that he is setting up a meeting with Highland Council within the next few months.

Marine Licence and Sanction Requests
The NavOps Committee noted the summary of Marine Licence Activity and Sanctions for the establishment/ disestablishment of AtoN as required under the Navigation Committee Terms of Reference.

Resourcing
The Committee noted the workload of the Navigation team, in terms of licensing cases, over the last five years.

5. OPERATIONS REPORT

The Committee noted and discussed the Operations report. Area highlighted were:

AtoN Availability
The Committee noted the 3-year rolling availability figures to 15 January 2026.

Category 1 availability is at 99.93%, well above the IALA Standard of 99.80% and up 0.01% since the last meeting.

Category 2 and Category 3 availability remain well above the IALA standard.

Worst Performers
The list of the worst performers was noted.

Outages
Since the last meeting, there has been 2 outages over 72 hours.

The Director of Operations highlighted the unreliable sector at Rova Head. This is an issue that has happened a couple of time where it is reported that the sector has shifted by pilots using the light and subsequently when checked the sector has not physically moved. NLB will check the sector themselves when a vessel is available and arrange a meeting with the Port Authority to finalise and confirm that this is the sector they are needing and whether it is as advertised.

Ships Downtime
NLV PHAROS has not had a good year with a combination of various defects and ultimately, she is starting to show are age.

NLV POLE STAR slewing pin defect is still ongoing. The slewing pin is being repaired and we are uncertain when this will be returned to the ship.

Maintenance
The Q4 dashboard and maintenance update were noted. Good inroads have been into close out of planned maintenance and overdue maintenance. There are some areas that still remain challenging i.e. inspections of FM200 system and Pillar Rocks.

Operations Projects
The NavOps Committee noted the project dashboard. Temporary lights for project work remain at, Oigh Sgeir, Corsewall, Eshaness and Dunnet Head.

Reprofiling of the plan to accommodate projects that have slipped through weather, etc is ongoing and an update will be provided at the meeting.

Action: Programme & Renewals Manager

Assets
The Committee noted the updates on issues in relation to the NLB estate. The following items were highlighted:

Cantick Head – The laying of the new road has been completed. It has been made clear to the neighbour that any further works will have to be organised the neighbour and adjacent landowners. This relates to the part of the road that is not NLB's and there are no burdens but where NLB does have a common law duty to pay a contribution to repairs.

HQ Roof – The Projects Team are preparing a specification for the replacement of the slate roofs on 84 George Street. The design and build element will be managed by NLB using a reputable and experienced roofing contractor that are familiar with older roofs and associated lead work.

Neighbour Consultations
The Committee noted the update on neighbour consultation.

Butt of Lewis – Discussions continue with the Galson Trust however consideration is being given to what NLB will do with the buildings to keep them in a wind and watertight condition should this not progress.

Helicopter
There have been no significant matters to raise with the NavOps Committee on this occasion though once again there has been several disruptions to programme and loss of opportunities to visit sites.

Vessel Replacement

As a major strategic project this will be reported on at the Governance Board.

Oban Harbour

The HRO remains with Transport Scotland to determine but there are positive indications post-election that this will occur.

Following the sinking of the Headcorn on its mooring on the 3 March 2026 resultant oil leaks led to significant community concern. NLB intervened to highlight this to MCA and the owner took action to boom the wreck and plug leaks. At NLB's request, a OBMG meeting was held with the MCA and owner which helped in community understanding.

Marine Operations

NLV PHAROS – The Committee noted the update on the windlasses and main crane. MCA and Class approval remain in place for operations with one anchor still available for emergency release.

The Chief Executive highlighted that over the last decade we have seen a decrease in the availability of service engineers and the responsiveness of engineering companies to provide support. There is a general lack of skills within the UK and the length of time it takes to get work done is affecting operations and is an ongoing problem.

NLV POLE STAR – There remains a number of ongoing and changing defects under warranty. Mainly these can be handled with the vessel in operation however there was a decision made to wait in Dundee for delivery of parts for the main engine exhaust compensator. Once these were fitted the vessel sailed and undertook buoy work off Inverness.

While alongside in Inverness the main buoy crane whilst being unstowed either due to mistake and use of overrides or sensor failure damaged the slew pin that locks the crane for sea. The assembly was taken to a Stirling based hydraulic specialist and is under repair. This has led to a circa 14 day period awaiting the return of the assembly in Inverness. During that period the workboat was launched and run in the water for familiarisation and local light inspections by road carried out. Learnings from this incident have been made and positive control of the use of overrides instigated.

It was noted that there have been no further failures with the rack coolers.

While crew morale appears to be good, it is acknowledged that this has been a frustrating period for the ships staff and all are keen to get on with NLB operations.

Oban Base

Port Marine Facility Safety Code – Oban Base now falls within the scope of the revised Port and Marine Facility Safety Code. As of 31 Mach 2026 NLB had to declare compliance or working towards compliance with the Port Marine Facility Safety Code. NLB has declared full compliance.

A contractor reviewed NLB processes and drafted an overarching Operating Procedure. The main area of change is aligning governance to the code.

Consequently, Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses are identified as Duty Holders, the Navigation Manager as independent designated person and the NavOps Committee as the main conduit to reporting.

There is no change to levels of responsibility and as most of the legislation the code aligns to is not applicable to NLB the main change is the audits for compliance that will now need to be implemented. As the Navigation team already audit against PMSC this will be done internally.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Commissioners that are members of the NavOps Committee should be designated as Duty Holders who will report through the Assurance Statement to the Governance Board. As the Navigation Manager attends the NavOps Committee there is a direct contact with the independent designated person and therefore a good mechanism of oversight can be established. The document will be amended appropriately, and the proposal will be taken to the next Governance Board for endorsement.

Action: Director of Operations

The Executive will look if there are any wider requirements and report back.

Action: Executive

This will be a standing agenda item at the NavOps Committee going forward.

6. BUSINESS SERVICES

Aviation Services Project

The Committee noted the update on the ASP project. Final bids were received from three suppliers and were evaluated in February with a consensus meeting held on 18 March 2026.

Work continues the Full Business Case and engaging with Centres of Excellence for their informal review in advance of the submission to CAB 6 on 21 April 2026. Positive feedback has been received from the Centres of Excellence.

Contract award is still anticipated to be mid-July 2026.

Scottish Government Frameworks

Scottish Government have now published “Public procurement - cross-border co-operation within the UK: SPPN 5/2026 - gov.scot” which outlines the process to allow continued procurements with other parts of the UK. Following first reading, DfT and NLB Procurement Team feel we will be able operate and use those Framework Agreements. Final written confirmation is awaited from DfT.

Government Spend Reporting

Cabinet Office guidance has been issued requesting Government sourcing and finance systems are able to report on spend by contract, supplier, commodity type and payment processing. Work is underway with the new finance system to ensure the information can all be captured and reported on however, there are concerns surrounding the additional burden.

Finance System

Following discussions the provider of current finance system agreed to extend support for a further year. NLB assessed the risk of the perpetual licence versus support and decided to extend the support agreement to minimise any risk to the historic data transfer.

Insurance Renewals

Marine insurances renewed as planned in February and other tri-GLA insurances renewed on 1 April. Work continues on NLB’s domestic insurances which renew in May 2026.

Conflict in Middle East

NLB is working with the other GLAs in terms of a resilience approach. The Global Instability Risk Register is being used to track developments. Also, in the Corporate Plan for 2026-2031 the Mission/Vision was amended to include an emphasis on resilience.

The question of wider resilience is sharply in focus with increased costs of fuel and availability. Immediate measures have been taken to ensure the vessels are fully bunkered and we have maximum jet fuel. Discussions are ongoing around supply chain to ascertain any pinch points.

Business Development
The NavOps Committee noted the update on business development.

Estates
The NavOps Committee noted the updates on estates particularly concerning Fair Isle South pier/slipway and the sale of Winkie.

ISO 27001
The scope expansion audit on 2/3 February 2026 to add monitoring to this standard was successful with only one minor nonconformity identified which was resolved during the audit visit.

ICT Services
The NavOps Committee noted the update on ICT Services. A disaster recovery test was conducted out of hours on 22 and 23 March which successfully replicated all servers to Oban from Edinburgh.

Project Spend
There are several projects which have not concluded in 2025/26 where resources will need to be allocated to complete in 2026/27. The Project Managers and Asset Management team are reviewing priorities to reprofile projects for 2026/27. The conflict in the Middle East may also impact on the programme.

7. NOTICES TO MARINERS

Notices to Mariners 4 of 2026 – Loch Spelve Unlit Beacon Installation; 5 of 2026 – VL HEADCORN; 5 of 2026 – Whale Rock (AIS as an AtoN) and 7 of 2026 – Eilean Glas (Alteration to MMSI) were published since the last meeting.

It was noted that the work at Loch Spelve Beacon has been completed and the Navigation Team is working with UKHO to accurately identify the location as the existing chart is dubious.

8. ESCALATED RISKS AND RISK CARD REVIEW

The Committee noted the following escalated risk.

Escalated Risk

- Marine Crane Provider (Sormec) has been slow to respond and/or assist with warranty claims to date. There is a high probability It is likely that this will continue after the warranty period. The key mitigation is to find a long-term UK maintenance partner beyond the guarantee period to provide support.

The Committee reviewed Risk Cards 8, 9 and 16. The following amendments were noted:

Risk Card 8 – Exploitation of Reserve Capacity
- New Potential Risk Cause – Fuel shortage impacting the opportunity to undertake commercial work.

Risk Card 9 – Technological Change & Obsolescence

- Additional Actions – Move “POLE STAR to incorporate Class Cyber Notation” to Control & Treatment.
- Additional Actions – Remove “POLE STAR build ongoing (on programme)” as this is complete.
- Additional Actions – Move “Expand scope of ISO 27001 Certification to cover key operational technology” to Control & Treatment.

Risk Card 16 – Artificial Intelligence
- New Risk Description – NLB failure to maximise opportunities presented by artificial intelligence to support operations and reduce costs.

The Committee noted Risk Cards 5, 6 10, 12 and 15. The following updates were highlighted:

Risk Card 5 – AtoN Provision
- Additional Actions – Move “Ongoing project to extend ISO 270001 framework of control to key operational infrastructure.” to Control & Treatment.

Risk Card 6 – Information Technology and Operational Technology
- Additional Actions – Move “Cyber assessment and validation of on-board technology for NLB POLE STAR and Cyber Class Notation being established.” to Control & Treatment.
- Additional Actions – Move “Application of ISO 27001 protocols and expansion of the scope of current certification to appropriate operational technology and ICT equipment e.g. AtoN Ignition Monitoring System.” to Control & Treatment.

Risk Card 10 – Asset Loss/Damage
- Additional Actions – “Reserve generator contract in place for HQ with final testing being planned for Q1 2026. Oban reserve generator project ongoing with a view to completion by the 25/26 Financial Year.” Asset Manager to update wording.

Action: Asset Manager

9. POLICY APPROVALS

There were no items for approval.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Neist Point
It has been brought to NLB’s attention that the former keeper’s cottages at Neist Point have fallen into serious disrepair. The Asset Manager gave a presentation to the NavOps Committee covering:

- Introduction – Overview of Light
- Access and Tourism
- Neighbours Property – Safety Issues
- Complaints
- Current Situation
- Proposal
- Benefits
- Risks
- Do Nothing

The NavOps Committee discussed the proposal and given safety concerns and NLB’s duty of care to its staff, it was agreed that the Executive should seek DfT approval to begin consultations with the

neighbour to purchase the property for a minimal cost. If this is successful, then NLB would make the property wind and watertight.

Action: NLB Executive

CDM-T Lamps

In 2014, 6 stations were changed from 35 watt CDM-T lamps to a specialist 20 watt lamp which at the time was assessed would produce the same range while reducing the power consumption. The issue is now that this was a specialist lamp which has since been discontinued and no stock is available. However, the 35 watt lamp which was the stations original specification are still available. To manage the remaining stock of 20 watt lamps the proposal is to change 3 of the 6 stations to 35 watt lamps i.e. Out Skerries, Ailsa Craig and Brough of Brisay and manage the remaining stock of 20 watt lamps at Foula, Chicken Rock and Noup Head until eventually all stations are LED. There are no Notice to Mariners issues.

The NavOps Committee agreed the proposal.

Scottish Government Elections – 7 May 2026

There will be a new Government following the elections on 7 May 2026. The Executive, supported by Commissioners, will need to meet with the new administration to make sure they understand NLB's story.

Navigation Manager

It was noted that this would likely to be Peter Douglas' last NavOps meeting. A new Navigation Manager has been recruited and will start at the end of June 2026. The NavOps Committee thanked Peter for his contribution to the NavOps Committee and previous Navigation Committee over the years – he will be a hard act to follow.

11. ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Chair will circulate a draft Assurance Statement following the meeting. Committee Members are requested to send any comments/amendment to the Chair over the next few days.

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Navigation and Operations Committee will take place on 5 August 2026 at 10am. This will be a virtual meeting.