NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSE BOARD
NAVIGATION AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES 16 APRIL 2025

PRESENT:	Jamie Finlay	Chair
	Brian Archibald	Commissioner
	Hugh Shaw	Commissioner
	Dick Welsh	Commissioner
	Fiona Larkin	Commissioner (Observer)
	Mike Bullock	Chief Executive
	Phil Day	Director of Operations
	Mairi Rae	Director of Business Services
	Peter Douglas	Navigation Manager
	Andrew Stevenson	Asset Manager
	Ewen MacKerchar	Marine Operations Manager
	Joe Jeffrey	Delivery and Planning Manager
	Gillian Burns	Navigation Officer
	Karl Davies	Coastal Inspector
	Paddy Wemyss	Project Leader
	Graham Allan	Procurement Specialist (Aecom Presentation Only)
	Alexandra Hiley	Aecom (Aecom Presentation Only)
	Amaroop Utam	Aecom (Aecom Presentation Only)
	Brian Cuthbert	Aecom (Aecom Presentation Only)
	Karen Charleson	Senior Executive Assistant (Notes)

ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Navigation and Operations Committee met on 16 April 2025. 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:

- The AtoN Category 1 availability is at **99.92%** 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.

- Two incidents have been reported since the last meeting:
  - The 80m reefer MV ROTSUND lost power and grounded at Sgeir Dubh on 10 Mar. She refloated and went into Kishorn.
  - The 64m general cargo vessel MV LIVA GRETA ran aground twice: firstly, on 31 Jan in Brodick; and then on 12 Mar off Fort William pier.

Neither incident was a result of AtoN failure.

- NLB vessels responded to other incidents as follows:
  - NLV POLE STAR responded to a Mayday from the bulk carrier YEOMAN BANK's engine failure off Glen Sanda on 4 Mar.
  - In the absence of a TH vessel, NLV PHAROS was requested to respond to the collision incident between MV SOLONG and STENA IMMACULATE off the Humber on 10 Mar.

- **2025 AtoN Review.** The final document will be presented to the tri-GLA Joint Users Group on 7 May. There may an opportunity for a tri-GLA soft launch of the review during London International Shipping Week in Sep and discussions remain ongoing.

- **AtoN Inspections.** At the end of Mar, 1773 LLA AtoN had been inspected out of a possible 2409 (71.9%) against a target of 70%. 144 AtoN are recorded as not inspected within the last 3 years. 459 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 488 (94.1%). 2 NLB AtoN are currently outwith the 3-year maximum inspection period.

- **Planned Maintenance.** Overall planned maintenance overdue is reported as 938 out of 6128 (15.3%). This is a significant (7.92%) reduction from the last report and is reflective of the effort and commitment across the organisation to drive this down.

- **Cantick Head complaint.** The neighbour at Cantick Head has submitted a complaint to NLB in respect of dealings around the access road and water supply pipe. The complaint was initially investigated by the Director of Operations and, following further dissatisfaction from the neighbour, has been referred for legal advice.

- **ASP.** SQ launched on 31 Jan with 5 compliant responses received by deadline of 3 Mar. The responses were evaluated on 8 Apr and all 5 bidders will progress to the next stage. Stage 3 and 4 CAB meeting is scheduled for 6 May.

- **New Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code.** Latest version of the code was launched on 15 Apr by the MCA and DfT. The Operations team are studying the revised code to understand whether there is any impact on NLB business/activity as a result of the update, particularly at Oban base.

- **Emergency Optics.** A review of the Kinnaird Head optic arrangements has raised the question as to whether there is a continuing need for an emergency optic at that site. Emergency optics were originally part of a cold war contingency to provide reduced range lights and have been removed from many sites during modernization when fully redundant systems have been installed. Further understanding of implications and the

number of sites affected is needed, and a further report will be made to the Committee at the Aug meeting.

- **Appropriate Assessment.** At the beginning of the meeting the Committee were joined by 3 representatives from Aecom who provided an informative presentation on screening and appropriate assessment. Their work has highlighted up to 107 NLB AtoN may be affected and thus require an additional appropriate assessment. This number could be reduced (potentially significantly) through additional agreements with Nature Scot which the Asset Manager will undertake.

Escalated Matters

- **Mercury Vapour testing.** GRAD are procuring a vapour testing and logging system that can run for extended periods which will be installed at Sumburgh. At the time of install swabs will be taken of surfaces in the lightroom to determine if transfer to the hands occurs. In the meantime, existing procedures are in place to manage personal safety in affected sites.

- **Vessels.**
  - **Ownership.** Both existing vessels transferred to the ownership of the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses on 11 Apr. The Committee noted the significant amount of work which has gone into this and registered thanks to all those involved. Post Committee note: there is some ongoing work to remedy the vessels being registered in ownership as 'Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses' and the name registered with the IMO and used with the MCA to record the vessel management as 'Northern Lighthouse Board'. Although slim, the delta may be cause for concern with regard to MCA surveys and insurance. The Director of Operations will further investigate and report to the next Committee meeting.
  - **Pole Star Disposal.** Ahead of the Apr Committee meetings, the Director of Operations and Director of Business Services circulated a paper with Commissioners on Pole Star disposal options. Following a period for review, the preferred option of pursuing a sale (sold as sale for conversion) will be taken forward.

- **Risk Cards.** Cards 8 & 9 were reviewed. Cards 5, 6, 10, 12 & 15 were noted.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the April meeting of the NavOps Committee and his first meeting as Chair.

The Chair thanked Commissioner Shaw for being an excellent chair of the NavOps over the last couple of years and congratulated him on taking over as NLB Chair. The Chair also thanked Elaine Wilkinson for her major contribution both as a Commissioner and as Chair of NLB.

It was noted that Commissioner Shaw remains a member of the NavOps Committee as a Commissioner with specialist nautical knowledge and is not in attendance in an observer capacity. Commissioner Larkin was in attendance as an observer.

PRESENTATION BY AECOM ON AIDS TO NAVIGATION SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Alexandra Hiley, Amaroop Utam and Brian Cuthbert were in attendance to provide an overview of the NLB Aids to Navigation Screening Assessment. The presentation covered:

- Project Background
- Assessing European Sites
- Assessing Nationally Designated Sites
- Project Results
- Next Steps

European Sites – A competent organisation is responsible for making an appropriate assessment for plans and projects to determine whether those projects are likely to have significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. In Scotland, this is called a Habitats Regulations Appraisal.

The Habitats Regulations Appraisal is set out by NatureScot and is broken down into 4 stages.

- Stage 1 – screening for likely significant effects on a European site
- Stage 2 – appropriate assessment of the implications for the site
- Stage 3 – assessment of alternatives, if none proceed to Stage 4
- Stage 4 – imperative reasons of overriding public interest. At this stage Scottish Ministers needs to be consulted

Nationally Designated Sites – These are designated within the UK under a variety of different pieces of legislation e.g. Marine Protected Areas, SSSI, Seal Haul Out Sites, Ramsar Sites, and Isle of Man specific protected sites.

Nationally Designated Sites are assessed slightly differently from European Sites. The Marine Directorate has not provided any formal guidance however Industry best practice is to take the Marine Management Organisation guidance for English Marine Conservation Zones and apply to it marine protected area assessments which is broken down into 3 stages.

- Stage 1 – screening
- Stage 2 – assessment
- Stage 3 – assessment – risk of damage to environment

Project Results – Aecom have been contracted to undertake the Stage 1 screening assessment to determine whether the maintenance activities associated with each NLB AtoN is likely to have any significant effect on European or Nationally Designated Sites noting that a lot of sites do overlap. The impact pathways determined are:

- temporary, permanent or loss to benthic habitats or species
- underwater sound from Multi Beam Echo Sounder surveys
- airborne sound disturbances from usage of drones
- indirect effects through impacts appraised species
- disturbance to seabirds from lighting; introduction and spread of invasive and non-invasive species

Each of the impact pathways were found to result in no likely significant effect to the qualifying features of any of the European or Nationally Designed Sites except for the airborne sound disturbance relating to the operation and use of the vessels, helicopter and vehicles. Most of the sites that have been recommended to be taken forward to the appropriate assessment stage are in particularly remote locations. However, it was highlighted that just because a site is taken forward to the appropriate assessment stage it could still be concluded that there is no adverse effect on site. Getting agreements in place with NatureScot will also reduce the number of sites.

Commissioner Archibald asked if National Parks, where they include the entirety of the coastline, add additional challenges in this area. Aecom advised that the processes will still apply but there may be an additional layer in dealing with the planning authority.

The Chief Executive highlighted the NLB have a new vessel due to come into service which will be a lot quieter than the previous vessel. NLB are also in the process of procuring a new helicopter service and noise reduction will be considered alongside reducing carbon.

The Committee agreed that this was a fascinating presentation which confirmed just how complex it is to incorporate into proactive and reactive activities.

Aecom and Graham Allan left the meeting at this point
---

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Commissioner Charteris, Paul Hudson (Programme & Renewals Manager) and Adam Lewis (Coastal Inspector).

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

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Navigation and Operations Committee meeting held on 22 January 2025 were agreed subject to the correct of a small typo - “NLB” instead of “NLN” – in the Assurance Statement.

Action: Senior Executive Assistant

3. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the update provided within the meeting pack.

Butt of Lewis, Galson Trust – A productive meeting was held with Galson Trust on 26 February 2025, where they confirmed that the earliest they would be in a position to undertake works would be Spring 2027 dependant on funding. Galson Trust confirmed that the accommodation could be used by NLB for staff to carry out maintenance in off season (October). NLB are developing a draft lease for a 50-year tenancy with an indication of costs, etc and a follow up meeting will be scheduled in 3 months’ time. This action will be closed and will be reported through the Operations Report going forward.

Action: Asset Manager

Annual Report – This action can now be closed. The next Annual Report will provide an up-to-date picture prior to taking further action.

NLV POLE STAR Disposal – A paper was circulated to the Commissioners for endorsement on 9 April 2025. Only positive statements were received.

Glenelg – Foreshore has confirmed to be in ownership of Crown Estates through Voluntary Registration.

Rising Number of LLA Failures – NLB recently attended the Harbour Master Association Conference. The members are fully aware of who NLB are and what we do. It was noted that the failure rate for this year is 5.9% which is an improvement from last year. Follow-ups and training are offered to provide full awareness and it hoped that the trend will continue to improve.

Channel inside Stroma – MeyGen are planning to submit a new safety case for more turbines in the Sound and a slightly revised safety depth. NLB will be involved in discussions around AtoNs.

Climate Emergency (Adaptation) – The Director of Operations highlighted at the previous meeting that a number of things mention Asset Management and asked for the Asset Manager to review. This has still to be actioned.

Action: Asset Manager

Inverness Base – The offering from the Fire and Rescue Service that a co-location will be available is not being progressed. NLB will continue to look for other premises and will provide updates through the Operations Report going forward.

4. NAVIGATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

Incidents

- MV ROTSUND - The 80 metre Reefer MV ROTSUND lost power and grounded on Sgeir Dubh in the Kyles of Pabay, Skye on 10 March 2025. She refloated and went into Kishorn.

- MV LIVA GRETA - The 64 metre general cargo vessel MV LIVA GRETA ran aground (a) in Brodick on 31 January and has subsequently been found to have damaged her propeller, and (b) off Fort William pier on 12 March 2025. She refloated and went into Corpach.

- NLV POLE STAR responded to a mayday for the bulk carrier YEOMAN BANK adrift off Glen Sanda with engine failure on 4 March 2025.

- Although outside the NLB area NLV PHAROS responded to the collision incident between MV SOLONG and STENA IMMACULATE off the Humber on 10 March.

None of these incidents were as a result of an AtoN failure.

2020 AtoN Review
The Committee noted the updated tracker of the 2020 AtoN Review which has now been merged into the 2025 tracker

Ruff Reef
Local input was received from the RNLI and as a result, the proposal to reduce Ruff Reef to an unlit beacon was withdrawn from the 2025 AtoN Review.

2025 AtoN Review
The AtoN Review has completed final approval and will be presented to the Joint Users' Group (JUG) on 7 May 2025. Following the JUG and in consultation with the other GLAs, it will be released on the NLB website.

GNSS update
The second GLONASS K" satellite was launched from Plesetsk on 2 March 2025.

The Indian NAVIC satellite NVS-02 was launched on 29 January 2025 however the rocket suffered from a propulsion failure and the satellite did not reach the correct geosynchronous orbit.

Aids to Navigation Inspections
At the end of March 2024, 1,773 LLA AtoN had been inspected out of a possible 2,409 (71.9%) against an inspection target of 70% during the reporting year (April-March). 144 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. 58 faults remained outstanding at the end of the month which are followed up by Navigation staff.

459 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 488 (94.1%). 2 NLB AtoN are currently out with the 3-year maximum inspection period (Ve Skerries light and racon).

PMSC Audits
Cromarty Firth Port Authority was audited on 8 January 2025. Port of Dundee was audited virtually on 24 January 2025 due to weather cancellation of a previously postponed event. Stornoway Port Authority and Western Isles Council were both audited on 26 February 2025. No significant issues were identified during these audits.

Marine Licence and Sanction Requests
The 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 two years. Recent growth has been driven by the Scotwind data-gathering phase, which has generated a number of meetings and applications for data gathering buoys & seabed sampling to date.

The recruitment of an additional Coastal Inspector has been undertaken with a new start planned in late May 2025. There had been 24 applicants with a wide range of experience.

The Port and Marine Facility Safety Code
The Port and Marine Facility Safety Code has been re-issued and expands the responsibility for feed mills and other jetty operators. The Code also now applies to NLB in Oban and procedures are being reviewed.

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 31 March 2025.

Category 1 availability continues to improve. It has been a relatively good winter and a number of historic failures have now fallen out of the statistics.

Category 2 and Category 3 availability remains above the IALA standard.

Top 10 Worst Performers
The list of the 10 worst performers was noted. It was noted that Skerryvore has had a number of failure occurrences in relation to the aging PLCs but will be the first pillar rock due for refurbishment.

Outages

Since the last meeting, there has been 4 outages over 72 hours.

Ships Downtime
NLV PHAROS had a successful dry dock in February 2025.

Planned Maintenance
Overall planned maintenance overdues are reported as at 7 April as 938 out of a total of 61,289 equalling 15.3%, a 7.92% reduction from the last report. These are tasks or ad hoc work that needs to be completed when technicians get on site and access to remote sites can be difficult.

Assets

Rattray Head Road – The Committee noted the update on status of the road.

Cantick Head – The Committee noted that a compliant had been received and legal advice is being sought.

Inverness Base – The Committee noted the update provided under Matters Arising. Commissioner Shaw asked whether the Base required to be in Inverness or whether it could be elsewhere. The Director of Operations advised that the Delivery & Planning Manager is undertaking a broader review and there is potential for different approaches.

Calf of Man (Water Main) – The neighbours are still interested in working with NLB to replace the water pipe (50/50 share) and they will then take on responsibility. The neighbour will organise the work but this has been delayed due to other priorities.

Pillar Rock Refurbishment – Skerryvore - As part of our preparation for the upcoming Pillar Rock Refurbishment Programme the University of Plymouth (UoP) were appointed to undertake wind and wave modelling/analysis to feed into the structural assessment. This is following the Tri-GLA sponsored Stormlamp process. The UoP team attended NLB HQ on 31 March 2025 to present their findings and this will be repeated for the NavOps Committee.

This has been a fantastic use of video imagery of the reef, taking reference points from it and turning it into a 3D model and has been a historically important evaluation for NLB as there has been no mapping of this reef other than Alan Stevenson's drawings. Aecom are now evaluating the proposed solar array.

A report and presentation will be given to an IALA Conference in due course.

Professional Services Consultancy Framework - NLB are investigating suitable CSS frameworks and hope to have a decision in the near future.

Q4 Computer Aided Maintenance Management Software – The Asset Team are pulling together a user requirements document that will have input by all NLB Stakeholders and will undergo a MoSCoW review to be used to identify appropriate Asset Management /Maintenance Management Systems through market engagement to inform a future tender process.

Escalated Matters
There were no significant items to discuss.

NLV POLE STAR Disposal
Following approval by the Governance Board, the purchase of the vessels has now been completed. NLV POLE STAR will be alongside in Leith from 24 April 2025 but will remain operational with ship's crew on board. Option for disposal can now be progressed.

The Committee thanked the Director of Business Services for her perseverance to get this concluded.

6. BUSINESS SERVICES

Aviation Services Project – The Selection Questionnaire (SQ) was launched on 31 January 2025 marking the formal start of the procurement, ahead of the procurement reform deadline. The deadline for responses to the SQ was 3 March and 5 compliant responses were received.

The different elements of the SQ submissions were evaluated and a consensus meeting was held on 8 April 2025 where it was agreed that all 5 bidders should progress to the next stage.

The tender and contract documentation are being fully developed ready for the joint Stage 3 and 4 CAB meeting on 6 May 2025.

Procurement Team - Procurement will look to develop a Pipeline for circulation and agreement after review of corporate plan with budget holders. The Committee noted the list of other major work streams.

There is a lot of work ongoing around the Procurement Reform in terms of templates, model terms and conditions, etc with DfT and Cabinet Office.

Note Verbale – It was noted that the Note Verbale was an agreement between the UK and Ireland to allow purchasing post UK exit from the EU. This fell into abeyance when Procurement Reform came along in February 2025. All contracts going forward will include the possibility of Irish Light joining at a later date.

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

Facilities – The Facilities Officer has attended a Fire Door Inspection course and is now undertaking a fire door inspection at NLB HQ. A report will be issued with the findings in due course.

Most of the remaining furniture has now been delivered including storage cupboards, pedestals, sofas and additional tables. The remaining items are due for delivery around the end of April. Work continues with CMS relating to a financial settlement.

Estates – Discussion are ongoing around the installation of LiDAR equipment at the Butt of Lewis Lighthouse site.

ISO27001 – A successful recertification audit took place in February and now work will progress to bring in other operational technology into the scope of the standard such as the Monitoring system.

Telephone system – During February 2025 telephone lines in HQ and Oban were ported to BT and are now utilising MS Teams for both internal and external calls.

PSTN lines – There are still 3 remote sites where engineers require to upgrade systems to eliminate the use of PSTN lines and work is scheduled over coming months to undertake this work. Oban lines cannot be switched over until the remote sites are transferred.

Project Spend – The Committee noted the summary of the 2024/25 project spend for capital and revenue to Period 12 (31 March 2025). A fuller paper has been submitted to the Audit & Risk Committee.

7. NOTICES TO MARINERS

Notices to Mariners 03 of 2025 – AtoN Review 2025; 04 of 2025 – Rubha Reidh – Alteration to MMSI; 05 of 2025 – Esha Ness – Establishment of Temporary Light; 06 of 2025 Kinnaird Head – Establishment of AIS AtoN; and 07 of 2025 – Kinnaird Head – Establishment of AIS as AtoN – Postponed, were published since the last meeting.

8. ESCALATED RISKS AND RISK CARD REVIEW

Escalated Risks
There were no escalated risks to raise at this meeting.

Risk Card Review
The Committee reviewed Risk Card Numbers 8 – Exploitation of Reserve Capacity and 9 – Technological Change & Obsolescence.

Risk Card 8 - Exploitation of Reserve Capacity

- Risk Cause – Note that the impact of public sector austerity, impacting client budgets and spending capability is likely to be an increasing risk as priorities shift elsewhere.
- Additional Actions – "Review of contract buoys as there will be restrictions where POLE STAR V can operate". It was noted that a review is being undertaken by the Business Support Manager and Ships Masters.

Risk Card 9 - Technological Change & Obsolescence

- Risk Causes – The risk around "Failure of vessel replacement programme for NLV POLE STAR." has been drastically reduced. NLV POLE STAR to be replaced with NLV PHAROS.
- Control & Treatment – "PHAROS and wider GLA support available to address statutory work if POLE STAR becomes inoperable." on 24 April 2025 this will be a known.
- Additional Actions – Update "Implement project to explore a technological solution to integrate the 4G lanterns into Ignition which will guarantee the monitoring for 2G until switch off and the replacement of the 2G lanterns" to reflect the 4G lantern project has been approved and is underway.

Risk Card Numbers 5 – AtoN Provision; 6 – Information Technology and Operational Technology; 10 – Asset Loss/Damage; 12 – Natural Events and 15 – Climate Emergency (Adaptation) were noted. Changes to Risk card 5 were identified as follows:

Risk Card 5 - AtoN Provision

- New Additional Action – "Work undertaken to introduce new maintenance system"
- New Additional Action – "Formation of new S200 Task Group"

9. POLICY APPROVALS

Any approvals required were covered under the appropriate Agenda Item.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Kinnaird Head Emergency Optic – The Delivery & Planning Manager advised the 2 smaller lanterns on the balcony (with sectoring) have not survived well and the particular model is obsolete. Options for replacement are being investigated but questions have been raised around whether there is a need for the emergency optic if there is redundancy in the main one. At Kinnaird Head 2 lamp failures would be required for a complete outage. The Director of Operations provided the

history of the emergency optic and advised that more recently, as NLB has moved to LED optics, 2 100% LED optics have been installed and the emergency optic has been removed.

It was agreed that following internal discussion, the Delivery & Planning Manager would bring a recommendation back around all emergency optics to the next NavOps Committee meeting.

Action: Delivery & Planning Manager

Bridge Simulator Training – It was noted that the Chair would be attending simulator training in April 2025. The Director of Operations will promulgate dates of future courses once they are scheduled.

Action: Director of Operations

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.

Action: All

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Navigation and Operations Committee will take place on 6 August 2025 at 10am. This will be a virtual meeting.