NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSE BOARD
NAVIGATION AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES 22 OCTOBER 2025

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
	Adam Lewis	Coastal Inspector
	Jennifer Matthews	Coastal Inspector
	Karl Davies	Coastal Inspector
	Karen Charleson	Senior Executive Assistant (Notes)

ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Navigation and Operations Committee met on 22 October 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:

- **AtoN Availability.** 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.

- **Navigational Incidents.** Three incidents have been reported since the last meeting:
  - The 11m fishing vessel FV SPITFIRE took on water and sank to the North of Little Cumbrae (within Clydeport Harbour area) on 10 September. The 2 POB were rescued.
  - The 15m fishing vessel SILVER CLOUD II ran aground at the entrance to Lochinvar on 14 October 2025. This is being investigated by MAIB.
  - There was an amputation of a crew member's limb on board the fishing vessel RELIANCE III 50nm East of Fair Isle on 17 October. MAIB are investigating

  - **Sound of Harris.** A significantly increased number of AtoNs may be requested as part of the new ferry route. The Navigation Manager has asked CFL/CMAL for a joint formal submission detailing what is required, in priority order, so that NLB can consider.

- **AtoN Inspections.** At the end of September, 413 LLA AtoN had been inspected out of a possible 2438 (16.9%) against a target of 70%. 184 AtoN are recorded as not inspected within the last 3 years. 281 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 490 (57.3%). 2 NLB AtoN are currently out with the 3-year maximum inspection period.

- **Planned Maintenance.** Overall planned maintenance overdue is reported as 1531 out of 9099 (18.67%) marking a significant reduction (10.9%) since the last committee meeting, demonstrating the value (and success) of the plan of action briefed to the committee in August. The Committee noted and praised changes in the reporting of these items, which now provides greater clarity and understanding of overdue maintenance tasks.

- **Assets.** Two recent events highlighted NLB burdens when it comes to access roads across the estate – knowledge levels of these burdens are thought to be good. The two events were:
  - Part of the access road to Cantick Head has been inspected and has deteriorated significantly. This section is the sole responsibility of NLB to maintain. A full re-instatement is the most economical option. Expected costs are more than previously indicated – £110k – which will require DfT single tender action.
  - A landslide occurred at the Mull of Kintyre access road (sole responsibility of NLB) on 29 September. Local contractors have completed an initial phase of work to clear the road and make the area safe temporarily (approx. £13k of spend) but further drainage and preventative works will be required.

- **ASP.** 3 bidders remain in the process with negotiations beginning w/c 27 October. DfT Assurance attended the September consensus meeting and were impressed by NLB's process, agreeing to undertake CAB5 via correspondence rather than in-person, saving the ITP time.

- **Shore to Ship Power.** Lead times of the equipment required, which is out with NLB control, may result in the cost being incurred in the next FY.

- **VRP:**
  - The committee were briefed on an emerging issue with Pole Star's azimuth thrusters: commissioning engineers had started motors with retaining bolts still in place. Exploratory work was ongoing at the time to understand the effect this would have, if any, on overall delivery timelines. A report from NLB's Technical

Superintendent within the shipyard shortly after the committee meeting confirmed and inspection had taken place, there is no damage, and the risk to the motors – and thus further delays from this issue – is negligible.
    - Positive feedback from DfT indicates VRP CAB stage 7 can be completed by correspondence rather than in-person and have verbally advised of a 'Green' project status.
    - It was noted that lessons learned from operating a single vessel this year should be considered for the planning/Business Case for the Pharos replacement when the time comes.

- **Scottish Government Frameworks.** DfT and CO have confirmed the expectation for Scottish Government to align with the Procurement Act 2023 during December 2025 which will allow NLB to utilise Scottish Frameworks thereafter, thus reducing any risk to NLB to minimal.

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

Escalated Matters

- There are no matters escalated to the Governance Board.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the October NavOps Committee.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Commissioner Charteris.

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 6 August were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the update provided within the meeting pack. All outstanding actions have now been closed.

4. NAVIGATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

Incidents
- The 11 metre fishing vessel FV SPITFIRE took on water and sank to the North of Little Cumbrae (within Clydeport Harbour area) on 10 September. The 2 POB were rescued.

- The 15 metre fishing vessel SILVER CLOUD II ran aground at the entrance to Lochinvar on 14 October 2025. This is being investigated by MAIB.
- There was an amputation of a crew member's limb on board the UK registered fishing vessel, RELIANCE III, 50nm east of Fair Isle on 17 October. MAIB are investigating.

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

GNSS update

The EGNOS Safety of Life Service failed at 0959 on 13 October 'due to the unavailability of both operational GEO satellites (PRN 136 and PRN 121)'. The Open Service was down for around 6hrs and the Safety of Life Service was down for 4 days. Both services are now operational.

The Director of Operations advised that the warnings to mariners on disruption of this service was lacking from a UK perspective. This has been raised with MCA and they are undertaking a review and will update their instructions to their watchkeepers in relation to this.

Sound of Harris

It has become evident that CFL are looking for a significantly increased number of AtoN marking the ferry route, whilst not intending to increase the operational period into the hours of darkness. Some of these changes require repositioning of existing buoyage; it has been suggested to CFL that they list any other changes in order of importance.

CMAL/CFL have again been requested to agree a joint request for any changes before NLB progresses any of these actions.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a Navigational Assessment is required from CMAL to support any request. NLB now has the whole of the Sound of Harris on simulator and the offer to run this could be offered to CMAL/CFL. The Director of Operations and Navigation Manager will discuss this further and report back when there is a final submission that involves NLB AtoN.

Action: Director of Operations/Navigation Manager

Aids to Navigation Inspections

At the end of September 2025, 413 LLA AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 2438 (16.9%) during this reporting year. 184 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 (see attached spreadsheet).

281 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 490 (57.3%). 2 NLB AtoN are currently out with the 3 year maximum inspection period (Ve Skerries light & racon).

Audit

Perth harbour was audited on 20 August, without finding significant non-conformance. The North Shetland zoned boat was inspected on 19 August 2025.

2025 AtoN Review

The Committee noted the 2025 AtoN review tracker.

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 four 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.

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 10 October 2025.

Category 1 availability remains steady since the last meeting at 99.92%.

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

Worst Performers
The list of the worst performers was noted. Largely, there has been no new failures within the top 10 group.

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

Ships Downtime
The failure of the cooling system on NLV PHAROS was reported at the last meeting. The table has subsequently been updated for the remainder of that period. NLV PHAROS has subsequently been operational with no further downtime. Operations have been continuing as normal delivering both helicopter operations and buoy work.

Maintenance
The Q4 dashboard was noted. Overall Planned maintenance overdues are reported as at 30 September as 1,531 out of a total of 9,099 equalling 18.67% a 10.9 point decrease from the last report. A concerted effort is underway to undertake PM that is overdue and to close work orders sooner.

As of 9 October 2025, the number of statutory planned preventative maintenance tasks that were more than 6 months overdue was 233, a decrease of 44 since the last report.

Work is continuing to improve the data and KPI reporting within Q4.

It was noted that some of the fire suppression systems were logged in fire detection and therefore have been transferred from one to the other. Also, up until now it has always been reported as FM200 which is a greenhouse gas and therefore the Asset Team are looking to change how this is reported as many of the FM200 have been removed, disabled or changed to non-greenhouse gas systems.

Commissioner Archibald commented that the way the data is being presented. The work ongoing to review the data is encouraging and acknowledged the good work being done.

Operations Projects
The Committee noted the project dashboard which provides the status of the ongoing projects. Temporary lights for project work remain at, Hyskeir, Sumburgh Head, Girdleness, Corsewall and

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

- **Cantick Head** - The condition of the road has deteriorated significantly and a full re-instatement is the most economical option. A quote has been obtained for the works and is significantly more than indicated in the last reports. DfT Single Tender Action approval is being sought.

- **Mull of Kintyre Road** - On 29 September 2025 a landslide was discovered blocking the Mull of Kintyre access road. This comprised of (estimated) 200T of debris (earth, peat, rocks etc), The landslide deposits were in places 1m deep and covered approximately 30m of the road and had destroyed the safety barrier.

  Contractors were engaged to assess the damage and advised that there remained a danger of more debris including large boulders falling on to the carriageway and members of the public were putting themselves at risk climbing across the landslide deposits under the unstable hillside. They also advised that the landslide deposits on the road could result in further damage and scouring under the road with the predicted heavy rain later in the week.

  An emergency purchase order was raised and the contractors mobilised to site and begun emergency works to erect safety barriers and signs and clear the debris, unblock drains and make the hillside safe. The road was cleared and the contractors off site by the end of 3 October 2025.

  The second stage of emergency works is reinstatement of safety barrier and installation of safety signage.

  Long term the Assets Team will look at the possibility of hillside stability surveys and any requirements for additional drainage and preventative maintenance regimes to reduce the likelihood of this re-occurring.

  Commissioner Shaw asked if NLB were clear on what their responsibilities/obligations are for all road access lighthouses and whether there was climate risk insurance in place. The Director of Operations advised that NLB were in a good position in terms of estate knowledge and burdens. Every site is different and there has been some legal back and forth around interpretation of what some very old burdens mean and where new legislation around shared infrastructure applies. The Director of Business Services added that NLB does not have climate risk insurance in place and reminded the Committee that a lot of NLB estate is self-insured. A conversation around the GLF reserve and whether in the context of changing weather patterns, etc there needs to be greater buffer zone in that reserve will be held. The Chief Executive and Director of Business service will raise during discussions with the GLF Accountant.

  Action: Chief Executive/Director of Business Services

Neighbour Consultations

The Committee noted the update on neighbour consultation. The Director of Operations highlighted that the issue at Copinsay has been resolved. No useful data from the monitoring equipment had been acquired during the weeks that the equipment has been installed.

End of Project Slides

The Committee noted the slides on Ailsa Craig. Start Point, Bell Rock Walkway and Buchan Ness.

The Chair commented that the slides were excellent and were a good snapshot of what has taken place at those sites. Some good news stories, particularly around Bell Rock and the in-house fabrication that had taken place.

6. BUSINESS SERVICES

Aviation Services Project
The Committee noted the update on the ASP project. Three compliant bids were received and assessed by different subject matter experts and on 26 September a consensus meeting was held to agree the scoring. All three suppliers remain in the process and negotiations will commence w/c 27 October 2025.

A member of DfT Assurance attended the consensus meeting and there was positive feedback on the way the NLB Lead Procurement person on the Team had handled the meeting. As a result, CAB Stage 5 was undertaken by correspondence which saved the ITP time.

Scottish Government Frameworks
NLB currently use several Scottish Government Framework agreements as detailed in the table below. The equivalent UK frameworks do not all cater for supplies in Scotland. DfT and Cabinet Office have now engaged with NLB and advised that the expectation is that Scottish Government will align to Procurement Act 2023 during December 2025 which would allow NLB to utilise Scottish Government frameworks thereafter.

Procurement Projects

- **Finance** – OneAdvanced has appointed a sub-contractor which was not part of the tender, this has delayed project documentation sign off, but services are being delivered as required.

- **Shore 2 Ship Power** – The specification and tender documents are being prepared but delivery is expected to take a few months which might impact on spend this financial year.

- **New POLE STAR** - Vessel delivery now late November/December 2025. Finalisation of final contract variation for delay and any penalties will be agreed prior to delivery. Positive feedback that DfT have agreed for CAB stage 7 to be completed by correspondence and have verbally advised of a "Green" assurance status.

  The Director of Operations briefed the Committee on an emerging issue with POLE STAR's azimuth thrusters: commissioning engineers had started motors with retaining bolts still in place. Exploratory work was ongoing to understand the effect this would have, if any, on overall delivery timelines.

Business Development
The Committee noted the update on business development. The Director of Business Services advised that there are various commercial buoys issues that NLV PHAROS is unable to attend for various reasons and NLB have had to rely on zoned boats, etc. The Business Support Manager is reviewing the process around this to make it clearer in terms of reporting and actions.

Estates
The Committee noted the update on Estates.

Commissioner Archibald asked for an update on the HQ George Street roof. The Director of Business Services advised that unfortunately the work has been delayed a couple of times due to the permission required for road closures. The work is currently scheduled for 26 October 2025.

Secure by Design
New requirements and process have been rolled out to Executive Group and Programme and Project Board. Full staff briefings will take place in December 2025. NLB have identified the first project to take through the process before the deadline of January 2026.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Work has continued with GRAD and the other GLAs to develop a strategy and policy document which will dovetail into the secure by design process. NLB are looking how AI can be used in a contained system using the monitor centre data. In addition to the work with GRAD, NLB has developed some frequently asked questions to be issued to staff and are reviewing some training that has recently been developed by the Civil Service Learning.

The Director of Business Service will investigate whether it would be possible to replicate the AI training for Commissioners.

Action: Director of Business Services

ISO 27001
In February 2026 NLB is due have their next certification for ISO27001 and it is planned to add an additional day to assess the readiness of the monitoring system to move into that Standard.

NLV POLE STAR
During October ICT staff have joined the vessel to arrange the installation of ICT and satellite communications equipment. There has been really positive responses and excitement from that Team on the vessel.

Project Spend
The Committee noted the summary of the 2025/26 project spend for capital and revenue to Period 6 (30 September 2025). The main concern from a Procurement perspective is the Shore to Ship project. Everything will be done to accelerate this project and a report will be brought back to future meeting should this slip further.

Action: Director of Business Services

7. NOTICES TO MARINERS

Notices to Mariners 11 of 2025 – Point of Ayre – Establishment of AIS AtoN; 12 of 2025 – Lunna Holm – Re-establishment of a permanent light, 13 of 2025 – Fair Isle South – Re-establishment of a permanent light, 14 of 2025 – Girdle Ness – Re-establishment of a permanent light and 15 of 2025 – Girdle Ness – Re-establishment of a permanent light 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 10 – Asset Loss/Damage; 12 – Natural Events and 15 – Climate Emergency (Adaptation).

Risk Card 10 – Asset Loss/Damage

- In the text it refers to ship, but the ship is not specified in the risk description column.
- Consider adding any lessons identified from only running one vessel as in effect we have lost one of our assets for a portion of the year. Wording around this will be discussed further offline between the Executive.

Action: Executive

- Active Cliff Erosion Monitoring – Covered in Risk Card 12.

Risk Card 12 – Natural Events

- Additional Actions – Include wording around the Mull of Kintyre landslide.
- Additional Actions – Include wording around the discussion to be held with the GLF Accountant on whether in the light of climate the level of GLF Reserve remains valid.

Risk Card 15 – Climate Emergency (Adaptation)

- Additional Actions – Add "Review of drainage, etc for protection of roads."

Risk Cards Numbers: 5 – AtoN Provision, 6 – Information Technology and Operational Technology, 8 – Exploitation of Reserve Capacity; and 9 – Technological Change were noted.

9. POLICY APPROVALS

There were no items for approval.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Northern Lighthouse Board User Group Agenda – 6 November 2025
The Committee noted the agenda and speakers. The Chair and Navigation Manager will look to attribute a timeframe to each agenda item.

Committee members are requested to let the Senior Executive Assistant know if they wish to attend.

Whale Rock Buoy
The Director of Operations brought the Committee's attention to the situation with Whale Rock Buoy. Whale Rock Buoy is a very difficult to maintain buoy station and the last AtoN Review supported replacing it with a Virtual Aids to Navigation. There is one AIS transmitter set up on Haskier with St Kilda and Flannans still to be set up. In the meantime, NLB has not managed to maintain the buoy for the best part of 2 years and it is unclear whether the buoy is still there. Getting there is extremely dependent on weather and NLB is very aware that servicing is long overdue.

Muckle Flugga
The Asset Manager reported that the air quality sampling report has been received, and both the engine room and accommodation are safe to access. Some asbestos in the accommodation was found in the floor tiles which has not been picked up on previous survey reports, but it is still safe to access.

One Vessel
Commissioner Archibald highlighted that being down to one ship does start to develop issues. It was suggested that issues, which have arisen as a result of only having one vessel, should be recorded as the information may require to be sighted in future when NLB comes to replace NLV PHAROS.

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 28 January 2026 at 10am. This will be a virtual meeting.