**NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSE BOARD**
**NAVIGATION AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES 28 JANUARY 2026**

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| **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 |
| | Paddy Wemyss | Project Leader (Renewals) |
| | Karen Charleson | Senior Executive Assistant (Notes) |

**ASSURANCE STATEMENT**

The Navigation and Operations Committee met on 28 January 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 99.80% 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 23 metre fishing vessel FV OCEAN CHALLENGE ran aground at Kirk Ness, Whalsay on 26 November and was refloated.
  - The under 10 metre fishing vessel FV AZALEA ran aground in Oban Bay and then sank whilst alongside Oban Railway Pier on 17 December.

  Neither incident was as a result of AtoN failure.

- AtoN Inspections. At the end of December 2025, 1221 LLA AtoN had been inspected out of a possible 2434 (50.2%) against a target of 70%, so well on track to meet this target by the year end. 136 AtoN are recorded as not inspected within the last 3 years. 378 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 490 (77.1%). One NLB AtoN are currently outwith the 3-year maximum inspection period.

- Planned Maintenance. Overall planned maintenance overdue continues to reduce (1209 at end of December 2025, down 4% from last committee meeting) demonstrating the value (and success) of the plan of action briefed to the committee in August 2025. The Committee noted and praised changes in the reporting of these items, which now provides greater clarity and understanding of overdue maintenance tasks.

- Vessels.
  - PHAROS experienced 12 days of downtime since the last committee meeting due to defect rectification to thrusters and emergency switchboard, which were further complicated by availability of spares and a service engineer (over the festive period) and then class clearance. Due to an emergent issue with the port anchor windlass and the requirement for an overhaul on the starboard anchor windlass in February, the vessel is not anchoring routinely. This does not affect the ability to anchor in an emergency.
  - POLE STAR entered service on 3 December 2025 and arrived into Oban on 25 December 2025. She was named by NLB Patron, HRH Princess Royal, on 21 January in Leith. Current plans see her fully operational by 28 February although she has been assigned for risk response since entering UK waters last month. Guarantee defects and rectification are be discussed with Gondan.

- Calf of Eday. The committee discussed and then approved changes to the sectors and range of a new sector light to be installed at Calf of Eday. The changes narrow the white sector on the northeast approach, in order to keep mariners further away from a shoal patch on the western side of the channel.

- Position, Navigation and Time resilience. Since the last committee meeting, the UK Government has announced a £155m investment in PNT resilience including an eLoran programme, development of the Nartional Timing Centre, funding for GNSS interference monitoring, and space based time transfer research and development.

- ASP. 3 suppliers remain in the process with the period 31 January to 2 March being the window for preparation and submission of bids.

- Shore to Ship Power. The committee discussed the issues associated with the required SSEN infrastructure upgrades to make the Oban shore power transformer effective. The project has now been deferred to 2026/27.

- Oban Harbour. Delays to Transport Scotland determination on the HRO have seen concerns raised by a number of stakeholders, particularly with issues around oil spills

and derelict vessels (neither are connected with NLB). NLB has discussed with CMAL and ABC at a senior level and will now write to Transport Scotland to outline concerns.

- Oban Fender Repairs. Delays in the Marine Directorate issuing a marine licence for this work to commence means there is risk it will be deferred to the next FY with a resulting underspend this FY.

- Scottish Government Frameworks. DfT continue to engage with CO but no confirmation yet that Scottish Government will align with the Procurement Act 2023 as expected. Risk to NLB is currently minimal with options to extend some existing contracts and the Procurement team will continue to monitor, and engage with DfT.

- Risk Cards. Cards 5 and 6 were reviewed. Cards 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15 were noted. Two risks were escalated to the committee:
  - Unavailability of technicians (3x vacancies) affecting delivery and planning of projects. Mitigation in place including updated recruitment process.
  - Principal Electrical Engineer (PEE) post gapped affecting sign off of electrical projects. Mitigation in place through cover by Programme and Renewals Manager (a qualified PEE) whilst new PEE recruited.

- Committee TORs. The terms of reference were reviewed and the committee approved the publication of them on the NLB website.

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting NavOps Committee in 2026 and thanked everyone involved in the Naming Ceremony of NLB POLE STAR which was held on 21 January 2026. It was a great day and it was evident how proud everyone was of the vessel.

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Commissioner Charteris, Adam Lewis (Coastal Inspector) 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 22 October 2025 were agreed.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the update provided within the meeting pack. Items highlighted were:

**Sound of Harris** - The Navigation Manager has engaged with CMAL/CFL and to date no joint submission has been made. An offer of utilising the simulation of the Sound of Harris at HR Wallingford (at CMAL cost) has been made. This action can now be closed.

**GLF Reserve/Climate Risk** – This has been raised with GLF Accountant and DfT Sponsor during the Corporate Planning meeting. They have advised it would not be appropriate to increase the GLF reserve but instead a call would be made on DfT should an event cause a large financial draw. This action can now be closed.

**Artificial Intelligence Training** – A transcript of the training was included in the meeting pack. The UK Government is rolling out free AI training which will be available to anyone. This action can now be closed.

**Shore to Ship Project** - An update was provided at Agenda Item 5. This action can now be closed.

**Risk Card 10 Asset Loss/Damage** – Any lessons identified from only running one vessel for a period of time have been captured in the VRP lessons learned log. This action can now be closed.

Commissioner Archibald noted the old POLE STAR is going to be re-engined and lengthened and asked if the messaging around why it was no longer fit for NLB's purpose was captured. The Chief Executive advised that this was covered in the business case and there is robust reasoning for the decision taken by NLB.

## 4. NAVIGATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

Incidents

- The 23 metre fishing vessel FV OCEAN CHALLENGE ran aground at Kirk Ness, Whalsay on 26 November 2025. She refloated and was escorted into Lerwick.

- The under 10 metre fishing vessel FV AZALEA ran aground in Oban Bay and then sank whilst alongside Oban Railway Pier on 17 December 2025. A salvage operation is ongoing.

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

Calf of Eday

Calf of Eday light was refurbished in 2002 and an NTM issued with the sectors. Subsequent vessel surveys in 2008 indicated that the sectors were erroneous and the chart updated to show the actual sectors. A new sector light is due to be installed at Calf of Eday and it is proposed to revert to the previously published sector for the approach from the SE, but to narrow the sector to the NE as the existing white sector passes over a bank charted at 0.7metres.

The current light is advertised as White 8 Miles; Red/Green 6 Miles nominal range and it is also proposed to standardise on a WRG range of 7 Miles.

The NavOps Committee discussed and approved the alterations to sectors and range.

Position, Navigation and Timing Resilience

On 19 November 2025 the Science Minister, Lord Vallance announced a £155 million investment in PNT resilience. The NavOps Committee noted the list of programmes.

GLA Risk Response Criteria Review

The Risk Response Criteria establishes the required GLA response time to AtoN outages and wrecks. A working group has been established to update the document and once the document is finalised it will be brought to the NavOps Committee for endorsement.

Aids to Navigation Inspections
At the end of December 2025 1,221 LLA AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 2,434 (50.2%) during this reporting year. 136 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.

378 NLB AtoN have been inspected out of a possible 490 (77.1%). One NLB AtoN is currently out with the 3 year maximum inspection period (Ve Skerries light).

Offshore Oil Inspection
The annual oil & gas inspection voyage was undertaken 6-20 November 2025. 50 inspections were completed with 7 sites reported as failures of some kind. Results have been reported to OPRED for follow-up. A commissioning inspection of Neart na Gaoithe OWF was also undertaken.

Audit
Isle of Man Harbours were audited on 3 November 2025, and KHM Clyde was audited on 21 November 2025. There were no significant non-conformances found in either case.

GNSS Update
Galileo satellites FM33 and FM34 were launched from Guiana on 17 December and are now in commissioning phase.

GLONASS satellite 708 was launched from Plesetsk on 13 September and is now operational.

2025 AtoN Review
The Committee noted the 2025 AtoN review tracker. The only new item is at Sumburgh Head where the permanent light is scheduled to be reestablished on 5 February 2026.

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 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 15 January 2026.

Category 1 availability is slightly down (0.05%) since the last meeting but remains well above the IALA standard at 99.93%.

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 main 2 failures were Haskeir and Flannan Islands which are both hybrid stations. At this time of year, the solar component is not enough and the generators have to run but there have been problems with the generators starting. Both are remote sites and very weather dependent to get there to respond.

Ships Downtime
There has been some problem with PHAROS. Over the Christmas period, over and above the cooling water issues, there was an unexpected absence of a Chief Engineer which resulted in 2 days being lost and subsequently there was an emergency switchboard defect which was resolved in 7 days but as it fell over the festive period clearance was not obtained from MCA/Class to continue operations for a further 3 days.

There has been no downtime for POLE STAR to date.

Maintenance
The Q4 dashboard and maintenance update were noted. The number of statutory planned preventative maintenance tasks that were more than 6 months overdue was 328, an increase of 72 since the last report.

Of these 115 (45%) (an increase of 45) are at the Pillar Rocks with the majority of these being at Dubh Artach (75). The worst overdues are the Bell Rock 5 year inspections of the FM200 system which are 1,216 days overdue.

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

**Shore Power Connection (Oban)** – The initial intention had been to put a proprietary transformer in for the ship to shore power but Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) also have to reinforce their entire network capacity in the Oban area. If NLB has a separate proprietary transformer SSEN would not be able to connect it for potentially 6 years.

On review of the initial work SSEN carried out, one of the options was to replace the existing transformer which supplies the entire Oban base with a larger capacity transformer. This is already connected and would allow NLB to utilise that transformer and supply the ship with hotel power which would allow use of the cable handling system until SSEN were able to upgrade their network. The Programme and Renewals Team are now working the Procurement to place an order with SSEN for this work.

The NavOps Committee agreed that this was a pragmatic and good outcome.

**Fender Repairs (Oban)** – There has been a problem with obtaining a Marine Licence and consequently the repairs are delayed. The Project Leader has been engaging with the Marine directorate since July 2025 on what should be a 14 week licence process. This may result in a further underspend for this financial year which is out with our control.

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

**Loch Ryan** - A safe working route for site access has been established. The RLK can now visit site.

Neighbour Consultations
The Committee noted the update on neighbour consultation. The Director of Operations highlighted that there were a number of different sites where there are issues with neighbours which are being addressed.

Appropriate Assessment
Following the recent works by AECOM NLB have still to fully review their findings for discussion with NatureScot. The review is planned for winter/spring 2026.

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 has been reported to the Governance Board however this will now start to be reported to this Committee.

Oban Harbour
The NavOps Committee noted that update on Oban Harbour. The Harbour Revision Order remains with Transport Scotland to determine.

Marine Operations

**PHAROS** – The NavOps Committee noted the port windlass drive coupling failure during anchor heaving operations. All staff responded well to the incident.

Repairs involve a change of coupling type which is being progressed. Despite this class approved modification being done to PHAROS Stbd windlass in 2014 the same modification to the port windlass was not carried out. The stbd windlass is also due an overhaul in the February 2026 maintenance period and for now the vessel is not anchoring routinely to avoid any further problems. This does not stop emergency anchoring.

**POLE STAR** – Everyone is delighted with the ship however there a number of guarantee claims which are being worked through with the Gondan. The Director of Operations highlighted issues with the rack coolers and communication with crane manufactures as the most significant items.

## 6. BUSINESS SERVICES

Aviation Services Project
The Committee noted the update on the ASP project. Negotiations have now completed, and work is underway to finalise the documents for the tenderers to submit their best and final offers. Three suppliers remain interested in bidding for the contract. The evaluators will review bids and hold a consensus meeting on 16 March 2026.

Scottish Government Frameworks
NLB currently use several Scottish Government Framework agreements as the equivalent UK frameworks do not all cater for supplies in Scotland. DfT have continued to chase Cabinet Office to provide an update as Scottish Government have still to align to the Procurement Act 2023. It was noted that it would be early 2027 before not having access to Scottish Government Frameworks would become a significant issue for NLB.

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.

Procurement Reform
Cabinet Office continues to provide notices on topics which NLB and our eProcurement system must comply with.

NLB are finalising standard model terms following a review by lawyers CMS. DfT have agreed these can be used for low risk above threshold procurements with the inclusions of some additional clauses. NLB will require to seek legal advice on contracts classed Gold and Silver (high risk/value/complex requirements) which may impact on legal costs and project timelines.

Insurance Renewals
Data gathering is currently underway to provide to Willis Tower Watson (Insurance brokers), to enable them to source appropriate Tri-GLA insurances for February and April renewals.

Finance System
The provider of the current finance system is unwilling to extend support beyond 1 April which may be an issue as the new system does not go live until 1 May 2026. Several meetings have taken place to try to reach resolution to minimise risk.

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

Secure by Design
New requirements were communicated to remaining staff and Commissioners late 2025. NLB have commenced two ICT projects and one engineering project before the implementation deadline of January 2026. All systems utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) will now follow the Secure by Design process; this will include a review by the Information Management Group and the Project Management Group.

ISO 27001
A scope expansion audit has been scheduled after the 2/3 February 2026 surveillance audit to assess the addition of monitoring to this standard.

NLV POLE STAR
No ICT issues reported. ICT staff were on-board on 17 January to run system updates and tidy cable runs.

Project Spend
The Committee noted the summary of the 2025/26 project spend for capital and revenue to Period 9 (31 December 2025). Since the report was prepared, the project to repair the pier in Oban is now looking unlikely to complete this financial year.

## 7. NOTICES TO MARINERS

Notices to Mariners 16 of 2025 – Buchan Ness AIS as an AtoN; 1 of 2026 – General Notice; 2 of 2026 – Extant NTM; and 3 of 2026 – Sumburgh Head – Re-establishment of a permanent light, were published since the last meeting.

## 8. ESCALATED RISKS AND RISK CARD REVIEW

Escalated Risk

- Risk of not being able to resource the area teams sufficiently. 20% of technicians are unavailable due to 3 x Vacancies 80% Level of technician posts filled. Increasing competition from wind energy sector especially in Inverness and Orkney/Shetland – There have been a number of individuals leave their roles last year and recruitment campaigns were largely unsuccessful. The adverts have been reviewed and stripped back and now rather than doing more targeted the locations have been listed and applicants have been asked to advise where they would wish to be located. There is now a good number of applicants and there is a shift of the first 15 applicant's w/c 2 February 2026 but the approach so far appears to be working well. It is hoped to be able to de-escalate this risk before the next NavOps Committee meeting.

- Principal Electrical Engineer Post Cover – Risk relating to the management of the gap in Principal Electrical Engineer (PEE) post, following the departure of the previous PEE, pending re-recruitment. Risk relates to ensuring effective cover and oversight regarding continued design approvals, general electrical safety oversight including ensuring the ongoing competence of all staff undertaking electrical tasks - The Programme and Renewals Manager is a Chartered Electrical Engineer and will cover electrical drawing sign off and electrical competency until the role is filled.

Risk Card 5 – AtoN Provision

- Additional Actions – Add "Review the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within AtoN systems"
- Additional Actions – Amend "Ongoing review by GRAD of metal halide lamp technology in use across GLA Estate" to reflect the GRAD review has been completed and we are awaiting the report to be published. There are number of sites where there are proposals to change the lamp technology used providing there is enough power available on site and there will be an impact on the range.
- Control & Treatment - Reference to "Port Marine Safety Code" to be updated to read "Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code"

Risk Card 6 – Information Technology and Operational Technology

- No changes identified.

The Committee noted Risk Cards 8, 9 10, 12 and 15.

## 9. POLICY APPROVALS

There were no items for approval.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Terms of Reference

The Chair requested that NavOps Committee members review the Terms of Reference offline and feedback any comments by 4 February 2026.

The Director of Operations and Navigation Manager will also draft some wording on jurisdiction within that timeline.

**Action: Director of Operations/Navigation Manager**

The NavOps Committee agreed that following any comments/amendments the Terms of Reference should be published on the website.

**Action: Director of Business Services**

Annual Performance

Commissioner Shaw, as NLB Chair, advised that it is stated in the Guide to Governance that each Committee should be undertaking an annual performance review to ensure they are meeting requirements. Following discussion, the NavOps Committee felt that this was covered in different ways e.g. Assurance Statement and would be repetition of what was being done elsewhere. It was agreed that Commissioner Archibald, as NLB Vice Chair, would discuss this further offline with the NLB Chair and Chief Executive.

**Action: Commissioner Archibald**

AI Training

The NavOps Committee noted the transcript of the Civil Service Learning Platform Introduction to Artificial Intelligence in the Civil Service training. There is lots of free training now available with the AI Knowledge Hub being a particularly valuable resource.

## 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 15 April 2026 at 10am. This will be an in person meeting.