

## **Broads Authority**

### **Broads Local Access Forum**

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011

#### **Present**

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr David Broad	Mr Peter Medhurst
Mr Charles Swan	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr George Saunders	Mr Robin Buxton
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Stephen Read
Mr Patrick Hacon	Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies

#### **In Attendance**

Mrs Trudi Wakelin – Director of Operations  
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)  
Mr Russell Wilson - Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)  
Mr Fergus Bootman - Planning Officer  
Miss Jo Eames – Administrative Officer

#### **Also in Attendance**

Ms Anna Mangini – Regional Local Access Forums Co-ordinator  
Mr Alex Hartley - Wensum River Parkway  
Mr Peter Howe – Anglia Boatbuilders Association  
Ms Sarah Abercrombie - Norfolk County Council

#### **1/1 Appointment of Chairman**

The SWRO invited nominations for the position of Chairman for the forthcoming year.

It was proposed and duly seconded that Dr Keith Bacon be appointed as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

There being no other nominations, it was

**RESOLVED**

that Dr Bacon be appointed as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

Dr Bacon in the Chair

## **1/2 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

It was proposed and duly seconded that Mr Peter Medhurst be nominated for Vice-Chairman for the following year.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

that Mr Medhurst be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

## **1/3 Membership**

The SWRO reported that Nick Larkin had not wished to be re-appointed to the Forum, which reduced the number of members to 17, and although within Defra's guidelines this meant that angling was not represented. Therefore members requested that the Broads Angling Strategy Group be contacted to ascertain whether a member from that group would like to represent angling on the Forum. Members also requested that Mr Larkin be formally thanked for his involvement in the Forum.

The Forum discussed the possibility of co-opting the Broads Authority members representing Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council to the Forum to provide closer liaison with the two councils. The SWRO agreed to ascertain whether this would be possible.

## **1/4 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Tony Howes, Mr Chris Yardley, Mr Gary Simons, Mrs Jo Lester and Ms Liz Brooks.

Mr Mike Flett declared an interest in a number of agenda items (see Appendix 1 for details).

## **1/5 Huddle**

The Regional Local Access Forum Coordinator for the East of England (RLAFC) gave a presentation to the Forum regarding 'Huddle', a social media chosen by Defra and Natural England to replace the England Access Forum and the regional coordinators. Natural England was inviting three members from each Local Access Forum (LAF) to join Huddle before the end of March 2012.

The Forum raised concerns regarding who would be responsible for looking at issues raised by Defra and Natural England and how they would be analysed. The RLAFC stated that the reason representatives from each LAF had been invited to join Huddle was because Natural England no longer had the resources to monitor and respond to issues. Through the Huddle media LAFs would be able to contact each other, regionally and nationally, enabling them

to discuss issues between themselves and raise issues with Defra, Natural England and ministers.

The RLAFc stated that in three months time Natural England would review Huddle, giving LAFs an opportunity to raise any concerns/issues they might have regarding Huddle with Natural England and Defra.

The RLAFc confirmed that cost implications had restricted the number of LAF members invited to join Huddle to three per LAF. Defra and Natural England were currently in negotiations regarding funding, which could affect Huddle membership further.

The SWRO reported that the National Parks Access Officers Group felt that a National Park orientated Huddle group would be a good idea.

The RLAFc stated that Huddle training for members of the Broads LAF and the Norfolk LAF had been arranged for Wednesday 18 January 2012, and would take place at County Hall. Therefore members wishing to join Huddle needed to contact her by the end of the month, so that she could make the necessary training arrangements.

Members questioned whether the Forum's Administrative Officer could join Huddle on behalf of the Forum. The SWRO agreed to ascertain whether this would be possible.

Members noted that only George Saunders had stated an interested in attending the Huddle training and therefore requested that the opinion of the members unable to attend the meeting be canvassed to ascertain whether one or two of them would like to represent the Forum on Huddle and attend the training session.

The RLAFc stated that LAF members who joined Huddle would be supported by the regional coordinators until the end of March 2012 and Natural England.

The RLAFc reported that each LAF would be invited to nominate one member to attend a day of training and workshops for LAFs, taking place in Bristol on Tuesday 6 March 2012. Representatives from Defra and Natural England would be in attendance and members would be able to discuss open access issues with Richard Benyon MP via an on-line chat link. Invitations would be sent to members before Christmas.

## **1/6 Wensum River Parkway Update**

The Wensum River Parkway Chairman updated the Forum on the progress of the Wensum River Parkway project by the Broads Authority, Norwich Society, Norwich City Council and HEART, who had been in partnership for the last two years. The progress made to date included funding for signage which was now in place, constructing a new green space on Riverside and the submission of a planning application for the path between Duke Street Bridge

and St Georges Bridge. If planning permission was granted funding would need to be sourced.

The partnership would be contacting the Land Trust, which was a national organisation involved with footpaths, etc, to ascertain whether they would be interested in the project. HUBS was another organisation the partnership would be contacting, as they provided funding for walkways and waterborne tourism.

The Wensum River Parkway Chairman reported that one of the important issues for the project was small craft access, which was why the discussion document had been produced. Peter Howe of the Anglia Boatbuilders Association, present at the meeting, confirmed that it provided a good opportunity to showcase eco boats, although funding would be required.

The Wensum River Parkway Chairman stated that another important issue was disabled access, which would require a separate discussion paper.

The SWRO noted that the Broads Authority welcomed the project, which it hoped would improve access to water and from water to land, and had been in discussions with the Wensum River Parkway Chairman and businesses interested in the project.

The Forum welcomed the project and hoped it would convince businesses and owners that it was a worthwhile project.

## RESOLVED

that the following points, raised by the Forum, be considered by the Wensum River Parkway partnership:

- The Forum suggested that Broads Tourism group might be interested in the project, although members felt that caution would be required as commercial development would need to be financially sustainable, and work would need to be done to achieve this.
- The Forum noted that the wider picture needed to be considered. Investment in the port at Great Yarmouth would be needed to encourage overseas visitors to the Broads.
- The Forum noted that disabled access to all amenities, such as pontoons, boat design, etc, had equal importance, and therefore needed to be considered at the design stage.

The Wensum River Parkway Chairman requested that any further suggestions from members be forwarded to him direct, and noted that the River Wensum was not included in the RoWIP.

## **1/7 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **1/8 Points of Information Arising from the Minutes**

### **(1) Minute 4/3/1: Agri-Environmental Scheme Petition**

Mike Flett reported that Norman Lamb MP had written to Richard Benyon MP regarding the removal of funding for permissive footpath agreements. The response Mr Lamb MP had received stated that although it was understood that some communities had come to rely on permissive paths, HLS payments did not cover this. The reply also confirmed that permissive footpath payments would not be reinstated.

Norman Lamb MP also wrote to Norfolk County Council. The Chief Executive responded by stating that although funding had been cut the County Council would continue their statutory duty to maintain rights of way.

The Forum noted that footpath concerns would be addressed by Norfolk County Council next spring, and if the County Council was the responsible body they would resolve any problems. However members raised concerns that the standard of maintenance might be an issue.

### **(2) Minute 4/5: Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review**

The Forum noted that following the completion of the Carlton Marshes improvements a ferry from Carlton Marshes to the Waveney River Centre had been established.

### **(3) Minute 4/6: Annual Report of the Local Access Forum**

David Broad reported that at its last meeting he had drawn to the attention of the Broads Authority the concerns raised by the Forum regarding the reduction of funding for maintenance of rights of way. He had also drawn to its attention the Forum's recommendation to write to all the MPs in the Broads area regarding these concerns.

Mr Broad also reported that members had been made aware that there was adequate provision in the Broads Authority's budget to maintain the agreed £28/30k, of footpaths for 2011/12.

The Forum noted that BESL was currently assisting with footpath maintenance as part of its bank monitoring programme.

### **(4) Minute 4/7: Defra Consultation on Village Greens Registration**

David Broad noted that the Broads Authority was pleased to know that a village green included land that was covered by water.

## **1/9 Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Update**

The SWRO gave a presentation to the Forum on the current status of the Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan (RoWIP).

The Forum welcomed the improvements that had been completed so far.

Norfolk County Council's LAF Coordinator questioned whether the Broads RoWIP would remain part of the Norfolk RoWIP 2007-2017. The SWRO confirmed that this would need to be discussed with Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk County Council's LAF Coordinator explained that Norfolk County Council was changing its approach to footpath maintenance, and that this included a review of the Norfolk RoWIP 2007-2017. A steering group, which members of the Forum were invited to join, would be created to discuss a new approach. The Forum stated that it would be very keen to be part of the steering group. The SWRO confirmed that there was a benefit to maintaining links with Norfolk County Council, as the Broads Authority could only add value to the work carried out by other organisations.

The SWRO noted that a number of schemes in the RoWIP were unlikely to go ahead in the current financial climate, and suggested that these be deleted from the document if members were happy with this approach.

The Forum questioned whether, rather than deleting schemes from the existing RoWIP, it would be possible to keep the document in its entirety and from it prioritise a number of schemes to be progressed. Once these had been completed the document could be reviewed again and further schemes prioritised.

The Forum noted that the scheme at Fleggburgh (B8) had not been considered in the Trinity Broads Action Plan and that no RoWIP information had been included in the Plan.

The SWRO stated that at present he had no idea of the cost implications involved in developing any of the schemes in the RoWIP, as that was a large piece of work that had not been as yet undertaken. The cost of footpath diversions and opposed orders would also need to be considered.

The Forum questioned whether using country lanes rather than riverbanks would reduce the cost. The SWRO stated that funds would still be required to define the lanes as part of a route.

The Forum noted that Boudica Way had received funding and sponsorship. The SWRO confirmed that this model was being considered by the Norfolk Trails Partnership.

The SWRO reported that some of the RoWIP schemes linked to open access land. The Broads Authority would need to access these areas of land to

ascertain whether they were suitable for public access from a public health and safety perspective.

The SWRO explained that before the RoWIP Action Plan update was made public its current status with regard to the Forum's comments would need to be reviewed.

The Director of Operations reported that the Rangers were in the process of developing area based plans, projects from which would include the involvement of local communities and volunteer groups. It was noted that an illustration of the Rangers areas was available on the Broads Authority's website. The Forum therefore requested that a copy be circulated to members.

## RESOLVED

- (i) that the RoWIP be updated with:
  - information confirming the current status for each scheme;
  - an estimate of associated costs for each scheme;
  - a suggested priority status of A, B or C (A being the highest priority) for each scheme; and
- (ii) that, in advance of the March meeting, a report containing the updated RoWIP be produced for discussion with members.

### **1/10 Review of Broads Authority Footpath Maintenance**

The WRO gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the progress of the Broads Authority's footpath maintenance programme.

The Forum noted that footpath maintenance included cutting back vegetation overhanging a footpath.

The Forum congratulated the Broads Authority on the maintenance of the circular walks in Acle, noting that they linked in well with the walks around Fairhaven and North Burlingham publicised by Norfolk County Council.

The Forum questioned whether there was scope within the footpath maintenance programme to delay maintenance if the vegetation had not grown significantly enough to warrant cutting. The SWRO confirmed that there was some capacity to do this on a single promoted walk, but it would not be possible to delay the cutting of the whole 30km.

The SWRO explained that as Norfolk County Council would not be continuing its cutting contract next year the Broads Authority would need to look at footpaths being maintained by other organisations, including BESL. Once details had been agreed with BESL and other organisations maps would be available digitally. The Forum requested that this be included as an agenda item for the March meeting.

The Forum noted that the new flood banks created by BESL were cracking, producing trip hazards. The SWRO confirmed that BESL and the Broads Authority were aware of the problem, which had been caused by an exceptionally dry summer, but were not sure how to rectify it. The SWRO stated that the Norfolk Trails Partnership would be providing training on how to assess the condition of footpaths.

The WRO requested that if members had concerns regarding the condition of particular footpaths but were not sure which organisation was responsible for their maintenance to contact him in the first instance. He would then assess whether it was a footpath maintained by the Broads Authority, and if it was not he would forward the information to the relevant County Council. However, if the problem related to a Public Right of Way, and was either a health and safety issue or related to a structure, the relevant County Council, as the statutory body, would need to be contacted direct.

David Broad noted that the footpath maintenance programme was one of the Broads Authority's objectives, and hoped that Broads Authority members would agree that Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils should continue to carry out their statutory obligations with regard to rights of way.

#### **1/11 Memorial Bench for Laurie Ritchie Update**

The SWRO informed members of the progress that had been made regarding the Forum's request for the installation of a bench at St Benet's in memory of Laurie Ritchie.

Members asked whether it would be possible to find out if any furniture was included in the HLF scheme for St Benet's, and if it was if it would be possible to add a plaque to a bench. The Director of Operations agreed to ascertain this and report back to the Forum.

#### **1/12 Ferry Proposal for the Deal Ground Development**

The Planning Officer gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the current status of the planning application that was submitted in October 2011 for two temporary floating pontoons on the River Wensum, one to be sited at the deal ground development and the other to be sited at the back of the football ground.

The Forum noted that:

- Planning permission for the two floating pontoons had been granted.
- The pontoons were an interim measure while agreement for a bridge between the deal ground developers and the utility developers was sought.

- The pontoons would remain in place for three years but this time period might be extended if agreement for a bridge was delayed or if the service operator/another party wished to continue the service.
- The applicant has indicated that the ferry would run between the two pontoons from 6 a.m. until midnight seven days a week, every half an hour, to enable access to the city from the deal ground development. This timetable was indicative and full details of service provision are required by a planning condition, with details to be submitted to the Authority prior to the installation of the pontoons.

The Forum questioned:

- Whether a Section 106 agreement for the deal ground development had been included?
- Whether guarantees had been sought from the deal ground developers to maintain the ferry service for the three years?
- When it would be operational?

The Planning Officer explained that because the Broads Authority's remit regarding the deal ground development only extended from one bank of the river to the other, those questions would need to be directed to Norwich City Council.

The Forum felt that the ferry might encourage access to land and could create links up and down the River Wensum.

The SWRO confirmed that it was the desire of the Wensum River Parkway project to extend as far as Cary's Meadow, but at present the railway line created a barrier. The Forum felt that if this barrier could be overcome it would be a great outcome.

It was noted that if members wished for information regarding the idea for a ferry from Thorpe to Whitlingham they should contact Thorpe Parish Council direct.

### **1/13 Broads Forum Update**

Peter Medhurst reported that the items discussed by the Broads Forum on 6 October 2011 included the Broads Plan, where there was disagreement regarding the issue of water quality, the Wensum River Parkway, the Climate Change Adaption Plan and the Habitat Audit, which the Broads Forum felt was a great achievement.

**1/14 Any Other Business**

Access to St Benet's Abbey

The Forum noted that progress regarding access to St Benet's Abbey from the boatyard at Ludham Bridge had halted, as the boatyard had gone out of business. Members felt that this was a priority and needed to be included in the RoWIP, so that it could be progressed.

**1/15 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 7 March 2012 at 2.00 p.m., and might include a site visit in the Great Yarmouth area. Members questioned whether a visit to the Trinity Broads could be included. The SWRO agreed to ascertain this.

The meeting concluded at 4.55 p.m.

Chairman

**Code of Conduct for Members**

**Declaration of Interests**

**Committee:** Broads Local Access Forum

**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday 7 December 2011

Name <i>Please Print</i>	Agenda/ Mins No(s)	Nature of Interest (Please describe the nature of the interest)	Please tick here if the interest is a Prejudicial interest ✓
Mike Flett	4/3 (1), (2), (3), 4/4	Correspondence with Norman Lamb, M.P. and Norfolk County Council concerning PRoWs and Permissive Paths; access to St Benet's from Ludham Bridge (Ludham Parish Council)	