

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2013

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Louis Baugh
Mr David Broad
Mr Mike Flett
Mr Patrick Hacon
Mr Alec Hartley
Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davis

Mrs Jo Lester
Mr George Saunders
Mr Gary Simmons
Mr Charles Swan
Mr Ray Walpole

In Attendance

Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Ms Lottie Carlton - Administrative Officer
Mrs Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources
Mr Russell Wilson – Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)

Also In Attendance

Mr Andrew Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council
Mr David Yates – Senior Trails Officer, Norfolk County Council

2/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Liz Brooks, Mr Robin Buxton, Mr Peter Medhurst, Mr Stephen Read and Mr Chris Yardley

2/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 1/3 (2): National Trails and Rights of Way Update – Norfolk County Council

The Norfolk County Council consultation 'Putting People First' was still underway looking at how to apportion required cuts to funding in various service areas. There was a proposal for an extra £75k to be put towards reactive cutting of PROW within existing policy via the Highways Department. The Broads Local Access Forum expressed the view that separating PROW and National Trails had not been a good move. It was also the view of the Forum that prioritisation rather than reactive cutting was a better solution and that the Broads, as part of the National Park family, should be given greater consideration when prioritising a cutting regime. It was agreed that the SWRO would draft a consultation response on behalf of the BLAF in consultation with the Chairman. Individual member responses would also be welcomed.

Norfolk County Council was undertaking a review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and would be talking to stakeholders to gather views about this. A response from the BLAF and individual responses were welcomed. It was agreed that the SWRO and WRO would arrange to meet with Norfolk County Council Officers to discuss the ROW Improvement Plan under review.

It was noted that there was no definitive map for Norwich and Great Yarmouth and therefore that Norfolk County Council did not have responsibility for footpaths within either city/town. It was noted however that a Section 106 agreement required the City council to adopt a section of the Norwich riverside walk as a highway.

Norfolk County Council had obtained £250k of EU funding, 'Cool Tourism', which would be focussed on the Paston and Weavers Way, linking local businesses to walking routes via training and a marketing toolkit. It was confirmed that the funding was for capital improvements. It was agreed that the SWRO and WRO would arrange to meet with Norfolk County Council Officers to discuss the Weavers Way.

It was confirmed that Natural England had given the go ahead for construction work on stretch one of the coastal footpath (Sea Palling to Weybourne) which was awaiting sign off by the Secretary of State. Work was due to be completed by autumn 2014. Stretch two (Sea Palling to Hopton on Sea) was timetabled for 2015.

(2) **Minute 1/3 (5): Integrated Access Strategy Access - Update**

Norfolk County Council had met with Broadland District Council planners regarding the proposed Rackheath Way. It was viewed as high priority green infrastructure. NCC would be raising the potential for this footpath to be considered for LEADER funding.

(3) **Minute 1/5: Wensum River Parkway update**

The Broads Society had organised a river trip to brief members of the River Strategy Working Group on the problems and issues. Discussion had also taken place regarding making Norwich more attractive as a visitor focus for those visiting the Broads. The event had attracted good press coverage.

On 14 December, a Carrow Cup bicentenary celebration would take place. The cup was the second oldest rowing cup in the country and was awarded for a traditional craft race.

It was noted that the Deal Ground bridge had been awarded planning permission, but there were no further updates concerning when this might be built.

(4) **Minute 1/6: Department for Transport cycling funding update**

A new pink pedalling route in Norwich had been designated.

(5) **Minute 1/7: Draft Deregulation Bill – call for evidence**

The Broads Authority and the Broads Local Access Forum had submitted separate responses to the Draft Deregulation Bill.

(6) **Minute 1/10 (2): To receive any other items of urgent business**

The Broads Authority Parish Forum had taken place at Ludham Village Hall on 18th September. Approximately 80 people had attended the drop-in session talking to Broads Authority staff about Climate Change, Love the Broads, Integrated Access Strategy, Placemaking and Catchment Approach. A formal meeting was held later in the evening followed by a question and answer session. Feedback for the Parish Forum had been good and a further one was planned for March 2014 in the Yare area.

2/4 Update on Waveney River Centre Ferry

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Waveney River Centre Ferry.

Since the Waveney River Centre ferry opened in May 2012 feedback has been

very positive and monitoring has shown that 50 to 100 visitors used the service each day during the peak summer months.

It was confirmed that retrospective planning permission had been awarded for the mooring stage posts at the ferry on the Carlton side.

Integrated Access outputs were being met by this scheme and it was hoped that reduced tolls for ferries would encourage more operations to open increasing access across the Broads area.

2/5 Oulton Broad Free Quay

A draft Harbour Revision Order and tripartite agreement regarding land transfer had been agreed by Suffolk County Council, Associated British Ports (ABP) and the Broads Authority.

It was noted that historically a free jetty had been provided at Oulton Broad but that Waveney District Council had removed this in 2004.

It was now confirmed that ownership of the land to which the mooring jetty abutted currently belonged to ABP and this would transfer to the Broads Authority once the tripartite agreement went ahead.

The Broads Authority confirmed that it would not be able to fund a reinstatement of the Oulton Broad free jetty as mooring was already available at Oulton Broad. This was in line with the current mooring sites review prioritisation criteria.

It was noted that there could be heritage funding potential for a reinstatement scheme. There was also tourism potential regarding access to local business outlets. The lack of short term waiting/de-masting facility for yachts could provide further support for any funding bids for a reinstatement scheme.

A review of the frontage and slipway would be made by the Broads Authority once the land transfer had been completed. If a wider project proposal came forward that included the free jetty this might be more likely to receive consideration.

Some members expressed the view that Waveney District Council, as trustees of the jetty, had neglected their duties in removing the structure. The responsibility for the jetty's reinstatement therefore lay with the Council and the Harbour Revision Order ought to reflect this. Reference to the income generated by Oulton Broad for Waveney District Council should also be included in any negotiations regarding responsibility for reinstatement of the jetty.

The Forum welcomed the transfer of land to the Broads Authority and thanked Officers for their work.

The SWRO agreed to update the Forum when the transfer had been completed and consult them regarding use.

2/6 Canoe Trails Project update

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Canoe Trails Project.

The aim of the project was to provide 80% coverage of the Broads by canoe trails, using suitable rivers for canoeing, mapping access opportunities to enable sustainable, deliverable and useable access.

Comments arose as follows:

- (1) It was confirmed that any new ramps or slipways included in the canoe trails will be DDA compliant and followed Canoe England standards.
- (2) The Bungay to Ellingham trail linked in to the Environment Agencies canoe trails to Homersfield.
- (3) It was agreed that zoned areas or particular events e.g. Three Rivers Race would be highlighted on canoe trails in order to ensure adequate safety for all users. Consultation had already been made with Rangers and angling, sailing and rowing groups in order to gather this information.
- (4) A suggestion was made to grade the trails to provide sufficient information for canoe users based on their experience.
- (5) It was noted that the Olympics had provided a greater interest in canoeing and Canoe England's support with marketing and advice would be beneficial.
- (6) The Forum was keen to encourage a canoe hire operation in Norwich and along the Yare where currently no provision existed. Canoe portage at New Mills was also viewed as desirable.
- (7) AINA was convening a working group to coordinate standardisation of safety hazard signage at bridges. It was confirmed that there were no byelaws regarding 'rights of way' through bridges. Voluntary codes of conduct were accepted by various craft.
- (8) The Countryside Access Manager for Norfolk County Council suggested linking canoe trails, walks and cycle path networks and this idea was welcomed by the Forum. It was agreed that the SWRO and WRO would arrange to meet with Norfolk County Council Officers to discuss the proposal.

2/7 CAP Implementation Consultation

The National Parks England response had been used by the SWRO as a basis for the Broads Local Access Forum response to the CAP Implementation Consultation, with a particular concentration on access and Broads specific

issues such as supporting rural communities and businesses, links with PROW and capital payment for access infrastructure.

A summary was given of the issues raised in moving from the old system to a new CAP scheme: The Broads and Coast were being reviewed by the local advisory rural development group. A 12 month break between the two schemes would involve transitional funding. There was concern that moving from pillar 1 to pillar 2 would reduce UK competitiveness. There were inefficiencies in the current funding stream mechanisms. The current advice was to start at 9% and increase gradually to 15% if efficiency and effectiveness targets were met.

Comments arose as follows:

- (1) Concern was raised that £12.5 billion over 5 years was a lot of support for one industry and benefits needed to be commensurate in the current climate of cuts in all other sectors. However it was also recognised that landowners required support due to their role as socio economic/ landscape custodians.
- (2) Concern was raised that there may be a business incentive to move away from cattle grazing fen marshes with the concentration on species specific incentives rather than landscape support. It was noted that the National Parks England consultation response had also picked up on this issue.
- (3) Application for LEP for LEADER areas and priority plans were being drawn up to reflect the requirements of local areas. A Broads area consultation would be taking place in Acle and the Broads Authority's Head of Strategy and Projects would be attending. The timescale for implementation was 2015.

2/8 Integrated Access Strategy Project Delivery

The WRO gave an update on Integrated Access Strategy project delivery.

It was noted that the Broads Authority budgeting for projects was now held in a central 'projects pot' and a Project Development Group (PDG) reviewed all submitted projects in order to prioritise spending.

The PDG had reviewed the Belaugh canoe portage project proposal.

The Whitlingham Charitable Trust (WCT) had received the project proposal for access improvements at Whitlingham Country Park and would be making a decision regarding potential funding input at their January meeting. The PDG had reviewed the proposed project and was supportive subject to confirmation of funding input from the WCT.

Project development was continuing on the Carey's Meadow canoe access project.

Work would be starting on the Hardley Cross 24 hour mooring project in January 2014.

It was noted that the intention was to have a list of 'off the shelf' integrated access projects ready to go when capacity was available to carry out the work. This required landowner agreements and staff resource to be confirmed.

Regarding the St Benet's footpath project, a successful meeting had taken place with one of the landowners concerned. A heads of terms draft agreement had been sent to land agents for the Crown Estates Commissioners with verbal agreement having been received for these. Sign off was still required. Work had been provisionally programmed into the Broads Authority Operations team pending agreements being signed. It was therefore hoped to have the footpath open in time for the new season and to include a guided walk on the new footpath in the Outdoors Festival in May.

2/9 Staithes: Current information and role of Staithes Management

The SWRO gave an update on current information available regarding Broads staithes and their management.

A land registry tribunal judgement in February 2013 regarding Martham Staithe had highlighted the importance of staithes and their management. The ruling had gone against the Parish Council and had shown the importance for accurate recording of information concerning ownership, precise location and dimensions and any rights connected to the staithe.

The current knowledge of staithes was based on a survey register of staithes compiled by Roy Kemp in 1986. 56 public and private staithes were listed in this publication but no information was included regarding precise locations, dimensions or rights connected to the staithes.

The Broads Authority Act of 1986 made provision for the Broads Authority to act as 'owner occupier' in order to protect unlawful interference with staithes in the Broads or to protect the rights attached to these. However, since the Martham Staithe ruling it was clear that more accurate information of Broads staithes would be required for the Broads Authority to be confident to put this provision into practise.

Comments arose as follows:

- (1) The importance of gathering accurate information was supported by the Forum whilst recognising what a huge task this would be, particularly regarding resource issues.
- (2) It was noted that approximately half of the Broads staithes were missing from the 1986 report and that the register was therefore too

inaccurate to be useful in its present state.

- (3) It was recognised that the Martham case would put landowners off defending staithes for fear of the potential costs involved if the case went against them.
- (4) Although very few staithes were likely to be under the Inland Drainage Board it was noted that they were currently completing an asset register and had significant documentary records regarding staithes.
- (5) Regarding information collation methods it was recommended that an initial request for information was sent to parish councils followed by historical research of tithe maps, enclosure awards and the 1910 inland revenue survey.
- (6) It was suggested that the project be put forward as a volunteer opportunity.

2/10 Broads Forum update

The Chairman updated the Forum on the Broads Forum meeting held on 7 November 2013.

Items discussed included water quality, the strategic priorities for the Broads Authority for the coming year, the canoe trails report, non-native species and the St Benet's Abbey footpath situation.

A public question had been raised regarding access at Whitlingham Country Park.

2/11 To receive any other items of urgent business

Information was requested regarding a scheme called 'Marine Watch'. The WRO agreed to contact Broads Beat, who would likely be able to provide further information on this, and report back to the Forum.

The meeting concluded at 4.55 p.m.

Chairman