

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2014

Present:

Prof Richard Card (Chairman)

Mr Andrew Alston	Dr Martin George	Ms Jennifer Parkhouse
Dr Keith Bacon	Mrs Barbara Greasley	Dr Philip Pearson
Mr Brian Barker	Mr John Hiskett	Mr Simon Partridge
Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr Brian Holt	Mr Bryan Read
Mr Ashley Cato	Mr Mike Hoyland	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Mike Evans	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Michael Flett	Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Anthony Wright

In Attendance:

Mr S Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Ms Maria Conti – Strategy and Projects Officer
Ms E Harris – Environment Officer
Mr S Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Mrs Angie Leeper – Asset Officer
Ms L Marsh – Administrative Officer
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance and Executive Assistant
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mr Neil Punchard – Broadland Catchment Partnership Officer

Also Present

Mr Paul Mitchelmore – Environment Agency
Mr Ian Robinson – RSPB
Ms Gemma Walker – Norfolk Wildlife Trust

3/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Julian Barnwell, Mr Henry Cator, Mr Martyn Davey, Mr Tony Gibbons, Mr Peter Jermy, Mr Matthew Thwaites and Mr Pete Waters.

3/2 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman welcomed Mr Paul Mitchelmore from the Environment Agency (EA), Mr Ian Robinson from the RSPB and Mr Mike Hoyland who was attending in place of Mr Tony Gibbons.

The Chairman advised that a written report of the Broads Authority meetings of 22 November 2013 and 17 January 2014 had been circulated in advance.

3/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/4 Public question time

No questions had been raised by members of the public.

3/5 Summary of progress/actions/response taken following discussions at previous meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

In response to a question raised by Philip Pearson (PP) about planned liaison with the RSPB and boat yards over high speed boat testing outside Strumpshaw Fen, Head of Safety Management Steve Birtles (SB) said this was currently being planned. Usage data was being reviewed to ensure the relevant boat yards were targeted. He said the work was due to take place around April 2014.

Richard Starling (RS) raised concerns over climate change engagement and the availability of information on the Authority's website. Head of Strategy and Projects Simon Hooton (SH) answered that the website had a section on climate change adaptation and that engagement events like the one in North Norfolk had drawn much interest. More events were planned including one for young people.

3/6 Reflection on the December tidal surge and how this relates to adapting to environmental change in the Broads

Members received a report from the Head of Strategy and Projects together with a presentation from Paul Mitchelmore (PM) from the EA that provided an overview of the December 2013 tidal surge and the impact it had on the Broads. Although evaluation of the event was continuing, preliminary indications were that the impact was as broadly predicted and the flood defences coped well. In his report SH stated it was difficult to relate the event directly to climate change but it would raise awareness and provide a greater understanding of the issues. The report set out the Authority's current approach to climate change which included a re-draft of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan detailing further research options and small scale adaptation.

In reply to a question from Mike Evans (ME) PM said there were too many factors to ascertain what difference wind direction would have made. Keith Bacon (KB) expressed his thanks for the BESL scheme and raised a question about the impact of dredging levels on future similar events but PM said this was not an issue in the Broads and, contrary to some reports, was unlikely to have been an issue in Somerset.

In response to comments from Michael Flett (MF) about a perceived lack of new soke [this seems to be the common spelling in Broadland] dyke maintenance PM said the EA had only extended existing dykes which remained the responsibility of the landowner.

Martin George (MG) stated the option in the report of carrying on as normal was not sustainable. In response to MG's comments about the importance of a Yare barrier at Great Yarmouth and remarks from John Lurkins (JL) that this would only need a smaller lock now the Outer Harbour was built. SH said the Authority was working closely with other agencies to determine the economic and technical aspects of this option but this may take time. He explained costs would be part of their considerations but were not the focus at present.

Answering concerns from RS, PM said the EA had not changed its policy on managing flood risk on the A143 at Haddiscoe Island and had not created a wash land there, explaining that work to elevate some parts of the road would then necessitate further work so the cost would be disproportionate to the benefits. He said the EA's plan was to restore defences in the Broads to the pre-1997 standard.

Replying to a question from Jennifer Parkhouse (JP), PM said he was not aware of plans to develop on the flood plain at Postwick Marsh. In response to an observation from Andrew Alston (AA) about the Ant being low after the surge, PM explained the delay in high tide reaching it.

Answering a question from Brian Barker (BB), SH explained Broads Community was a group of stakeholder organisations and community members branded to enable better climate change engagement and communication.

PP called for more emphasis on conservation issues, using natural systems and joining up with work by other agencies like the BTO and Natural England in future climate change adaptation plans.

In summing the discussions up the Chairman recorded the Forum's thanks for the effective flood defence system, noted the Authority's emphasis on carrying on the climate change adaptation work and added that the Forum was equally keen for a continued dialogue between the relevant agencies with regard to this.

3/7 Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan Progress and Process Review and Challenges and Choice Consultation

The Forum received a report and presentation from the Broadland Rivers Catchment Partnership Officer, Neil Punchard (NP), concerning the approach being taken and the progress to date on the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan. This would be the first stakeholder plan for the catchment and was a strategic priority for the Authority in 2013/14 with the completed plan due to be prepared by spring 2014. It would focus on effective integrated engagement

and working between relevant agencies and stakeholders for multiple benefits. It is a proposed strategic priority for 2014/15.

The report contains the Authority's submitted response to the Environment Agency's formal consultation on the second River Basin Management Plan "Challenges and Choices" prior to ministerial agreement and decisions on affordability.

In reply to a question from Andrew Alston (AA) regarding reliability of evidence NP said the aim was to be open and honest where there was any uncertainty over evidence and to aim to fill gaps in data. Answering AA's question about the potential use of natural flood plains, NP said that this might be appropriate upstream.

PP commented that the RSPB had captured its own water quality data and emphasised the advantage of partnership working to understand issues, options and their potential impact.

RS said there was a need to work with parish councils, citing arable land run off as a long standing problem in one area which NP pointed out was ultimately easily resolved.

In response to a query by Mike Hoyland (MH) regarding how the flow of the Wensum would be managed, NP said the Rivers Catchment Partnership would be involving local groups to determine the details of how specific areas should be operated.

The Chairman offered the Forum's congratulations on the report, adding that he trusted NP would take note of the points regarding the importance of partnership working.

3/8 Delivering Living Landscapes: Discover, Explore, Take Action

Members received a report and a presentation from Gemma Walker (GW) of Norfolk Wildlife Trust which set out the Trust's Delivering Living Landscapes community project. This was to be delivered in various areas of the county, including the Bure Valley, with the aim of creating a network of connected habitats and helping people engage with their natural environment with a pilot study due to finish in September 2015.

In response to a question from AA regarding potential difficulties of mapping roaming wildlife, GW said the Trust was working with landowners to designate appropriate sites to mitigate this issue.

MH raised the issue of land ownership in connecting corridors and allowing access, to which GW responded that the Trust was engaging communities, parish councils and landowners to understand and support the project to connect differently owned sites. She added, in answer to his question about involving schools, that the Trust was inviting itself to speak at every school in the project areas.

3/9 Implementation and Maintenance of HLS Measures to Deliver Benefits for Breeding Waders

Ian Robinson (IR) of the RSPB presented members with a report and gave a presentation on the decline of breeding wader bird numbers and the predation issues associated with having large populations of birds on pockets of reserves. The report and presentation outlined ways to manage this by assisting landowners with land management techniques to provide more habitats for breeding waders.

In response to a suggestion from RS, IR said the picture was more complicated than simply going back to how land was managed 25 years ago due to changes in habitat sizes and predator balance.

3/10 Summary of the Findings of the Annual Macrophyte Survey 2013

Members received a report and presentation from the Environment Officer, Emma Harris (EH), which detailed and discussed findings from the annual water plant survey involving 25 water bodies during 2013.

MG questioned the need for antifouling paints and suggested discussions needed to take place between the boating industry and the paint manufacturers to alleviate this issue.

RS said it was vital that the water plant survey continued and, in response to his comment regarding the relationship between increasing salinity and the apparent decline in water plant growth at Horsey Mere, EH said no direct correlation had been found and that a combination of factors, such as the input of ochre, were likely to be affecting plant growth.

In response to KB's query about the volume of Chara in the northern bay of Hickling Broad, EH said only fragments had been found with no significant volumes or beds.

3/11 Waste Disposal Policy

The Forum received a report from Asset Officer Angie Leeper (AL) outlining new Controlled Waste Regulations which meant local authorities now had the option of charging for hire boat waste. Broadland District Council have various boat waste disposal sites within the Broads executive area and have asked the Authority to increase boat tolls to cover their collection and disposal costs. Members were informed that, if such a proposal was adopted by all the District Councils in the area it would necessitate a 4% to 5% tolls increase and additionally that polluters were not exclusively boat users, as the sites were often used by local residents and businesses.

The Chairman along with many members stated strongly that the Authority should not be responsible for waste disposal, commenting that this would be an unjust burden. Michael Flett (MF), Peter Medhurst (PMe), Ashley Cato and

the Chairman all commented that the boating industry brought in revenue to district councils by boosting the local economy and increasing the number of rate-paying businesses.

The Chairman added that waste disposal facilities were essential, and that if they were not provided and fly tipping ensued, tourists would be deterred from return visits with a consequent negative impact on the local economy. KB warned fly tipping could increase in response to possible cut backs to other waste disposal sites.

The Chairman and MF commented that other National Park members do not have waste disposal responsibilities. Chief Executive John Packman supported this comment adding that, while the Authority should not take on the responsibility, visitors to a National Park area expect good waste management which should also stand as an example. RS suggested getting support from parish councils over the issue.

Barbara Greasley (BG) said her business provided general and recycling bins under a private arrangement as there were very few segregated facilities in the area. In response to Peter Jermy (PJ) commenting that the Authority should be responsible for waste at yacht stations as it charged for moorings AL confirmed the site owners paid for collection.

In summing up, the Chairman stated that members agreed it was not appropriate for the Broads Authority to provide waste facilities and that the Authority should resist making a contribution towards waste disposal costs if requested by district councils, especially as the polluter could not be clearly identified.

3/12 Wakeboard Trial Findings

Members were presented with a report from Head of Safety Management Steve Birtles (SB) on the findings of the extended trial of recreational wakeboarding including 'getting air' on the rivers Yare and Waveney. The report included a Review Panel recommendation to the Broads Authority meeting on 21 March 2014 to implement option 3 of the report.

PP asked for a more rigorous assessment process of zone usage for both water-skiing and wakeboarding with a greater focus on conservation issues and he and PMe felt there should be a more even spread of activity between the zones, arguing that zone 2 water-ski usage had increased when this was a sensitive area close to Strumpshaw Fen Nature Reserve. SB highlighted figures from the report that suggested usage in zone 2 had decreased since 2008.

In response to a question from Peter Jermy SB said that wakeboarding and windsurfing were very well self-policed. He also confirmed to MH that 'getting air' did not involve using the throttle.

In summing up the discussion the Chairman said most members were supportive of the recommendation while two had concerns in respect of zone 2 on the Yare due to the perception of potential for increased levels of disturbance near Strumpshaw Fen nature reserve.

3/13 Consultation on the Draft Strategic Priorities 2014/15

The Chief Executive presented a report outlining the Authority's draft strategic priorities for 2014/15, with a focus on climate change, the National Park brand and sustainable management and use. Sustainable management and use covered catchment management, biodiversity, improvements for visitors at Whitlingham, tourism and economic development.

AA suggested 'toning down' the climate change element for political and public engagement purposes and questioned the notion that climate change was damaging. The Chief Executive and MG referred to a general consensus among scientists that climate change was a real and complex threat and that the Broads would need to make adaptations to cope with its effects. MG suggested that the Tyndall Centre at the UEA produce a report for members outlining their findings. The Chief Executive added that good management now would put the Broads in a better position to adapt in future. In response to RS endorsing the way that organisations in Holland are communicating climate change issues the Chief Executive said that, having worked with Dutch partners, he could confirm the Authority took a similar approach.

RS questioned whether tourism promotion should be a priority stating some parishioners felt it impacted negatively on them. The Chief Executive, BG and BR emphasised the importance of tourism on the local economy. The Chief Executive added it was related to one of the Authority's three purposes. MH thanked the BA for increasing angling opportunities.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by noting that, although the Forum generally endorsed the priorities, two members had concerns about discrete issues (one about climate change matters, and the other about tourism promotion).

3/14 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive presented his report, which summarised the current position of important projects and events, including any decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings.

PP raised concerns regarding what he perceived as the lack of monitoring of the waterskiing trial on Breydon Water, commenting that he felt this was a serious issue.

3/15 Parish Issues

No issues were reported.

3/16 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

No items of urgent business were reported.

3/17 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The Chairman confirmed he would raise the following items to the next Broads Authority meeting:

- Members' comments on the report on the tidal surge and climate change
- Members' comments on the River Catchment Plan progress
- Members' comments on the Waste Disposal Policy
- Members' comments on draft strategic priorities

3/18 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 1 May 2014 at 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2pm.

3/19 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

Members discussed how agenda items were decided and RS commented that he felt it was difficult to get items on the agenda and there should be fewer presentations to keep it manageable. The Chairman emphasised the terms of reference for the Forum, which the Forum agreed on 25 April 2013 are to be reviewed at the next meeting, and that any potential agenda items needed to be prioritised in terms of how many members wanted to discuss them.

An update on progress of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan would be added to the next meeting's agenda.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm.

Chairman