

Public Question Time

Questions and Statements submitted by Mr T C Harris and Mr G Doggett

**Statement and Question from Mr T Harris
Regarding Catfield Water Abstraction**

Since the last Broads Authority meeting there have been two significant developments.

Firstly it has been confirmed that the UK's largest population of the Fen Orchid, representing over 50% of the total population of Britain's most endangered plant, is at imminent risk of destruction from the rapid growth in Sphagnum which Natural England has described as "remarkable" and "may be indicative of a tipping point". This corroborates Prof Barendregt's findings of last year that Catfield Fen was in poor condition and at risk of irretrievable damage.

Secondly the Environment Agency on 3rd July has announced yet another delay of at least two more months in making its "minded to " decision for an abstraction licence application up for renewal in early 2012 and relating to a problem first reported in 2008 over six years ago. The Broads Authority has the relevant reports and is well aware of their scientific validity. Does it recognise the urgency of the present situation and will it be advising the Environment Agency accordingly?

**Statement Questions and Petition from Mr G Doggett, Chairman River
Waveney Trust Regarding Item 10 – Geldeston Woodland**

Statement:

1. The River Waveney Trust is a charity caring for the River Waveney and its environs. It has 658 members (as at 4 July 2014) organized into 5 local groups in the towns of Diss, Harleston, Bungay, Beccles and Lowestoft. The Trust is an important and visible partner to the BA for the Broadland Catchment Plan and many biodiversity and water quality initiatives. The charity has a remit to guard and improve public access to the river and its tributaries. The Trust was alerted to issues around the sale of the woodland by Geldeston Parish Council in October 2013.

Subsequent site meetings and discussions with the BA Assets Officer were held. The Trust supported a Parish Council initiative to protect the woodland from sale to private interests and provided a supporting statement to the BA.

2. The Asset Officer's report to meeting on 10 May not supplied. This has hindered our understanding of BA position and doesn't explain why BA accepted informal bids for the woodland with no consultation with local interests.
3. Email 7/3/14: Questions asked and answered about RWT interest and proposal to take over the woodland management, retaining it for public interest and use. BA clearly knew about the working party (attended by BA officers) formed in February 2014 and currently working on a 20 year strategy for the Geldeston Locks area including the woodland and surrounding land including the important access road and car parking area – Locks Lane.

Questions:

1. Why have BA been so reluctant to disclose officer reports, especially that for the meeting of 10 May 2013?
2. Why have BA been reluctant to meet the River Waveney Trust to discuss future management of the woodland? This is a fourth option ("Option D") and was offered in November 2013. The officer reports ignore this initiative.
3. Can the BA confirm that there are no intentions to sell or dispose of the marsh and associated car parking area outlined on their ownership plan (attached)? If they are preparing this land for sale, why is no mention made in the officer briefing report for this meeting on 11 July?
4. Do members recognise the existence of River Waveney Trust as a consultative organization with an agenda for Geldeston Locks future usage?

Petition:

That the BA should halt all sale of land in and around Geldeston Locks until all future management options appraisal by the working group has been concluded and properly reported to members. That BA should engage with the River Waveney Trust to create the correct management of the BA assets with regard especially to habitat, tourism (especially canoeing and small boats visiting the Locks) and public access.