

**Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/Stakeholder  
Engagement**

Report by Director of Planning and Strategy

**Summary:** This report advises Forum members of the progress made to date on the review of consultative arrangements and community/stakeholder engagement. It also outlines the timetable and next steps.

At this meeting, the views of Forum members are sought on the effectiveness of the Authority's consultative arrangements and how these could be improved. The output from the meeting will be fed into the deliberations of the Review Working Group.

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Broads Forum members may recall that, in response to the Government's consultation on the Governance of National Parks and the Broads, the Authority committed to carrying out a review of the role, composition and support provided to all the Authority's consultative bodies, particularly following its reorganisation in the light of the reduction in National Park Grant. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Government in its decisions. At its meeting on 18 November 2011, the Authority set out how it intended to review the way it engages with non-statutory stakeholders and local communities. The scope of the review was to include the Authority's three main consultative mechanisms - the Navigation Committee, the Broads Forum and the Broads Local Access Forum - but could potentially include other committees such as the Planning, Financial Scrutiny and Audit, and Standards committees. At its meeting in January 2012, the Authority agreed to extend the scope of the review to consider the effectiveness of its existing community engagement mechanisms, e.g. parish forums, parish pop-ins, local events, written consultations and newsletters..
- 1.2 A wide range of people have a keen interest in the future of the Broads and the way it is managed, and the review is looking at how the Authority can promote a more open, inclusive and consistent approach to communication and consultation as part of its decision making process.
- 1.3 The review is being led by Andrea Long, Director of Planning and Strategy with Maria Conti, Strategy and Projects Officer. It is included within the Authority's Strategic Priorities for 2012-13, discussed by the Forum at its meeting on 9 February 2012. It is anticipated that the review will be completed by December 2012.

## **2 Progress to Date**

2.1 Given that the scope of the review has been broadened since its original inception, it has for ease of management been broken down into three separate but interlinked projects. The projects are as follows:

- (1) To establish an open and consistent consultation process for the preparation, delivery and review of Broads Authority strategies and policies, including the 'we asked, you said, we did' line of communication and feedback
- (2) To review the Authority's informal and ad hoc engagement with non-statutory stakeholders – e.g. local residents, interest and amenity groups, visitors, businesses, schools, volunteers – and the ways it engages with them
- (3) To review the Authority's more formal, regular consultative mechanisms, e.g. Broads Forum, Navigation Committee, Broads Local Access Forum

2.2 Progress to date against each of these projects is set out for information below.

### **(a) Strategy preparation and consultation**

An internal guidance framework has been developed for use by Broads Authority officers engaged in strategy production. This gives guidance on document design and structure, research, and consultation planning, delivery and feedback.

### **(b) Review of Community Engagement Mechanisms**

Officers have researched community engagement good practice in other organisations, including National Park Authorities, adjoining local authorities, harbour authorities and other inland navigation authorities.

A series of detailed interviews has been undertaken with front line staff (those whose job roles bring them into regular contact with local communities and members of the public). Feedback was invited on their experience of public perceptions of, and interests in, the Broads and the purposes and work of the Authority, and how easy people felt it was to engage with the Authority, particularly in terms of getting information and giving their views.

Telephone interviews are being carried out with a number of stakeholders who represent a wide range of interests in the Broads and who have a past or present relationship with the Broads Authority. The interviews, which are being carried out by an independent facilitator, are seeking feedback on the effectiveness of the Authority's engagement methods and suggestions for improved or new ways of working.

The interviews are being undertaken in confidence; the list of participants will not be publicised and the results will not be attributable to any particular participant unless he/she specifically asks for their comments to be attributed. Each participant will receive a copy of the report. The report will ultimately be made public as an agenda item when the Authority considers the results of the full review.

Using a similar range of questions, a written questionnaire will be distributed to parish councils over the summer; the process for feedback will take account of council meeting timetables, including those that do not meet in August.

### **(c) Review of Consultative Arrangements**

Information from the research outlined in (b) above is also being used to inform this part of the review.

The Planning Committee Procedures and scheme of delegations were reviewed by members in March 2012. A number of new procedures were adopted, relating largely to the Public Speaking Procedure, including an extension of time for each category of speaker from 3 minutes to 5 minutes.

A number of Broads Forum members will have been contacted as part of the telephone interview process (see above), although it has not been possible to interview all Forum members or all groups represented within it. Today's meeting is an opportunity for members to feedback on the same framework of questions, with a particular emphasis on the effectiveness of the Forum in sharing and discussing issues of interest and concern to its members and the Authority.

## **3 Next Steps**

- 3.1 The first key strategy to be produced by the Authority following the adoption of the strategy preparation guidance will be the Integrated Access Strategy due to be published for consultation in September 2012.
- 3.2 It is anticipated that the consultant's report of the telephone interviews will be received by the Authority by the end of July and parish council questionnaire feedback received by September 2012.
- 3.3 When the Authority first considered the review process in January 2012 it was envisaged that a small Member Working Group be established. This group will comprise the Chairs of the Broads Authority, Planning Committee, Navigation Committee, Financial Scrutiny and Audit Committee, Standards Committee, Broads Forum and Broads Local Access Forum.
- 3.4 The suggested terms of reference for the Working Group agreed at the Authority meeting in November 2011 are as follows:

- To consider whether the Authority's full range of purposes are given sufficient attention through the current structure of committee and to identify overlaps or gaps in the coverage.
- To examine and recommend how the present arrangements could be streamlined and improved in the light of administrative support available in order to ensure that the Authority receives a full range of advice on all its functions from representatives of interest groups.
- To consider and make recommendations on the Membership and structure of the Authority's consultative committee's (including appointments and length of service) and frequency of meetings.

3.5 Meeting dates for the Working Group have yet to be determined.

3.6 The knowledge and opinions of the Broads Forum are a crucial part of this community engagement review. For this reason, the agenda for this meeting has been kept light to give time for members to feedback on the effectiveness of the present engagement arrangements and how they might be improved. Though this may tend to focus on the working of the Forum itself, feedback on communication and engagement between stakeholders and the Authority more generally is also welcomed.

3.7 A set of prompt questions and supporting information will follow.

3.8 The Forum will be consulted further at its meeting in October on the issues and options developed by the Review Working Group.

Author: Andrea Long  
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