

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Mike Flett	Mr George Saunders
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Gary Simmons
Mrs Jo Lester	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Stephen Read	Mr Chris Yardley

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

Ms Gemma Walker – People and Wildlife Officer, Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Mr Andrew Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council
Mr David Yates – Senior Trails Officer, Norfolk County Council

3/1 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

3/2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

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

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

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

3/3 Membership

It was noted that the term of one member of the Forum was due to end in November 2014 and that the terms of a majority of remaining members were due to end during 2015. A review of membership would therefore take place.

It was noted that the WRO would be leaving the Broads Authority at the end of March and taking up a new post with Norfolk County Council as Senior Trails Officer. The Chairman thanked the WRO for the work he had undertaken to improve access in the Broads. The SWRO also thanked the WRO and wished him well in his new role.

3/4 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr David Broad, Mr Tony Howes, Mr Louis Baugh and Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies.

3/5 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/6 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

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

The Countryside Access Manager agreed to provide details of the businesses involved in the Cool Tourism funding initiative.

Minute 2/3 (2): Integrated Access Strategy Access – Update

The Postwick Highway approval had the potential to provide a link over the Postwick viaduct to the 'Broadland Way' project. This was confirmed by the Countryside Access Manager as a strong contender for funding, dependent on the Norwich Northern Distributor Road being built.

Minute 2/4: Update on Waveney River Centre Ferry

It was suggested that an extension to the Angles Way could link up to the Waveney River Centre Ferry. It was noted that BESL had put in a planning application for various footpath diversions at Carlton Marshes. Discussions were taking place with Suffolk County Council to resolve some resulting difficulties. It was noted that any changes to footpath status could not be done under the Town and County Planning Act.

Minute 2/5: Oulton Broad Free Quay

It was noted that the other moorings at Oulton Broad tended to be long term.

Minute 2/8: Integrated Access Strategy Project Delivery

The Director of Planning and Resources updated the forum on the Whitlingham Country Park item. Currently a campsite exists at the Park. A public consultation would be taking place regarding a potential Youth Hostel being built at the site under a joint partnership project between the Whitlingham Charitable Trust, the landowner, the Youth Hostel Association and the Broads Authority.

Forum members highlighted the poor state of footpaths at the Park in certain areas. It was confirmed that an access statement had been drawn up as part of the funding bid for the joint partnership project and that the SWRO would be commenting on this.

Minute 2/9: Staithes – Current information and Role of Staithes Management

It was suggested that Professor Tom Wilson could potentially be interested in a proposal to research and gather definitive information about Staithes in the Broads as it linked to a project he had undertaken on historic pathways. The Chairman agreed to contact Professor Wilson regarding this proposal.

It was noted that a survey had also been undertaken on Broads Staithes in the 1960s by the Port of Great Yarmouth and that this was kept in the Norfolk Records Office.

3/7 Living Landscapes

The Norfolk Wildlife Trust's People and Wildlife Officer gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Trust's Bure Living Landscapes project.

This Heritage Lottery funded project was running as a pilot project looking at conservation at a landscape scale. Two Community Officers were involved in helping to raise the profile of the project and get people involved. The project's key mechanisms involved Exploration, Discovery and Taking Action and a range of activities, roadshows, guided walks etc. would help to contribute to delivery of the aims of the project. 120 Living Landscape areas in England had been set up by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) organisation and it was hoped to

build a country wide picture of mapped information on green spaces and activities available in these areas. A 'toolkit' was also being developed to help local people get involved.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

Walks brochures/cards were being produced as part of the toolkits; for example in Upton these would start from the Community Public House.

Wild Walks were also being worked up in collaboration with BTO and the RSWT to help enable the public to access living landscape areas. Wildlife sightings could be uploaded to the project website and results could be used in future funding bids for priority species monitoring. Training workshops would be provided to assist with identifying of key species. Identification boards or leaflets were also suggested. It was confirmed that some fully accessible walks were being included. A suggestion was made to get Tree Wardens involved with these walks. Community groups who expressed an interest would be welcome to get involved.

A walking festival was due to take place just after the Broads Outdoors Festival.

A suggestion was made to use Fairhaven as a hub to link up some of the walks, although it was appreciated that walks would have to be free.

3/8 Review of Norfolk County Council rights of Way

The Norfolk County Council (NCC) Countryside Access Manager and Senior Trails Officer gave a presentation updating the Forum on Norfolk Trails and the Review of NCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

Norfolk Trails: There were currently 12 long distance pathways managed by NCC plus 70 circular walks leading off these. Some of the paths were privately owned and permissive paths e.g. Marriot's Way. Norfolk Trails covered 20% of Rights of Way in Norfolk with the Highways department managing the rest. A review was being undertaken of the Business Plan and this would develop key aims, drivers and partnerships.

Review of Norfolk County Council's ROWIP: NCC would be consulting with key stakeholders on a mid-term review of their ROWIP. The process was being managed by a Steering Group. It was noted that Mr Ray Walpole represented the BLAF on this group. Current thinking so far was to change the name to 'Countryside Access Improvement Plan' and to make the Plan more concise. The consultation asked for information about any local or national strategies or areas of work that should be included. It was agreed that the SWRO would coordinate responses from Forum members. Consultation feedback forms were circulated and an electronic copy would also be made available.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

Forum members welcomed the NCC ROWIP review.

It was confirmed that all footpaths and open access land would be included in the review, not just Norfolk Trails. Although the Norfolk Trails department was leading the review the Highways department was also involved.

Currently the Broads Authority's ROWIP was included as an appendix in the NCC ROWIP. NCC was open to views on whether this was still appropriate. It was noted that the Broads Authority had adopted an Integrated Access Strategy with an associated 3 year Action Plan of re-prioritised projects and therefore members advised that it would be more suitable for the NCC ROWIP to link to this document.

It would be useful to include a transport infrastructure review and mitigations regarding climate change. Linking up communities via the footpath network should also be included.

Regarding coastal footpaths it was noted that legislation allowed for 'roll back' in cases of erosion. Dual routes were being created within designs for new sections.

Improving access in Norwich was also important and NCC was urged to consider inclusion of the city within their review. Norwich had particularly good open access areas, riverside walkways and access to Whitlingham, the Wherryman's Way and Marriott's Way which could be linked via the city. NCC agreed that this was an important issue and advised that Section 106 and CIL funding could potentially be available.

It was noted that talks were underway with owners of Norwich railway station regarding promotion of Norfolk Trails that started from the station. It was agreed that start and end points of Norfolk Trails needed to be more prominent regarding signage and interpretation.

3/9 Broads Authority Footpath Maintenance Update

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Broads Authority footpath maintenance programme and mooring walks.

The Authority's resource working group had made the decision to rationalise footpath maintenance via a 'linking land and water' driver. Greater emphasis would therefore go towards circular walks that increased access opportunities linking facilities, heritage and wildlife from moorings. Both long and short walks would be included, themed as 'Mooring Walks'. The proposed walks were shown and these included: Cantley, Reedham, Hardley Cross, Chedgrave Common, Loddon mooring, Rockland, Bramerton, Brundall, Commissioner's Cut, Thorpe, Whitlingham, Ludham Bridge, How Hill, River Green, Cantley and Sutton mooring. Rangers were currently in the process of 'ground-truthing' the walks prior to the start of the season. IT website mapping would be used to promote the walks and these would have the potential to be updated or changed if unforeseen issues arose.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

A request was made to also produce paper copies of walks although it was recognised that these did not have the same potential to incorporate unforeseen changes or updates.

Open source mapping was being used making best use of small budgets available.

The mooring walks would be incorporated in the 30km cutting regime.

The Forum was supportive of the proposed system.

3/10 Mooring walks

Covered in item 3/9.

3/11 Integrated Access Projects updates

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on Integrated Access Projects.

Hardley Weir: The new weir structure was working successfully, creating both recreational and conservation benefits in this area.

Hardley Cross Mooring: A new 24 hour free mooring had been put in at Hardley Cross, addressing a gap in mooring provision along this section of the River Yare. Interpretation was planned for the site.

Belaugh Canoe Portage: The Belaugh canoe portage and bank erosion project was progressing with landowner agreements and designs now in place.

Surlingham Ferry Slipway: In response to strategy and local needs, a project incorporating a slipway for small boats and canoes was being worked on. Improved car parking and ground conditions at the site were being incorporated into design work. A planning application would be required and discussions were ongoing with the landlady.

Slutton's Dyke: The dyke had become overgrown and impassable and, following meetings with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the local Broads Authority Rangers and Environment Officers, work had been undertaken to clear the dyke. Before and after photographs illustrated the improvement.

River Yare Accessible Canoe Route: This project linked together the three canoe projects at Whitlingham, Carey's Meadow and Rockland and included plans for canoe portage and footpath and car parking improvements.

Ludham Bridge Footpath: Various mortgage provider permissions were being sought by landowners. Once these were in place the project could proceed.

Waveney Canoe Link: A planning application was going in this month.

3/12 Cockshoot Board Walk

The SWRO highlighted the costs and options for replacing the Cockshoot board walk. The section between the two moorings, including the angling platforms, was viewed by the Broads Authority, Natural England and the Environment Agency as priority for replacement and the landowner was happy for a long term access agreement for this section. The NWT owned section of the board walk was in a better state of repair but was still in need of replacement. NWT were so far not willing to be part of a partnership project for this work.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

In view of the high level of use of the path combined with the potential reinstatement of the ferry the Forum was supportive of the entire length of the board walk being replaced.

A further meeting with NWT was encouraged in order to get support and additional funding from the Trust towards a joint BA, NE, EA, NWT project.

3/13 Canoe Trails progress/delivery

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on Canoe Trail's progress and delivery.

Along the River Yare three maps had been developed in consultation with various relevant organisations including the British Canoe Union (BCU). Included were longer sections for serious paddlers and rowers and shorter ones for recreational use. QR codes would be added to all routes. The routes would appear in the BCU Canoe Focus, a national publication.

The Forum was supportive of the work achieved.

3/14 Outdoors Festival 2014 update

A Canoe Focus event would take place as part of the Outdoors Festival on 17 May 2014. The event would appear in the Outdoors Festival brochure and associated pdf. A link would be circulated to Forum members once this was available.

3/15 To receive any other items of urgent business

A Broads Authority Parish Forum focussing on the Yare Valley was being held at Reedham Village Hall on 19 March 2014 to which Forum members were welcome to attend. The SWRO and WRO would be attending with information about the Integrated Access Strategy.

The Broads Forum meeting held on 6 February had been very positive. The tidal surge and climate change had been discussed.

3/16 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 11 June 2014 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 p.m.

Chairman