

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2014

Present:

Mr Andrew Alston	Mr Michael Flett	Mr Peter Medhurst
Mr John Ash	Mr Martin George	Mr Richard Starling
Dr Keith Bacon	Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Brian Barker	Mr Robin Godber	Mr Hugh Taylor
Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr John Hiskett	Mr Anthony Wright
Mr Henry Cator	Mr Peter Jermy	
Mr Mike Evans	Mr John Lurkins	

In Attendance:

Ms E Guds – Administrative Officer
Mr S Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Ms A Kelly – Senior Ecologist
Ms A Long – Director of Planning and Resources
Mrs S McColl – Environment Officer
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mr N Punchard – Broadland Catchment Partnership Officer
Ms B Williams – Volunteers Co-ordinator

Also Present

Mr David Broad – Chairman of Navigation Committee

4/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Bryan Read, Mr Matthew Thwaites and Barbara Greasley.

The Chief Executive welcomed everyone to the meeting including Mr John Ash who was attending in place of Mr Bryan Read. Those present introduced themselves.

4/2 Appointment of Chairman

The Chief Executive invited nominations for the appointment of the Chairman to the Committee.

It was proposed and duly seconded that Keith Bacon (KB) be appointed as Chairman.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

that Dr Keith Bacon be appointed as Chairman of the Broads Forum to the Committee.

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

4/3 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chairman to the Committee.

It was proposed and duly seconded that Peter Medhurst and Michael Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman to the Committee.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

that Peter Medhurst and Michael Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Broads Forum to the Committee.

4/4 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman welcomed Esmeralda Guds to the meeting as the new Administrative Officer and Personal Assistant of the Chief Executive and Chairman. He also welcomed Hugh Taylor as a new member.

The Chairman thanked and paid tribute to Martin George (MG) who received a 'lifetime achievement' award at the Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards ceremony for his enormous contribution to the understanding of the Broads and playing a significant role over 50 years in safeguarding them for posterity. He has been an inspiration to many people, colleagues and students and continues to be a fount of knowledge on the Broads.

The chairman reported on the Broads Authority meetings of 16 May and 11 July and the issues discussed included:

- (1) Formally approving the proposed changes to the membership of the Broads Forum
- (2) A public question and discussion on the effects of water abstraction on Catfield Fen
- (3) The possible sale of BA assets at Geldeston; a decision was deferred.
- (4) Upper Thurne Working Group; its future and BA involvement
- (5) Following the report from the Broads Local Access Forum expressing concern about a proposed scheme at Hoveton Great Broad, BA members expressed similar concerns. This was particularly about the poor level of public access being proposed in return for public finance and whether the money should be spent on Hickling Broad instead.

4/5 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following two amendments:

- *Minute 4/8 Broads Forum Arrangements. Para 3: a broach should read a broad*
- *Minute 4/18 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting. Para 1: Tony Hoyland should read Mike Hoyland*

4/6 Public Question Time

No questions had been raised by members of the public.

4/7 Summary of progress/actions/response taken following discussions at previous meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

4/8 Sediment Heavy Metals Record and Historical Boating in the Broads

Members received a presentation from the Senior Ecologist which summarised the recent research commissioned and supported by the Broads Authority over the past 15 years and highlighting the banning of TBT in 1987 from boat antifouling paints which led to its replacement by alternative biocides including Cu and Zn.

The research commissioned by the Broads Authority showed that the Broads had been contaminated by antifoulant-derived heavy metals, particularly Cu and Zn which had increased since the banning of TBT in parts of the boated system. The spatial distribution of contaminants across the Broads rivers and lakes showed that the heavy metals Copper, Zinc and tributyltin were greater at concentration closer to boat yards suggesting that boat antifoul paint is an important source.

MG said he welcomed the presentation but did not agree with the Broads Authority's wording of *Environmental Friendly Anti-Fouling Paint* as he believed there was no such thing. He argued that it was time to get the message across that anti-fouling was increasing, a total ban of the use of anti-fouling paints was crucial and advising the public to use environmental friendly alternatives was imperative

The Senior Ecologist answered a question from John Hiskett (JH) that there were no financial incentives for using anti-fouling paints and agreed with MG that the Broads Authority should continue to promote the key messages. Robin Godber (RG) added that from his experience there was no need for anti-fouling paint if you rinse your boat after use.

The Chief Executive responded to this that although the Authority recognised that the use of anti-fouling paint was a major concern, it did not have any

powers to control its use. The Broads Authority recommended the public to use alternatives, to which Brian Barker (BB) responded that from his experience no other options were made available to them.

David Broad (DB) said he appreciated the importance of the issue and was happy to add this item to a navigation committee agenda.

The members welcomed the presentation and noted the damaging effects of anti-fouling paint on the Broads.

4/9 Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan

Members received a presentation on the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan from the Catchment Partnership Officer which focussed on a short background and the approach the Broads Authority was taking regarding shared interest and multiple benefits. The aim of the approach was to improve the water environment and to tackle multiple issues and provide multiple benefits by working closely with different organisations and groups. One goal which was highlighted was to reduce the run-off and soil, nutrient and pesticide loss.

Andrew Alston (AA) responded that only a very small percentage of sediment coming into the rivers was run off from arable fields and therefore reducing this would only have a small impact on the overall outcome. AA continued that the larger proportion of sediment came from urban dust, Highways and grass fields near water.

Neil Punchard (NP) responded that this may be the case for the Bure catchment but was not for others such as the Wensum. More importantly the approach was looking at cost-effective measures to address a range of issues in combination that included reducing water run-off (whether it carried sediment or not) from fields and thus reducing downstream flood risk, increasing groundwater recharge and improving water quality (pesticides, nutrients and/or sediment).

MG expressed his disappointment with the Wensum Project as only some sections of the Wensum river were linked to the flood plains and he believed all floodplains should be linked and controlled by sluices. He also believed that management of flow rate within the systems needed to be improved as conservation of the catchment was vital.

Henry Cator (HC) agreed with MG that conservation of the catchment was a very important issue which needed to be looked at as a whole and therefore it was important to work closely with the stakeholders.

When the question of Catfield Fen was raised, the Director of Planning and Resources responded that she would like to arrange a workshop around Catfield Fen in November-January 2015.

The members welcomed the presentation and anticipated that the plan would enable wider benefits to be provided for the long term.

4/10 Broad Reed and Sedge Cutting Association

Members received a presentation by Richard Starling (RS), the Chairman of the Broads Reed and Sedge Cutting Association (BRASCA), which highlighted the main issues and problems facing reed and sedge cutting in the Broads.

One of the issues Richard reported on was dykes stagnating the flow of water which caused the reed to rot.

Another issue he underlined was the creation of new reed beds which required public funding and were lacking a sustainable management plan. RS informed the members that reed and sedge cutting remained the only true sustainable management method of managing the Broads reed and sedge habitat and therefore Brasca believed that all new reed bed creation projects should have a sustainability clause which requires at least 50% of an area should be designed to produce and able to harvest thatching quality reed.

RS continued that it would be important to build more reed beds on good marsh land in order to meet demand so there would be no need for imported reed. He added that by bypassing thatchers and selling reed directly to the household there was no need to charge VAT which means that Norfolk reed becomes cheaper than imported reed.

Answering a question from AA, RS answered reeds were very good for cleaning out water and that the Environment Agency had currently reported that their previous recording of poor water quality was misreported.

The Chair mentioned that some reed cutters believed that reed beds should contain some scrub to which RS answered that this was acceptable as long as they can afford this and did not expect the landowner to compensate for it.

In response to Tony Gibbons (TG) question, RS answered that the Broads Authority had helped fund the training of new entrants but that there was not much interest for young people taking up a career in reed cutting. They only received approximately one new entrant per year which currently was sufficient until they can afford to expand.

The Chairman thanked RS for his interesting presentation and members noted the report.

4/11 Broads Volunteer Services

Members were provided with a report which gave them an update on the Broads Authority Volunteer Service.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator reported that the Broads Authority had always involved volunteers in its activities but that since May 2011 a structural change in management and supervision of volunteers had resulted in improvements to the volunteer service such that it was now possible to define the number of volunteers, what they are doing and how many hours they are contributing.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator continued that for the first time they had also been able to define the economic value of the volunteers to the Broads Authority by using a simple formula of *the number of volunteers x average number of hours x average hourly wage = 85 volunteers x 10 hours x £13.03/h = £11,075/month.*

RS commented that although he appreciated that the volunteers were doing a very good job, he had concerns that the public was aware that the volunteer rangers did not have any enforcement power.

The Director of Operations replied that volunteers were the eyes and ears for the rangers and report back to Broads Control. She continued they were there to enhance the Broads Authority's role and were not used as free labour.

To a question of Michael Flett (MF) concerning likely consequences of ragwort ingestion by ponies at Valentines Meadow, Ludham, the Volunteer Co-ordinator answered that ragwort pulling will be an activity the volunteers would be carrying out soon to which the Environment Officer added that as ragwort was causing such a big problem a management plan had been put in place to spray the affected area to resolve the issue.

Peter Jeremy (PJ) mentioned that from the figures in the report it seemed the numbers of hours the volunteers spent per months had dropped but the Volunteer Officer clarified that this appeared this way because now the figures were being recorded more accurately than in the past.

The members welcomed and noted the report.

4/12 Duck Broad Island Re-Creation Scheme – Environmental Monitoring

The members received a presentation on how the Broads Authority had re-created an area of reed-swamp separating Heigham Sound from Duck Broad which had eroded away since 1940s, as a solution to dredging disposal and BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) habitat re-creation.

Stakeholders had concerns that the disturbance of sediment caused by dredging could lead to a release of nutrients which could adversely affect fish populations particularly through the increased likelihood of a *Prymnesium Parvum* outbreak. Therefore a rigorous water quality monitoring programme was adopted by the Authority before, during and after the works to give early warning of potential problems and found that the works had no detrimental impact on the water quality in this area.

To a question of the Chair SM answered that Duck Broad would remain an open reed bed hopefully attracting fish and wild fowl.

SM informed the members that gabion baskets making up the retaining wall of the structure were planted (wetland plants). In summer 2013 these plants struggled to grow but now look fantastic. Answering a question from MG about the likely causes of the prymnesium bloom in April 2012, SM explained that a change in the phosphorous to nitrogen ratio can cause the algae to release toxins but a more likely cause was the combination of low water levels and high temperatures causing stress conditions.

Robin Godber (RG) wanted to know if there was a possibility that Duck Broad, in spite of its inconvenient access, could be used as commercial reed beds to which SM answered that this had not been given much consideration yet but could be a possibility.

The members welcomed and noted the presentation.

4/13 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive presented his report, which summarised the current position of the dualling of the A47, Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy Work Programme Progress Update and Outboard Tolls, and decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings.

In relation to dualling of the Acle Straight RG mentioned he would support this project as long as it would include creating new habitats so the whole region would profit.

Also, as an Outboard Motor Toll allows the toll payer to exchange one outboard motor between vessels as opposed to paying the motor craft toll on each one, RG wanted to know if during the winter months it would be permitted to tow other boats with one motor, to which the Chief Executive answered he was not sure and would look into this.

Members noted the report.

4/14 Parish Issues

Chedgrave

John Lurkins (JL) expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken by Tony Risebrow and Cally Smith in respect of the recent Planning Public Inquiry at Chedgrave which the Authority had won. He asked if there were costs awarded to the Authority from the appellants. The Director of Planning and Resources answered that the Authority had not made a claim for costs against the appellants because, whilst the appeal and process leading up to it had been frustrating, it had not been vexatious and therefore there were no technical grounds for an award of costs to be made.

Ludham Field Base Centre

In response to a question from MF regarding an update on the Ludham Field Base Centre the Chief Executive answered that they had found a tenant and hoped a lease will be completed soon.

Waste Disposal

Regarding the waste disposal issue BB reported that based on several quotes he received from private rubbish collection companies it would cost the Broads Authority only approximately £400 per year to collect the rubbish, no distinction would be made between domestic and commercial waste and there would be no extra charges for disposal of the waste. In response the Chief Executive pointed out that £400 would cover the cost for just one parish. More importantly the Chief Executive indicated that a meeting had been arranged with officers from all the relevant district councils and it was hoped that a satisfactory arrangement for the collecting of waste could be agreed.

Neighbourhood Plan

Charles Swan (CS) reported that Oulton Broad were in the process of producing a neighbourhood plan. A public consultation event had recently been held and it was clear that one of the issues was that Waveney District Council did not have any conclusive maps of the extent of the Broads Authority Executive Area within Oulton Broad. The Director of Planning and Resources suggested that the Parish Council could either consult the formal parliamentary maps held in the Norfolk Archive or they could use the forthcoming Broads Authority Site Specifics Local Plan maps which may help.

4/15 Current Issues

MG mentioned regarding the government recent decision to push ahead with the fracking plan that this would be disastrous for the Broads as two thirds of Norfolk is drained by the rivers in the Broads.

The Chief Executive responded to this that the government had indicated that fracking would only be permitted in national parks in exceptional circumstances.

To a question of MF the Chief Executive answered that the proposed permissive footpath from Ludham to St Benet's Abbey had still not been formally opened as reaching signed agreement with all of the landowners had been taking longer than expected, however it had been agreed informally with all landowners and therefore he anticipated it could be in place soon.

4/16 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

No items were proposed as items of urgent business.

4/17 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The chairman will report to the next Broads Authority meeting on the various issues discussed by the Forum.

4/18 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

RS recommended it would be useful to discuss the ability for the public to record meetings in future and PM suggested for MG to give a presentation on the History of the Broads.

4/19 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 November 2014 at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.20pm.

Chairman