

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2012

Present:

Mr Stephen Johnson (Interim Chairman)

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| Mr Andrew Alston | Mr Terry Fleet | Mr Peter Medhurst |
| Dr Keith Bacon | Dr Martin George | Mr Bryan Read |
| Mr Julian Barnwell | Mr Tony Gibbons | Mr Richard Starling |
| Prof Richard Card | Mr Brian Holt | Mr Hugh Tusting |
| Mr Martyn Davey | Mr John Lurkins | Mr Anthony Wright |
| Mr Mike Flett | | |

In Attendance:

Mr S Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Mr J Clements – Planning Policy Officer
Ms R Evitt – Administrative Officer
Mr R Holman – Director of Change Management & Resources
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance and Executive Assistant
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive

2/1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Messrs Mike Barnes, Henry Cator, Martyn Davey, Mike Evans and Philip Pearson.

2/2 Chairman's Announcements

Members noted the resignation of Jonathan Bowman as Chairman of the Broads Forum, and agreed the content of a letter of thanks which would be sent to Jonathan Bowman on behalf of the Forum.

(1) Report Back from Broads Authority Meetings

Members noted that there had been two Broads Authority meetings since the last meeting of the Forum. During the November meeting, members had received the draft minutes of the October Forum meeting. They had also received the Biodiversity Audit, the outcome from the Government's consultation on Governance arrangements and some exempt business. It was also noted that they had adopted the Local Development Framework Development Management Policies.

During the January meeting of the Authority members had received a public question from Mrs Molly Howes, the NPAPA Improvement Plan, a roadmap to determine the 2012/13 Strategic Priorities, the 2012/13 budget in which the National Park Grant had been cut by over £200,000, the Education and Volunteer Strategies and the plans for the forthcoming Tolls Review.

(2) **Membership Issues**

Members noted that the Forum was without one Parish Council representative but that steps were being taken to rectify this. The Forum also welcomed Richard Card, who was attending his first meeting as the nominated substitute for the RYA and NSBA.

(3) **Any Other Announcements**

There were no other announcements.

2/3 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2011

Detailed amendments to the minutes had been received. Following discussion by members it was agreed that the original minutes should be agreed and that the amendment should be noted.

Richard Starling (RS) commented that the adoption of the original minutes did not therefore reflect paragraph 1.1 of the report for Agenda Item 6 relating to Climate Change Adaptation as the proposal put forward by Dr Martin George after the Broads Forum was not put to the Authority. The Forum noted that not all the points raised in the report had been included in the minutes.

2/4 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussion at Previous Meeting

Members received the Summary of Progress.

2/5 Preparation of Site Specific Policies Development Plan Document

Members received a presentation on the Preparation of the Site Specific Policies Development Plan Document.

Members noted that the Authority was preparing this document to give effect to the Core Strategy and complete its transition to the Local Development Framework planning system. A second phase of public consultation on 'Draft Site Specific Policies' would be undertaken very shortly.

Members were requested to spread awareness of the consultation among their respective interest groups and to submit any comments they may have when the consultation documents were published. The deadline for receipt of consultation responses was 5 April 2012.

Andrew Alston questioned the introduction of neighbourhood planning in the current reform of planning law, which put a lot more emphasis on parish councils. Members noted that the reform would be challenging but would also provide some opportunities. The reform would remove a strategic layer of

planning but insert a new neighbourhood layer. There was potential opportunity for parishes and local groups to have more control.

RS queried the financial implications to the Authority and the district councils, and the officers confirmed there would be costs and that resources for this were rather limited.

Richard Card (RC) commented on the process of the imminent Site Specific Policies consultation, and whether it met the Government's code of practice. Members noted that there were certain requirements for consultation the Authority had to meet, which were less stringent than those adopted by the Government for their overall consultation and the officers were confident they had reached and complied with these and all relevant codes of practice.

Members noted that it was important that they consulted their relevant organisations in the consultation process. One of the items the Authority was about to review was how it consulted its stakeholders and this was something the Authority could look at as part of the process.

Questions were also raised about the Community Infrastructure Levy, how it might be raised and applied in the Broads – any development in the Broads tended to be small-scale, and so any Levy raised may have limited impact. Efforts were taken to ensure the potential for damage was minimised in the application.

Conclusion

- (i) Concerns were expressed about the potential costs of the local and neighbourhood planning proposals and where these would fall.

2/6 Climate Change Adaptation

Members received a paper which summarised the work that had been done so far on climate change adaptation and explained the Broads Authority's position prior to wider consultation. Members were invited to review the situation to see if they felt this was the best route to follow.

Members noted that key bodies were moving forward collectively and the process had now identified how important it was to go to a wider set of stakeholders – especially the thoughts on how flooding would affect the Broads. It was crucial that everyone helped with the challenging decisions ahead.

The Forum was asked to recognise that the Authority has to take into consideration Defra and the Government's perspectives and to work with a wide range of people in determining the best actions to take.

Mike Flett (MF) commented that it was important that we emphasised how important the issue was to the Authority and that it was as high up the list as possible.

Martin George (MG) commented that he strongly believed that it was up to the Authority to push hard to save this wonderful region. Natural England and water companies had specific priorities and these must be taken into account, but the Authority was the only organisation dedicated to caring for the Broads. He also commented that he was still convinced that a barrier was the only way forward for the long-term future of the Broads.

MG continued that Appendix 1 recited the actual impacts that climate change was likely to have. This was derived from the Biodiversity Audit – which had been a magnificent piece of work. A great deal of credit was deserved for creating a wonderful report but also for identifying which species and communities would be most at risk from incursion of salt water.

Members noted MG's comment that it was not the basic sea level rise that was the threat but whether the incidences of North Sea surges would increase as a result of climate change when high river levels would be created and salt would be pushed into the system. As far as the Broads was concerned it was of critical importance to find out where the impact of surges would most be. Strumpshaw was already feeling the strain of brackish incursion.

Keith Bacon queried which organisation would be responsible for choices about where to pump salt water if such an incident occurred. Concern was raised that there was little time for a consultation when there was a disaster and the EA's recovery plans should be examined.

Members noted that the issue of responsibility was crucial and this was why engaging with all stakeholders to look at such issues was vital. It was important to work with others but it was the Authority that was set up as a guardian for the future.

Members noted that it was more about tactics – a barrier might well be the future but we need to build a case and obtain local support, gather research findings and financial information to substantiate it. For example, the Authority had been working with a small company in Lowestoft who were working on a design for a barrier, which could both protect land and generate electricity. These designs were not necessarily financially viable on their own and it would still need substantial funding from central government. Working with other stakeholders, including high-level discussion with the Environment Agency (EA), was crucial.

Members were reassured that the Authority was not sitting back and waiting for an answer. A lot of work and important research was taking place in the background which would lead to a better understanding of water quality, and to water levels being maintained at selected sites and in the best state possible, with a catchment wide approach. It was noted that this demonstrated the value of involving as many stakeholders as possible.

Conclusions

- (i) Members expressed a strong view that the Authority must act as a champion for the Broads as a whole, and must be seen to command that role.
- (ii) Members considered that the threat from gradual salinisation of the rivers and broads was just as powerful as the threat from catastrophic inundations or the estimated rise in mean sea level and needed to be considered within the eventual Plan.
- (iii) Members wanted more assurance that the EA was prepared with contingency plans for dealing with any saline inundation that might occur, and how their proposals might affect the rivers and broads.
- (iv) Members endorsed the tactics set out by the Authority for approaching the climate change issues, but advised that the issue had to be dealt with very carefully.

2/7 Wakeboarding Trial Findings and Review Panel Recommendations

Members received a report, which set out the findings of the trial of recreational wakeboarding including 'getting air' on the River Yare and the views of the Water Ski Review Panel. The Forum's views were sought on the proposals, which were set out in section 7.

Members noted that no complaints had been received and all user feedback had been positive. It had been concluded that Option 2 should be taken forward with an additional year of the trial to gain more information and make a more informed decision and to extend to the River Waveney.

RC commented he had been a member of the Review Panel and had been most impressed with what could be achieved through a diverse group of people making evidence based decisions.

Conclusion

- (i) Members endorsed the proposals for a further period of trials to be extended to the Waveney and the proposed changes to times on the River Yare Zone 1. Members also commended the way the Water-ski Review Panel had been operating to take account of all interests and users.

2/8 Draft Strategic Priorities 2012/13

Members received a paper on the Draft Strategic Priorities 2012/13, in which the Authority had to adopt objectives, projects and key milestones to meet the strategic priorities for 2012/13 during its meeting taking place in March 2012. The report set out the draft objectives, projects and key milestones and sought the Forum's views on these.

Members were informed that opportunities were limited to do new things because of the commitments already made to important areas such as the European funded programmes on sustainable tourism and integrated management of sediment.

RS commented that it was important that the Authority maintained the programme of expansion and improvement including mooring, boating and improving the facilities. He referred to a Broads Authority letter advising that signs would be placed at water points at Broads Authority 24 hour Moorings stating "Not Drinking Water" and questioned how this would fit in with the Draft Strategic Priority 3(b)2 concerning improvement of moorings.

Members noted that the monitoring identified a variable situation and tackling some of the diffuse pollution issues was challenging. It was suggested that the Authority looked at other regions and continued to press to resolve the issue.

Issues were raised about access and about the quality of the water supply for boaters, but members were assured that these were within the Priority Work Programme for 2012/13 and were being dealt with to the best of the Authority's ability.

Conclusion

- (i) Members endorsed the proposals for the Strategic Priorities for 2012/13.

2/9 Chief Executive's Report

Members received a report, which summarised the current position in respect of a number of important projects and events, including any decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings. Members were asked to note the report.

Members noted that the Authority was at the final stage of testing its new on-line Tolls system.

Members also noted the completion of the Volunteer Strategy. In response to a recommendation that there should be volunteer representation on the Forum, it was agreed that this would need to be considered during the Authority's review of consultative arrangements. It was also noted that the

Authority would be concentrating on improving the volunteer experience for current volunteers before looking to increase the number of volunteers further.

MF queried the implications and cost to the Authority of taking full responsibility of Breydon Water.

Conclusion

- (i) Members stressed the importance that the Authority's Volunteer Strategy sufficiently emphasised the importance of engaging volunteers and giving them a means to express their views to the Authority.

2/10 Current Issues

Members noted that negotiations were taking place concerning the transfer of Breydon Water. Members queried the costs to the Authority and tolls. In the last 20 years the Authority had been paying 50% of the maintenance and had been patrolling the area. Though the Authority was sharing the maintenance costs, the Authority had no control over the area.

MG raised his concerns about the toxicity of anti-fouling paint (not just the use of copper) and about the effects of nitrates within the river systems, particularly at times of low rainfall.

RS had tabled a suggestion to the Forum concerning: the appointment of a Vice Chairman from within the Forum to take the Chair until a new Chairman was appointed, as he considered that there was a conflict of interest for the Chairman of the Authority to act as the Chairman of the Forum; adopting a form of voting for decisions; and the generation of a written report from the Forum to the Broads Authority.

Though some members supported the suggestion that the Forum appointed a Vice Chairman from within the Forum, other members were concerned that this could cause problems with maintaining an independent approach and could inhibit that member from representing their interests. Some members also considered that the Forum should avoid voting on matters, recognising that it was not a decision making body, and that consensus should be sought whenever possible, with alternative views still being recorded. Members also noted that the minutes of the Forum were received by the Broads Authority and it was the minutes that provided the formal record.

The Forum agreed to vote on the proposal to appoint a Vice Chairman from within the Forum, resulting in 3 members voting for, 11 members voting against and 2 members abstaining.

As the tabled proposal was not agreed, Bryan Read proposed that the Chairman of the Broads Authority should continue as the Interim Chairman for the next two meetings, pending the findings of the Authority's review of

consultative arrangements. This proposal resulted in 13 members voting for, 2 members voting against and 1 member abstaining.

Conclusion

- (i) The Chairman of the Broads Authority would continue as the Interim Chairman of the Authority for the next two meetings.

2/11 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

2/12 Matters for Chairman to Raise at the Next Broads Authority Meeting

The Chairman would raise the conclusions from the meeting's agenda items, as detailed in these minutes, to the attention of the Broads Authority at its next meeting.

2/13 Date of Next Meeting

Bryan Read (BR) commented that the meeting at Acle had been a good idea, however the lack of attendance by the public did not substantiate that this should be continued. The Forum agreed that future meetings should be held at Dragonfly House.

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 5 April 2012 at Dragonfly House commencing at 2.00pm.

2/14 Matters to be Discussed at the Next Meeting

A report on the 'Implications of Drought' was requested for the next meeting. Andrew Alston would forward his views on this topic to allow the Broads Authority and EA to reflect on the issues raised.

The meeting concluded at 16.24pm

Chairman