

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010

Present

Mr Jonathan Bowman (Chairman)

Mr Andrew Alston	Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Jeff Toser
Mr Henry Cator	Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Kenneth Turner
Mr Martin Davey	Mr Bryan Read	Mr Hugh Tusting
Mr Steve Duckett	Mr Robin Slatter	Mr Mark Wells
Mr Terry Fleet	Mr Richard Starling	Mr Anthony Wright
Mr Martin George		

In Attendance

Mr B Hanson – Head of Tourism and Recreation Development
Mr S Hooton – Director of Conservation and Countryside Management
Ms A Kelly – Head of Conservation
Mr J Organ – Head of Administration and Executive Assistant
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mrs L Shute – Administrative Officer
Ms T Wakelin – Director of Waterways

Also Present

Mr Ian Russell - Chairman of the Broads Tourism Forum
Mr Michael Sutton-Croft – Co-ordinator, Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative
Mr David Whiles – River Basin Programme Manager, Environment Agency

2/1 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies for absence were received from Julian Barnwell, Barry Green, John Hiskett, Michael Knights, Clare Millar, Philip Pearson and Matthew Thwaites.

The Chairman welcomed Tony Gibbons who was attending as replacement for David Batten under Fishing/Angling Interest Groups and Robin Slatter who was attending as substitute for Pamela Masters who had recently resigned from the Education Interest Groups.

The Chairman also welcomed Ian Russell, Chairman of the Broads Tourism Forum, Michael Sutton-Croft, Co-ordinator, Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative and David Whiles, River Basin Programme Manager, Environment Agency.

2/2 Chairman's Announcements

(1) Report back from Broads Authority Meetings: 20 November 2009 and 22 January 2010

The Chairman reported back on the discussions at the Authority meetings on 20 November 2009 and 22 January 2010.

(2) Membership Issues

Members noted that following David Batten's resignation as representative for Fishing/Angling Interest Groups, Tony Gibbons from the Broads Angling Strategy Group had been appointed as his replacement and Keith Ford as the substitute.

Clare Millar has replaced Michael Nutt from visitnorwich under Commercial Interest Groups.

Pamela Masters, representative for Education Interest Groups, had recently resigned. As yet no replacement had been appointed. Robin Slatter was attending as the substitute.

2/3 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/4 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussions at Previous Meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

2/5 Tourism and Interpretative Initiatives

Members received a report giving details of recent progress in the tourism sector, under the umbrella of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, and outlining the close and active partnership with the Broads Tourism Forum.

Ian Russell, Chairman of the Broads Tourism Forum, gave a presentation on how the tourist industry had operated in the Broads in the past and initiatives and aspirations which were part of the future work of the Broads Tourism Forum.

The Broads Tourism Forum had been established as part of the awarding of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and had resulted from the Authority's work on the concept of sustainability in the tourism industry. A Tourism Strategy had also been required. This had been put in place and an Action Plan developed.

Members noted how the Broads was being promoted as a tourist destination including the 'Enjoy the Broads' campaign with details of a guide which had recently been published, the new web site www.enjoythebroads10.com. (NB. a new website www.enjoythebroads.com should be operational from June) and the tourist promotional shows they were attending.

Members noted the importance of getting organisations to sign up to the strategy and provide a consistent approach in the promotion of the Broads to ensure that visitors enjoyed the experience.

In reply to members' questions, it was noted that the Tourism Forum would be continuing with its promotion of the strategy and getting more businesses and organisations, including providers such as the RSPB and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, and resident populations to sign up or be involved over the next twelve months. Although there was always a resource issue, the Strategy was a five year exercise and the Tourism Forum was concentrating on establishing good foundations. The Forum was keen to promote core activities such as walking and cycling and farm access. A request was made to provide members with a copy of the 'Enjoy the Broads Guide' when it had been launched.

The Chairman thanked Ian Russell for his presentation.

Agenda Item 8: Anglian River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and Water Framework Directive (WFD) Update was discussed next. Please see minute 2/8 below.

2/6 Broads Biodiversity Plan

A report and presentation setting out the objectives of the Broads Biodiversity Action Plan (Broads BAP) and highlighting the main actions in the 'Action Plan' for the Broads Authority was received. The five-year Action Plan followed on from the 2009 Broads BAP Framework Document and had been developed in consultation with internal and external partners. The Action Plan outlined biodiversity projects from 2009-14 and details of a new landscape-scale habitat opportunity mapping which had been produced using objective scoring criteria identifying areas of high, medium or low priority for habitat creation.

The five-year Action Plan (2009 to 2014) would be reviewed annually as required.

Members received a presentation on the creation and maintenance of habitats, priorities identified and projects that the Authority's Conservation Team were taking the lead in delivering. These included Fen Management and Restoration, the Fen Survey which was about to be published, the Trinity and Lound Partnership Projects (which was at the final stages of being considered for a Waterways Renaissance Award), Connecting Wetlands and the Peat Project.

In reply to members' questions and comments on reed beds, the peat soil resource and carbon footprint, it was noted that there was still a lot of work to be carried out on the carbon audit. Provided the peat was kept wet this would lock up the carbon. A member commented on the lack of new wetlands and the importance of managing reed beds sustainably. It was agreed that there was a need to manage water levels in accordance with the prescriptions set out in the agri-environment schemes and to recognise the conflicting requirements of providing the ideal conditions to maintain commercial reed cutting throughout the late winter/early spring.

Meeting multiple demands which were not compatible was a challenge on the management of some areas of land and the Authority was keen to discuss this and work with interested parties.

Members were encouraged to contact the Authority if they had any further comments on the Action Plan.

2/7 Invasive Non-Native Species Initiative

A report was received providing a brief outline of the impacts that invasive non-native species were having across the United Kingdom, the mechanisms that had been set up by the Broads Authority and partners to co-ordinate responses to these impacts and the actions being taken in Norfolk and in particular the Broads to address the problems. There were several control projects being carried out in the Broads which were summarised in the report.

Members received a presentation by Michael Sutton-Croft who outlined the types and varieties of non-native species in Norfolk and Broads, the environmental impacts, economic impacts, health and social impacts and the issues to be taken into account when dealing with the problems. This was followed by a presentation by the Head of Conservation outlining the partnership work on attempting to eradicate floating pennywort from the River Waveney.

Norfolk was leading in the management of these species and this was one of only a handful of county-level initiatives to coordinate and promote the prevention, monitoring and control of non-native species.

Members noted the control projects that were being carried out and that control at an early stage would prove to be more economical in the long run.

In reply to a member's question, the difficulties of controlling water plant species with chemicals were noted. Further research was needed in this area.

A member asked that Egyptian and Greylag Geese should be included as non-native species and made various suggestions as to how mink might be controlled.

The Chairman thanked Michael Sutton-Croft for his presentation.

2/8 Anglian River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and Water Framework Directive (WFD) Update

A report giving an update on the Anglian River Basin Management Plan, which provided a full ecological classification for waterbodies monitored in the Broads Authority executive area, was received. Members noted that the reasons given for waterbodies failing to meet their ecological targets enabled the Broads Authority to align its work programmes to prioritise and maximise achieving WFD targets in the Broads. As a co-deliverer of the Plan, the Authority would co-ordinate its actions, with relevant partners, through the Broads Water Quality Partnership. The Broads Authority Area formed the most downstream part of the Broadland Rivers WFD catchment.

Members received a presentation by David Whiles, River Basin Programme Manager, Environment Agency (EA) on the Plan which had been launched on 29 January and describing the likely improvements to be made to the waterbodies.

The Plan consisted of a 2,500 page document covering a 25,000 square kilometre area. By the end of the first cycle of WFD implementation, due to end in 2015, the national prediction was for a 2-5% improvement in waterbody ecological classification with most waterbodies expected to achieve at least “good” classification by the end of the third cycle in 2027.

In reply to a member’s question regarding the effect that new development may have on the ecological targets, it was noted that the effects on the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive would be considered as part of the development stage.

In reply to members’ questions, it was noted that although salinity issues had been considered as part of the Plan, estuaries would be included at a later stage when the tools and knowledge were in place, supportive measures to ensure that flows were maintained had been included, the Authority would be involved in the Flood Management Partnership and Mr Whiles would take comments that there was a need for of greater local involvement back to the EA for consideration.

It was noted that the feasibility of the provision of a Yare Barrier needed to be investigated.

The Chairman thanked David Whiles for his presentation.

2/9 Chief Executive’s Report

The Chief Executive presented his report, which summarised the issues considered by the Broads Authority and the decisions taken during the most recent cycle of meetings.

In reply to a member’s question about the Authority’s involvement with schools and education, members noted that there were a variety of ways this

occurred. There were a series of initiatives which included providing grant aid to develop educational material for children of different ages, providing grants through the Sustainable Development Fund for projects in schools, rangers activities including their involvement in schools' week and specifically targeting excluded children through the Forest Schools project at Whitlingham Country Park.

(1) **Consultation on the East of England Plan>2031: Scenarios for Housing and Economic Growth**

A member commented that every building which was newly built as part of this development should be carbon neutral and asked that in future the Authority should insist that all new building should be carbon neutral. Members noted that the Authority was keen to influence and progress such issues. This would rely on adapting Building Regulations, changes in the construction industry, build quality and the acquisition of new building skills.

2/10 Current Issues

(1) **Technical Advances in Controlling Salinity**

A member commented that the Authority might be interested in new techniques being developed in Italy to deal with salinity.

(2) **Press Release**

A member noted that copies of the Authority's press releases were available on its website. The Authority was looking at producing a regular newsletter.

(3) **River Wensum Strategy**

A member requested an update on the River Wensum Strategy.

2/11 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

2/12 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The Chairman asked that members get in contact if there were any items they wished him to take to the Authority when he made his usual report to the next meeting.

2/13 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 April 2010 at 2.00pm at Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich.

2/14 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

The Chairman expressed his wish that members provide topics for agenda items and presentations. He requested that members inform him of their views and wishes for the content of the agenda in plenty of time. This would be helpful for the planning of future agendas.

The Habitats Directive Regulations item which had been requested by a member had been scheduled for the next Broads Forum meeting.

The earlier request for an update on the River Wensum Strategy would be added to the forward plan.

The meeting concluded at 4.50pm.

Chairman

NB: At the end of the meeting members were informed that the Authority was moving towards reducing the amount of paper work and postage consumed for the production of agenda and minutes which will reduce the costs of printing and postage especially as all the papers were available on the Authority's website, as follows:

- Level 1 was no papers at all apart from a reminder agenda sheet. This would require a laptop to be used at the meeting (wireless access to the web site could be provided).
- Level 2 was agenda and reports only – minutes and appendices would be available on the web site.
- Level 3 was a full set of papers however, as the minutes were sent out after the meeting, these could left out of the agenda papers.

The Authority would be contacting members and organisations to confirm their preferences.