

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2010

Present

Mr Jonathan Bowman (Chairman)

Mr Andrew Alston	Mr Terry Fleet	Mr Philip Pearson
Mr Keith Bacon	Dr Martin George	Mr Bryan Read
Mr Colin Dye	Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Mike Evans	Mr Peter Medhurst	

In Attendance

Mr S Birtles – Head of Waterways Strategy and Safety
Ms M Conti – Broads Strategy Officer
Mr R G Holman – Director of Corporate Services
Mr S Hooton – Director of Conservation and Countryside Management
Ms A Kelly – Head of Conservation
Ms A Long – Director of Planning and Strategy
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mrs L Shute – Administrative Officer
Ms T Wakelin – Director of Waterways

Also Present

Ms S Dawkins – Natural England

3/1 Apologies and Announcement

Apologies for absence were received from Henry Cator, Jane Cryer, Steve Duckett, Jeff Toser, Kenneth Turner and Hugh Tusting.

It was the Chairman's sad duty to announce that Barry Green had died on 27 February. Barry had been an active and much valued member of the Forum and would be sadly missed.

3/2 Chairman's Announcements

(1) Report back from Broads Authority Meeting: 19 March 2010

The Chairman reported back on the discussions at the Authority meetings on 19 March 2010. Simon Middleton had made an interesting presentation on 'Branding the Broads' which the Forum would receive at a future meeting.

(2) **Membership Issues**

Members noted that the issue of future parish council representation on the Forum was reported at item 9 (Chief Executive's report).

The nominating organisations had been requested to appoint replacement members for Barry Green and Pamela Masters.

3/3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 February 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/4 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussions at Previous Meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

(1) **11 February 2010: Printing and Production of Agenda and Minutes**

In reply to a member's question, it was noted that charges imposed for supplying hard copies of meeting papers requested by members of the public were only for the costs of printing and postage incurred by the Authority and at a level consistent with those charged by other authorities. Members were reminded that all papers were published on the Authority's web site, available for inspection at its offices and displayed at Authority meetings.

3/5 Broads Plan Review

Members received a report giving details of the Broads Plan review process. The Director of Planning and Strategy gave an update on the consultation process to date and key issues that had informed the preparation of a preliminary draft plan.

The Chief Executive gave details of the proposed structure, long term vision and key themes for the draft Plan, including examples of aims, objectives and actions under each theme.

Members took part in a workshop looking at a revised Vision for the Broads in line with the new Government Vision and Circular for English National Parks and the Broads, priorities for the Broads for the next five years in line with Government's Priority Outcomes and suggestions for key outcomes/aspirations for the next five years.

The preliminary draft Plan would be discussed by Authority members at a third workshop on 9 April, taking into account comments made by Forum members at today's meeting. Following any further revisions the draft Plan would then be considered at the Authority meeting on 14 May 2010 for its endorsement and publication for wider consultation.

The Forum would have a further chance to discuss the draft Plan during the public consultation period, which was planned to run from early June to mid-August. A Forum workshop would be held at the scheduled meeting on 22 July to discuss emerging issues arising from the consultation.

3/6 Broads Authority Act 2009: Implementation of Removal of Vegetation etc

A report setting out the proposed process and procedure for the identification and removal of vegetation hazards and potential hazards to the navigation for the implementation of the provisions relating to "Removal of Vegetation" within the Broads Authority Act 2009 was received.

The proposed procedure detailed in Appendix 1 of the report had been developed to set out a clear process with defined responsibilities and timescales.

In reply to a member's comment that the procedure should not state either owner or occupier as this might be confusing, and should say one or the other, it was noted that the wording had been modelled on highways legislation and the provision was set out in this way so the most appropriate person could be contacted depending on the circumstances. The provision would only be used where there was a significant hazard.

Although involved in setting out the procedures, comments were still awaited from the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association.

3/7 Condition of SSSIs and Update on Habitats Directive Regulations

A report was received which set out the importance and benefits of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) both nationally and within the Broads. Members noted the legal and policy positions relevant to the Broads Authority in delivering its duties.

The Head of Conservation and Sarah Dawkins, Natural England, introduced the report.

Although there had been some progress in improving the ecological condition of SSSIs in the Broads, members noted the challenges that had affected the achievement of favourable status for wildlife and that there was still a long way to go to ensure that the condition of the Broads SSSIs matched its reputation as a world class wetland. Members noted the key remedies and action required and that there were a significant number of remedies for a large area to achieve the PSA target set within the Broads by the PSA deadline of December 2010.

The Authority was championing work aimed to improve the condition of the SSSIs by using the Broads Plan as a tool to provide a clear framework.

In reply to a member's comment that point source pollution should be targeted and the data provided by Environment Agency was different to that of Natural

England, who appeared to make subjective assessments, it was noted that Natural England had a recognised procedure for identifying problems. In reply to a further question regarding extraction licences, members noted that there were a series of tests used to assess the issuing and retraction of licences, including that of 'overriding public interest'. A member pointed out that water extraction could affect flow rates and water pollution which would mean that an influx of a large number of houses, as proposed for the Anglian region, would have a profound effect on water quality.

Members also commented on land use projects, the apparent reduction in phosphorus, and the proportion of pollution which came from point sources and sewage systems including reed rhizome systems, water levels and the effect poor land management had on wildlife. In addition a member commented that there were limited options available to land owners when compensating for the effect on water quality caused by adjacent land areas out of their control.

Members noted that the Fen Management Strategy was in the process of being updated. There was a pool of people in partner organisations who could provide advice on land management.

The Chairman thanked Sarah for her presentation.

3/8 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation World Heritage Site Inscription

Members received a presentation by the Chief Executive providing details of the criteria needed to apply for World Heritage Status inscription. The Authority already held much information which could contribute towards formulating a bid by the deadline of 10 June 2010. In particular, there were similarities when looking at the protection of World Heritage Sites and the key elements of a World Heritage Management Plan with the national park principals and policies and with what the Authority was currently carrying out. Links could also be made with the Authority's work under the European Landscape Convention and the Tourism Strategy. It was noted that any bid would require the support from neighbouring local authorities to be successful.

The proposal including an assessment of the advantages, disadvantages and resource implications of inscription of World Heritage Status would be reviewed, and a bid proposal referred to the Authority for consideration at the its meeting on 14 May 2010.

3/9 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 addition the Chief Executive had recently visited Northern Italy where he had visited an area which had a salt curtain which acted as a preventative

measure for sea salt incursion and a wetland site project which had been created by a local drainage board and was similar to sites in the Broads and the work of the Authority.

(1) Parish Council Membership of the Broads Forum

A member expressed concern at the process for identifying additional suitable candidates to represent parish councils on the Forum. He pointed out that not all parish councils in the Broads area were members of the Norfolk and Suffolk Associations of Local Councils.

The Chief Executive would seek advice on how it might be possible to ensure that all parish councils in the Broads were involved in the process.

(2) Implementation of the Broads Authority Act

In reply to a member's question, it was confirmed that there were different criteria to be met when applying the exemption for third party insurance to visiting craft. Visiting unpowered craft of 4 m and under in length were exempted from the requirement to hold third party liability insurance and this could be applied to local craft on a short term toll.

3/10 Current Issues

Nothing was reported under this item.

3/11 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3/12 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.

3/13 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 22 July 2010 at Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich, commencing at 2.00pm.

3/14 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.

Members noted that a report by the Communications Manager on the revised Communication Strategy, as reported in the Chief Executive's report, and a Forum workshop considering emerging issues arising from the consultation on the Broads Plan (Minute 3/5) were planned for the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm.

Chairman