

## **Broads Authority**

### **Broads Local Access Forum**

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2010

#### **Present**

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Louis Baugh	Mr Peter Medhurst
Ms Liz Brooks	Mr Stephen Read
Mr Robin Buxton	Mr George Saunders
Mr Alan Duce	Mr Gary Simons
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Patrick Hacon	Mr Ray Walpole
Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies	Mr Chris Yardley

#### **In Attendance**

Mr Adrian Clarke - Broads Projects Co-ordinator  
Ms Jo Eames – Administrative Officer  
Mr Simon Hooton – Director of Conservation and Countryside Management  
Ms Rachel Killington – Website Manager  
Mr Nick Sanderson – Head Countryside Ranger

#### **Also in Attendance**

Ms Sarah Abercrombie - Norfolk County Council  
Mr Jeremy Halls – Broadland Environmental Services Limited  
Ms Anne Mason – St Benet's Abbey Project

#### **3/1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Graham Downing, Mr Tony Howes, Mr Nick Larkin and Mrs Jo Lester.

#### **3/2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3/3 Points of Information Arising from the Minutes**

##### **(1) Minute 2/4: Angles Way Leaflet**

The Head Countryside Ranger confirmed that the Angles Way map had been produced and copies had been circulated to the Forum.

(2) **Minute 2/11: Thorpe Marshes**

The Head Countryside Ranger stated that formal notice had been received from Thorpe Town Council confirming that they did not wish to take out a lease on Thorpe Marshes but would support other interested bodies that did. It was noted that the Fringe Project was not in a position to lease the site either.

(3) **Minute 2/12 (3): Whole Valley Approach Update**

Members noted that the Ant Valley Rights of Way Group would be meeting on Monday 12 July 2010. Keith Bacon, Mike Flett and Louis Baugh would be attending from the Forum.

**3/4 The St Benet's Abbey Project**

Both Louis Baugh and Mike Flett declared an interest in this project (see Appendix 1 for details).

The St Benet's Abbey Project Manager gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the aims of the project, including the conservation of the remains, access and community involvement, of which the Forum was very supportive.

The St Benet's Abbey Project Manager confirmed that the most popular way to access the site was by boat and the most difficult was on foot, which was an issue as the project hoped to encourage pedestrian access.

The Forum discussed the problems of accessing the site on foot from Ludham Bridge stating that, although there was permissive access from Hundred Dyke on Ludham Hall Estate and a public right of way (concrete track) from Ludham Hall Estate to the Abbey, there was no right of way along the riverbank from Ludham Bridge to Hundred Dyke. It was noted that this area of land was owned by the Environment Agency (EA).

The previous tenant of the boatyard at Ludham Bridge for forty years had no problem with access through the boatyard and along the riverbank to Hundred Dyke. However, to establish this route as a right of way, twenty years continuous use needed to be proven and this may be problematic because BESL had set back a section of riverbank as part of their flood defence work.

The Head Countryside Ranger suggested that the Forum could identify this issue as part of the Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan review (Item 13). He also suggested that the issue could be discussed at the Ant Valley Rights of Way Group meeting.

The St Benet's Abbey Project Manager agreed to write to the EA (or the Forum) regarding access and copy the letter to the Forum (or the EA) and Horning Parish Council.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator stated that the EA was very responsive to rights of way improvements. The Forum therefore suggested that a sub group meeting with the EA, Ludham and Horning Parish Councils and representatives from the St Benet's Project could be arranged to discuss access. The facts of recent events would need to be established before a decision on how to proceed could be agreed. How access routes should be publicised also needed to be agreed.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator agreed to write a briefing note for the Forum regarding rights of way in relation to set back land.

BESL's Environmental Manager agreed to ascertain whether, where the Environment Agency had the freehold of the floodbank, it retained ownership when a new setback bank was constructed on the marshes and to report back to the Forum.

The St Benet's Abbey Project Manager confirmed that disabled visitors would be able to access the site by car along the public right of way, and that a small car park for disabled visitors would be constructed. She also confirmed that this right of way would not be fenced in or narrowed so there would be no restrictions for horse riders wishing to use it.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator stated that he had been in contact with the project regarding river frontage access for angling.

The Forum agreed that Louis Baugh and the Ritchie family should decide where to site Laurie's memorial bench, and the St Benet's Abbey Project Manager together with the Head Countryside Ranger and the Landscape Architect should decide the type of bench. The only stipulation from the Forum was that it needed to be user friendly.

The Forum questioned whether a visit to St Benet's Abbey could be incorporated into local bike hire cycle routes. As this was the purpose of the Ant Valley Group, it was suggested that the St Benet's Abbey Project Manager contact the Head of Valley Management regarding this possibility.

The St Benet's Abbey Project Manager thanked the Forum for inviting her to the meeting and requested that, should members have any comments, suggestions, advice or queries, to contact either herself or the Forum's secretary.

### **3/5 Hickling Wetland Project**

Broadland Environmental Services Limited's Environmental Manager gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the flood defence proposals for the Hickling area.

The Forum discussed how the woodland landscape would change as a result of Compartment 6 Phase 2's proposed works, and questioned whether woodland establishment due to natural succession would be better than a

clear fell, as a landscape amenity would be lost and landscape needed to be considered as well as biodiversity. The Forum also suggested that two cores of ancient woodland should be maintained.

Although the Forum was in favour of the proposed new footpath, they raised concern regarding the fact that the EA would no longer maintain the section of footpath that ran along the existing flood wall (marked green on the Hickling South Wetland Project consultation map) once the 'set back' area had been created, especially as this was part of the Weavers Way long distance footpath. Also, if culverts were inserted into the wall to link the 'set back' area to Heigham Sound, the path may deteriorate. Concerns were also raised regarding the possibility that the path might be moved or the priority of the path might be downgraded.

It was noted that, although the area belonging to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust had restricted access, access to the Weavers Way could not be restricted, as it was a public right of way.

The Forum suggested that, if Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority decided to take on the responsibility for the section of footpath marked green on the Hickling South Wetland Project consultation map, a time frame in which the two organisations gave a firm commitment to maintain the path was required otherwise it might not be maintained.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator stated that BESL and the Broads Authority were producing an agreement regarding the works, which included maintenance of the integrity of the bank for five years.

The Forum questioned whether the footpath could be maintained for a similar length of time to that of the sea defences (50 years).

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator noted that it was likely that the footpath would not significantly deteriorate for a number of years, although there might be financial implications. Dedicating the new footpath as a right of way might be a possibility.

The Forum agreed to write to BESL in support of the project but to also mention their concern regarding the future of the section of Weavers Way that ran along the existing flood wall.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator urged the Forum to take into account the number of rights of way improvements that had been achieved through the flood alleviation project.

### **3/6 Broadland Flood Alleviation Project: Update on Access Enhancements**

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator updated the Forum on the main enhancement schemes linked to the Broadland Flood Alleviation Project (BFAP) that were currently being worked on by Broads Authority and BESL officers.

The easy access path between Carlton Marshes and Nicholas Everett Park in Oulton Broad had been completed.

As part of the angling/access to water enhancements funding had been agreed for a slipway at South Walsham which would be installed before the end of the fishing season.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator would be meeting Waveney District Council regarding the land transfer of the free jetty and would update the Forum of progress at the next meeting.

### **3/7 Broads Authority Tourism Website**

The Website Manager gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the Broads Authority's new tourism website ([www.enjoythebroads.com](http://www.enjoythebroads.com)).

As the website was still being developed and would be updated later in the year the Website Manager requested that should members have any feedback, suggestions for walks, cycle routes, etc, or stories to contact her direct.

The Forum questioned whether it would be useful to have information regarding BESL's temporary footpath closures on the site.

The Website Manager confirmed that it had been agreed to include web links to other sites on the website, although these would need to be live and relevant.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator stated that once the slipway information and the free angling maps had been produced these would be uploaded onto the website.

The Forum suggested that information regarding the St Benet's Project be included on the site.

### **3/8 Walking and Cycling Hubs**

The Forum considered a report by the member representing walking which sought to encourage members to consider creating walking and cycling hubs in the Broads.

The Forum confirmed that they supported the ideas put forward in the report.

The Director of Conservation and Countryside Management noted that there was a big difference in scale between sites owned by an organisation, such as the National Trust, and the Broads Authority, as these organisations were able to charge an entry fee, produce their own way-marked walking and cycle routes, etc. The Broads Authority was not able to do these types of things unless in conjunction with other partners. A mobile phone tour and

interpretation displays had been installed at Whitlingham Country Park and, although the Broads Authority would like to hire cycles and open the visitor centre and toilets at the Park during the winter months, these were expensive to achieve and would therefore require external funding. At present the Park as an amenity was almost at full capacity, although the Whitlingham bridges scheme might encourage funding. All that said the concept in the report was sound and the Broads Authority needed to be positive and seek out opportunities when they arose.

RESOLVED

that members support the proposals raised in the report.

### **3/9 World Heritage Status**

The Forum considered a report by the Chief Executive which was initially considered by the Authority to help them consider whether to progress a bid for World Heritage status for the Broads. At the Broads Authority's meeting of 14 May 2010 it was agreed to make a bid to join the UK's Tentative List for World Heritage status.

The Director of Conservation and Countryside Management reported that currently the Authority was collating a bid to join the UK's list. The Broads Authority's Chairman was leading on this project and would keep interested parties informed of progress.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

### **3/10 National and Regional Local Access Forum Issues**

#### **(1) East of England Representation**

Peter Medhurst reported that although the Forum had nominated him to represent the Eastern region, due to personal commitments he was unable to undertake the role. Mr Medhurst therefore requested that members interested in being nominated contact either the Head Countryside Ranger or the Forum's secretary direct. Norfolk County Council's Countryside Officer confirmed that no-one from the Norfolk Local Access Forum wished to be nominated.

#### **(2) Review of England Access Forum**

The Head Countryside Ranger reported that the Forum had received a letter from the Chairman of the England Access Forum (EAF) stating that it had been two years since the formation of the EAF. At the formative meeting in May 2008 it was agreed to review the EAF's progress after two years, so the EAF was now seeking the Local Access Forums (LAFs) views regarding:

- The links between EAF and the LAFs through the regional coordinators.
- The effectiveness of the links between LAFs and Natural England at a national level through EAF.
- The added value that a national body representing LAFs can bring.
- The options for EAF's development.

The consultation closing date was the end of September 2010.

It was agreed that the letter from the Chairman of the EAF be circulated to the Forum and that members forward their comments to the Forum's secretary. These comments would then be discussed at the meeting in September. The Forum requested that the minutes of the last EAF meeting be circulated with the letter.

### **3/11 Broads Forum Update**

Peter Medhurst reported that the items discussed by the Broads Forum on 8 April included a report by the Chief Executive regarding World Heritage Status, the development of the new Broads Plan and a report on the current condition of SSSIs in the Broads.

The Forum requested that the report regarding the condition of SSSIs in the Broads be forwarded to members for information.

### **3/12 The Role of the Broads Authority in Regard to Access**

The Head Countryside Ranger tabled a report first taken to the Forum on 10 December 2008 updating members on the management agreement between the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council regarding rights of way in the Broads. It was noted that there were now 334 km of rights of way in the Broads. 306 km were public rights of way (PRoW), and the remainder were permissive footpaths.

The Broads Authority also worked with Norfolk County Council regarding the works undertaken by BESL to raise the standard of access to improve the visitor experience.

As well as rights of way management the Authority had a role in enhancement projects, signage, and the Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan.

Under the CRoW Act 2000, the Authority was the legal statutory body for nineteen areas of open access land in the Broads. It also had the responsibility for the establishment and the administration of the Broads Local Access Forum.

### **3/13 Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Update and Review followed by a Scoping Exercise for Potential BESL Enhancements**

The Head Countryside Ranger updated the Forum on the current status of the Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Action Plan, stating that:

- W5 (Carlton Marshes/Share Marsh) - footpath access to Reedham was currently being increased and improved. The set back bank had added 55 metres to total length of rights of way in the Broads.
- Y4 (Halvergate/Berney Marshes) – signage and furniture had been upgraded.
- B8 (Fleggburgh) – access maps had now be uploaded onto the Broads Authority’s website.

The Head Countryside Ranger tabled a proposed route for the Harnsers Way which had been developed following communications with Ray Walpole and Norfolk County Council’s rights of way officers. This was supported by members.

The Forum agreed to postpone the scoping exercise until the next meeting, noting that enhancement locations did not need to be restricted to the flood banks themselves, they could include areas near flood banks.

The Forum suggested that time be set aside on the agenda for the scoping exercise, and that members forward ideas to the Forum’s secretary in advance of the meeting. The Head Countryside Ranger also suggested that a sub-group might be required following the exercise.

The Broads Projects Co-ordinator agreed to produce a briefing note regarding the issue of access from Ludham Bridge to St Benet’s Abbey.

### **3/14 Any Other Business**

The Head Countryside Ranger requested that members forward their comments regarding the Broads Plan and the Development Management DPD consultations to the Forum’s secretary to enable the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Head Countryside Ranger to respond formally on behalf of the Forum.

### **3/15 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 8 September 2010 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 5.20 p.m.

Chairman

## Code of Conduct for Members

## Declaration of Interests

Committee: Broads Local Access Forum

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 16 June 2010

Name Please Print	Agenda/ Mins No(s)	Nature of Interest (Please describe the nature of the interest)	Please tick here if the interest is a Prejudicial interest ✓
Louis Baugh	Item 3	St Benets Abbey and access to forms part of the farming enterprise of DL Ritchie Ludham Hall. I have a advisory and management role with this business and therefore an interest in this agenda item.	
Mike Flett	Item 3	<p>I am a Parish Councillor for Ludham, and although the St Benet's Abbey site is not situated in the parish of Ludham I have been involved in brief discussions in council meetings concerning access to the site as have other Parish Councillors.</p> <p>The Norfolk Archaeological Trust had invited Parish Councillors to a site visit to learn about their plans for conservation and access.</p> <p>The parish council was asked if it would consider contributing to the costs of the project, but declined to offer financial support.</p> <p>The only land access to St Benet's Abbey is through Ludham, hence the parish council's interest. The access is via an existing track – a CRB – and not suitable in its present state.</p>	