

## **Application for Determination**

<b>Parish</b>	Repps with Bastwick
<b>Reference</b>	BA/2009/0022/FUL
<b>Target date</b>	1 April 2009
<b>Location</b>	South bank of River Thurne, upstream of Potter Heigham Bridge
<b>Proposal</b>	Installation of seven recycled plastic angling platforms
<b>Applicant</b>	Broads Authority (Mr Adrian Clarke)
<b>Recommendation</b>	Subject to agreement on materials, approve subject to conditions

### **1 Description of Site and Proposals**

- 1.1 The application site is on the south bank of the River Thurne, upstream of Potter Heigham Bridge. The section of riverbank subject to the application extends approximately 250 metres from the eastern end of the Broads Authority 24 hour moorings to the first of the chalets on this bank east of Potter Heigham Bridge.
- 1.2 This stretch of riverbank is unpiled and covered by a natural reed bed. A concrete flood wall runs along the rear of the bank, with an adjoining footpath. Beyond the bank lies a soke dyke and a large expanse of open marshland.
- 1.3 There currently exist three timber angling platforms along this stretch of riverbank, which offer access across decking from the footpath to the riverbank for anglers.
- 1.4 The proposal is for the installation of seven recycled plastic angling platforms and a pathway along the bank and up to each. Each platform would measure 1.8 metres by 1.8 metres and be supported by four posts driven into the bank. There would be a low level stop board along the river edge, and lower toe boards to each side. The top of the decking on the platforms would stand 30 to 60 centimetres above the mean water level and they would finish flush with the existing river margin, so as not to extend into the navigable waterway.
- 1.5 The proposed recycled plastic material is dark brown in colour with a rough surface texture. Negotiations are ongoing regarding this proposed material. The pathway would be constructed from a geotextile membrane surfaced with type 1 material.

- 1.6 Two platforms would be situated downstream of the existing, with one between two of the existing, and four upstream.
- 1.7 The proposal is put forward to meet one of the key objectives of the Broads Fisheries Action Plan to redress the perceived decline in bankside angling access in the Broads. The Broads Angling Strategy Group has identified that the Upper Thurne in particular requires improved bankside access and the Environment Agency and Broads Authority are working in partnership, with the support of the Broads Angling Strategy Group, to provide additional angling platforms here.
- 1.8 The application site is within Compartment 7 and there is a current planning application (BA/2008/0378/FUL) for the bank to be raised behind the existing wall and a new, larger soke dyke to be excavated. These works, if approved, would create a crest on the bank approximately two metres wide. There is potential to work with BESL to install these platforms during the flood defence works, if approved.

## **2 Site History**

BA/2003/0766/HISTAP - Erection of three fishing platforms and associated work to upgrade footpath to promote disabled access – Approved subject to conditions, 27 May 2003.

BA/2008/0378/FUL - Improvement works for 11.4km of floodbank on the River Thurne between Thurne and West Somerton and include online strengthening, rollback and excavation of soke dykes (material sourcing) as well as a temporary sites compound and associated engineering works - Pending consideration and is the subject of a report elsewhere on this agenda.

## **3 Consultations – to be reported orally**

Broads Society  
Repps with Bastwick Parish Council  
Potter Heigham Parish Council  
District Member  
Great Yarmouth Borough Council  
North Norfolk District Council  
Environment Agency – See Letter attached at Appendix 2  
Water Management Alliance

One letter of representation has been received, suggesting that there is no proven need for the additional platforms.

## **4 Policies**

### **4.1 National Planning Policy**

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicyguidance/>

### **4.2 Broads Local Plan (Saved Policies)**

**Policy C 6** Development affecting the Upper Thurne and Trinity Broads  
Development leading to increased boating use of any kind will not be permitted in the following areas shown on the Proposals Map:

- a) the Upper Thurne;
- b) the Trinity Broads.

**Policy C 7** Waterside development  
Development on or close to the waterside will not be permitted outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map Insets except where it is in accordance with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

**Policy B 11** Design  
Development will only be permitted if its scale, form, design, external materials and colour would be appropriate to its setting. New development in the built environment should respect the character and townscape of the area. New development in the countryside should be appropriately located so as to minimise its visual intrusion in the landscape.

**Policy TR 19** Visitor facilities and entertainments  
Small scale visitor facilities, particularly those related to environmental education and conservation, will be permitted provided all the following criteria are met:

- a) the development would not result in a scale and concentration of similar uses in the vicinity which would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the ecological and landscape qualities of the area; and
- b) the siting, design, external materials and colour of any new buildings would be appropriate to the character and appearance of the Broads landscape, waterways or built environment; and
- c) any resulting visitor activity would not have a significant adverse effect on wildlife or wildlife habitats; and
- d) the development would not have a significant adverse effect on the residential amenities of any adjoining occupiers.

Amusement arcades, funfairs or other entertainment facilities likely to generate a level of traffic or visitor activity incompatible with the above criteria will not be permitted in the Broads area.

#### Policy TR 21 Local recreational facilities

New recreational facilities for local residents or visitors will be permitted provided the proposal complies with all the following criteria:

- a) if permitted, the development would not result in a scale and concentration of similar uses in the vicinity which would have a significant adverse effect on the ecological and landscape qualities of the area; and
- b) it would not have a significant adverse effect on open space of recreational or amenity value in accordance with Policy C12 of the Local Plan; and
- c) it would not have a significant adverse effect on the landscape, on wildlife habitats or on the residential amenities of adjacent occupiers.

#### Policy TR 26 Angling facilities

The development of angling facilities, including anglers' staging, fishing ponds and associated car parking will only be permitted provided that:

- a) it would not have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the riverside environment and surrounding landscape or on areas of wildlife importance; and
- b) the development would provide a good standard of construction and design; and
- c) where appropriate, the proposal is supported by evidence that damage to bankside vegetation will be prevented; and
- d) there would be no significant adverse effect on the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers; and
- e) there would be no significant adverse effect on the use of the waterways.

#### Policy INF 12 Community facilities

The Authority will permit the development of new buildings, the extension of existing buildings or the use of land to meet a need for local community uses and facilities provided that the development would not have a significant adverse effect on the wildlife, landscape, waterways or built environment of the Broads.

#### Policy PHB 11 Green bank zones

Development will not be permitted within the 'green bank zones' defined on the Proposals Map Insets.

### 4.3 **Broads Core Strategy adopted September 2007**

Policy CS1 Development and changes in land use / management must ensure that all aspects of the environmental and cultural assets of the Broads distinctive landscape are protected, enhanced and restored.

Proposals should ensure opportunities for positive impacts on the following core assets have been addressed and adverse impacts avoided:

- (i) the defining and distinctive qualities of the varied landscape character areas formed by the built and natural environment
- (ii) tranquillity and wildness as part of the Broads experience
- (iii) the value and integrity of nature conservation interest and
- (iv) the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment

Opportunities to mitigate the visual impact of currently intrusive features should be sought.

Policy CS11 Tourism and recreation development will be directed to appropriate locations which have the necessary infrastructure and facilities to support such development by:

- (i) identifying criteria for broad areas to ensure a network of facilities to achieve a hierarchy from high density comprehensive provision through to low key support facilities;
- (ii) requiring adequate levels and types of infrastructure and facilities to support development taking into account factors such as accessibility, water quality, sewer capacity, seasonal impacts.

Policy CS17 Safe recreational access to both land and water and, between the waters edge and the water will be protected and improved through:

- (i) developing the Public Rights of Way network in line with the recommendations of the Norfolk and Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plans;
- (ii) developing access to designated open country;
- (iii) identifying and safeguarding potential crossing points of land and water;
- (iv) protection and improvement of staithe and slipways;
- (v) creation of new access to the waterside by boat (where there is good road access and provision for parking);
- (vi) the improvement and maintenance of launching facilities for small craft;
- (vii) the protection and creation of waterside spaces for informal recreation;
- (viii) incorporating appropriate measures for disabled people.

## **5 Assessment**

5.1 The proposal is for seven additional angling platforms on a section of riverbank where three exist already. The key issues to consider are design and scale, visual impact upon the landscape, impact upon waterways, effect on amenities, and impacts upon ecology, wildlife and wildlife habitats.

5.2 In terms of the principle of the additional platforms, the design and scale are similar to that of the existing platforms. The decking surface of the platforms and gaps beneath the toe and stop boards would give the platforms an open, lightweight appearance whilst being of a functional design for their purpose. The path along the riverbank and up to each platform is proposed to be

constructed using durable materials that would require less maintenance than the timber boardwalks to the existing platforms. This path would also reduce the trampling of vegetation and erosion of the bank that results from anglers informally accessing the riverbank.

- 5.3 The existing platforms form a small, low level visual interruption within the reeded riverbank at uneven intervals and the proposed additional platforms would result in a row of ten platforms at more regular intervals. The low level of the platforms, at a maximum height of approximately one metre above mean water level, is not considered to result in any significant additional visual impact on the character and appearance of the reeded bank or surrounding rural landscape. In terms of principle, the proposed new platforms are acceptable.
- 5.4 Whilst the design of the platforms is acceptable in principle, there are concerns over the use of brown recycled plastic for construction. This material is more durable than natural timber; however, it has an artificial appearance and does not 'weather' over time. It is considered that it is inappropriate in the Broads, and particularly in a strongly natural location such as here. The Authority has resisted the use of such material for other projects and its use here would set an undesirable precedent. Any approval should be conditioned on agreement of a more appropriate material.
- 5.5 The platforms shall finish flush with the river margin and thus not extend into the navigable waterway or impede navigation. The purpose of the platforms is to provide bankside angling access and shall therefore not attract any additional boating use to the Upper Thurne.
- 5.6 On the opposite bank and at the upstream extent of the application site stand residential chalets. The addition of seven new angling platforms is not considered to result in any significant adverse impact on the residential amenity of the occupiers of these chalets nor upon the amenity value of the public footpath, due to the quiet nature of the sport.
- 5.7 Along this stretch of river the presence of common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) and marsh-sow thistle (*Sonchus palustris*) has been identified. The proposal includes appropriate mitigation measures and is therefore not considered to result in any significant adverse impact on the ecological qualities of the area, wildlife or wildlife habitats. Formalising access to the riverbank with individual pathways up to each platform would also reduce the impacts on wildlife and ecology that currently results from anglers informally crossing between the footpath and riverbank.
- 5.8 Angling is a key recreational activity in the Broads that attracts locals and visitors to enjoy the natural assets of the Broads; and also contributes to the viability of the local economy. Therefore this proposal, which represents an opportunity to improve existing facilities and engage with an important stakeholder group, is welcomed.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 In principle, the addition of seven new angling platforms on this stretch of riverbank is not considered to result in any significant adverse visual impact on the local, or wider, Broads landscape. The platforms would provide bankside angling access that would not affect the navigable waterway or attract additional boat traffic. By virtue of the quiet nature of the sport, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts on residential amenity and, by formalising access to the riverbank and employing the mitigation measures detailed in the application, there is not considered to be any adverse impacts on the Broads' ecology, wildlife or wildlife habitats. The proposed recycled plastic material however is unacceptable and in order for the proposal to be acceptable, agreement must be reached regarding their substitution with timber.

## **7 Recommendation**

Subject to agreement on materials, approve subject to conditions

- (i) Standard time limit
- (ii) In accordance with submitted plans
- (iii) Wildlife mitigation measures
- (iv) Materials such as shall be agreed

## **8 Reason for Recommendation**

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with saved policies C6, C7, B11, TR19, TR21, TR26, INF12 and PHB11 of the adopted Broads Local Plan and policies CS1, CS11 and CS17 of the adopted Core Strategy.

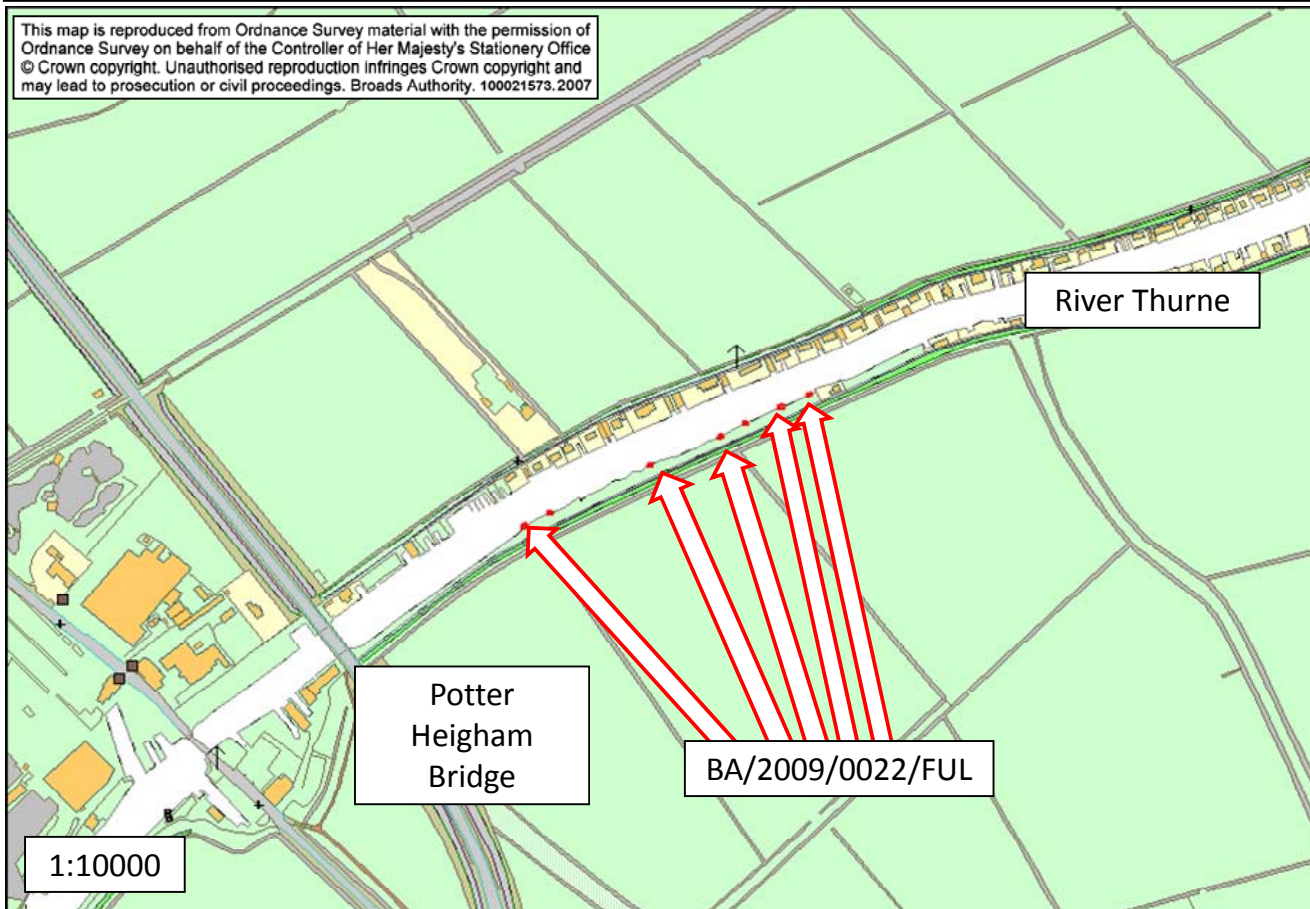
Background papers: BA/2003/0766/HISTAP and BA/2008/0378/FUL

Author: Maria Hammond  
Date of report: 19 February 2009

List of Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Site Location Plan

**BA/2009/0022/FUL - Left Bank Of River Thurne, Upstream Of Potter Heigham Bridge  
Installation of seven recycled plastic angling platforms**

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## APPENDIX 2

**Broads Authority  
Planning Committee  
6 March 2009  
Agenda Item 8(2) and 8(3)**

### LETTER FROM ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Our ref Mar/PHigh/Planning/23/02/09

Date 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Dear Adrian,

#### **BA/2009/0021/FUL and BA/2009/0022/FUL – Angling platforms on the River Thurne**

Thank you for your email dated 16 February, regarding the current planning applications for the installation of recycled plastic angling platforms at Martham and Potter Heigham.

As you are aware we are hoping to be able to complete these projects before the start of the new coarse fishing season on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009, which will form a significant contribution towards fulfilling our shared Broads Fisheries Action Plan objectives. The additional platforms at Potter Heigham will help to provide alternative facilities for anglers, which will help to take pressure off the Broads Authority 24hour moorings during the busy summer period.

We are therefore extremely surprised that visual amenity concerns were not raised with respect to the use of recycled plastic materials at a pre-application stage, given that the Broads Authority were made aware of our intention to use such materials for these projects as early as September 2007.

The use of timber for these projects has been considered, however we firmly believe that on balance the many advantages of using recycled plastic products for these applications outweigh any subjective visual amenity concerns in these locations. Indeed during extensive consultations as part of the on-going Broadland Flood Alleviation Project, we note that the Broads Society has encouraged the use of recycled plastic products as a more sustainable alternative to timber for a number of years. We are also aware that recycled plastic materials have already been utilised in the Thurne valley.

The proposed dark brown-coloured platforms are low in profile and will be situated flush to the edge of the river, set within the extensively reeded margins at these locations. As such we consider that they will be largely screened from view from most angles, either from the river or the floodbank footpaths. At Potter Heigham in particular, the visual appearance of the platforms should be set in the context of the varied frontages and architectural features of the Thurne Bungalows. The existing timber platforms are also screened by marginal vegetation and will be set far enough

apart from the new platforms not to be visible from most angles as a series of discrete features.

#### **Eastern Area - Icen House**

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Materials sourced from recycled plastic offer a number of performance and health and safety benefits over wood, as highlighted by the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP):

- **Durability** – Expected lifespan of at least four times that of timber, with little visible wear
- **Reduced maintenance costs**
- **Rot and algae proof** – little or no requirement for maintenance, painting or application of preservative compounds
- **Vandal resistant** – surface texture is more resistant to graffiti and resilient to other types of vandalism. Most recycled plastic products are more difficult to ignite than timber.
- **Insect resistant and crack proof** – recycled plastic products will not dry out or crack and are resistant to attack by insects
- **Non-slip** – Recycled plastic deck surfaces are moulded with a rough non-slip surface and are resistant to the growth of algae in damp conditions. Chicken wire or additional textured materials and subsequent on-going maintenance are not required.
- **Splinter-free** – Recycled plastic does not splinter during construction.

In accordance with our policies on sustainable development, environmental protection and the reduction of waste, we believe the use of recycled plastic materials also offers significant environmental benefits, including:

- Unlike timber, recycled plastic materials do not require treatments or preservatives that are potentially harmful to the environment, both in initial processing and on-going maintenance.
- Recycled plastic products do not leach any harmful chemical compounds into water courses or soil.
- The use of recycled plastic demonstrates a commitment to sustainable development by encouraging a market for such materials and diverting waste from going to landfill. It also encourages an awareness amongst the public of a positive outcome from household waste recycling initiatives.

Given the limited remaining design life of the existing timber platforms at both locations and the need to maintain the existing angling access as part of our shared commitments to the Broads Fisheries Action Plan, we would be happy to work with the Broads Authority to help provide appropriate replacements. We would also be happy to work with your colleagues in Planning and Landscape to identify suitable recycled materials that could be utilised for future schemes.

I trust this has answered the matters raised to your satisfaction. If I can be of further help with this, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely

**STEPHEN LANE**

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## **Fisheries Technical Specialist**

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Cc Amanda Elliott, Team Leader Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity  
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