

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

Mr Andrew Alston	Mr Robin Godber	Mr Simon Partridge
Mr Ashley Cato	Mr John Hiskett	Mr Bryan Read
Mr Martyn Davey	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Michael Flett	Mr Philip Pearson	Mr Hugh Taylor
Dr Martin George		Mr John Tibbenham

In Attendance:

Ms Maria Conti – Strategy and Projects Officer
Ms Esmeralda Guds – Administrative Officer
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Ms Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources
Dr John Packman – Chief Executive

Also in attendance:

Prof Jacquie Burgess – Chair, Broads Authority
Rob Wise – Environment Adviser, National Farmers Union
John Newton – Norfolk County Adviser, National Farmers Union

1/1 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies for absence were received from Julian Barnwell, Henry Cator, Barbara Greasley, Peter Jermy, Jennifer Parkhouse, Peter Waters and Anthony Wright.

The Chair welcomed Jacquie Burgess, Chair of the Broads Authority, to the meeting.

1/2 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed members that he would address the issues discussed at the Broads Authority meeting later on in the agenda at the Chief Executive Report.

As agenda item 6, the Broads Plan Review, would be presented in shape of an interactive exercise, the Chairman suggested changing the running order of the agenda and address agenda item 6 after agenda item 10.

1/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

- *Minute 5/11 Chief Executive's Report. Para 4: usage of water-skiing on Breydon Water was minimal should read usage of water-skiing on Breydon Water took place on one occasion.*

1/4 Public Question Time

No questions were raised by members of the public however the Chairman raised the issue of fracking and said that although National Parks were to be protected from fracking, horizontal fracking appeared to be permitted therefore fracking from outside into the National Park would become a possibility.

Philip Pearson (PP) commented that as currently little information was available, it would be better to address the issue when more detail was made obtainable.

1/5 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response taken following discussions at previous meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

In regard to the footpath from Ludham to St Benet's Abbey the Director of Planning and Resources updated members that there would be a meeting next week with the contractor and the landowner to discuss the details of how to complete the works.

Members noted the report.

Agenda Item 1/6 would be dealt with after Agenda 1/10

1/7 Review of Consultative Arrangements: Evaluating Changes to Broads Forum

Members received a report outlining the findings of an audit into the Broads Authority's Consultation Activities and Partnership Provisions undertaken in January 2015.

In particular, the audit examined the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/ Stakeholder Engagement, carried out by the Broads Authority during 2012/13. The audit concluded that all measures had been implemented but that further work was required to assess their effectiveness.

The Director of Planning and Resources sought members' views on the effectiveness of these changes and advised that these would be reported to the Broads Authority as part of the overall response to the audit.

PP enquired how much influence members had when setting the Agenda to which the Director of Planning and Resources responded that having 'Matters to be discussed at the next meeting' as a standing item on the Agenda allowed members to suggest any issues they wish to address. She continued that agenda item 'Parish Issues' offered members a further opportunity to address matters they would like to discuss. Both items had been very effective and resulted in a variety of topics being presented at the meeting. Conversely, 'Public Question Time' a standing agenda item allowing members of the public to raise questions directly with Forum Members, so far had not been used, but the opportunity for them to do so would remain open.

Richard Starling (RS) commented that the meetings were more effective and more democratic than they used to be.

Members noted the audit findings and believed the changes to the Terms of Reference and operation of the Broads Forum to be effective.

1/8 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive presented his report, which summarised the current position of the Authority's strategic priorities.

The Chief Executive updated Members that the Hickling Parish Forum was very successful, well attended and a worthwhile experience which offered a good opportunity to talk about Hickling Broad in much detail.

In relation to navigation charges John Tibbenham (JT) commented that numerous toll payers were displeased with the suggested toll increase and queried how the multiplier was established.

The Chief Executive responded that this year the Authority levied the lowest ever increase of +1.7% across the board. The combination of that decision and a series of pressures including the costs of additional practical work had made this year's decisions on tolls for 2016/17 particularly difficult. He said that the Navigation Committee had recommended an increase in tolls income of 4.5%, to abandon the hazard removal at Dickey Works and to decrease the multiplier for hired motor cruisers from 2.62 to 2.55.

He added that evidence from the Stakeholder Survey suggested that tolls account for around 9% of the total costs of owning a private boat and 11% of the operational costs for the hire fleets.

In regard to the multiplier the Chief Executive said that members who had attended the Tolls Workshop had a good understanding of how the multiplier was conceived and he suspected that part of the explanation for the Navigation Committee's recommendation to reduce the multiplier was the continuing decline in the size of the fleet with a forecast of further reduction of 20-30 boats next year. He continued that in addition a significant gap had

opened up between the equivalent multipliers applied on other waters (1.54 for example on the Thames compared to 2.62 on the Broads in 2015).

In response to JT's comment that the maintenance of Mutford Lock was financed from navigation funds despite not many navigators using the lock, the Chief Executive indicated that the main costs of maintaining the structure were from the endowment that came with the transfer of the Lock and the operational costs were funded from the income from charges and navigation income.

Martin George (MG) highlighted that it was worth reminding that the hire boat industry uses the Broads more hours a year, stirred up sediment, caused erosion to banks and were in general more damaging to the Broads.

The Chief Executive responded that a hire boat multiplier was first introduced in the mid-1970s to fund the development of new moorings and explained that the Authority would need to take into account the contribution of the industry made to maintenance of the system and provision of facilities. In addition the Stakeholders Survey indicated that there was a great variation in the number of weeks boats were hired and that taking into account solely of usage when setting charges would not be appropriate. In addition, as mentioned earlier the Chief Executive indicated that in other parts of the country the multiplier was lower so it was about finding the right balance.

The Chief Executive informed members that the Heritage Lottery Fund bid of £2.6 million had been successful and thanked members for their contribution in achieving this. He pointed out however that receiving the funding did not alleviate the problems from a potential reduction in National Park Grant because most of the funding was devoted to new projects. Officers and members agreed that regular updates to the Broads Forum on how the projects develop would be useful.

The Chairman commented that Jacquie Burgess (JB), the Chairman of the Broads Authority, encouraged more member participation and tried to involve members amongst others through workshops.

He further announced that membership for the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) ended in October, that currently they were recruiting new members and the closing date would be tomorrow, 6 November 2015.

Members noted the report.

1/9 Parish Issues

Michael Flett (MF) congratulated officers and members on a useful and informative Hickling Parish Forum. The Chairman of the Broads Authority added that it was good to see so many members involved and hoped this would continue.

MF mentioned that many unlicensed boats moored at Loddon were spotted and queried whether these would be pursued by the Authority or whether there was anything the Parishes could do to help. Robin Godber (RG) added that this was a matter which was taking place more frequently.

The Chief Executive advised members that the most efficient way to address the issue was to forward details of the vessel to Broads Control where the member of staff on duty would be able to check the details against the Authority's database. He added that in most cases the toll had been paid but the plaque had not been displayed. Although he indicated that currently toll plaques were the most effective way for Rangers to establish whether charges had been paid, he would not rule out the possibility of a more efficient method being made available to them in the future.

In response to what would happen if tolls remained unpaid. The Chief Executive explained that the Authority proceeded through a series of steps including a warning and followed up by letters. Prosecution was the last resort and it was worth noting that many of the late payers were the same individuals from one year to another.

John Lurkins (JL) enquired whether it was possible to determine who was responsible for the poor conditions of the bridge and the footpath at Wherryman's Way as so far nothing had happened to resolve the issue and the situation was worsening.

The Chairman replied that this matter was raised at the Broads Local Access Forum and County Council and BESL had done some work, however this was not fit for purpose. The Director of Planning and Resources added that she would ask the Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer to provide JL with an update.

1/10 Current Issues

Andrew Alston enquired about the suggestion of a meeting held between officers and farmers in the Bure Valley. The Chief Executive responded that the Authority's Chair had had a meeting with some of the landowners in the Bure Valley but that, since the last meeting of the Forum, productive and positive meetings had been held with officers of the National Farmers Union and the Regional Director of the CLA.

RS commented that there was an increase use of imported straw mainly from Poland instead of sedge. He also raised a concern about the management prescription for a site at Barton Fen. A meeting was arranged for the 19 November to discuss the matter. RS said he would follow this up with BA officers after the meeting.

The Head of Strategy and Projects mentioned that the Climate Change Adaption Plan consultation had now closed and that 14 responses to the plan had been received which would go to the Broads Authority on 20 November 2015.

1/6 Broads Plan Review

The Broads Plan was the strategic management plan for the Broads and was subject to regular review. The current Plan was adopted in May 2011 and its review was a Strategic Priority for the Broads Authority in 2015/16. It was anticipated that the revised Plan, which would cover the period 2017-22, would be adopted in March 2017.

A workshop for Broads Authority Members was held on 7 October 2015 to start scoping the strategic direction for the next Plan period. Forum Members were provided with a report which presented the output from that workshop, and were invited to comment on other strategic issues and priorities they felt should be addressed in the next Plan.

Forum Members then undertook a workshop exercise similar to that previously undertaken by Broads Authority members and the results were captured on flip charts.

Following the workshop session members had a discussion on general issues.

RS suggested that it would be helpful for Natural England and the Environment Agency to attend a Broads Forum meeting to give members the opportunity to meet with them. The Chief Executive agreed that for NE and EA to join the discussions at Broads Forum would be useful and a good idea.

Andrew Alston (AA) commented that it was his perception that there was a need to improve communication between the Authority and landowners/ farmers to which the Head of Strategy and Projects responded that the landowners' opinions were sought but the Authority did not always receive any feedback. He stressed the importance of involvement from both parties and that the Authority currently interacted with approximately 25 landowners and was making progress. He welcomed any suggestions that AA might have for improving communication between the Authority and farmers

1/11 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

No items were proposed as items of urgent business.

1/12 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The Chairman would report to the Broads Authority meeting on the various issues discussed by the Forum.

1/13 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

The Chairman encouraged members to contact officers with any suggestions for future agenda items, especially if they were prepared to present it themselves.

1/14 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 4 February 2016 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting concluded at

4.45 pm

Chairman