

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Olly Barnes	Mrs Dawn Hatton,
Mr Louis Baugh	Mr George Saunders
Miss Liz Brooks	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Tony Brown	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Richard Webb
Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Chris Yardley
Mr Alec Hartley	

In Attendance

Ms Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer
Mr Mark King - Waterways and Recreation Officer
Ms Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources
Ms Karen Sayer - Design and Information Supervisor

Also In Attendance

Dr Andy Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council
Mr Martin Sullivan – Chair, Norfolk Local Access Forum

3/1 To receive apologies for absence and welcome new and returning members

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Nick Dennis, Mrs Lana Hempsall, Dr Peter Mason, Mr Martin Symons and Mr Peter Warner

New members Mrs Dawn Hatton and Mr Richard Webb, and the Chairman of Norfolk Local Access Forum, Mr Martin Sullivan were welcomed to the meeting. Introductions were made.

3/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 3/4 (1) Ludham Footpath

Work is being completed on the fence line around the field and signage wording agreement is being sought. The Broads Authority would include the path on their mowing regime. It was noted that the old BESL site is used by the Internal Drainage Board. There is currently no planning permission for car parking at the site.

(2) Minute 2/4 (2) How Hill Footpath

Natural England and provided formal agreement that a full Habitats Regulation Assessment was not needed. As part of the Integrated Access Strategy a site visit had taken place to assess what work would be needed.

(3) Minutes 1/6 Parish Council Issues – Herringfleet Car Park

A second site visit had been made to Herringfleet car park. It was confirmed that all pig items had been removed and the site was clear of obstructions. Local members of the public are still not happy about the parking situation, but it was confirmed that as this is Open Access land, which does not allow for car access, the decision regarding parking at the site lay with the landowner. The locked gate to the bridleway has been reported to Suffolk County Council.

(4) Minute 2/7 (2) Martham Footpath Diversion

The Forum had been consulted by Norfolk County Council about the Martham footpath diversion. A 'holding' response had been submitted prior to completion of the Staithes Research report being compiled by Tom Williamson of UEA.

3/4 Norfolk County Council update

(1) Wherryman's Way, Hardley Flood

A meeting had taken place between Norfolk County Council (NCC), the Broads Authority (BA), the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) to discuss an approach to the Wherryman's Way at Hardley Flood. A meeting had also taken place with local Parish Councils and District Councils and a public meeting had been held. It was confirmed that the EA did not maintain the riverbank along this footpath. Closure of the footpath was currently in place for the section where the riverbank is not maintained. The Wherryman's Way had been diverted.

(2) Coastal Access – Stretch 2 Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling

Dr Andy Hutcheson gave a presentation updating the Forum on progress of the Coastal Access Path along Stretch 2 from Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling which included a section within the Broads Authority executive area. It was confirmed that Stretch 1 (Weybourne to Sea Palling) had been opened in

December 2014 and some circular walks had been created off this, adding benefit to the local economy. Stretch 3 is existing coastal path so there would not be major changes, but roll-back discussions with landowners were ongoing. Stretch 4 from Hunstanton to Kings Lynn would route through Snettersham and Sandringham.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- The principle was to keep as close to the coast as possible when choosing routes. Natural England was the body responsible for establishing the routes and these had to be signed off by the Secretary of State. Norfolk County Council was then given responsibility to carry out works and manage the resulting paths.
- Enhancements: This included creating 20 circular walk options via Coastal Communities funding stream Explore More Coast opened up huge potential for marketing and sharing good practice and opportunities.
- It was noted that it was legally permissible to walk in cropped fields with roll-back and landowners were aware of the provision.
- National Trail signage, branded as National Coast Path, would be used using NE quality standards.
- The Norfolk Coast Path sections were funded 75% by NE and 25% by NCC.
- Various partners had been consulted including the Ramblers. Great Yarmouth Borough Council had discussed signage in parts of the path going through the conservation area.
- Timescales: Work would start on the infrastructure for Stage 2 after Easter and it was hoped to open the path on 24 October 2016 to coincide with the 30th Anniversary of Norfolk Trails.
- Sea Palling to Winterton: Not all the path's route was behind the dunes, some went onto the dunes. Certain mitigation measures would be put in place to ensure the terns were protected. Closeness of housing had meant consultation took place with home owners. The route had now been signed off. Plans were available on the NE website. The National Trust were happy with the section at Horsey.

(3) Broadland Way

This was part of the Green Infrastructure Plan. No funding was in place yet, but it still remained a high priority for NCC.

3/5 River Wensum Strategy update

Successful public and internal consultations had helped to identify projects themed around land access, recreational boating, environmental enhancements and

management of the riverside. Provision for small unpowered boats (moorings, slipways, launches) was also highlighted as a priority.

An action plan had been drafted and projects were being worked up for costing. Norwich City Council and the Norwich Society both approved the ideas.

The plan was due to go out to consultation but had to wait until after election purdah.

Partners would be covering different aspects of the action plan as follows: Norwich City Council 'access and management liaison', BA 'leisure', NE 'environment'.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

- Funding would come from CIL for green infrastructure and HLF was also being looked at.
- Lack of facilities (toilets, waste disposal etc.) and developer encroachment made it difficult for certain user groups. The Forum agreed this was an important consideration.
- The list of proposed projects would come to the Forum for discussion and comment.
- People would like to be able to access Whitlingham Country Park from Norwich by foot. This was currently dependent on developers. Generation Park Norwich was unfortunately on hold at the moment due to funding issues.
- The Forum expressed support for the project and agreed to submit a statement to Norwich City council.

3/6 Draft Integrated Access Strategy Action Plan

The SWRO gave a presentation showing the results of the Forum workshop activity that took place at the last meeting to review and prioritise actions in the Integrated Access Strategy. The following themes came forward strongly: Canoe access, land access, extension of the water space, local access hubs, River Wensum Strategy, moorings, earth floodbank works, extension of Broads cycling offer, railway stations/public transport, disabled access 'access for all', information and angling.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

- The canoeing section should include small craft.
- Facilities, toilets and refuse collections, were a central Government cuts led issue and were the responsibility of Councils not the Broads Authority, but lobbying would continue.
- Horse riding was included in the 'access for all'/multi-use section.
- The term 'access for all' rather than 'disabled access' was preferred.

- Trailer facility provision not just car parking was important.
- The Forum agreed that the highlighted themes reflected the workshop results.
- It was noted that currently the Broads Plan is under review and the first draft is out for consultation. The access chapter had been informed by the work of the Forum. Members were thanked for their work towards this end.

3/7 Setting the First Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

The Government is committed to changing attitudes towards walking and cycling and were therefore investing in a strategy to provide infrastructure and capital works. The LAF conference had discussed the strategy plans and were currently awaiting a consultation document, due before the next Forum meeting.

Currently the strategy was very urban centred. National Parks England would be emphasising the importance of inclusion of rural cycling with links to urban areas in their response. Responses were being sought from LAFs prior to the official consultation start date.

As the consultation was happening before the next Forum meeting it was agreed that the SWRO and Chairman would write a letter on behalf of the Broads Local Access Forum stressing the importance of rural cycling and the benefits to health and wellbeing, and tourism and the economy, stressing that a low tech rather than over-engineered solutions were required for more rural areas. Funding feasibility studies and phased, realistic timescales were also key to successful projects.

Norfolk County Council were about to go to consultation on their own cycling and walking action plan (7th March to 19th April) and would be working with District Councils and the BA to investigate potential investment/funding from government.

Highways England has £100million available for improvements alongside road networks and a Department for Transport competition launch for the Sustainable Travel Transition Year Fund had a 4-week deadline for bids. These short periods of run-in time highlighted the need to have 'off the shelf' project ideas ready for such potential funding.

3/8 'Access All Areas'

Ms Karen Sayer, Design and Information Supervisor, Broads Authority updated the Forum on a video to be produced by Geocast TV 'Access All Areas' to be filmed at 6-7 locations in the Broads with water and land access and close to the city (to highlight the only National Park with a city aspect). The video would be available for viewing on the Broads Authority website.

Various locations had been selected for potential inclusion: Whitlingham, Barton Broad boardwalk, Broads Tours, Wroxham Barns, Nancy Oldfield Trust, Waterside, Rollesby 'wheelie boats', Fairhaven Gardens. Suggestions for other locations were welcome.

The Forum offered the following additional suggestions:

Oulton Broad Sailability and Waveney Stardust, Landbased bird watching e.g. at Hickling or Strumpshaw, disabled fishing platforms (although filming coincided with the closed fishing season), wheelie-boats for pike anglers.

3/9 Boudica Way by Powerchair

Mr George Saunders gave a presentation on the disabled access audit he and Martin Symons had carried out using powerchairs on the Boudica Way.

The audit highlighted many relatively cheap alterations that could be made to avoid the many detours they had to undertake to get around certain sections that were not accessible due to stiles, gates that were too narrow and other obstructions. Some bridges were found to be accessible and others could be if they had ramps added to the ends rather than steps; some however were just too narrow and detours had to be made.

They were also able to provide information about unpredictable surface issues that users may encounter (e.g. ploughed tramlines in fields, weather condition changes) and where detours could be taken to get around such obstacles if they arose.

Busy main roads and crossings highlighted sections of the path where it would be advisable to have a companion or an alternative exit strategy.

At some sections of the audit it appeared that the barriers were insurmountable but with better maps and creative detours planned the audit was able to continue.

The audit highlighted some relatively cheap works that have since been carried out to improve the path for powerchair users, coming in at <£2k. Information has also been provided to highlight the Boudica Way as a recreational facility for all.

Norfolk County Council has been pleased to support the audit and was planning on doing more. It highlighted the benefits of partnership working, volunteering and how relatively minor works can make huge improvements to access on public paths.

3/10 Hoveton and Wroxham Station Improvements

Ms Andrea Long, Director of Planning and Resources, Broads Authority updated the Forum on the issue of Hoveton Riverside Park regarding flooding and maintenance.

The Park linked paths to and from the railway station, to the Broads Authority Information Centre and along the riverside. Moorings along the Hoveton viaduct also linked to the Park. Cycle hire would also soon be available near to the TIC. The Hoveton Riverside Park was unfortunately sinking and was now at a lower level than the river. Investment was needed but it would take a large amount to fix the problem successfully and there was currently no BA budget available.

There was not an easy solution available for the site. Responsibility for much of the area lay with the parish council, but the Broads Authority may be able to assist with funding application bids that the parish council could be eligible for that the BA, as a public body, was not able to apply for. The BA would also help with the 'look' of the

area with maintenance, tidying up using volunteers prior to the start of the season and the opening of the TIC.

3/11 Broads Forum updates

Unfortunately Martin George had had to resign from the Broads Forum due to ill health. His invaluable contribution would be missed.

The following items were discussed at the last Broads Forum:

- (1) Review of waste facilities
- (2) Broads Local Plan and Broads Plan consultations
- (3) Draft action plan for sustainable tourism. Review for European Charter for Tourism in protected areas
- (4) First stage success of Landscape Partnership Scheme Heritage Lottery Fund bid
- (5) Funding for National Parks and AONBs. Defra grant was set and would increase 1.7% year on year for 4 years. It was a relief to find there would be no further cuts to National Park funding
- (6) Environment Agency water quality data – pressure on them to make the data more accessible

3/12 To receive any other items of urgent business

A request was made by Mr Ray Walpole to include the need for ferries and help for access in the Broads in the revised Broads Plan. The importance of strategic links between Norfolk and Suffolk also needed highlighting.

A request was made by Mr Chris Yardley to have a report on works planned, and being carried out, at Hickling Broad. An update on the Stage 1 proposals for the future and how these would impact on small craft were of particular concern. It was agreed to include an update in the June meeting.

3/13 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.00pm.

Chairman