

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013

Present:

Prof Richard Card (Chairman)

Mr Andrew Alston	Miss Janet Gilmour	Ms Jennifer Parkhouse
Dr Keith Bacon	Mr John Hiskett	Mr Simon Partridge
Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr Brian Holt	Mr Bryan Read
Mr Henry Cator	Mr Peter Jermy	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Mike Flett	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Charles Swan
Dr Martin George	Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Pete Waters
Mr Tony Gibbons	Dr Philip Pearson	Mr Anthony Wright

In Attendance:

Ms H Ayers – Administrative Officer
Mr W Burchnall – Project Manager
Mr A Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer
Mr S Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Mrs A Long – Director of Planning & Resources
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance & Executive Assistant
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Ms T Wakelin – Director of Operations
Mr R Wilson – Waterways and Recreation Officer

2/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from, Mr A Cato, Mr M Davey, Mr M Evans and Ms B Greasley.

2/2 Chairman's Announcements:

The Chairman advised that since the last Forum, one Broads Authority meeting had taken place. It was reported that at the meeting on the 20 September, members received a progress report on the Authority's Education Strategy where members noted the Forum's concerns that a lack of funds (especially in terms of transportation) could prevent families and school parties from making the most of the Broads. To address this, members were advised that the UK National Parks had been working to secure discounts with travel companies and a member suggested that there were other potential sources to fund transportation. The Volunteering Strategy was noted by members as being on-target. Martin George's matter which was raised as urgent business at the July Forum was taken to the 20 September meeting. In addition, the Broads Authority discussed and approved the new Navigation Committee appointments process. Authority members also agreed to fund a joint Authority and Forum member site visit.

Forum members noted that all main and substitute members of the Forum had been confirmed and all main member profiles had been received bar one. Once it was received the profiles would be published on the Authority's website.

2/3 Public Question Time

The Forum received its first public question, from Ray Walpole concerning how the Broads Authority should assist to improve green transport links to Whitlingham Country Park. The question (Appendix 1) was read out and discussed.

The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer advised that the Authority was actively involved in improving transport links and as a member of the Wensum River Parkway Partnership had worked with Norwich City Council and Norwich Heart. Members noted that the Authority's Planners worked with housing developers under a Section 106 Agreement as to how to deliver the transport links (which were subject to a planning application with the council) at the River Wensum housing development's frontage. The Authority had also investigated demasting and visitor moorings at this location. Members were also advised that the river bus stop would not be compromised by the new development and there was a possibility that the ferry service could be reinstated subject to funding.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman asserted that the Authority should champion this cause for members of the public without access to a car. It was recognised that it was not the responsibility of the Authority to provide the links but the Authority could represent this cause to the relevant councils. Members noted that Sustrans had made £1.9m available for Norwich cycle paths. However, the funding was no longer available. The Head of Strategy and Projects advised that the Whitlingham Charitable Trust was delighted with the predicted additional visitors anticipated from the development plans and was conscious that the increased traffic would need to be managed. However, the Trust was concerned where funding for the additional resource to provide appropriate support would come from and advised that the current funding sources were South Norfolk District Council and the Whitlingham Park car parks. It was noted that Norwich City Council and Broadland District Council did not provide funding.

The Director of Planning and Resources advised that GNDP had funding in place for green infrastructure projects in the area. With the proposal for the bridge between the Utilities and Deal Ground sites there may be potential to include Whitlingham Park as part of the wider green infrastructure for the area if this was seen as a desirable outcome for the GNDP partners. Members also noted that there was an SDF application for a ferry crossing at Thorpe Mashas to Whitlingham Park which would receive funding if consents were granted by the Authority and Network Rail. A member enquired whether additional river bus services could be timetabled to which officers advised that the Authority was not in a position to support a private enterprise however the

rural development programme led to CLLD and could potentially assist with this. An existing route which traverses the bridge to Postwick was suggested (and required some improvements) as another option. Officers indicated that this option had some potential but was not a particularly safe route.

The Chairman summarised the Forum's response to the question posed as follows:

Members agreed with the view that individuals without access to a car should not be deterred from accessing Whitlingham Country Park. A number of issues were identified around funding, resource and responsibility and members encouraged the Broads Authority to work with all the relevant local authorities to fund such initiatives. Alternative solutions were discussed, such as additional river boat services and the River Yare bridge crossing; although reservations existed on the level of involvement the Authority could have with a commercial venture and whether the bridge crossing idea would be safe and viable. Overall, funding represented the greatest barrier to addressing the concerns raised in this public question.

2/4 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2013

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following changes:

- **Page 11: Paragraph 3, third sentence.** *“Another member advised that 90% of children at the deprived St.John’s RA VC Infant School had not been out on the water of the Broads “*

Should read;

“Another member advised that 90% of children at the St.John’s RA VC Infant School had not been out on the water of the Broads “

- **Page 13: Last bullet point.** *“Fencutter Effectiveness”*

Should read;

“Weedcutter Effectiveness”

2/5 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussions at Previous Meetings

A report was received that provided members with a summary of progress on matters previously discussed by the Forum.

The Director of Planning and Resources confirmed that the ferry at Waveney River Centre was in operation and that a planning application had been approved for the ferry's mooring posts.

The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer advised members that the permissive path at St. Benet's Abbey was not yet open subject to agreement being reached by three landowners. It was hoped that agreement could be reached before Christmas.

2/6 Initial Consultation on the Draft Strategic Priorities for 2014/15

Members received a report which outlined the Authority's draft objectives, projects and key milestones to meet its strategic priorities for 2014/15. The Chief Executive advised that the current status for the majority of priorities was 'green' as per the table in Appendix 1. He advised that the Authority wished to remain ambitious however, was wary to commit to too much in light of a potential cut in National Park funding and stated that in view of resource constraints, would focus on the critical deliverables.

One member pressed that the Authority should forge more partnerships with organisations and suggested that increased partnership working could prevent the closure (to the public) of listed buildings such as Berney Arms Wind Mill. He stressed the mill was an iconic building that should be re-opened.

Another member stated that climate change should be a top priority and that nearly all facets that made-up the Broads hung on the climate and water levels. This was acknowledged by the Chairman as already being in the Broads Plan; however, the member pressed for it to be higher on the Authority's list of priorities.

Members also considered that the 'load' of tourism should be more evenly spread throughout the Broads' catchment. The Chief Executive stated that significant income was generated from tourism in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and in light of the STEP funding source that was soon to cease, alternatives would need to be sought to support this industry. He also advised of recent progress on this front where agreements had been reached for English National Parks to work in closer partnership with Visit England and Visit Britain to promote these destinations within the UK and further afield. Members recognised the huge potential the Broads had to the tourism industry. However members advised that the evidence base for this needed to be robust and compatible with biodiversity action plans and measures, and carefully phased to match any budget constraints.

Members concerned with the threat to grazing marshes being converted to arable land discussed whether it was too late to prevent grazing marshes from being put under the plough now the ESA scheme was coming to an end. Members viewed it as not being too late and suggested they submit their views on Defra's website before 28 November. Other members suggested Broads' MPs should take this matter up as a priority. Another member stated the Authority played a pivotal role to work with Natural England to understand water quality and how this was impacted by marshland under the Water Framework Directive. Other members reported that other schemes existed to replace ESA. The Chairman enquired whether this should be one of the

Authority's objectives which was supported by several members. Other members highlighted that some marshland concealed subtle archaeology which would be lost if went under the plough and as such recommended full environmental impact assessments were performed on sites potentially threatened by conversion to arable.

The Chief Executive stated how the Catchment Partnership project would be a valuable mechanism to understand how to effectively manage the area for the benefit of people and wildlife. One member viewed the Catchment Partnership as anti-farming and another stressed how vital it was that conservationists and farmers forged and maintained successful trusting partnerships.

A member commended the report but queried whether the date in Section 4.4 should read 2030 rather than 2013, to which officers confirmed 2030 was the correct target date.

The Chairman summarised the Forum's suggestions for Strategic Priorities for 2014/15. These were:

- a. Development of Partnership Working in general, with the following areas specifically mentioned:
 - (i) Provision of access and interpretation for historic buildings.
 - (ii) More emphasis on tourism.
 - (iii) The re-generation of the Southern Broads.
 - (iv) Evidence based impact analysis of recreation in relation to the conservation of the Broads.
- b. A higher priority towards understanding the effects of climate change.
- c. To determine an approach to enable protection for the special qualities of the Broads and in particular the potential loss of grazing marsh due to the demise of ESA and its resulting impact on water quality and conservation.
- d. To harmonise the tensions between farming and conservation interests.

2/7 Canoe Trails Report and Update on Canoe Launch at Ellingham Sluice

Members received a report that set out the progress made on the development of canoe trails in the Broads to-date. Members were advised that the trails were developed from the IAS (Integrated Access Strategy) which linked people with the land and waterways. In developing the trails officers met with the canoe hire network and researched existing trails such as Great Glen canoe trail and the Blurb. Officers developed trails no lower than Acle and with low tidal fluctuations in order to offer accessible, family-

friendly, sustainable and safe canoeing. In addition, the trails offered the opportunity to get close to Broads' wildlife. Members were given a brief overview of the lifecycle to develop a trail from the initial idea for a trail route to the GIS mapping. Officers advised that the maps also provided users with safety and invasive species information. The trails developed to-date had been delivered on time, budget and specification.

Members were advised that additional trails were being researched (for example, in the Upper Thurne and Southern areas) and would be publicised at next year's outdoor festival. It was also noted that the Authority worked with Canoe England and rowers to ensure cross compliance.

In addition, members were provided with an update on the Upper Waveney Canoe Trail, where officers worked in partnership with the EA and a local landowner to provide a canoe launch point downstream of Ellingham Sluice. The landowner had agreed in principle to the project proceeding and officers awaited a formal agreement. After the project is finished, the structure would be maintained by the Waveney River Trust.

Members were advised that the trails were available via the www.enjoythebroads.com website and via a canoeing book which was soon to be published. The Authority viewed these trails as very beneficial pieces of work that both brought benefits to tourism and enabled relationships to be built with organisations such as Canoe England who were keen to promote the Broads as a premier family canoe destination. Canoe England had plans to reflect this in their quarterly magazine.

Members noted the contents of the report.

2/8 Update on Non-Native Species Projects in the Broads

Members received a report which gave an overview of work carried-out on non-native species in the Broads. The Authority's Project Manager advised that raising awareness was key to tackling this issue. A recent public survey indicated that 92% of respondents could identify the killer shrimp as a problem species in the Broads. Members noted that there were a number of mechanisms used to address such species, which included, working with EA and Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative (NNSI). Other measures included signage, posters, the 'Check, Clean, Dry' initiative, awareness raising via shows/festivals, communications via various media channels, bio-security advice, and partner workshops.

Members enquired what impact these measures had on the movement of non-native species to which officers advised that it slowed the predicted spread. Other members were pleased that Floating Pennywort had been removed from the catchment, however, raised concern that some forms of non-native species would be impossible to eliminate altogether. He asserted that in some locations, Himalayan Balsam had colonized whole reed beds, which had caused the beds to suffer degradation. The Project Manager advised that Himalayan Balsam needed to be controlled at the top of the

catchment due to the nature of its dispersal of seeds. He also advised that additional bio-control methods (such as 'rust' treatments and Leaf Mining Weevils) could be available in approximately five years following successful trials. Members were advised that funding existed to research and control invasive species, so efforts to slow the spread of these would continue.

Another member queried whether the Authority operated a campaign to control mink to which officers advised a survey was currently being carried out to provide an indication of mink numbers. The same member asked whether a presentation could be given to the Forum with regard to mink.

Members noted the contents of the report.

2/9 Chief Executive's Report

Members received a report which detailed the recent activities of the Broads Authority in respect of a number of important projects and events. The Chief Executive advised that the report provided an update on the agri-environment scheme and the value of grass marsh in Broadland.

One member queried whether the Authority had provided any comment on the proposed development of ten thousand new homes in the Broadland area. The member hoped that the Authority had advised relevant parties that it had a strong interest in the current water flows being maintained. He also stressed how much valuable insight had been gleaned from the ESA scheme and warned that habitats would be lost if marshland was put under the plough and advised that such habitats were home to some 63 submerged water plant species and 97 other species on the edges of dykes. He also stated that conversion to arable would mean a lowering of dykes' water levels; the consequences of which would be potentially disastrous. The Director of Planning and Resources advised that the Authority did state its concerns over water quality and quantity as well as potential impacts on recreation and visitors.

One member queried whether water restrictions would potentially be imposed in future and considered 105 litres per person would be reasonable.

Another member queried whether the planned shift of responsibility of Mutford Lock to the Authority (as a result of a Harbour Revision Order) would impact the free quay. The Chief Executive advised that this would not alter the current quay arrangements. A member advised that the current Mutford Lock Harbour Revision Order was not listed on the Marine Management website. The Chief Executive advised that he would look into this and provide an update.

Members noted the contents of the report.

2/10 Parish Issues

Local community members were requested to report any relevant parish issues for this standing item.

A member reported on the recent Authority hosted Bure and Ant Parish Forum held on 18 September at Ludham Village Hall. He advised members that the meeting was an informal interactive pilot and was based on the Ranger team area communities. Members and Authority employees were on-hand throughout to assist with enquiries and discussions. Towards the end of the meeting a question and answer session was held where there was a good exchange of views and engagement with officers.

The objective of the meeting was to increase awareness by local communities of the Broads Authority responsibilities and issues. It also provided an opportunity for two-way engagement.

The member reported that the pilot event ran very well and hoped that members of the Broads Local Access Forum would be able to attend future parish forum meetings as the session proved to be very informative. Approximately 60 people attended from various nearby parishes.

Another member enquired whether the river downstream of Loddon could be dredged, to which the Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer advised that subject to successful piling removal trials performed by BESL at the south bank, this stretch's piling would be removed and then dredged. He also advised that the EA trials at this location (to drive in piles) was successful; however the precise details for the depth the piles should be driven to had not yet been determined. Members noted that a planning permission would be required before work could proceed on the remainder of the piles. A member requested that the Forum should receive a report at a future meeting on this subject.

2/11 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

2/12 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The Chairman confirmed he would raise the following items to the next Broads Authority meeting:

- Strategic priorities raised by Forum members at this meeting
- Public question raised by Ray Walpole at this meeting

2/13 To note the date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 February 2014 at 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2.00pm.

2/14 Matters to be discussed at future meetings

The following matters were noted for discussion at future meetings:

- Piling conditions
- The impact of otters on the ecosystem: fish in Wroxham especially
- Dualling of Acle Straight
- Turntide Jetty
- Breydon Water Ski Trial
- Southern Broads (especially volume impact of Caldecott Yard on all aspects of Oulton Broad)
- Community wildlife project on Rivers Bure and Ant: a presentation and report by (non-BA) project worker

Broads Forum – 07 November 2013

Public Question – Ray Walpole:

“In view of the winding-up of the Greater Norwich Partnership, how should the Broads Authority champion efforts to improve facilities for Greater Norwich residents and tourists, who are not car-owners, to make use of "their country park" at Whitlingham? E.g. divert the City Centre/County Hall bus service to Whitlingham Visitor Centre at week-ends, extend Wensum River Pathway to Whitlingham Park, re-instate the ferry crossing from Thorpe Marshes to the Park at week-ends from B.A's boatyard.”