

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2012

Present

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr David Broad	Mr Peter Medhurst
Mr Charles Swan	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Chris Yardley	Mr Robin Buxton
Mr Gary Simons	Mr Stephen Read
Mr George Saunders	Mr Tony Howes
Mr Louis Baugh	Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies
Mr Mike Flett	Mrs Jo Lester
Ms Liz Brooks	

In Attendance

Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Mr Russell Wilson – Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Miss Jo Eames – Administrative Officer

Also in Attendance

Mr Alan Carr – Head of Tourism, Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Ms Sarah Abercrombie – Local Access Forum Co-ordinator, Norfolk County Council

2/1 Great Yarmouth Tourism

Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Head of Tourism gave a presentation to the Forum regarding tourism in the Great Yarmouth area, starting with a brief history from its beginnings as a popular seaside resort in the 1800s to its decline as a tourist destination in the 1980s. In the 1990s, in a bid to encourage visitors back to Great Yarmouth, the Borough Council secured funding to re-landscape the sea front. Tourism is now worth £½ billion to the local economy.

Following his presentation the Head of Tourism responded to members' questions, reporting that:

- Many of the visitors to Great Yarmouth come because of its appeal as a beach resort – however we are making gradual progress to encourage our visitors to explore a wider area and a greater range of activities.

- Great Yarmouth Borough Council included in its tourism brochure a double page spread on “Countryside & the Norfolk Broads” and a “Broads Village Guide”.
- We are aware that if we are to attract European visitors we must place greater emphasis on countryside or heritage activities including the Maritime Festival.
- Around ten years ago the Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority produced a new Short Breaks brochure based around Countryside/Heritage themes in the Great Yarmouth area. The brochure failed to generate sufficient business to make it viable and was therefore discontinued after two or three years.
- It was clear that it was going to take more than a brochure to move the perception of Great Yarmouth away from merely being a ‘bucket & spade’ resort.
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council was currently talking with rail companies to explore the options to increase rail visitors to Great Yarmouth.
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council through the Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority public/private partnership needed focus its marketing activities into projects that offered the greatest return for its investment, thus increasing the value of tourism to the local economy

Members made the following points:

- Advertising visits to see the seals at Horsey or promoting places for angling would encourage different types of visitors to come to the Great Yarmouth area at different times of the year, therefore extending the existing tourist season.
- Developing facilities on the 750 metres of quay to enable boaters to stop in Great Yarmouth could be considered to increase tourism.
- Promoting Great Yarmouth as a gateway to the Broads could be a way of encouraging European visitors to the area for more than just the Maritime Festival.
- Encouraging better links between Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the Broads Authority to increase partnership working would be advantageous.
- Exploring opportunities that linked public transport with holiday resorts to enable visitors to discover other places of interest in the area was achievable.

2/2 Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

Keith Bacon, Louis Baugh, Mike Flett, Robin Buxton and David Broad declared interests in a number of agenda items (see Appendix 1 for details).

2/3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to Item 1/10, paragraph 4:

'The SWRO confirmed that there was some capacity to do this on a single promoted walk, but it would not be possible to delay the cutting of the whole 30km.'

2/4 Points of Information Arising from the Minutes

(1) Minute 1/3: Membership

The SWRO reported that the Head of Governance and Executive Assistant had confirmed that any increase in the membership of the Forum should be addressed as part of the Authority's review of consultative arrangements. The Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2002 only allowed for a maximum of three members of the Forum to be members of a Local Authority (including a member of the National Park family). Therefore only two additional members could be appointed over the one existing such member appointed to the Forum, should this be determined as advisable during the Authority's review of consultative arrangements.

The SWRO therefore agreed to formally respond to the Head of Governance and Executive Assistant stating that members felt that an increase in the Forum's membership should be taken into consideration during the review.

(2) Minute 1/5: Huddle

The SWRO reported that it would not be possible for the Forum's Administrative Officer to join Huddle on behalf of the Forum.

(3) Minute 1/8/2: Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review

Charles Swan reported that now the ferry from Carlton Marshes to the Waveney River Centre had been established an early morning walk had been organised for Sunday 29 April. It would commence at 5.30 a.m. and would finish with breakfast at the Waveney House Hotel. Anyone wanting to take part in the walk should contact Suffolk Wildlife Trust via the Carlton Marshes Education Centre.

(4) **Minute 1/9: Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Update**

The SWRO reported that the Authority and Norfolk County Council would need to discuss the future of the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan as part of the Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2017.

Norfolk County Council's Local Access Forum (LAF) Coordinator confirmed that originally Norfolk County Council was going to merge the Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan with the Transport Plan. The SWRO stated that the Authority would be discussing this as a possibility with Norfolk County Council.

(5) **Minute 1/11: Memorial Bench for Laurie Ritchie Update**

The SWRO reported that the Director of Operations had confirmed that there was not currently any furniture planned to be included within the St Benet's Abbey Project, and that the Project was still awaiting agreement from the tenant farmer. However, should the position change the Authority would seek to incorporate a plaque as requested by the Forum. The SWRO confirmed that he would ensure that should the opportunity arise a plaque be considered.

(6) **Minute 1/14: Access to St Benet's Abbey**

The SWRO reported that he and the WRO were in the process of organising a meeting with the relevant interested parties to discuss a way forward regarding access to St Benet's Abbey. Louis Baugh agreed to be involved in those discussions. The SWRO confirmed that he would update the Forum on the outcome of the meeting.

2/5 GIS Mapping Systems

The WRO gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the use of GIS as a tool to prioritise the projects within the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which would then inform the Integrated Access Strategy.

The Forum felt that the GIS software was also a good tool for identifying footpath problems.

The SWRO agreed, stating that the software could be used to record the costs of maintenance or replacement of footpath furniture, surfacing, etc.

The Head of Strategy and Projects confirmed that through STEP funding it would be possible to develop a mobile phone package that linked to a mapping system. This could then be used to take photographs of footpath furniture needing maintenance or replacing, which could be uploaded via WiFi onto a mapping system. The only problem would be that local authorities might not have the funds available to mend or replace the footpath furniture.

George Saunders reported that Phototrails, which was already available, combined mapped trails with photographs of potential hazards and details on surfaces, gradients, facilities, etc, and agreed to forward the link to the Phototrails website to the Head of Strategy and Projects.

The Forum questioned whether it would be possible for the WRO to provide members with a digitised copy of the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan's project routes. The WRO stated that due to licensing issues, the GIS software not being particularly user friendly and the large amount of historic footpath information the Authority had it had not been possible to do so.

2/6 Paths for Communities

The SWRO provided the Forum with a summary of a new grant scheme being run by Natural England which sought to encourage and enable local communities to work with landowners to develop and enhance local public paths to create a network with more appeal to visitors and tourists that would contribute to the rural economy through better support for local services.

Members noted that the funding for the new grant scheme was being sourced through the Rural Development Programme, which would run for two years. As the new scheme would encourage community involvement it would send a strong message to Defra, which should be considered when the next Rural Development Programme was being developed.

The SWRO confirmed that the £1m was the total yearly national grant and that Natural England was therefore keen to receive small scale bids of under £10,000.

The Forum noted that there was only a small window of opportunity for the submission of bids for this year. Therefore communities with projects that had already been developed would be in a better position to apply for funding than those communities that would need time to progress projects.

The SWRO stated that the Authority, in partnership with communities, would need to develop ambitious, costed, action plans from projects already identified in the Authority's work programme to apply for funding from next year's scheme.

The Forum suggested that parish councils could be classed as communities.

The Forum felt that as funding from the new scheme was granted retrospectively projects in communities working in partnership with the Authority had an advantage as they would have the resources to pay for projects straight away.

The Head of Strategy and Projects stated that if the Forum felt that it was likely that the retrospectiveness of the new scheme would prevent community projects from being progressed, the Authority would explore the issue further.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted and that W3, W4, Y5, B3, B5 and AT9 from the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan be considered by the Authority as possible community partnership projects.

2/7 Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Update

The SWRO gave a presentation to the Forum regarding the Authority's suggested prioritisation of the projects identified in the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan and sought members comments.

Of the 16 projects given a high prioritisation the Forum agreed with 15 of the suggestions, requesting that one project be changed from a high to a low priority.

Of the 12 projects given a medium prioritisation the Forum agreed with 11 of the suggestions, requesting that one project be changed from a medium to a high priority.

Of the 15 projects given a low prioritisation the Forum agreed with 13 of the suggestions, requesting that two projects be changed from low to medium priorities.

The Forum congratulated the SWRO and the RWO on a very clear and valuable presentation. Members appreciated being given the opportunity to be involved in the project prioritisation, and felt that the process had enabled footpaths to be logged that might have otherwise been lost.

The WRO agreed to forward the presentation to the Forum.

The SWRO stated that the intention was to update the Rights of Way Improvement Plan on a regular basis and that at the next meeting he would be seeking members' comments on the prioritisation of the high priority projects.

2/8 National Local Access Forum Conference Feedback

Keith Bacon reported that he had attended the conference held in Newcastle and although he did not feel that overall it was a very good conference, he found both the Defra structure review and networking with other LAF members useful.

During the conference 'Paths for Communities' was discussed, as was Huddle and Green Infrastructure.

The continuation of the regional co-ordinators for a further year was also confirmed at the conference.

2/9 Broads Outdoors Festival

The WRO reported that this year's Outdoors Festival would be taking place from 5-20 May 2012. It would be launched at Whitlingham Country Park on Saturday 5 May and would be rounded off with the Green Boat and Tourism Show at Salhouse Broad on Sunday 20 May. The details of all the events taking place were available on the Outdoors Festival's website <http://www.outdoorsfestival.co.uk/>. A link to which could be found on the enjoythebroads.com website.

2/10 Broads Forum Update

Peter Medhurst reported that as the Chair of the Broads Forum had resigned the Authority's Chairman took the meeting held on 9 February 2012. The items discussed included a presentation on climate change and the continuation of the wakeboarding trial. Mr Medhurst felt that it had been a very positive meeting, with increased co-operation between Broads Forum members and the Authority.

2/11 Any Other Business

(1) Consultation Panel Review

David Broad noted that the Authority was currently reviewing its consultation panels and questioned whether the Forum felt that any changes were necessary. Mr Broad was not sure if there would be an official consultation but confirmed that he would report back to the Authority that members considered it to be a valuable forum in its present form, noting that the Forum addressed the Authority's second principle purpose.

The SWRO stated that the Authority valued the views of the Forum, especially regarding support for projects, such as the project prioritisation exercise that had just been undertaken.

(2) NPAPA Review

Keith Bacon reported that within the NPAPA Review report, at point 7.5, it stated that:

'Access and recreational issues are being addressed. An integrated approach to land and water access is being developed with an access forum that works well together.'

(3) Whitlingham Country Park Parking Charges

The SWRO reported that the Authority, on behalf of the Whitlingham Charitable Trust (WCT), was seeking the Forum's views as to whether or not blue badge holders should be asked to pay to park at the Country Park, as a range of facilities were provided for them.

George Saunders suggested that blue badge holders should be charged for half the time, i.e. if they paid to park their car for one hour they would get two hours worth of parking. Mr Saunders also stated that the parking machines would need to be accessible for blue badge holders.

Members therefore confirmed that they were in favour of charging blue badge holders in principle but at a reduced rate, and asked the WCT to consider methods of doing this. Members also asked that consideration be given to the location of the parking machines.

The SWRO reported that the Head of Governance and Executive Assistant had stated that having reviewed the concerns raised recently the Authority had suggested to the Trust that additional signage making reference to the following points would be installed:

- (i) Tickets would only be provided for one of the tariffs shown, with no change provided, and should be checked to confirm the exit time.
- (ii) Tickets should be retained as proof of purchase if the registration number had been incorrectly entered to stop a Parking Charge Notice being issued.
- (iii) Top ups to the appropriate tariff could be made at any time during a person's stay before they left the car park.

The Forum also suggested that a bold notice be installed at the entrance to the Country Park.

2/12 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 13 June 2012 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 p.m.

Chairman

Code of Conduct for Members

Declaration of Interests

Committee: Broads Local Access Forum

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 7 March 2012

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 ✓
Keith Bacon	Item 7	Permissive path in Catfield, chairman of Catfield Parish Council, which is the landowner of the path concerned.	
Louis Baugh	Item 7	I have a land management input to the proposed sites at St Benets Abbey/Ludham Hall.	
Mike Flett	Item 7	Footpath access to St Benet's from Ludham Bridge (Ludham Parish Council).	
David Broad	Item 1-11	Toll Payer.	
Robin Buxton	Item 7	AT6 - owner for Horsey Estate AT12 – agent for Burnley Estate	✓ ✓