

Annual Report of the Broads Local Access Forum
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report presents for members' information the key matters considered by the Broads Local Access Forum during the last year relating to the development and improvement of public access within the Broads.

Recommendation: That the work of the Forum be noted.

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the key matters considered by the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) during the last year relating to the development and improvement of public access within the Broads.

2 Annual Report

2.1 The draft Broads Local Access Forum annual report is attached to this covering report as Appendix 1.

2.2 The key issues considered by the Forum over the last year included the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs consultation on the future for food, farming and the Environment and Norfolk County Council's consultation on the new Norfolk Access Improvement Plan.

2.3 One of the main challenges for access recently has been the ending of access payments to landowners through Defra's Countryside Stewardship Scheme which has resulted in the loss of permissive paths throughout the county including routes in and linking to the Broads National Park. The BLAF therefore submitted a response to the Defra consultation advising that Government should value access to the countryside as a public good and introduce targeted access payments in any post Brexit environmental land management scheme. Additionally the BLAF highlighted the need for Government to value and support traditional farming landscapes in the lowlands like the Broads grazing marshes as well as those in the uplands and supported the Broads Authority's suggestion for a pilot Agri-Environment Scheme in the Broads.

2.4 The BLAF welcomed Norfolk County Council's consultation for the new Norfolk Access Improvement Plan. The BLAF advised the Broads Authority

on its response to the consultation highlighting the opportunities for partnership working on the delivery of the Plan and stressing the need for the Plan to emphasise the importance of the Broads National Park for access in the county.

Author: Adrian Clarke

Date of Report: 12 July 2018

Broads Plan Objectives: E 6.1, 6.2

Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – The Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2018

The Broads Local Access Forum
Annual report 2017



The Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report – 2017

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1. Broads Local Access Forum

1.1 Statutory purpose

The Broads Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established by the Broads Authority in 2003, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Act states that the purpose of the forum is to be a statutory advisory body to provide guidance and advice to the Broads Authority and other organisations on the improvement of public access within the Broads and to contribute to opportunities for open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. In providing advice, the forum will have regard to:

- The needs of land management
- The conservation of the natural beauty of the area
- The management and maintenance of recreational access whilst balancing this against the needs of nature conservation, agriculture, the interests of landowners and managers, navigation and countryside management projects within the Broads

1.2 The forum's vision

The Broads is an unrivalled wetland of natural diversity, heritage and special character. It is a place where people come to explore, enjoy and find spiritual refreshment. Access to the Broads should be clear and easy to use, respectful of wildlife and land management, meet users' needs and promote responsible and harmonious behaviour. The Broads Local Access Forum will champion access improvements and management, represent a wide range of interests and contribute to sustainability for the environment, communities and the economy.

2. What has happened during the year?

2.1 The forum at work

The forum has delivered its purpose in a number of ways:

- i The forum has held four public meetings to agree its advice to the Broads Authority and other organisations.
- ii The forum provided representation on the Broads Forum, the Norfolk Local Access Forum, the Joint LAF meeting (Broads, Suffolk and Norfolk) and at Regional and National LAF meetings.
- iii Forum members provided advice by individual correspondence on consultation documents.
- iv Forum members are expected to use and develop their own networks of contacts to gather information and opinions, and to offer advice and information on access.

2.2 Challenges faced by the forum

The forum faced the following challenges:

- The main challenge faced by the Forum has been the continuing pressure on public funding for countryside access across all local authorities which has meant some paths have received little maintenance. Additionally as Agri-Environment Access payments to landowners have come to an end some permissive paths have closed resulting in a more fragmented access network.



2.3 Advising the Broads Authority and other bodies

The Forum has given advice to a number of bodies over the year:

- The Parliamentary Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- The British Standards Institute regarding a consultation on standards for gaps, gates and stiles
- The River Wensum Strategy Partnership on the public consultation for the River Wensum Strategy
- The Planning Inspectorate regarding the Martham FP 1 Modification Order
- Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the Defra consultation on the Future for Food, Farming and the Environment

The forum has also given further advice to the Broads Authority on:

- The adoption of the River Wensum Strategy

2.4 Responding to consultations

The forum has responded to the following consultations:

- BSI: Gaps, gates and stiles – specification (British Standards Institute)
- River Wensum Strategy (River Wensum Strategy Group)
- Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – Call for Evidence (Defra)
- Draft Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (Norfolk County Council)
- Martham Footpath 1 – Modification Order Public Hearing
- Food and Farming consultation (Defra)
- Opportunities post Brexit to form policy for agri-schemes that maximise access benefits (Cambridge LAF)

2.5 Access reports and presentations

The forum received the following access reports:

- Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2016 – Call for Evidence consultation
- Staithes and the Environment Agency
- Progress report on Defra's 8 Point Plan for the English National Parks
- Trialling presentation for community groups on Climate Change, Flood Risk and how these affect the Broads landscape
- Sport England Draft Report – Walking Insight
- Sustrans Proposal – East Norfolk Cycle Routes
- Access Projects updates (2017-18)
- Access Projects (2018-19 draft)
- Broads Authority Boat Census 2018
- Broads Local Access Forum draft Response to Norfolk Access Improvement Plan
- British Standards: Gaps, Gates and Stiles update
- Broads Forum updates
- Norfolk County Council Access updates



2.6 Partnership working

The forum has worked with the following partner organisations:

- Norfolk County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Norwich City Council
- Natural England
- River Wensum Strategy Group
- Broads Climate Change Partnership
- Broads Forum
- Norfolk LAF
- Sustrans
- Environment Agency
- Broads Angling Strategy Group

2.7 Observers and advisors to the forum

The forum has received reports and advice from:

- Andrew Hutcheson, Norfolk County Council
- Marie-Pierre Tighe, Broads Authority
- Adrian Clarke, Broads Authority
- Mark King, Broads Authority
- Jacquie Burgess, Broads Authority
- Simon Hooton, Broads Authority
- Professor Tom Williamson, UEA



3. Who makes up the forum?

3.1 Chair and Vice-Chair

In December 2017 Keith Bacon was re-appointed as Chair and Alec Hartley appointed as Vice-Chair.

3.2 Members and representation

Chairman: Keith Bacon – Catfield

Tel: 01692 581314
keithbacon@keme.co.uk

Representing archaeology and landscape heritage

Vice-Chairman: Alec Hartley – Norwich

Tel: 01603 452884
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Representing Wensum River Parkway Partnership

Kelvin Allen – Downham Market

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Representing Broads Authority

Louis Baugh – Neatishead

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Representing landowners and managers

Liz Brooks – Ludham

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Representing equestrian riding and driving

Tony Brown – Lowestoft

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Representing nature conservation

Robin Buxton – Lingwood

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Representing landowners and managers, tourism and local businesses

Mike Flett – Ludham

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mikeandjeanne@btinternet.com

Representing Local Authority (Parish Councils)

Tony Gibbons – Norwich

Tel: 01603 400973
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Representing angling

Dawn Hatton – Norwich

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Representing walking, people with disabilities and access for all

Peter Mason – Catfield

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Representing walking, tourism and local business



Stephen Read – *Oulton Broad*

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Representing walking and water-borne recreational issues

George Saunders – *Norwich*

Tel: 01603 413485
georgesauanders@btinternet.com

Representing people with disabilities and access for all

Charles Swan – *Oulton*

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clerkoultonparishsuffolk@hotmail.co.uk

Representing Local Authority (Parish Councils) and educational establishments

Martin Symons – *Poringland*

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Representing cycling, people with disabilities and access for all

Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro – *Pakefield*

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Representing Broads Authority

Ray Walpole – *Norwich*

Tel: 01603 300221
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Representing walking and cycling

Richard Webb – *Norwich*

Tel: 01603 505362
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Representing walking and sailing

Christopher Yardley – *Burnham Thorpe*

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Representing water-borne recreational users and nature conservation

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