

Broads Authority
Broads Local Access Forum
Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Louis Baugh	Mr Stephen Read
Mr Robin Buxton	Mr George Saunders
Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Richard Webb
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Chris Yardley
Mrs Dawn Hatton	

Also attending:

Mr Martin Caplin – Norfolk County Council
Ms Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Mr Ken Hawkins – Vice-Chair Norfolk Local Access Forum
Mr Mark King - Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mr Ian Leatherbarrow – Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Mrs Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services

3/1 Apologies for absence and welcome

Mr Kelvin Allen, Dr Peter Mason, Mr Mike Flett and Miss Liz Brooks sent their apologies. The Chairman welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.

3/2 To receive declarations of interest

None declared at this point of the meeting. Mr Baugh later declared an interest in relation to item 9 regarding point 1.48 of the Broads Integrated Access Strategy Action Point.

3/3 Receive and confirm the 05 Dec 2018 minutes

The Forum approved the minutes which the Chairman signed.

3/4 Matters arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 2/6 (1) How Hill Footpath

The Environment Agency to carry out works to the bridge in the next few weeks. BA to take on ongoing responsibility for the bridge. Once work is complete the permissive footpath can open.

(2) Minute 2/6 (2) River Wensum Strategy

Norwich City Council is delaying the launch of the Strategy.

(3) Minute 2/6 (3) Staithe Report

Thorpe Town Council is happy with the revised wording for their area. The SWRO sent revised entries to those who provided feedback. Once he receives confirmation of these entries, Tom Williamson will be asked to finalise the report and it will be made available on the Authority's website.

(4) Minute 2/6 (4) Wherryman's Way – Phase 2

The Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council are looking for further funding contributions for the £11.9k project to upgrade the hydrological modelling and scenarios for potential work on the Wherryman's Way at Hardley Flood. The Environment Agency do not have any funding available. A senior officer level decision is due from South Norfolk Council.

Martin Caplin agreed to find out if the section of path from the dyke at Rockland to Beauchamp is on Norfolk County Council's cutting regime.

3/4.5 Norfolk Wildlife Trust consultation on Hickling Broad project (extra item)

The Chairman agreed to include an extra item from Mr Ian Leatherbarrow of Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT).

Background: NWT is consulting on how to improve access to Hickling Broad and surrounding land that they own. Landscape architects Shields Flynn are coordinating the consultation. They held a workshop at Hickling village hall for residents and are consulting with stakeholder organisations including BLAF.

Issues: It is hard to view the water from the land. A NWT boat trip takes visitors to view the broad, but there is a ten-minute walk to get to the boat. Visitors want circular walks, particularly linked with the Weavers Way.

Comments and answers to questions

- Hickling Staithe is a good viewing point. NWT owns the staithe but the pub owns access to it via a permissive path.
- The 'beach' near the sailing club could be a good viewing point, but again access is over private land belonging to the pub.
- 'Swim Coats Mill' has a good viewing point, but again access is over private land and residents raised concerns over car parking and access at this site. The Forum could revisit an 'on the shelf' project from 2007 for this site.
- Vehicle access to the NWT reserve is along Stubb Road. A parking area near the staithe would help.

- Public mooring at Deep Go Dyke does not have access to trails or the Weaver's Way.
- Viewing points and access to waterside trails are part of the Integrated Access Strategy. Participants at the Broads Engage event raised some good ideas. The SWRO and Mr Ian Leatherbarrow to meet to discuss these ideas.
- Broads Engage participants also raised the problem of having to walk along long stretches of road as part of the Weavers Way.
- Wild moorings: some like the remoteness with lack of access but more people would like such moorings to link to footpaths, particularly the Weavers Way.
- A permissive path could join NWT land with Catfield Staithe.
- NWT should consider wheelchair access for any proposed viewing point projects. Boat trips starting from the staithe would be an improvement.
- The BLAF is supportive of any public benefit access projects.
- Mr Ian Leatherbarrow agreed to provide plans showing land ownership in the Hickling area along with existing access routes so that the Forum can formulate more detailed suggestions for the consultation.

3/5 Membership review

The review of BLAF membership resulted in the following resignations: Mr Ray Walpole, Mr Charles Swan, Mr Martin Symonds and Mrs Melanie Vigo di Gallidorno. Mr Tony Brown did not respond and has not attended Forum meetings for some time. He is therefore no longer a member of the Forum by assumption. The Authority will assign a replacement member following Mrs Melanie Vigo di Gallidorno's departure from the Forum.

14 members were reappointed to the Forum leaving spare places up to a maximum of 22.

At the December BLAF meeting members agreed that tourism business, nature conservation and entry level craft were categories missing representation on the Forum. Following resignations and a further review, the Forum agreed to add the following additional areas of representation: youth ambassador, health and wellbeing, diversity and cycling. The entry level craft category includes canoeing and paddle boarding.

Comments and answers to questions

- Following their resignations, the Chairman agreed to write and thank the long-standing members Mr Ray Walpole and Mr Charles Swan for their significant contributions to the Forum over many years.

- Easton College and UEA could provide links to a regular youth ambassador place or places on the Forum. The SWRO agreed to check the minimum age for membership of LAFs and to contact the College and University.
- Oulton Parish Council email correspondence suggests a misunderstanding of the procedure for membership of the Forum. The Authority will invite them to apply, but it confirms that they do not have a permanent place for their parish on the Forum. There are 92 parishes in the Broads area and this would not be a practical assumption for all parishes. The SWRO agreed to contact Oulton Parish Council to explain the situation.
- The SWRO agreed to arrange the process for enlisting new members to the Forum for the agreed areas of representation (to include placing an advert in the local newspaper and arranging a press release).

3/6 Regional LAF meeting update

Dr Keith Bacon and Mr Ken Hawkins attended the regional LAF meeting in Cambridge on the 16 January 2019. Representatives from the Broads, Norfolk, Central Bedfordshire and Luton, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire LAFs attended along with staff from Natural England.

Main discussion areas included railway crossings, an important topic for some LAFs and Agri Environment schemes finishing meaning associated permissive paths closing.

Mr Louis Baugh updated the Forum on post Brexit planning for farming and the environment. Following consultation, Defra is now at the 'Tests and Trials' stage for a number of new scheme proposals using 'public payments for public benefits' as the underlying basis for potential new ELMs schemes. The Authority continues to promote multiple benefit access to Defra at every opportunity. The Broads Authority and key stakeholders submitted a lowland grazing scheme proposal and are waiting to see if Defra includes it as one of the pilots for Tests and Trials.

Natural England involvement with LAFs is decreasing due to funding cutbacks and they cannot give the same support they used to give.

Public maintenance of claimed routes: The meeting discussed the issue of Councils not maintaining any routes claimed by 2026 based on long-term use. The advice is therefore to make claims based on documented evidence where possible.

3/7 Norfolk County Council update

Mr Martin Caplin, Norfolk County Council (NCC) Trails Officer, gave a presentation on projects the Council is carrying out in the Broads area.

RDPR, CIL and NARLEP funded projects are helping to improve signage, surfacing and circular walks associated with NCC long-distance trails in the Broads.

Projects in Great Yarmouth are linking town circular walks, access improvements and signage to the trails.

The Angles Way has many gates along the route, put in by BESL. Where no longer needed for stock reasons, more accessible alternatives will replace these gates. There is also potential for a cycle way on the trail. BESL maintain paths on banks once a year so that engineers can check settlement. 40 new signs will go in to guide people through Great Yarmouth and to the Angles Way. Signs on the Beccles to Carlton Colville section will have mileage showing how much further to go. The sign design will use a hybrid of the Norfolk and Suffolk styles. Urban signs will replace the sticker system currently in place.

The Wayfaring project will put in five kissing gates a year replacing less easily accessible barriers and latches.

The Weavers Way will get new signage including for circular walks off the trail. RDPE funding will tackle Greenways Route Stalham to Bengate (permissive parts of the path) including improved road signs and surfacing. Public consultation on this project was very positive.

The Wherrymans Way is using CIL funding to improve the Norwich to Loddon section with new signage and physical improvements. Habitats regulations and historical boundaries research concluded before the projects started. Other sections receiving funding are Kirby Bedon (BR4), Surlingham (FP4 and FP2) and Rockland St Mary (FP6).

Comments and answers to questions

- The Forum congratulated Norfolk County Council on progress made.
- The Forum would like to see improvements to signage on the public paths near Acle bridge as it is not clear where to go.
- The SWRO agreed to try and get an update on the Reedham permissive footpath issue from the Parish Council who is dealing with landowner negotiations.

3/8 County Council prioritisation of Rights of Way claims under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Chairman submitted a response on behalf of the Forum to the Defra consultation on public benefit and public access, raising concerns about the task Norfolk County Council has in assessing the definitive map log based on historic evidence. There are still many more submissions to come and the cut-off date of 2026 is soon approaching.

Worcestershire LAF also raised the issue with Defra claiming that their Council cannot get through all the applications before the deadline and that Defra did not give the Deregulation Act enough thought. They are asking Defra for an extension to the deadline. They are also asking for support from other LAFs on HUDDLE.

Norfolk LAF asked Norfolk County Council for a list of applications. They did not receive a list but are now trying to collate information from individual applications on

the Council's website. There is already a back log and this will only get worse. Forum members are concerned that either Norfolk cannot share the information or does not have it.

The Chairman agreed to write to Norfolk County Council to ask for the list of applications but to wait for Norfolk LAF to build an evidence base from their research before the Chairman writes to Defra. HUDDLE to be used to get interest going with other LAFs.

3/9 Broads Integrated Access Strategy update on draft changes

The SWRO gave a presentation on draft changes to text of the Integrated Access Strategy. The draft strategy includes comments made at BLAF meetings and by those attending the Broads Engage workshop event. The draft action plan includes projects that have previously been prioritised by the BLAF and actions to identify future projects that will maximise opportunities for partnership working with Norfolk County Council through the new Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP).

The main proposed changes to the strategy, supported by the BLAF were:

- 1) The addition of a new objective to improve easy access in the Broads through partnership with other authorities and organisations;
- 2) The addition of a new objective to provide routes that relieve visitor pressure on sensitive sites and accommodate growth;
- 3) The addition of a new objective to deliver the River Wensum Strategy through the River Wensum Strategy Partnership;
- 4) Prioritising bridleway creations that provide opportunities for circular riding routes and allow riders to avoid dangerous road riding; and
- 5) Prioritising the creation of Mills Trails through the Water, Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Comments and answers to questions

- Only Norfolk County Council gets a mention throughout the Strategy. Although the NAIP offers good partnership project potential this should not exclude promoting opportunities to work with Suffolk County Council. The draft could read that there will not be any projects in the Suffolk Broads.
- Permissive footpath agreements drawn up under the Water, Mills and Marshes project are not tied to the project timescales. 15 years is a usual minimum for such agreements.
- The SWRO attends the CIL Decision Officers Group.
- Text should include not just Norfolk Trails but the wider network under Objective 5 and working with Suffolk County Council.
- The SWRO agreed to see if the Broads Authority could receive the draft Integrated Access Strategy in July instead of May. This would allow Forum

members to consider any last-minute changes to the draft at their June BLAF meeting.

3/10 Any other business

The SWRO agreed to find out if there is an access element to the next Broads Engage workshop on Biodiversity at Hoveton Village Hall on 25th April (1.30-4.30pm).

There are examples of signs reminding users of shared routes of priority to pedestrians in Lowestoft and at UEA.

The SWRO agreed to discuss an issue at Smallborough Staithe with Mr Chris Yardley outside the meeting.

The SWRO agreed to investigate an issue concerning angling at Sutton Staithe.

The SWRO announced this would be his last BLAF meeting as he is leaving the Authority at the end of May. The Chairman and members thanked him for guiding the Forum and providing constructive and helpful meetings over the years. He would be a huge loss to the Authority and the Forum.

3/12 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 05 June 2019 at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm.

Chairman