

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2015

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

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| Mr Louis Baugh | Mr Stephen Read |
| Ms Liz Brooks | Mr George Saunders |
| Mr Mike Flett | Mr Gary Simons |
| Mr Alec Hartley | Mr Charles Swan |
| Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies | Mr Ray Walpole |
| Mr Peter Medhurst | |

In Attendance

Professor Jackie Burgess – BA Chairman
Ms Lottie Carlton - Administrative Officer
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Mr Mark King – Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Ms Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources

Also In Attendance

Mr Tony Brand – River Waveney Trust
Ms Anne Hemwood – River Waveney Trust
Mr Andrew Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council
Ms Tracey Jessop – Assistant Director, Highways and Transport, Norfolk County Council

4/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Gregory, Mrs Jo Parmenter and Mr Hugh Taylor.

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting, including Mr Tony Brand and Ms Anne Hemwood of River Waveney Trust who were interested in becoming members of the Broads Local Access Forum. Members were reminded to sign the declaration of interests form for any relevant items of the meeting.

4/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the correction of some minor typographic errors, clarification of the Ordnance Survey term 'upsy-downsy' meaning 'inclines' in item 3/7, and signed by the Chairman.

4/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 3/3 (1): Staithes – Current information and role of Staithes Management

The research brief had been agreed with Professor Tom Williamson at UEA who will be appointed to undertake the work. A meeting was being held to agree milestones and outcomes. The research would commence in September 2015. A full report was expected by the end of the year. Potential staithe sites were being highlighted for research and Forum members were welcome to put forward other suggestions. Norwich was included in the survey brief, recognising that much of the Wensum riverside through Norwich had been used as a staithe historically.

(2) Minute 3/3 (3): Boundary Farm Mooring

A lease was being negotiated with the landowner. Once this was finalised the mooring would reopen.

(3) Minute 3/3 (5): Review of BLAF membership

Since the last Forum meeting the Broads Authority had decided to review the terms of membership of the Broads Local Access Forum and a full report would be compiled outlining the results of the review and a new process for appointing members. The Authority was keen to improve the status of the Forum, an important advice body for the Authority in delivering its second purpose. The importance of covering sufficient areas of access interest through membership was stressed. Views from BLAF members would be sought on how the Authority could better achieve the desired outcome outlined above.

It was noted that Mr Peter Medhurst would be resigning from the Forum after this meeting. Peter was thanked for his valuable input on the Forum over many years, particularly for his time as Vice-Chairman.

Also resigning was Mr Hugh Taylor who was also thanked for his input to the Forum. The Waveney River Trust, who Mr Taylor represents, is keen to remain involved with the Forum going forward.

(4) Minute 3/3 (6): Sale of Geldeston Woodland and Marsh

Geldeston Woodland had been passed to the River Waveney Trust who would be managing it in the future.

(5) Minute 3/3 (7): Ludham Footpath

The SWRO updated the Forum that after many drafts and requested changes, the wording of the permissive path agreements had been finalised and signatures were awaited from the three landowners involved. Members expressed frustration over the length of time it had taken to reach resolution. Some members were critical of the Broads Authority (BA) who they felt was at fault and should have enforced a resolution.

The SWRO provided clarification over certain issues:

- The route had never been a proven PROW and therefore the BA had not been in a position to be able to insist on opening it up.
- No-one had submitted a claim to prove the footpath had been in continuous use for at least 20 years. Furthermore the BESL work had created difficulties in providing this for one particular section.
- The Forum had agreed that the Broads Authority should attempt to negotiate a resolution with the three landowners involved rather than seek to legally prove continuous use of the path. Much time and effort had been expended by the SWRO in trying to obtain agreements from the landowners and this was acknowledged and appreciated by most members of the Forum who recognised that delays had not been the fault of the Authority or the SWRO.
- It was reported that the gate on the Restricted Byway to St Benet's Abbey had been put back. On a restricted byway this was an illegal obstruction. Explanation for the reason for the gate being needed involved cattle movements being obstructed by BESL using a particular area nearby without consent. It was agreed that it would be useful for the parties involved to meet and discuss the matter.

(6) Minute 3/3 (8): How Hill Footpath

A meeting was due to take place with Natural England at the end of June to confirm there were no concerns regarding habitat regulations.

(7) Minute 3/3 (9): Broads Heritage Lottery Fund Bid

The Broads Landscape Partnership Scheme HLF bid had been submitted. The outcome would be known in October.

(8) Minute 3/3 (13) (5): Harbour Revision Order – Mutford Lock

There was agreement between the three parties involved. The paperwork was now in the hands of their solicitors.

(9) Minute 3/5: Cycling Ambition in National Parks funding

Norfolk County Council had submitted an expression of interest for cycle delivery funding. Broads Authority was willing to be involved.

(10) Minute 3/10 (8): Broads Forum Update

The Upper Thurne Working Group had met. Hickling restoration had been their main agenda item. The BA Director of Operations was in attendance to feed back into the plans for long term restoration of this broad.

4/4 Norfolk County Council update

Norfolk County Council's Assistant Director, Highways and Transport updated the Forum following on from Matt Worden's feedback from the March BLAF meeting.

Stakeholder dissatisfaction with management of the PROW network by Norfolk County Council (NCC) had become clear and stakeholder groups were being consulted to try and get to the root of the problems. Workshops had been held and the results from these were circulated in a tabled paper.

A new approach to managing the PROW, in conjunction with the Norfolk Trails, would involve:

- Prioritising work to the most important areas (highlighted in the workshops and elsewhere)
- Recognising that government cuts meant that not everything could be done
- Emphasising improvements rather than inspections, with footpath wardens and others identifying and photographing problems to alert the Council via electronic feedback
- Facilitating a parish partnership scheme and community involvement to help adoption and maintenance of footpaths in local areas

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

(1) Yes, the BLAF would be consulted on the NCC ROW improvement plan review.

(2) Public transport to Whitlingham Country Park was requested.

(3) Facilitating linked cycle routes from stops along Abellio railway lines was requested.

(4) Several footpaths were no longer useable. The Assistant Director, Highways and Transport agreed to circulate NCC's cutting regime to help

Forum members identify any potential problems or savings that could be made by switching maintenance to more regularly used paths.

- (5) It was confirmed that a cycle way was included in the plans for the Northern Distributer Road bridge crossing.
- (6) It was confirmed that NCC was looking at synergies and sharing knowledge and experience of PROW issues with Suffolk County Council.

4/5 Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (Natural England's Access and Engagement Summary)

Natural England had published the results of their latest survey of adults looking into engagement with the natural environment. This provided useful evidence for public bodies looking to prioritise budgets. Results tended to mirror those of the Broads Authority's Stakeholder Survey regarding the importance of access in the countryside.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- (1) The results would be invaluable background information for funding bids.
- (2) Health and exercise benefits were also a key consideration and contributions from Health Authorities could be forthcoming.
- (3) The links from the report were very interesting and Forum members were encouraged to look at these. With 49k people interviewed every year for 5 years this provided extremely robust evidence.
- (4) Forum members discussed access to Whitlingham Country Park and perceived obstruction to this aspiration by the Whitlingham Charitable Trust who manage the Park. It was noted that discussions were ongoing with the Trust on this matter.

4/6 River Wensum Strategy Update

The Broads Authority, and Norfolk County Council, had agreed to become formal partners with Norwich City Council taking the River Wensum Strategy forward. The Environment Agency was also involved regarding water management and quality.

Internal consultations and SWOT analysis of enhancement opportunities had been undertaken. The next stage would involve consulting the general public. An event was planned on 24 June at Blackfriar's Hall, Norwich from 1pm to 7pm for the public to put forward their views. There would also be an online consultation available. The SWRO agreed to circulate a link to the online consultation. There would be a follow up event at the end of the year with an updated strategy including feedback from the public.

The potential to look at Norwich City Council's ownership out to Hardley Cross would need to be done under a different consultation. The banks along this stretch were in multiple land ownership

Projects had not been decided on. Some suggestions included: historic interpretation, missing riverside links, New Mills industrial archaeology and Whitlingham Bridge.

4/7 Integrated Access Strategy Action Plan Review

The SWRO gave a presentation on the Integrated Access Strategy Action Plan Review. The IAS Action Plan was due for review on its set 3 yearly cycle. Achievements were displayed on a table with colours highlighting work completed and action ongoing. It also highlighted work that had not been achieved. This document would be used as a basis for the 2016-19 review.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

- (1) The Broads Plan was also being reviewed and the IAS action plan review would link into this.
- (2) There was a need to be mindful of constraints including operational capacity and that new or improved access had ongoing maintenance considerations.
- (3) The review would be guided by stakeholder survey and boat census results.
- (4) Clarification was needed regarding ownership of countryside furniture and who was responsible for maintenance and replacement. Norfolk County Council, Broads Authority, BESL and the Environment Agency would be meeting to clarify and collaborate concerning this issue.
- (5) It was agreed to use the September BLAF meeting to concentrate on the IAS action plan review in a workshop style. The SWRO agreed to circulate the action plan update table for members to submit ideas prior to the meeting to enable mapping and supplementary information to be made available.
- (6) It was confirmed that the Navigation Committee had input to the IAS and review where actions had navigation elements.

4/8 Joint LAF meeting

Several BLAF members had attended the joint LAF meeting with Norfolk LAF. Issues covered had included: Generation Park Norwich, Coastal Access Path stages and links to coastal paths going inland, a broader approach, history of the area and linking to walks. It was agreed that partnership working was essential. It was noted that there was a Generation Park Norwich pre-application exhibition at the Forum in Norwich this week.

4/9 Broads Forum Update

The following items were discussed at the last Broads Forum:

- Broads Beat Officer presentation.
- Heritage boats and whether they should be exempt from tolls.
- Lake Restoration Research Project – review of 45 years of scientific research. Hickling to be prioritised.
- Discussion surrounding Prymnesium.

4/10 To receive any other items of urgent business

The SWRO alerted Forum members to two consultations that had come in:

- (1) Ramblers' Association 'Big Path Watch Campaign'. This involved registering a 1km square area online and surveying its condition on the 13 July. Results would provide a countrywide picture of the state of footpaths. Either an app or a paper version was available for the survey.
- (2) Natural England's 'Outdoor Sport and Recreation Alliance' consultation questioning what should be included in national strategy for the outdoors in England: National Parks and LAFs had been given an extension to 19 June to submit consultation responses. Individual Forum members could submit responses, but it was also agreed that the SWRO would submit a response on behalf of the BLAF.

A new document 'National Parks England' was circulated. It included qualities and values of National Parks and was intended as a means to help inform ministers.

4/11 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 09 September 2015 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.52 p.m.

Chairman