

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2016

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

Mr Andrew Alston	Ms Barbara Greasley	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Henry Cator	Mr Peter Jermy	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Michael Flett	Ms Jennifer Parkhouse (1/1-1/8)	Mr John Tibbenham
Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Philip Pearson	Mr Peter Wall
Mr Robin Godber	Mr Paul Savage	

In Attendance:

Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterway and Recreation Officer
Ms Esmeralda Guds – Administrative Officer
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Ms Andrea Kelly – Senior Ecologist
Mr John Packman – Chief Executive
Mr Neil Punchard – Broadland Catchment Partnership Officer
Ms Trudi Wakelin – Director of Operations

Also in attendance:

Claire Piper – Assistant Process Manager of Asset Planning, Anglian Water
Maria Woods – Environment Permitting Scientist, Anglian Water
Tom Williamson – University of East Anglia, Professor of History, Landscape Group, School of History, UEA

1/1 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies for absence were received from Brian Barker, Julian Barnwell, Martyn Davey, John Hiskett, John Lurkins, Bryan Read, Hugh Taylor and Anthony Wright.

The Chair welcomed Jacquie Claire Piper, Maria Woods and Tom Williamson to the meeting.

1/2 Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The Chief Executive invited nominations for the appointment of the Chairman to the Committee.

Michael Flett (MF) nominated, seconded by Henry Cator (HC), that Keith Bacon be appointed as Chairman. No other nominations were forthcoming.

RESOLVED

that Dr Keith Bacon be appointed as Chairman of the Broads Forum.

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

The Chairman invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chairman to the Committee.

Henry Cator (HC) nominated, seconded by Robin Godber (RG), that Michael Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman. No other nominations were forthcoming.

RESOLVED

that Mr Michael Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Broads Forum.

1/3 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman asked for a minute's silence to pay tribute to the late Martin George, former member of the Broads Forum.

The Chairman further congratulated Jacquie Burgess on her new appointment as Chair of National Park UK and welcomed Peter Wall (PW) to his first meeting as a new Member of the Broads Forum.

1/4 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1/5 Public Question Time

No questions were raised by members of the public.

In response to a question on the implications of Brexit for National Parks, the Forum was given an update on Government changes that Rory Stewart had been promoted to Minister of State for International Development and it was not clear who would replace him.

1/6 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response taken following discussions at previous meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received and the Forum was advised that there were no further updates concerning Ludham Bridge and Mutford Lock.

Members noted the report.

1/7 Water Recycling in the Broads

Members received a presentation from Anglian Water (AW) which covered Environmental Discharge Permits and Compliances, business context and future investment and first time sewerage schemes.

It was made clear that no legal discharge could be made without a permit stating what, where and how much could be discharged.

It was further pointed out that AW was a private company with many different stakeholders, the Government being the main one, each with their own demands. The aim was to strike a balance between keeping the stakeholders satisfied and making a profit while providing water as a public need at an affordable and fair price.

Claire Piper (CP) agreed that especially villages in the Broads and with climate change the sewer systems can fail at times leading to what is termed Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and that working together with Parish Councils and partners to improve communications should be encouraged. Problems should be reported to AW and that this might be something to incorporate into the 5 year plan. In addition, as the Broads is a key watersports amenity area, there is a case for the successful communication between water companies and surfers/beach users to be replicated in areas such as the Broads.

CP suggested offering a further presentation in March 2018 when the result of the assessment of the Combined Sewer Overflows in the Broads that could affect the amenity value of the area was known. AW confirmed that the programme of investments has not yet responded to recent reports, such as the Bure Diffuse Water Pollution Assessment that has been funded by NE and undertaken by the West Country Rivers Trust, although this can be considered for the next 5 year plan cycle. CP also confirmed that AW is very interested in constructed or created wetlands to help improve water quality and that they are currently undertaking a project with Norfolk River Trust. Members were informed that if the project proved successful this would mean AW could be more involved with wetlands in the next 5 year plan cycle.

It was clarified that a report would come out in 2017 to determine if it is possible for water companies to lower phosphorus limits.

In regards to septic tanks members were informed that AW has a clear process for considering septic tanks which was sent out in the papers. AK added that the impact of septic tanks on water quality, with a particular focus on SSSI's was looked into by Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, funded by NE and BA and that she could forward these reports if anyone was interested.

Some members who had more specific queries were asked to contact CP directly.

1/8 The Staithes of the Broads: A History and Assessment

Members received a presentation from Prof Tom Williamson summarising the findings of an academic research project on the history, recording and status of staithes in the Broads which the Authority had commissioned the UEA to carry out.

Professor Williamson explained that public staithes are best understood as a matter of *rights* rather than of *ownership*. Where two different kinds of public highway – by land and by water – meet, a right of transhipment would become established. Over time ownership of staithe sites may have changed but the rights connected to them remain unchanged

Further the presentation highlighted that while the use of some staithes had lapsed and others were rendered redundant by siltation in theory lapsed staithes while currently not in use, could potentially be brought back into use.

It was confirmed that Prof Williamson's report would be made public. It was explained that the presentation only covered part of the research findings relating to some staithes but the full report covered the whole Broads area.

Prof Williamson confirmed that all the research had been carried out by assessing historic document and not by interview. The research concentrated on enclosure maps and awards (early 19th century), tithe maps and schedules circa 1840, and finance act maps and documents of 1910.

Members applauded the presentation.

1/9 Lake Restoration Action Plan 2016/17 – 2021/22

Members received a report which outlined a Lake Restoration Action Plan which had been formed following on from the scientific Lake Review (2015) and based on the prioritisation adopted in the Lake Restoration Strategy (2008). The Action Plan had been drawn up with key partners. Both large and small-scale lake restoration projects were ongoing and planned in the Broads. These combined efforts put the Broads as a national and international leader in lake restoration. The report further updated members on the progress made on the Hickling Broad Enhancement Project towards delivery of the Strategic Priority.

In light of Brexit it was explained that there were two parts to the funding of the Hickling Project. One part was funded from the core navigation and National Park funds while funding for the long-term goals is being sought from CANAPE (via European funding application). Officers of the RSPB who are taking the lead on the external funding had assured partners that they are continuing to lead the project and partners are awaiting the decision on the submitted Expression of Interest which is due in September.

John Tibbenham was disappointed to hear that Wroxham Island would no longer be restored especially as it was the only part of Hoveton Great Broad proposals which was open to the public.

It was explained that Natural England had removed this element from their proposals as the external funders were not prepared to fund it as Wroxham Island is not within the designated site.

Richard Starling (RS) believed that the Authority should rely more on the Drainage Board for good water quality and therefore suggested to invite Mr Bloomfield to the next Broads Forum meeting to give a presentation.

In regards to the catchment work it was explained that whilst this needs to continue and play a primary role, it was a long-term aim which was still years away in delivering results. It was pointed out that in the mean time it was essential to take small steps to create short term results while continuing with the long term plan.

RS raised an issue about geese and the Senior Ecologist recognised that geese were a concern and they do have an impact on reed margins. Although egg pricking was an acceptable method, it can only check the trend of the geese population growth and is not a solution. Andrew Alston (AA) mentioned that unless the surroundings were made less appealing, geese would still continue to fly in from somewhere else.

Members noted the report.

1/10 Mooring Strategy Update

Members received a report which provided them with an update on the Authority's mooring strategy and the action plan to maintain the Authority's moorings that was adopted by the Broads Authority in November 2014. The report summarised the works that had recently been carried out to the Authority's existing moorings and identified that a number of sites had been prioritised for the development of new 24-hour moorings, safety moorings and demasting moorings.

The Forum was reminded that Members of the Authority had decided that the Authority should not seek to take on new mooring sites if the acquisition of those sites would result in an increase in its piling responsibilities. Although they did consider that the Authority should consider acquiring sites if there was no piling liability connected to them.

Further the Navigation Committee had given officers unequivocal advice that the Authority should not consider entering leases for mooring sites that require the payment of annual fees higher than those recommended by our property advisers.

Paul Savage (PS) believed there is a greater need for demasting moorings and informal moorings and that better ways of communications were needed about what other solutions of moorings were available.

It was explained that the provision of informal moorings was not always possible and that where provided for the public, needed to be safe.

It was pointed out that the Authority does not own the riverbanks and landowners do not have to allow (except in limited circumstances) or provide facilities for mooring so therefore more often than not the Authority had to negotiate with the landowners. It was explained that one of the reasons landowners do not want trees to be cut down was because this can encourage mooring.

Barbara Greasley informed the Forum that the results of a survey she carried out showed that visitors to the Broads do not believe there are enough mooring sites, especially near places to eat.

It was noted that the Authority was aware of the demand for mooring and would continue to seek to negotiate with landowners for new mooring sites but that this would require resources. It was highlighted that stakeholders fully supported that the Authority should maintain its free moorings, therefore the Authority had encouraged double moorings; better mooring and included the mooring strategy as part of the Broads Plan.

PW was concerned about the impact of stern-on mooring, especially on sailing boats that had to manoeuvre through narrow channels with increased vegetation.

Members noted the report.

1/11 Wet Grassland Project

Members of the Forum received a report which outlined that wet grassland was a priority habitat which dominated the landscape of the Broads and rural farming economy (Broads Biodiversity Action Plan, 2009, Biodiversity and Water Strategy, 2013 and Why Farming Matters to the Broads, 2010). Investment in biodiversity was required to enhance bird and dyke wildlife populations of the marshes. This partnership project provided an excellent collaborative model for bidding for Heritage Lottery Funds for biodiversity work. These combined efforts put the Broads as one of the 8-9 national leaders in wetland restoration.

It was explained that as receiving EU LIFE funding had been made more difficult due to Brexit the proposal had been broken down in smaller bids.

While Philip Pearson (PP) supported the project AA enquired whether the project would be better suited for farmers who were too small to gain agri-environment payments and advice.

The Senior Ecologist responded that this project is part of a partnership approach to offering advice, together with other projects it would provide an improved service.

RS pointed out that for the Wet Grassland Project to be a success, good quality water was crucial.

Members noted the report.

1/12 Chief Executive's Report

The Members of the Forum were updated that "Broads Village" at this year's Royal Norfolk Show had been very successful and the Authority much appreciated the support from other organisations. Officers would be working with Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association with a view to attending in 2017.

The Chief Executive said that although the Waste Workshop had been helpful in identifying the issues, it had not managed to offer any resolutions.

In general Members of the Forum were interested to know whether the Authority would be able to put more pressure on the district councils or whether it would be helpful to start a publicity campaign, i.e on Twitter. Although it was recognised this could be useful, the Members of the Forum were reminded that ultimately this issue was about money and the Authority did not have the resources nor was it set up to deal with waste disposal like district councils were.

It was confirmed that the definition of 'commercial waste' was correct, and that legal advice received by the Authority said that Norfolk County Council was acting within its powers, although the regulations are subject to review next year.

Members noted the report.

1/13 Parish Issues

In regards to the Wherryman's Way RG mentioned that as well as the footpath to Hardly Flood, the diverted path via Chedgrave Common to Chedgrave had now been closed as well. Although Members of the Forum recognised this was not the Broads Authority's responsibility, they believed that the Authority should put more pressure on finding a solution as there was a concern that the situation would get harder to resolve the longer it was left.

Members were updated that Norfolk County Council had now agreed to put up a notice informing the public of the closure of the footpath for safety reasons and that there had been talks of jointly funding the felling of trees and clearing of scrub on the front face of the bank.

They were further informed that the Authority had been monitoring tidal fluctuations upstream of Hardley Flood to see whether the erosion of the bank

was currently having a negative effect on navigation. The early results of this monitoring did not show any evidence of the depth of the river being affected.

The Forum was made aware that work on the Wherryman's Way from Pitt's Lane to Chedgrave Common would start in September 2016 and a report updating them of the progress on this was requested for the next Broads Forum meeting.

1/14 Current Issues

No items were proposed as current issues.

1/15 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

No items were proposed as items of urgent business.

1/16 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

The Chairman would report to the Broads Authority meeting on the various issues discussed by the Forum.

1/17 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

RG suggested an update on work being done on the Wherryman's Way and RS suggested a report from Mr Bloomfield from the Drainage Board on water quality.

1/18 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 3 November 2016 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting concluded at 5.20 pm.

Chairman