

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

Mr Andrew Alston	Ms Barbara Greasley	Mr Paul Savage
Mr Brian Barker	Mr John Hiskett	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr Peter Jermy	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Ashley Cato	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Hugh Taylor
Mr Michael Flett	Ms Jennifer Parkhouse	Mr John Tibbenham
Mr Tony Gibbons	Mr Bryan Read	Mr Peter Wall
		Mr Anthony Wright

In Attendance:

Mr Gavin Devaney – Environment Officer
Dr Dan Hoare – Environment & Design Supervisor
Ms Esmeralda Guds – Administrative Officer
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy & Projects

Also in attendance:

Giles Bloomfield – Internal Drainage Board
Prof. Jacquie Burgess – Chair of the Broads Authority
Ian Holman – Cranfield Water Science Institute
Ulysse Pasquier - Student at the University of East Anglia
Rory Sanderson – Environment Agency

2/1 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies for absence were received from Henry Cator, Martyn Davey, Robin Godber, Philip Pearson and John Packman.

The Chairman welcomed Giles Bloomfield, Ian Holman, Ulysse Pasquier, Rory Sanderson and Jacquie Burgess to the meeting.

He announced that at the last Broad Authority meeting it had been agreed that the Authority would audio record all their meetings with immediate effect. Currently there were no plans to make the recordings available online however on request recordings could be made available at Yare House.

The Chairman further announced that Trudi Wakelin had left the Authority as she was offered and had accepted another position at the Marine Management Organisation. Rob Rogers had replaced her as the new Director of Operations.

The Chairman continued to report that in future the draft minutes instead of the confirmed minutes would be received at the Broads Authority meeting to overcome the delay of the confirmed minutes being received. Andrew Alston (AA) added that feedback from Chairman to the Broads Authority was important as the feel of the meeting didn't always come across in the minutes.

2/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/3 Public Question Time

No questions were raised by members of the public.

2/4 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response taken following discussions at previous meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received

Some issues were raised in regarding to the Staithes report from Prof Tom Williamson which was produced at the Broads Forum meeting in July 2016. Richard Starling (RS) and Brian Barker (BB) expressed concerns about the Authority founding a policy on, and drawing conclusions from a report which was believed to be inaccurate and was currently unavailable to the public. In addition Tony Gibbons felt that the distinction between Staithes and moorings in the report was unclear.

It was explained to the Forum that the delay for publication of the report was due to maps and photographs from the UEA not being made available yet. It was however suggested to look into the possibility of publishing the report without them and adding them as an appendix at a later stage when they became available.

It was further explained that Prof Williamson was commissioned to write a report based on certain key historic documents rather than a comprehensive report covering all possible evidence. The report was a great improvement on what currently existed and could be a sound base for further research. Any further evidence about staithes would be welcome.

2/5 Brograve Catchment Project – by Ian Homan and Giles Bloomfield

Members received a presentation about salinity and ochre levels in the Brograve System where groundwater modelling showed that raising water levels, infilling of over-deepened drains and cutting of new shallower drains could reduce the amount of salt entering the Brograve Catchment.

Giles Bloomfield (GS) from the Internal Drainage Board confirmed that although the main goal was reducing salinity, by raising water levels the ochre levels would be affected as well. He explained that altering the drainage to

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remove ochre completely would change the landscape, and currently there was no mechanism in place landowners were willing to take on board.

It was further clarified that the farming of Hempstead Marshes was market force driven and therefore use of the land was open to any viable business model.

Members recognised that maintenance of the dykes was important and Giles confirmed that an annual maintenance regime for the drains was in place. He said that although this was just a trial, it got farmers sitting and talking around the table, which was optimistic.

Members noted the presentation.

2/6 Broads Water Quality Report: River Thurne 2015

Members of the Forum were presented with a Water Quality Report for the river Thurne 2015 which was produced following encouragement from the Broads Forum and especially BRASCA and the Broads Authority for data to be made more accessible.

The report's map illustrated water quality monitoring points, showing the results of each point, rather than of the river in general. The report would include the status, actions and the water quality itself. Though it didn't show flow grades, hydrology failure would be illustrated. Finally there would be a part about the fish status and a link to water plant surveys.

When queried Rory Sanderson explained that non-native fish were not actively removed by the Environment Agency (EA), however they would send out information to angling groups advising them not to put any non-native fish back in the water.

Rory then pointed out that the report was a template and would have to adapt if done on other parts of the Broads. He informed the Forum that he hoped the report would be replicated for the main Broadland Rivers and be made available on the Broads Authority's website.

RS said that he had pressed for this report from the Environment Agency after being frustrated that they could not discuss the issue at the Upper Thurne Working Group.

Although Rory didn't want to be completely dismissive of the Catchment Data Explorer (which was on the EA website to support the River Basin Plan), he agreed there was a gap for side by side information to help communities understand the situation and that the report would fill this gap. He continued that although the initial set up for other catchments would be labour intensive, he was hopeful that an annual update would be less time consuming.

Members agreed the report was very accessible and a big improvement on previous reports.

When asked whether water sampling by different bodies could be shared and fed into one system managed by the EA, Rory explained that the Agency did join up with different organisations on specific projects, however their system wouldn't allow data entry from other organisations.

Members welcomed and noted the report.

2/7 Ulysse Pasquier on his PhD modelling flooding risk and climate change in the Broads

The Members of the Forum received a presentation on modelling future flood risk for inland and coastal adaption in the Broads as part of a PhD.

They were informed that the first objective of the project was to model the impacts of climate change on flooding risk and salt incursion. The second objective was to explore ways of engaging stakeholders and the interaction between scientific information and local knowledge.

Members of the Forum were informed that the research would last for 3.5 years until 2019. It was based on a catchment scale approach, so looking at both coastal and inland flooding and built upon existing models on hydraulic flooding.

Members' views were sought and it was highlighted that Ulysse was looking for some volunteers with a knowledge of flood issues for the Broads to be interviewed as baseline information for the study and they were encouraged to make contact with him.

Members noted the report.

2/8 2016 Broads Water Plant Survey Results

Members received a report which presented them with the findings from the annual water plant survey carried out during summer 2016 when a total of 28 broads were surveyed using a standard rake sampling technique. The River Waveney upstream of Beccles was surveyed for water plants, using a similar rake methodology, but specifically developed for rivers and linear channels. Barton and Hickling broads were surveyed using hydroacoustic survey equipment, to gain greater accuracy and resolution of the volume of water plants growing in the water, and their spatial extent over the bed of these broads.

While discussing the current condition of Cromes Broad it was explained that the decrease of stoneworts in the broad was only a relatively minor fluctuation in the last three years. Since 1992 when the broad was isolated from the main river with a sluice, water plants have been dominant in Cromes Broad. The issue of nutrients entering the site via local septic tanks is on-going and requires further evidence. Water level management was queried with the broads' isolation from the river. Officers explained that water levels for

Cromes and Clayrack Marsh are controlled at Crowe's Staithe, and this has been a fixed height for at least the last 15 years.

RS expressed concerns about the potential for a large decline of stoneworts in Martham South Broad, if his observation of an increase in greylag geese activity were to be felt in the aquatic plant population.

The Environment Officer confirmed that the Broads were monitored annually for water plants and results were documented. He explained that establishing the cause for short-term fluctuations in species was difficult as there were many different causes, i.e. weather, nutrient availability, fish and boat traffic. When viewed over the longer term (>10 year scale), the general pattern and specific impacts of restoration actions were more apparent in the data. Reporting water plant data since monitoring first started in 1983 will be carried out in 2017 to give a fuller picture and make clearer the scale of the changes observed.

Members noted the report.

2/9 Chief Executive's Report

RS passed on a few corrections, one to the BA external funding reports where the £35K figure granted to BRASCA should actually be £24,558.00. Further he clarified that it was used to help solely younger people and new entrants to the industry.

High Level Flood Management Review

Members of the Forum were updated that the Authority continued looking at High Level Flood Management alongside the Environment Agency. Meetings were being held with local MPs, CEOs and Leaders of the Norfolk and Suffolk Councils. A further meeting was intended in Westminster for MPs and Councils to debate the issues and timescales involved.

Tolls Review

Given it was the first year of implementation of the new toll structure, it had been decided for the Tolls Review Group to remain in existence. They intended to have two more face to face meetings, monitoring and responding to issues as they develop and contributing to the Tolls Review next year.

Broads Local Plan

RS suggested whether the consultation on the Broads Local Plan should be extended due to the delay of the Staithe report. The Head of Strategy & Projects explained that as the Staithe report was not the sole piece of evidence on which the plan was based this was unlikely but that his concerns would be passed on to the Planning Policy Officer.

AA expressed concerns about the consultation process for the Broads Plan which didn't draw out factors he felt were not right in the area. For example he felt it would be necessary to ensure water level management was controlled

through the planning process. He felt flood plains were not being able to function properly and national policy had to change.

When RS asked about the Flood Risk Supplementary Planning Document it was clarified that the responses to the consultation on this document were to be considered by the Planning Committee and that feedback would be forwarded once the outcome had become available.

Giles Bloomfield responded that regulations were in place and that the Environment Agency does seek to manage water level change, however he agreed there was room for improvement and that better legislation was on its way.

The Chairman updated the Forum on the following changes on the Broads Authority Committee since July 2016:

- Greg Munford , CEO of Richardson Boatyard and Chairman of Broads Tourism - Secretary of State Appointee;
- Sarah Mukherjee, Environmental journalist and soon to be CEO of Crop Protection Agency – Secretary of State Appointee;
- Haydn Thirtle – appointed by Great Yarmouth Borough Council;
- Brian Iles – appointed by Norfolk County Council;
- Bill Dickson, moved from the Navigation Committee – Secretary of State Appointee
- Nicky Talbot, acting Chairman of the Navigation Committee in absence of Michael Whitaker through illness.

Barbara Greasley (BG) confirmed that Broads Tourism was now a Limited Company and explained that this would give them more credibility with the banks.

Members noted the report.

2/10 Parish Issues

Mike Flett informed the Forum that it was doubtful that the issues around waste between Ludham Parish Council and North Norfolk Council would be resolved and therefore it was likely that two boat waste sites at Ludham, Womack Water and Ludham Bridge, would be removed by 31 March 2017.

AA questioned whether the problem was that there was no mechanism in place for the Councils to generate income to pay for this service. BG suggested a contribution through Tolls, although was aware that not all hire boat operators would welcome this idea.

It was deliberated whether it might be worth finding out how other authorities deal with the commercial waste issue on their rivers, i.e the Thames.

Paul Savage (PS) commented that his understanding was that the legislation stated that commercial rates would apply only if the boat was wholly residential and therefore shouldn't be applicable to private and hire boats.

On a different matter John Lurkins (LK) reported that South Norfolk Council had now decided to charge their parishes for emptying their dog waste disposals. A further concern was about maintaining footpaths and knowing who was responsible if they deteriorated.

It was explained that when footpaths crossed farmland or land that was registered with a compliance agreement it would be the County Council who was responsible. However, if the footpath ran along a riverbank often the responsibility would come under BESL.

Charles Swan informed the Forum of a new parish as from 1 April 2017, Oulton Broad Parish Council. He explained this was in addition to Oulton Parish Council which still remained.

2/11 Current Issues

No items were proposed as current issues.

2/12 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

No items were proposed as items of urgent business.

2/13 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.

2/14 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

RS asked about establishing the areas of functional flood plains in the Broads, where water is free to flow on and flow off without pumping. AA asked the same for areas of functional reed beds.

SKH explained it might be difficult for the Authority to obtain this information but would look into this.

Tony Gibbons proposed for the Broads Angling Strategy Group to liaise with Steve Lane from the Environment Agency to give a presentation on new ideas around a filter system to lessen saline incursion.

Peter Jermy proposed to have an update on the Mooring strategy and enquired about a list of moorings which were linked to planning applications permissions.

The Head of Strategy and Projects responded there is a list, with a map, where moorings have been identified as needed. There will be limited occasions when public moorings are required as part of a planning permission but this information would be available.

RS suggested encouraging members of the public to attend and that Forum meetings should have a section on the Agenda allowing the public an allocated time to raise questions. The Chairman responded he was happy for

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members of the public to come along and raise an issue however could not guarantee they would receive an answer immediately.

AA suggested inviting the manager of the Rural Development Leader Programme to give a presentation on available grants as they are struggling to find suitable projects at the moment.

2/15 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 27 April 2017 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm

Chairman