

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 05 June 2019

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Present

Keith Bacon – in the Chair, Kelvin Allen, Liz Brooks, Mike Flett, Tony Gibbons, Peter Mason, Stephen Read, Chris Yardley.

In attendance

Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer, Ken Hawkins – Vice-Chair Norfolk Local Access Forum, Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment, Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects, Mark King – Waterways and Recreation Officer, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services.

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies received from Louis Baugh, Robin Buxton, Alex Hartley, Dawn Hatton, Richard Webb.

No representative from Norfolk County Council was available.

Members held a minute's silence to mark the passing of valued member Mr George Saunders. His input to the Broads Local Access Forum and many other local groups had been invaluable, particularly his input and advice regarding trialling of access routes.

2. Declarations of interest

None declared.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

How Hill Footpath

The footpath is open and the sluice bridge is in the down position. The path is clear and the new section across the meadow open. People are already using the path and feedback is very positive. A Broads Authority press release will go out once the final asset handover with the Environment Agency completes. The Chairman explained that the footpath section from Catfield Fen to Johnny Crows Staithe is not formally part of this path. The Chairman thanked Mark King and Dan Hoare for their work on this project.

River Wensum Strategy

The partnership, led by Norwich City Council, formally adopted the strategy earlier this year, however the launch event is still to take place. The Broads Authority is due to finish the New Mills canoe portage project soon and other Broads Authority projects in the strategy are in the pipeline.

Staithe Report

Tom Williamson approved final amendments with all parties concerned. Marie-Pierre Tighe is waiting to receive the final report from Tom Williamson and will arrange for it to go onto the Broads Authority website.

The Chairman explained that the report is a historical research document and does not provide information on current status or use of all staithe. He also explained that there is not necessarily a link between staithe ownership and staithe rights, granted under the Enclosure Awards. Rights for public staithe related to unloading and loading of goods by owners or occupiers of the parish, not the public.

The Chairman explained that the Environment Agency owns many staithe, passed to them via historical changes in organisations responsible for their ownership and protection. The Forum agreed their role is to ensure that the Environment Agency is aware of the importance of staithe and their role in protecting access rights to them. The Forum agreed to send the EA a reminder of their responsibilities for staithe along with a copy of the staithe report and to provide a copy of the letter to Norfolk LAF.

The Forum agreed that further work should include identifying the current status and use of staithe in the Broads. They agreed to include discussion on the scope of such work and who should undertake it at the December Broads Local Access Forum.

Reedham permissive footpath

A small section of the Wherryman's Way at Reedham is shut for safety reasons. Users now have to walk along the road here instead. This is an unsatisfactory solution and is upsetting visitors and locals. The Parish Council is trying to negotiate a permissive path agreement with the landowner but they are not making progress.

The Forum agreed that this is an important section of footpath and that the current diversion is not a long-term solution. The Forum therefore agreed to submit a formal advice letter to the Broads Authority with a recommendation to create a Public footpath under the S26 of the Highways Act 1980 for the 100m section of the Wherryman's Way footpath at Reedham.

The Chairman agreed to sign the letter on behalf of the Forum. The Forum suggested that Norfolk LAF should write a similar letter to Norfolk County Council.

Definitive Map Modifications

The Vice-Chairman of Norfolk LAF presented a tabled paper on Definitive Map Modifications applications listed on the Norfolk County Council website. The British Horse Society, the Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society along with individuals have submitted 75 applications that are awaiting determination. Most are from 2015 onwards. The website does not show any information about completions. The paper also explains the process for registration of DMMs. The Forum noted the risk of losing evidence if the process gets delayed.

Norfolk County Council are struggling to fund the staffing resource to deal with the backlog and this is likely to become more challenging the nearer the 2026 deadline gets as more applications come in. Norfolk is not atypical; other councils have similar issues.

The Ramblers have a dedicated team working on DMM applications.

Norfolk LAF's Visions and Ideas group is looking into whether Public Rights of Way could benefit from some of the £12 million a year that goes to coastal footpaths. Visitor donation schemes, such as Love the Broads, might also be able to help.

5. Membership updates

Vice-Chairman

Alec Hartley resigned from BLAF for personal reasons. Electing the Chairman and Vice-Chairman usually takes place at the December meeting of the Broads Local Access Forum, but the Forum needs an interim Vice-Chairman in the meantime.

Stephen Read nominated Mike Flett as interim Vice-Chairman. The Forum voted unanimously and Mike Flett agreed to take on the role until December 2019.

Broads Authority restructure

Marie-Pierre Tighe explained structural changes to staffing at the Broads Authority. The Senior Waterways Recreation Officer (SWRO) role is vacant. Dan Hoare, Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment will manage the role which now sits in the Operations Directorate. Some other changes result from a mini-restructure with two roles removed from the structure (the Head of Strategy and Projects and the Waterways and Recreation Officer).

During the transitional period until the replacement to the SWRO is in post, both Marie-Pierre Tighe and Dan Hoare will cover access issues and attend Broads Local Access Forum meetings. Lottie Carlton will continue to provide administration support for the Forum.

Comments and answers to questions

- The SWRO role sits better in the Operations Directorate in regards to getting support from operational staff in the delivery of Broads Integrated Access Strategy actions. The strategic aspects of the role will continue, supported by Dan Hoare and a new role created to provide support on strategic issues (Head of Governance).
- Forum members feel the Authority is losing too much knowledge and experience and that access will not receive the same priority. Marie-Pierre Tighe assured members this is not the case, that the Authority will continue to support access issues. The objectives of the changes are to increase the efficiency of the service delivery, with support from different areas of the Authority.
- The reason for the changes is to increase resilience and efficiencies, streamline resources in a better way and to deliver more relevant, consistent and cost-efficient services to the Authority.

- Dan Hoare's team includes four supervisors responsible for coordinating footpath maintenance and work on capital projects. It also includes Environment Officers who work on the impacts on conservation, protected species, sites and moorings.
- The SWRO role will need to attract quality applicants and the Authority will appreciate any help the Forum can provide with advertising the vacancy when it goes live in the autumn.

The Chairman thanked Simon Hooton and Mark King for their work over the years.

Forum membership

The Broads Local Access Forum membership needs a minimum of 10 members and a maximum of 22. Currently there are 12 members. The Authority is due to appoint one more member in July to replace Melanie Vigo de Gallidoro.

Martin Symons has offered advise/input regarding disability access issues, but not as a full-time member of the Forum.

Marie-Pierre Tighe agreed to investigate bringing forward the recruitment process for new members to the Forum.

6. Broads Integrated Access Strategy update

The Waterways and Recreation Officer gave a presentation updating the Forum on the revised Broads Integrated Access Strategy.

A key strategy is easier mobility for all including sensory provision with a focus on access for all, River Wensum Strategy projects, partnership working, NAIP Broads projects and Suffolk ROWIP.

A list of completed projects shows progress made.

Actions for the new strategy include 40 identified projects around the seven major rivers. The Authority hopes to dedicate the How Hill footpath to George Saunders.

The mooring part of the strategy will go to Navigation Committee for approval.

The whole strategy will go to full Authority in July for adoption.

Comments and answers to questions

- Rollesby Broad platforms – Broads Angling Services Group is signing a lease agreement with Norfolk Wildlife Trust and is seeking funding from local businesses to help fund replacement platforms.
- Whitlingham Charitable Trust is generating an angling access strategy and project at Whitlingham Country Park linked to the River Wensum Strategy.
- The revised Broads Integrated Access Strategy includes information about successes, but there should also be recognition of when things did not go to plan to learn from these situations. The Broads Authority's Project Development Group uses project

evaluation forms that include lessons learnt. It is useful to engage with landowners, licencing bodies and others early on to avoid delays. It is also useful to include contingency funds to allow for unforeseen changes to projects.

- The SWRO and WRO evaluated the Broads Integrated Access Strategy project list using 'wish list' ideas from Forum members and the Broads Engage event. They only included projects that were realistic and achievable. Feedback following on from the Broads Engage workshop is on the Broads Authority website.
- A traffic light system would help to rate the feasibility of projects. The Authority agreed to provide an update of the action list including a traffic light rating system.

Mr Chris Yardley proposed formally accepting the revised Broads Integrated Access Strategy and Mr Stephen Read seconded this. The Forum agreed unanimously. The strategy will now go to Navigation Committee and then on to Broads Authority for adoption.

7. Draft Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2018-19

The Forum suggested the following changes to the membership list:

- Include Alec Hartley as Vice-Chairman with dates and then Mike Flett as Interim Vice-Chairman.
- Include George Saunders, but without contact details included.
- Removed 2.7 from the contents.

8. Any other business

None.

9. Date of next meeting

Due to the vacant SWRO role the Forum agreed to holding a shorter meeting on the 04 September 2019.

The Authority agreed to arrange a visit to the Aston Rowant National Access Land Centre when the new recruit is in post, potentially at the end of Sept/beginning of October.

The next meeting of the Broads Local Access Forum would be held on 4 September 2019 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62 – 64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1

Declaration of interests Broads Local Access Forum, 05 June 2019

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
None	n/a	n/a