

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 04 September 2019

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Present

Keith Bacon in the Chair, Linda Aspland, Louis Baugh, Harry Blathwayt, Liz Brooks, Robin Buxton, Mike Flett, Tony Gibbons, Peter Mason, John Murray, Steven Read, Richard Webb, Chris Yardley

In attendance

Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer, Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services, Louis Treloar – Waterways and Recreation Officer, Mike Edwards – Norfolk FWAG, Chris Ward – Reedham Parish Council, Ken Hawkins – Norfolk Local Access Forum.

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies received from Kelvin Allen, Dawn Hatton, Tim Harris.

The Chairman welcomed new members Linda Aspland, Harry Blathwayt, John Murray and Julie Brociek-Coulton, along with the new Waterways and Recreation Officer Lewis Treloar, Mike Edwards from Norfolk FWAG, Ken Hawkins from the Norfolk Local Access Forum, and Chris Ward from Reedham Parish Council.

New members introduced themselves with a short background on their experience and interests on access issues in the Broads.

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were declared at this point of the meeting. Louis Baugh and Keith Bacon declared an interest at item 4 as Trustees of the Broads Trust regarding the Trust's agreement to contribute funding to Reedham Parish Council towards the Reedham permissive footpath landowner agreement. Louis Baugh declared an interest at item 6 regarding his membership of FWAG and as a landowner under countryside stewardship.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 5 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

How Hill footpath

Members reported that the newly opened How Hill footpath was very good. Some anglers reported boats mooring at the 'no mooring' sign near Clay Rack Mill.

DH agreed to ask the Broads Authority Rangers to make checks on the 'no mooring' situation near Clay Rack Mill and report back.

River Wensum Strategy

Marie-Pierre Tighe will attend the River Wensum Strategy Steering Group meeting on 24 September 2019 at Norwich City Council.

Staithe Report

The final version of the Staithe Report is now available to view online at www.broads-authority.gov.uk/looking-after/managing-land-and-water/staithe-of-the-broads. It includes minor amendments, satisfying parish and town council concerns.

Forum members will discuss potential further work related to staithe at their next meeting.

Reedham permissive footpath

A small section of the Wherryman's Way long distance footpath is closed at Reedham for safety reasons. The Broads Local Access Forum gave formal advice to the Broads Authority that they should use their powers to force a public right of way creation order for this section of footpath. Following input from Reedham Parish Council, the Authority discussed this advice at their 26 July meeting and resolved to continue discussions with Norfolk County Council, Reedham Parish Council and the landowner.

Chris Ward, a representative from Reedham Parish Council, joined the meeting at this point to give an update to the Forum as follows:

- Meetings between Reedham Parish Council and the landowner began in 2017.
- A sub-committee now deals with negotiations on behalf of the parish council.
- Achievements include production of a draft agreement including formal specifications of required work, Environment Agency bespoke licences, £20k funding secured from four different sources including the Broads Trust, formal tendering and selection of a contractor, vegetation and dyke clearance and surface levelling, and offers to the land owner to purchase the land.
- Reedham residents have volunteered to carry out maintenance of the footpath.
- The only remaining area the landowner does not agree with is management of dogs off leads, due to concerns about livestock on adjoining land.
- A meeting is due on 17 October between Reedham Parish Council sub-committee and the landowner.

The Broads Authority agreed for an officer to attend a meeting with Reedham Parish Council and report back to the Forum.

Comments and answer to questions

- Norfolk Local Access Forum discussed the issue and expressed support for a resolution to this matter.
- The Broads Authority and the Forum congratulated Reedham Parish Council on their efforts to date.

5. Broads Local Access Forum - terms of reference

Marie-Pierre Tighe gave a presentation on the Broads Local Access Forum's terms of reference and noted that the Forum's constitution needs to be refreshed to include up-to-date information. Any amendments would need to be agreed by the Broads Authority in consultation with the Forum.

Forum minutes are included in the Broads Authority agendas, and Authority members who are also Forum members can highlight any issues and report back to the Forum.

Forum members agreed to provide feedback and suggestions on amendments to the Broads Local Access Forum constitution via email. A draft will be discussed at a future meeting.

6. Norfolk FWAG presentation on local access agreements

Mike Edwards, Business Manager for Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Service (Norfolk FWAG), gave a presentation on local access agreements.

FWAG is a not-for-profit organisation that encourages farmers to carry out conservation measures on their farms. Norfolk FWAG and the Norfolk Local Access Forum have been working together to look at putting in access agreements on local paths that were permissive paths as part of farmers' agri-environment schemes.

As agri-environment schemes ended, permissive path agreements and financial support for their maintenance also ended. Following a spending review, the Government withdrew funding for new permissive path agreements as part of new agri-environment schemes. Some farmers still allow the public to use these previous permissive paths, while many others are lost to public access.

Norfolk FWAG is working on getting together locals, parish councils and landowners to review paths included in previous agri-environment schemes and soon to end schemes. The process involves highlighting paths which are, or were, popular with the public and then assisting with drafting new agreements and payments from the parish council to the landowner for maintenance and putting up signs, including a map of footpaths in the area, what can be seen, and dos and don'ts when using the paths. This method worked successfully in Bradenham and Swanton Morley.

Norfolk FWAG is also involved in the Test and Trial stage of new ELMS, Defra's proposals for new agri-environment schemes, after current schemes are due to end in 2024. It is hoped to persuade Defra of the importance of permissive access paths as part of such agreements. This fits with ELMS principles of 'public money for public goods'.

Norfolk FWAG is also looking into alternative options for keeping permissive paths open such as business sponsorship or permits to use schemes.

Comments and answers to questions

- Footpaths seemed very wide in previous schemes due to management practices for field edges. There is no specific width requirement for local access agreements.

- This is an issue in other parts of the country but, as seen in the presentation statistics, Norfolk and Suffolk have more to lose, hence the reason Norfolk FWAG is piloting this work. The model can be used in other areas.
- Parish council payments to landowners will vary dependent on the length of path, where it is, what the footfall is and other considerations. The agreement is negotiated between the parish council and the landowner.
- The local access agreements are legally binding for 5 years, but protect the landowner property rights if a landowner sells the piece of land.
- Permissive path agreements were funded entirely from the UK treasury and not match-funded from the EU, which influenced the decision to not include permissive paths in newer schemes.
- While the two successful Norfolk FWAG schemes only involved footpaths, this does not preclude inclusion of bridleways in any future schemes. It is however dependent on securing landowner agreements.
- Parish councils can contact Norfolk FWAG or Norfolk LAF with any suggested areas. The number that can be taken on is dependent on contacts, expertise and officer time.
- So far there are no parishioner complaints regarding spending rate payer's money on footpath schemes.
- Paths which only exist for part of the year are not suitable for permissive path agreements.

Mike Edwards agreed to circulate Broads data on permissive footpaths.

7. Any other business

Broads Authority 24-hour moorings – mooring and angling priorities

Broads Authority 24-hour mooring signs request anglers to give way to boaters mooring up. Formal adoption of this policy was made 14 years ago. It was noted that at a specific site this sign is at odds with other angling restrictions.

Dan Hoare agreed to clarify with Tony Gibbons the matter of standard wording on 24-hour mooring signs and its applicability at all locations.

Aston Rowant National Land Access Centre visit

Staff at the centre have agreed to show Broads Local Access Forum members around the site. It is based in Oxfordshire and the journey time is approximately 2¾ hours from Norwich.

Lewis Treloar agreed to organise a trip to the Aston Rowant Centre, should sufficient numbers be interested in going.

Canoes and kayak launch sites

As the Broads Authority does not own bank sides it cannot make a blanket ruling on where canoes and kayaks can launch. There is information on the Visit the Broads website highlighting hire centres and paddle guide maps for each area.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Broads Local Access Forum is 04 December 2019 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62 – 64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting ended at 15:30.

Signed by

Chairman

Summary of progress

Outstanding actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Broads Authority Rangers to make checks on the no mooring situation near Clay Rack Mill and report back	04/09/2019	Dan Hoare
Discuss potential further work related to staites at the 4 December meeting	05/06/2019	BLAF members
BA officer to attend a meeting with Reedham parish council and report back to the Forum	04/09/2019	Lewis Treloar
Forum members to provide feedback and suggestions on amendments to the Broads Local Access Constitution	04/09/2019	BLAF members
Circulate Broads data on permissive footpaths	04/09/2019	Mike Edwards
Discuss matter related to signs wording with Tony Gibbons	04/09/2019	Dan Hoare
Organise a trip to the Aston Rowant Centre	04/09/2019	Lewis Treloar

Appendix 1 - Declaration of interests Broads Local Access Forum, 04 September 2019

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest
Louis Baugh	4	Trustee of Broads Trust
Keith Bacon	4	Trustee of Broads Trust
Louis Baugh	7	Member of FWAG and landowner under countryside stewardship