

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 01 September 2021

Contents

1.	Apologies for absence and welcome	2
2.	Declarations of interest	2
3.	Appointment of Vice Chair	2
4.	Minutes of the Broads Local Access Forum meeting held on 9 June 2021	2
5.	Summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions at previous meetings	2
	Riverbank maintenance at Potter Heigham	2
	Staithes report	3
	Lost Paths in the Broads	3
	Open water swimming	3
6.	Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)	3
7.	Integrated Access Strategy: Update	5
	Strumpshaw permissive routes	5
	Gillingham FP14	6
	Herringfleet Hills	6
	Halvergate marshes	6
	Bungay Staithe	6
8.	Opening access to EA owned banks: Update	6
9.	AOB	7
	Membership	7
	Face to face meetings	7
10.	Date of next meeting	7
	Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests Broads Local Access Forum, 01 September 2021	8

Present

Keith Bacon – in the Chair, Linda Aspland, Richard Atkins, Harry Blathwayt, Christine Cane, Peter Dixon, Tony Gibbons, Tim Harris, Dawn Hatton, John Murray, Steve Read, Michael Scott.

In attendance

Dan Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Ecology, Andrea Kelly – Environment Policy Adviser, Kylie Moos – Administrative Officer, Lewis Treloar – Waterways and Recreation Officer, Martin Sullivan – Norfolk Local Access Forum.

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

There have been two appointments to the Forum since the last meeting. The Broads Authority appointees were confirmed as Harry Blathwayt and Michael Scott. The Chair welcomed both members to the meeting.

Apologies received from Louis Baugh, Katie Baxter, Peter Mason, Paul Saunders.

2. Declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered and set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

3. Appointment of Vice Chair

Peter Dixon was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Broads Local Access Forum. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously to appoint Peter Dixon to this role.

4. Minutes of the Broads Local Access Forum meeting held on 9 June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions at previous meetings

Riverbank maintenance at Potter Heigham

Significant improvements to the riverbanks at Potter Heigham were reported after a site visit in May. 80% of the fly tipping which was left in between the bungalows has now been removed.

Dan Hoare contacted the Environment Agency to discuss the maintenance, a Forum member also raised the issue at Potter Heigham Parish Council. It is not clear who removed the litter, but it was agreed that no further actions need to take place at this time.

Staithe report

The Chair has written to the Environment Agency asking for their opinion on the staithe report but has not yet received a response. A follow up phone call will take place with David Horsfall.

Lost Paths in the Broads

This item is still to be discussed at the Norfolk Local Access Forum. It was agreed to raise this item at a future meeting.

Open water swimming

The first meeting has been held with the Broads Authority Head of Rangers, Head of Safety Management, Waterways & Recreation Officer and two representatives from the Forum to discuss current guidance and suggest ways to improve how open water swimming is conducted in the Broads. Initially the meetings will remain small whilst the scope and role of the Broads Authority is being defined, before inviting additional members to a sub-group meeting.

Any trial areas will also need to consider legal liabilities and protection for landowners should an incident occur on the water. The next meeting is due to take place in October.

Lewis Treloar is currently working with a group at Oulton Broad who are looking to section off an area exclusively for the use of open water swimming on designated event times and days. A member cautioned that individuals may still turn up outside of the designated times. A trial needs to consider the random nature of people's choices of when and where to swim.

6. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

Andrea Kelly, Environment Policy Adviser for the Broads Authority provided a presentation on Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) to the Forum. The three-year funded programme will provide financial support to farmers and other land managers. The Broads Authority will be working with Norfolk Coast Partnership for a joined-up approach.

Protected Landscapes

Across England and Wales there are 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - covering nearly 25% of land in England. They:

- provide a range of habitats for an array of wildlife
- support rural communities – attracting 260 million visitors per year
- play an important role in our health and wellbeing

Objectives

1. Be delivered by farmers, working in partnership with Protected Landscapes and key land management advice partners
2. Address key challenges - help improve, and prevent damage to, the landscape

3. A bottom up approach - projects proposed by farmers, and approved by Local Panels, which will support Protected Landscapes' local priorities
4. Additional investment - it will work alongside, not in competition with, existing schemes and add value where it is most needed

The programme will:

1. Be delivered by farmers, working in partnership with Protected Landscapes and key land management advice partners
2. Run from July 2021 to March 2024
3. Receive applications between 1 July 2021 and 31 January 2022 for funding in the first year of the programme

Who can apply

The programme is open to all farmers and land managers within the Protected Landscapes. It could also support activity on other land, where a project will benefit a Protected Landscape or its body's objectives or partnership initiatives.

Applicants must manage all land in the application and have control of the activities being proposed or have obtained written consent.

Four themes of the Programme

Climate – Including reducing flood risk and more carbon stored/sequestered

Nature – Including greater habitat connectivity and biodiversity

People- including greater public engagement in land management

Place-including conserving historic structures

The project must also support the priorities of the protected landscape body's management plan.

Funding

Applicants can apply for 100% of the costs of the project if no commercial gain can be made otherwise, a proportion of the costs. If the project is the same as a Countryside Stewardship (CS) activity, applicants will be paid the same as the CS rate. If not, they will be offered funding on the estimated costs.

How to apply

Applicants must contact the Protected Landscape to discuss the project before applying. Applications can be submitted from now until 31 January 2022 for the first year of the programme. Multi-year awards are possible, but all projects must end by March 2024.

After the agreement ends

Natural, cultural and access activities after the agreement period ends do not need to be maintained. Capital infrastructure such as fences, gates or restored buildings and machinery assets will need to be maintained 5 years from the completion date.

How applications will be assessed

Applications will be scored on the following:

- 40% for project outcomes - climate, nature, people and place
- 20% for value for money
- 20% for how sustainable the project is or the legacy it will leave
- 20% for how likely it is that the project will be carried out

Applications for over £5,000 will be judged by a local assessment panel. Under £5,000 will be scored by a senior team member.

Progress to date

£148,301 has been committed since the 1st July in the Broads. £79,053 is still available until 31 Jan 2021.

Comments and answers to questions

The Environment Agency have recently provided their conclusions on Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) on the River Ant. One of the proposals is the closure of the Witton and East Ruston public water supplies. The Environment Agency have announced that they do not have the money to carry the same study on the Bure and Thurne. A member asked if this type of study would be eligible for FiPL funding. Andrea Kelly responded that there is money for evidence gathering but the programme is aimed at farmers and landowners instead of public bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England. It was also noted that one of the successful Broads applications agreed funding towards a water storage reservoir in the Ant.

Parish councils, charities and trusts can apply for the funding, but the landowner will need to support the application. Maintenance towards recovering lost paths to the river is an example of a suitable project if the landowner was in agreement.

Bridleways and equestrian access can also be considered when discussing access and footpaths. Lewis Treloar requested examples of routes that could be widened are sent to him after the meeting.

7. Integrated Access Strategy: Update

Lewis Treloar presented a list of Integrated Access Strategy (IAS) projects which may be eligible for funding through FiPL if the landowner or land manager submits an application.

Strumpshaw permissive routes

A land manager has been in contact with the Broads Authority to discuss additional permissive routes around Strumpshaw. Discussions with the land manager are ongoing.

Gillingham FP14

Maintenance is required on 150m of FP14 in Gillingham which is underwater for most of the year. The Broads Authority, Norfolk Trails and the Environment Agency are working with the landowner to submit an application to restore the path. Once three quotes have been received for the work that needs to be carried out, the application will be submitted.

Herringfleet Hills

Through the Water, Mills and Marshes project additional paths and furniture have been identified for the area. Discussions with the land manager are ongoing.

Halvergate marshes

Through the EXPERIENCE project a number of improvements to footpaths at Halvergate Marshes are due to take place. There is section between Wickhampton to Polkey's Mill which have not been included in the EXPERIENCE project. A discussion with the landowner is required to consider the missing path.

Bungay Staithe

To reinstate the circular walk at Bungay Staithe a new access bridge is required. Match funding will be required due to the large costs of the project. The proposed access bridge would cross into the adjacent landowner's land. This plot of land is currently up for sale, and an application is unlikely to be submitted in the first year.

8. Opening access to EA owned banks: Update

Tony Gibbons provided an update to the Forum on the ownership of riverbanks on the River Thurne between Coldharbour Farm and Womack Water. Through Land Registry and copies of the land deeds, it has been confirmed that the riverbanks are not under the freehold of the Environment Agency and remain the responsibility of the landowner.

Some maintenance of the flood bank was previously maintained by sheep grazing, but this is apparently no longer the case.

Discussions between the Norwich and District Anglers Association (NDAA) and the landowner indicates that this riverbank could still be used for fishing by agreement. An additional agreement for a potential permissive path route for the general public and not just NDAA members would add significant value to public access in this location. NDAA members have their own public liability insurance when fishing from private land. A member of the public would not have the same cover if they were to fish from the riverbank.

Lewis Treloar reported that when locating fishing platforms throughout the Broads, a map of Environment Agency owned banks was obtained. The map shows platforms which have formalised access already in place. None were in the Coldharbour to Womack stretch.

Lewis Treloar agreed to add the creation of a permissive route between Coldharbour farm and Womack to the IAS project list.

9. AOB

Membership

A member noted that a response is due shortly from the government on the Landscapes review by Julian Glover. One of the recommendations is to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors to National Parks and AONBs. It was noted that the current membership of the Forum is not diverse, and increasing ethnic diversity is not mentioned in any member interests.

Lewis Treloar replied that during the advertisement for new Forum members in January 2021, the adverts were promoted to various groups including The Bridge Plus+ (a Norfolk based black/Asian and minority ethnic (BME) organisation), but unfortunately no responses were received. Norfolk Local Access Forum reported a similar response to their recent recruitment of members.

Dan Hoare confirmed two members are appointed to the Forum from the Broads Authority. The remaining members are appointed through a selection process including the Chair of the Forum and administered by Broads Authority officers. A member responded that is not made clear in the constitution that there are two routes for joining the Forum.

A member commented that it is the responsibility of all Forum members to increase the diversity of the membership. The Forum is about access, and access should be available for everyone.

Face to face meetings

Currently Forum meetings cannot take place at the Broads Authority offices due to reduction in meeting room capacity to remain Covid-19 secure. Some members expressed a preference of meeting face to face, and miss the informal discussions before and after the meeting. Meeting halls such Hickling Village hall were suggested for future meetings.

The next meeting is due to take place in the winter, when there is likely to be an increase in Covid-19 and other illnesses. The Forum agreed to hold the next meeting online, and consider face to face meetings in the Spring.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Broads Local Access Forum would be held via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 11.30am

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests Broads Local Access Forum, 01 September 2021

Member	Agenda/minute	Nature of interest