

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2012

Present

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Charles Swan	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Chris Yardley	Mr Peter Medhurst
Mr Gary Simons	Mr Stephen Read
Mr George Saunders	Mr Patrick Hacon
Mr Louis Baugh	Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies
Mr Mike Flett	

In Attendance

Nick Sanderson – Education Officer
Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Russell Wilson - Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Jo Eames – Administrative Officer

Also in Attendance

Peter Howes – Chairman, Three Rivers Way Association
Caroline Davison – Project Manager (Access and Interpretation),
St Benet's Abbey Project/Planning & Campaigns Manager, CPRE
Norfolk

3/1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Jo Lester, Mr Tony Howes, Mr David Broad and Ms Liz Brooks.

3/2 The Three Rivers Way Update

Louis Baugh and Mike Flett declared an interest in this item (see Appendix 1 for details).

The Chairman of the Three Rivers Way Association gave a presentation to the Forum updating them on the progress of the project, the aspiration of which was to create a shared use pathway linking Wroxham, Hoveton, Ludham and Potter Heigham. Although to date the project had 1,500 supporters, created a website and a newsletter, undertaken a feasibility study, produced a strategic business case, organised the Bluebell Wood Appeal and had a plan for a viewpoint at Ludham Bridge, they had not been able to

secure funding to create the pathway. Therefore the Association was considering whether defining and promoting a walking route from Hoveton to Potter Heigham would be a more viable alternative, especially as circular walks could be developed from the main route.

Following his presentation the Chairman of the Three Rivers Way Association responded to members' questions, reporting that:

- It had not been possible to secure funding from Norfolk County Council for the development of the shared use pathway. Although the Association was not able to provide a definitive cost for the project as a whole, the cost of the first section of pathway was £300,000, and the pathway consisted of three sections.
- Even in the current financial climate and taking into consideration the fact that not only was capital required to create the pathway but funding would also be required to maintain the pathway, the Association felt that, as there were no shared use pathways in Norfolk, this should not be used as an excuse to prevent the development of the pathway.
- The Association was happy to discuss the suggested route of the pathway with parish councils.
- The strategic business document for the pathway did not have any economic value but the pathway would have value to those who would use it as an amenity. Footfall was less in rural areas than in urban areas and there were no facilities available to assess how many people would use the path. It would however have an economic impact in relation to providing opportunities for the creation of refreshment places.

Members supported the idea of viewpoints along the pathway as it linked with the Forum's idea of hubs, places with a variety of amenities that could be appreciated by local people and visitors alike, such as Ludham Bridge and Womack Staithe. Members suggested a further site for a viewpoint would be at Horning Upper Street. The Forum suggested that promoting these hubs would be a good way forward. The Chairman of the Three Rivers Way Association stated that whilst it was easy to come up with ideas to promote the project, the difficulty was in moving the project forward.

3/3 St Benets Abbey Project Update

Louis Baugh and Mike Flett declared an interest in this item (see Appendix 1 for details).

The Project Manager for the St Benet's Abbey project updated the Forum on its progress.

Since the beginning of May, when the two year project began, the Project Manager had been connecting with the people the previous Project Manager had met during the development stage of the project.

At present the monument was in the process of being conserved, but as it was only possible to undertake this task during the summer months, the process would continue next year, on the low lying flint walls.

The Project Manager would be working with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Broads Authority to manage the site for wildlife. Physical access to the site would be improved with the creation, by the Authority, of a small car park on the site. Two all access paths would also be created, one from the car park to the windmill, and the other from the moorings to the windmill. It was noted that it was not the intension of the project to promote access to the site by car. Interpretation would be sensitively sited, and the use of QR codes would be explored. Walking, cycling and boating trails would be developed in collaboration with local people, and there would also be a virtual visit to the site.

Day schools and workshops, with the Abbey as the focal point, would be developed to enthuse local people to get involved with the project.

Links with boatyards would be developed and multiple location events would be organised.

Training would be provided for archive research, visitor surveys, guided walks, events, tours, etc.

At the end of the project it was hoped that local people would be interested in keeping the site alive with events, surveys, etc.

The Forum suggested that it might be possible to work with the river bus tour operators to incorporate St Benet's Abbey in their schedule of stops.

The Forum also suggested that the Three Rivers Way Association might be able to source funding if it linked in with the St Benet's Abbey project.

The Forum discussed the issue of access to St Benet's Abbey from Ludham Bridge with the Project Manager, confirming that as this issue was very important to the Forum, they would be happy to work with her to find a way forward. The SWRO stressed that it was important to continue to press for a resolution to the access issue from Ludham Bridge to St Benet's Abbey.

3/4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/5 Points of Information Arising from the Minutes

(1) Minute 2/4/2: Huddle

The SWRO confirmed that because members of the Forum had not attended the recent Huddle training day members were not able to keep up-to-date with the issues that were being raised on Huddle. However, if members were interested in joining Huddle now it was possible to do so as the number of members able to join had increased. The SWRO noted that Huddle was a medium for Local Access Forums to use rather than a tool to be used by local authority staff. The Forum therefore requested that Natural England be questioned as to how, nationally, successful Huddle was, and that Natural England's response be discussed at the next meeting.

(2) Minute 2/4/5: Memorial Bench for Laurie Ritchie Update

The SWRO reported that members had requested that if furniture was to be included within the St Benet's Abbey project, a memorial plaque from the Forum be incorporated. The Project Manager agreed to take this into consideration.

(3) Minute 2/4/6: Access to St Benet's Abbey

Mike Flett declared an interest in this item.

The SWRO reported that a meeting between interested parties in the area was being arranged for early July. The SWRO had been invited to the meeting and would report any outcomes to the Forum. Louis Baugh requested that he attend the meeting, as he represented a number of interested parties.

The Forum felt that if a solution was not agreed at the meeting a mechanism for seeking the determination of a right of way needed to be agreed, either by proving the existence of a right of way or gaining agreement to create a new right of way.

The Forum suggested that the Authority obtain the lease details from the Land Registry.

The Forum also suggested that a direct application to the Environment Agency would be advisable.

The Forum noted that it might be possible for the local parish council to circulate a request to parishioners for historic evidence relating to the existence of a right of way through the boatyard.

The SWRO concluded by confirming that this access issue had been given a high priority by the Forum in the Integrated Access Strategy, and would create a link to an existing permissive route.

3/6 CPRE Norfolk's Protect our Paths Campaign

The Planning and Campaigns Manager for CPRE Norfolk reported that a leaflet had been produced explaining how the reduction in funding by Norfolk County Council would affect footpath maintenance, what CPRE Norfolk was doing in response and how people could get involved. A workshop in September had been organised to draw together existing footpath wardens and those interested in becoming footpath wardens, to enable CPRE Norfolk to consolidate a network of footpath wardens. Also, as part of the campaign, CPRE Norfolk hoped to appoint a Community Engagement Officer and was waiting for confirmation as to whether it had secured funding for a footpath celebration. CPRE Norfolk was also working in partnership with the Ramblers Association.

The Forum noted that the campaign was in direct response to Norfolk County Council's decision to reduce funding for footpath maintenance. However, a similar campaign was taking place in Suffolk.

The Forum suggested that CPRE Norfolk could link in with the 'Pride in Norfolk' award.

The Forum noted that they needed to encourage all parish councils to get involved in the campaign.

The Forum suggested an alternative would be for volunteer groups to maintain footpaths across the Broads area, similar to Broadsword, a Broads Society volunteer group that undertook bank side tree maintenance in the winter months with the Authority to ensure the rivers were navigable.

The SWRO reported that the Authority was currently recruiting volunteers and would invite the Volunteer Coordinator to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

3/7 Improvements to the Policy and Legal Framework for Public Rights of Way Consultation

The SWRO provided members with a summary of the recently published Defra consultation regarding potential improvements to the policy and legal framework for recording and making changes to public rights of way. The report dealt with a series of recommendations which arose from proposals put forward by Natural England's stakeholder working group on unrecorded rights of way and asked for members' comments on some of the specific questions raised in the consultation document.

The Chairman explained the importance of the 'List of Streets', a document indicating which of the roads in England the county councils recognised as

highways they were responsible for. As parish councils might not have access to this document, they might not be aware of which roads the county councils maintained and which they did not, and they would need this information to be able to ascertain which roads needed to be registered and therefore protected. The document might not have been updated since it was produced in the 1920s, although a road designated as a highway would automatically be covered by the Highways Act.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be noted; and
- (ii) that the following points be included in the Forum's consultation response:

Point 2.1

The removal of the cut off date or, if this was not possible, a decision on how to progress needed to be agreed with an agreed process for late registrations. County councils needed to be pro-active in recording current rights of way registration requests to meet the cut off date.

Point 2.2

Parish councils should be sent the 'List of Streets' and an up-to-date copy of the definitive map with a questionnaire so they can establish which routes they need to register. It needs to be made clear who would send the information out, who would collate the information and what questions needed to be asked.

The wording needed to be changed from

'...to show that they were in continuous use at the time of the cut off date.'

to

'... to show that they had been rights of way at any time prior to the cut off date or had been in use since the passing of the Act.'

Historic evidence should be collated to prove routes had been in use since the passing of the Act.

Point 2.4

Norfolk County Council needed to devote adequate staff time to the maps team. The response should also refer to Suffolk County Council.

Point 2.5

The Forum supported this proposal as they felt it would speed up the recording process.

Point 2.6

All rights of way needed to be protected. The SWRO reported that Broads routes that lead to staithe or ferry crossings would be included in the Authority's response. The Forum noted that these routes needed to be vehicular.

Point 3.2 (i)

The Forum questioned the cost to the authorities.

Point 3.2 (ii)

The Forum agreed that this was appropriate for the authorities to undertake, but that it must not enable them to decide that an objection was irrelevant. The Forum therefore suggested that the wording be changed from

'...any irrelevant objections.'

to

'...any irrelevant or vexatious objections.'

Point 4.4

The Forum supported Option C.

The Forum endorsed the recommendations in the report. Therefore the SWRO agreed to liaise with the Forum's Chairman to produce a response.

The Forum requested that the response be sent to the Norfolk Local Access Forum, Ray Walpole and George Saunders.

The Forum also requested that the response be sent to the Regional Local Access Forum Coordinator for the East of England with a request for copies of other Local Access Forum responses.

3/8 Annual Report of the Local Access Forum

The Forum considered the draft Annual Report which would be presented to the Broads Authority at its meeting in July. The report set out the key matters considered by the Broads Local Access Forum during the last year relating to the development and improvement of public access to land and water for open-air recreation and enjoyment. The report also contained other information suggested in the Government's recent guidance.

A copy of the Annual Report would also be forwarded to Natural England and the Forum discussed the proforma that Natural England had requested members complete to accompany their copy of the Annual Report.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Forum approves the draft report for submission to the Broads Authority meeting; and
- (ii) that the proforma be re-sent to the Forum and that members comments relating to the proforma be forwarded to the SWRO, the WRO or the administrative officer. The SWRO would then complete the proforma in collaboration with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman and forward it to Natural England with the Annual Report.

3/9 Paths for Communities Update

The SWRO reported that the application form to register projects was now available on Natural England's website. The SWRO, noting that only community projects would be eligible, agreed to circulate copies of the form and the associated documents to the Forum. The Forum requested that copies also be sent to the Clerk of Thorpe St Andrew Town Council and the Chairman of the Three Rivers Way Association.

It was noted that Norfolk County Council would need to approve any project and that a forward plan relating to the ongoing maintenance of the project would need to be ascertained.

The SWRO felt that it was worthwhile, although it did appear to be quite an onerous application process.

3/10 Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan Update

The SWRO gave a presentation to the Forum updating them of the progress on the Integrated Access Strategy, reporting that the Forum's comments regarding the prioritisation of projects in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan had been incorporated. Following the completion of the access elements of the work, GIS maps had been produced to illustrate, in layers, the information that had been collated, including land designations, the rights of way network, moorings, slipways, etc. Information relating to amenities, accessible paths and cultural heritage would also be added to the maps.

The Forum requested that Grade 1 buildings be considered as a further addition to the maps.

The WRO explained that at present the maps could only be produced in a jpeg format, so for public access greater functionality would need further investigation.

3/11 Broads Outdoors Festival Update

The Education Officer gave a presentation to the Forum updating them on the success of the recent Festival, noting that, since not all of the questionnaires from the Festival had been collated, it was only an interim update at this stage.

The EDP was the media partner for the Festival and produced 60,000 brochures which were circulated with the 2 May edition of the EDP. 150 events had taken place and 55 organisations had taken part. 600 people had attended the Horsey Mill Centenary weekend, 900 had attended the Norfolk Wildlife Trust event at Barton Turf and 400 had attended the Green Boat Show.

The Forum felt that the EDP publicity was a great asset to the event.

3/12 Deal Ground Update

The SWRO reported that the planning application was currently with Norwich City Council. Although it included a pedestrian bridge to link the Deal Ground and the Utility Site, it did not propose a link to Whitlingham Country Park. The Authority would support the application as long as appropriate navigation considerations were in place.

The Forum requested that the Authority press for a link from the Deal Ground to Whitlingham Country Park. The SWRO agreed to raise this with both Norwich City Council and Authority's Planning Officers.

The Forum questioned whether the Forum could arrange a meeting with the Authority and the Whitlingham Trustees to discuss the possibility of expanding the use of the Park for disabled visitors. George Saunders suggested that the Forum contact the Norfolk Coalition to ascertain what disabled visitors wanted.

The Head of Strategy and Projects reported that the Whitlingham estate and the Whitlingham Trustees were currently running a competition regarding the development of the site and the surrounding area. He believed a public consultation event was soon to take place and he would ask if Forum members could attend at the next Whitlingham Charitable Trust meeting.

3/13 Broads Forum Update

Peter Medhurst reported that the main items discussed by the Broads Forum on 5 April 2012 included a strategic look at the current drought conditions in the Broads and how national park authority members were appointed.

3/14 Any Other Business

Ferry Crossing at Burgh St Peter

Charles Swan reported on the inauguration of a new ferry crossing on the River Waveney at Burgh St Peter, which took place on 26 May. It had been a great success and was a terrific facility that opened up the area for cyclists and walkers.

The Forum suggested that Carlton Marshes signage, and a cycle and pedestrian route from Burgh St Peter to Reedham Ferry, be added to the Integrated Access Strategy prioritisation list.

3/15 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 September 2012 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman

