

Broads Authority

Minutes of the remote meeting held on 25 June 2020

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Present

Bill Dickson – in the Chair, Kelvin Allen, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Matthew Bradbury, Gail Harris, Andree Gee, Lana Hemsall, Tristram Hilborn, Tim Jickells, Bruce Keith, James Knight, Leslie Mogford, Greg Munford, Simon Roberts, Matthew Shardlow, Nicky Talbot, Vic Thomson, Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, Fran Whymark.

Also present

Hilary Slater – Monitoring Officer in waiting

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Steven Bell – Monitoring Officer, Andrew Farrell – WMM Programme Manager, Bill Housden – Collector of Tolls, Emma Krelle – Chief Financial Officer, Harry Mach – CANAPE Project Manager, Rob Rogers – Director of Operations, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services, Maria Conti – Head of Governance (minute taker), Essie Guds – Governance Officer (meeting moderator), Sarah Mullarney – Governance Officer (meeting moderator).

1. Apologies and welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this additional meeting of the Broads Authority, including members of the public viewing the live stream.

Apologies were received from Simon Sparrow.

2. Chairman's announcements

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and provisions of The Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings England and Wales) Regulations no. 392.

The Chairman reminded members that the meeting was being held under the provisions of the above regulations and in accordance with the Broads Authority's Standing Orders for remote meeting procedures agreed on 22 May 2020. The meeting was being live streamed and recorded and the Broads Authority retained the copyright. The minutes remained the record of the meeting.

General proceedings

The Chairman took it that Members had read the papers and the emphasis would be on asking questions and debating the issues.

3. Introduction of members and declarations of interest

The Chairman welcomed Gail Harris, returning to the Authority as Norwich City Council's appointed member. He also welcomed Hilary Slater, who was attending the meeting as an

observer and in relation to item 16 on the agenda. The Chairman asked for members' approval to allow Mrs Slater to remain for the exempt items, and this was agreed.

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

4. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

6. Minutes of Broads Authority meeting held on 22 May 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

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

Member appointments: It was confirmed that Gail Harris was appointed to the Planning Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). Matthew Shardlow had been invited to join ARC but wished to gain more experience as an Authority member before considering this.

The Authority noted the schedule of progress following decisions of previous meetings. The Chief Executive reported that the Management Team's focus during the C-19 lockdown was on keeping staff and volunteers safe while maintaining services; supporting the return of private and hire boating; and negotiating with Defra on financial support to offset the impacts of the lockdown on the Authority and the hire boat industry. A progress report on strategic priorities and wider activities would be brought to the next Authority meeting, and the Authority's involvement in the UK Green Recovery Plan and Net Zero with Nature would be reported in September. All this work would feed into the Broads Plan review, due to begin next year.

8. CANAPE

The CANAPE Project Manager gave a presentation on the progress of this EU partnership project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a sustainable peatland economy. The planned partnership meeting in the Broads earlier this year was rescheduled to the autumn, depending on the C-19 situation.

The first work package involved creating a hectare of new reed swamp and a still water refuge area in Hickling Broad. A geotextile tube barrier had been installed and the area infilled with

15,000m³ of sediment. A further 4000m³ would be pumped in this winter before the area was planted. The project was also trialling a new method of DNA testing for *Prymnesium*.

The second work package was the sustainable and marketable future for peatlands through paludiculture (wet agriculture). Trial projects included farming sphagnum moss for, among other things, compost and upland bog restoration; using reed litter as a soil improver; and producing charcoal from waste wood, which was being sold locally. Other work included digital mapping of peat soil cores and an environmental education programme with local high school students.

The Project Manager confirmed that the Brexit withdrawal agreement was to maintain current levels of funding to the end of the project in 2023.

The Chairman commented on the positive and varied elements of the project. A member referred to other regional fen projects on carbon capture, carbon sequestration and paludiculture, and it was confirmed that the vision for the Broads was linked to the Peatland Strategy, ELMS tests and trials, Broadland Catchment Partnership work and a potential pilot scheme with other peatland national parks.

The Environment Policy Adviser reported that commercial profits from paludiculture products were small scale and would need more investment to expand. The focus at this stage was to access funding for industries such as reed and sedge cutting to maintain both their viability and nature gains. A member referred to the challenge of competing water demand, particularly in the Upper Thurne.

9. Water Mills and Marshes (WMM) Project

The Programme Manager gave a progress report on the Water, Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Scheme. Multiple partnership projects were in place in environmental education, community engagement, landscape conservation, and heritage skills training and mill restoration. Projects on hold during the COVID-19 lockdown would hopefully restart in the Autumn, and a member site visit was suggested.

In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that a local conservation group would be taking on the maintenance of the circular walk project at Acle and the historic pillboxes would be made secure.

10. The Port Marine Safety Code: To consider any items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

The Director of Operations reported on a serious incident the previous day when a boat caught fire on a private mooring.

11. Minutes received

The Chairman assumed that members had read these minutes and invited any questions.

It was resolved to receive and note the minutes from:

[Broads Local Access Forum – 4 December 2020](#)

[Navigation Committee – 16 January 2020](#)

12. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

13. Formal questions

There were no formal questions of which notice had been given.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held remotely on **Friday 24 July at 10.00am**.

15. Exclusion of the public

A member asked for clarification on the exempt nature of item 17 and requested the item be discussed in public session. The Chairman explained that, while the report itself did not contain exempt material, it was likely to lead to discussion on matters of commercial and financial sensitivity to hire boat businesses and their staff. Some members suggested the discussion should be in public until deemed necessary to move into private session, and others felt the full session should be private to allow free and frank discussion.

The Chairman called for a vote to suspend live streaming and go into private session. The vote was 12 for, 7 against and 1 abstention.

The Authority **resolved** to exclude the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public benefit in disclosing the information.

The live stream recording of the meeting was suspended at 11.33.

16. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

The report was received containing exempt information seeking the Authority's approval for the appointment of Monitoring Officer.

Andree Gee proposed, seconded by Tim Jickells, and

It was resolved unanimously

To approve the appointment of Mrs Hilary Slater as the Authority's Monitoring Officer with effect from 26 June 2020.

To delegate to the Chief Executive, the authority to negotiate and enter into a Section 113 Agreement with East Suffolk Council to allow Mrs Slater and Mr Bing to work for the Broads Authority, whilst remaining East Suffolk Council employees.

and

To thank Mr Steven Bell for his services as Monitoring Officer.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Slater. It was confirmed that Mr Bell would continue to provide expert planning advice to the Authority.

17. Response to the COVID-19 and the financial position of the Broads Authority and local businesses

The exempt report was received regarding the Authority's approach in response to impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on the Authority and local businesses.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Authority supports the approach for hire boat charges in 2020/21 outlined in the report following consultation with the Navigation Committee on 11 June 2020.**
- (ii) To authorise the Chief Executive to negotiate and sign a Change Control Notice to the Authority's Funding Agreement with Defra on the lines set out in paragraph 2.2. of the report, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Navigation Committee, and subsequent circulation of the document to members for comment.**

The meeting ended at 13.25.

Signed by

Chairman

Appendix 1 – Declaration of interests Broads Authority, 25 June 2020

| Member | Agenda/minute | Nature of interest |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| Gail Harris | 7 | Member of Norwich City Council, Director of Forum Trust |
| James Knight | 17 | Hire boat operator |
| Greg Munford | 17 | Chief Executive of Richardson's Leisure Ltd |