

Cockshoot Boardwalk

Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary:	This report provides members with a summary of the current position regarding the Cockshoot Boardwalk which links the Broads Authority's Cockshoot Dyke and Woodbastwick 24-hour moorings and also provides access to a number of angling platforms. The report also considers whether the Authority should continue to be involved with the Cockshoot boardwalk.
Recommendation:	That members note the contents of the report and advise officers as to whether the Authority should prioritise the replacement of a section of the boardwalk.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Broads Authority leases land at Cockshoot Dyke and Woodbastwick which enables the Authority to provide two 24-hour moorings on an extremely busy reach of the River Bure. The moorings are linked by a boardwalk also provided by the Broads Authority which extends onto the adjacent Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) reserve and provides access to a number of angling platforms which, until recently, have been leased by the landowner to an angling club.
- 1.2 The lease on the land and the licence for the boardwalk end this year and the Authority needs to decide whether the boardwalk should be maintained in the future. Access to the angling platforms is dependent on the boardwalk being replaced and officers also need to give consideration to the importance of maintaining angling access to this reach of the Bure when a decision is made as to whether the boardwalk should be replaced.

2 Current Condition of the Boardwalk and Angling Platforms

- 2.1 Officers have recently inspected the boardwalk and angling platforms and reached the conclusion that the entire length of the boardwalk which runs between the two 24-hour moorings has deteriorated to the extent that it should be replaced if the Broads Authority is to renew the lease and licence. The angling platforms have also deteriorated badly and some of them are now dangerous to use. The section of boardwalk which runs onto the NWT reserve is in a better condition and could be maintained by carrying out repairs in the short to medium term if the Authority is minded to renew the agreement with the NWT.

- 2.2 Officers have obtained an estimate for replacing the boardwalk and the total cost for replacing the whole boardwalk route would be in the order of £140,000. The cost of replacing the section of the boardwalk which links the two moorings would be in the order of £55,000.

3 Options

- 3.1 There are a number of options available regarding the boardwalk ranging from withdrawing from the lease and grants and restoring the land to its former condition, to complete renewal of the lease and replacement of the entire boardwalk. Officers consider that there would be merit in giving further consideration to maintaining the boardwalk link between the two moorings but not the link onto the NWT reserve as it solely exists to provide access to the NWT site.
- 3.2 The Broads Angling Strategy Group (BASG) has advised that the angling platforms are an important resource on the River Bure and have encouraged the Authority to consider working with the Environment Agency (EA) to secure their replacement. The angling club which leases the platforms has indicated that it would be prepared to relinquish the lease and it would then be possible to make the platforms freely available to the public.
- 3.3 Currently the boardwalk link between the two moorings is quite heavily used with people counter records collected by Natural England (NE) since 2007 showing that between 11,000 and 15,000 people use the route annually.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 As the boardwalk linking the two moorings is well used and there is support for the replacement of the angling platforms from the BASG officers consider that the Broads Authority should seek to develop a partnership project to replace the boardwalk and at least some of the angling platforms. Initial discussions have taken place with the EA and NE both of whom have indicated that they would be prepared to consider supporting the project and potentially apply for funds to contribute to the costs involved.
- 4.2 Given the costs involved officers would recommend that further discussions take place with the EA, NE, BASG and the NWT to see if there is scope for establishing a formal partnership to replace the boardwalk, provide a viewing area over the adjacent nature reserve and provide improved interpretation and information for visitors to the area. If a partnership is formed options for external funding could then be explored further. If the NWT is prepared to contribute consideration could be given to replacing the whole route but in the event that NWT is not supportive officers consider that efforts should be concentrated on replacing the section that links the two moorings.
- 4.3 The project meets the aims and objectives of the Integrated Access Strategy in that it links land and water, people and information and provides access to an historic ferry site which is potentially going to be restored.

Background papers: Nil

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Broads Plan Objectives: TR1, TR2

Appendices: Nil