

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 07 June 2017

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Olly Barnes	Mr Stephen Read
Mr Louis Baugh	Mr George Saunders,
Miss Liz Brooks	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Martin Symons,
Mrs Dawn Hatton	Mr Ray Walpole
Dr Peter Mason	Mr Richard Webb

In Attendance

Mrs Jacquie Burgess – Broads Authority Chairman
Ms Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer
Mr Mark King - Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mrs Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources

Also In Attendance

Dr Andy Hutcheson – Norfolk County Council

4/1 To receive apologies for absence and welcome new members

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Nick Dennis, Mr Mike Flett, Mr Tony Gibbons and Mr Chris Yardley. Members were welcomed to the meeting. Mrs Jacquie Burgess, Broads Authority Chairman, Andrea Long, Broads Authority Director of Planning and Resources and Andy Hutcheson, Norfolk County Council were also welcomed to the meeting.

4/2 To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting. No further declarations of interested occurred during the meeting.

4/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 01 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 01 March 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4/4 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 3/4 (1) Ludham Footpath

The Ludham permissive footpath was officially opened as part of the Broads Outdoors Festival with a guided walk 'Monastic Meanderings' led by the SWRO. A video made by Mustard TV was shown to the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF). Not all BLAF members had received an invitation to attend the official launch. Apologies were given for this oversight. A morning site visit to the footpath is planned for the September BLAF meeting.

(2) Minute 3/4 (2) How Hill Footpath

All work has been completed. The path is ready to be opened to the public once the Broads Authority receives the official legal handover documents from the Environment Agency for the sluice bridge.

(3) Minute 3/4 (5) Hickling Project update

The winter work has been completed. Profuse growth of the water plant *cara intermedia* has been noted in the broad.

(4) Minute 3/4 (6) River Wensum Strategy update

Due to the recent general election and associated purdah requirements there has been a further delay in publishing the draft River Wensum Strategy for public consultation. The consultation will now start on 26 July 2017 and run until September. The document will be available to view online and at a venue yet to be confirmed. There will also be specific project consultations. The Vice-Chairman and WRO agreed to contact BLAF member Mr Tony Gibbons to get feedback from an angling perspective. CIL funding has been agreed and improved access to the riverside walk and links to the Marriott's Way projects will therefore definitely go ahead.

(5) Minute 3/4 (7) Staithes Research

There have been numerous requests to see the Staithes Research carried out by Professor Tom Williamson, but unfortunately photos and maps intended to accompany the report have still not been received which has delayed publication. Broads Authority's Management Team will discuss the issue next week to see if there is a way of intervening to ensure the report can be published. The Forum agreed this was important.

(6) Minute 3/4 (10) Mutford Lock

With the formation of the new Oulton Broad Parish all concerned are keen to get some progress regarding the land transfer at Mutford Lock. The Director

of Planning and Resources agreed to circulate an update to Forum members on the latest situation.

(7) Minute 3/6 (1) Pathmakers Burgh Castle Project

An official opening of the 'access for all' Burgh Castle boardwalk is taking place on Wednesday 14 June at 2pm. BLAF members were invited to attend.

(8) Minute 3/9 AOB

Cess Staithe, Martham: A date is yet to be set for a Public Enquiry into the proposed footpath at Cess Staithe, Martham.

Publicity: Rob Leigh has been appointed to the role of Head of Communications for the Broads Authority, Tom Waterfall has been appointed to the role of Communications Officer (Digital and PR) and is managing website and social media content. Interviews for the Communications Officer (Media and PR) are taking place next week.

BLAF Membership: Two members will be appointed to BLAF at the Broads Authority meeting in July.

4/5 Norfolk County Council update

Dr Andy Hutcheson of Norfolk County Council (NCC) gave a presentation 'Strategic update in the Broads and beyond':

Strategic Green Network: The national trails website includes the Coast Path, Marriott's Way, Wherryman's Way, Weaver's Way and Peddar's Way with lots of useful information, including circular walks off these national trails.

Coast Path: Numbers 1 and 2 are open and further changes are being worked on for North Coast and number 4. Norfolk is included in the south-east area. It is hoped to work with Suffolk County and Essex County to market the East of England as an area modelled on the South West Coast Path approach which has successfully increased economic impact and international visitor interest with clever use of itineraries.

The Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan is undergoing a strategic review.

Norfolk Cycling and Walking Action Plan: The final draft is ready. The Department for Transport have also published their infrastructure document [covered in agenda item 6] which includes guidance for plans. NCC will follow this guidance in order to maximise access to funding.

'Pushing Ahead' is a three year Department for Transport funded project. NCC will liaise with the Broads Authority on project development.

Broads Access Improvements: The Chegrave section of the Wherryman's Way is bedding in after work carried out last year [photos shown to the Forum]. It is open to the public. A people counter showed 15,804 clicks since 01 February 2017. Similar people counters on other routes show that spring and early summer are most popular whilst August is the least used time of the year.

Comments and answers to question as follows:

- The Parish Council is happy to take forward the Permissive Path agreement with the landowner for the Chedgrave section of the Wherryman's Way.
- The people counter results tend to show local user focus. Ramblers Association walk statistics back the dip in August figures. Marketing improvements could be useful to improve footpath use during August. NCC funding is project based and there is no further budget available for marketing. There is however a visitor economy focus under the new Director at NCC and they are working with Visit Norfolk and district level DMOs sharing website links to improve tourism marketing coverage.
- On other sections of the Norfolk Trails surveys are available with questions relating to how often the path is used, average spend per visitor and where the visitor's are from etc. Surveys are either supervised (volunteers or professionals) or via self-completion.
- The 'access for all' terminology could be misinterpreted to mean access for all types of users e.g. horse riders, cyclists etc.
- Luggage transfer and linked bed and breakfast bookings services work well in other parts of the country to increase visitor numbers but is not something that has taken off for the Norfolk Trails. A commercial enterprise would be needed to get this up and running. Links to TV shows and films also help other parts of the country with visitor numbers.
- School links and promotion are integrated into various NCC projects including 'Pushing Ahead' and using heritage and wildlife aspects of the Marriott's Way.

4/6 Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy published in June 2017.

The main intention of the strategy is to make walking or cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys by 2040.

SUSTRANS has already successfully promoted cycling to schools resulting in 40% of children no longer being driven to school.

The strategy does not specify how it will be funded or who will be eligible, but the Broads Authority and the Broads Local Access Forum would be keen to access any funding available.

Objectives include: improved safety, reducing accidents, delivering high quality cycling and walking routes in deprived areas, connecting existing network hubs and encouraging bike parks in suitable locations both urban and rural.

As a result of the strategy it is hoped to save £1.7billion a year in national health costs, decrease traffic congestion in towns and cities, provide well connected, clearing waymarked cycle routes, improve safety and promote economic gains.

Sustrans has been working on a Phase 1 map identifying options in Norfolk. NCC and BA are discussing inclusion of Broads schemes in any future communities projects, £100k projects involving installation of numbered posts for cyclists to follow, similar to waymarkers, and linked to relevant mapping.

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

- The 2040 target is ludicrously long. BLAF would want to see shorter timescales.
- Increased spots to park and pick up hire bikes in the Broads is supported.
- Cycling to school is not an option for many parents and children due to safety and timing issues (parents need to get to work, children are often in different schools).

4/7 Cycling UK Off-road Report

The WRO gave a presentation updating the Forum on Cycling UK's 'Rides of Way' report reviewing surveys of 11,500 off-road cyclists in England and Wales.

The survey highlighted the wide range of ages taking part in off-road cycling, the majority of whom emphasised the health and mental wellbeing aspects of the activity rather than the thrill of high speed mountain biking.

93% of respondents revealed that the quality of trails was the key to choosing where they visited.

The distinction between footpaths, bridleways and byways is based on historical evidence and the report highlighted that 70% of those surveyed felt the current PROW system is outdated, not reflecting life in the 21st century.

Cycling UK does not intend to push for all PROW to be opened to cyclists but since currently only 20% of the network is available to cyclists they feel a review is necessary to look at how they can work with National Park Authorities, Local Councils and other organisations to help improve routes.

Comments and answers to questions:

- The legalities of registration of public rights of way required user evidence, so for example Catfield could only be registered as a footpath despite being suitable for cyclists. The Forum agreed that the law needed reviewing.

- Landowner consents could open up permissive paths to cyclists and horse riders.
- Cycling UK lobbying could help facilitate the 2026 deadline for registration of unlisted routes.
- Carlton Marshes has a bridleway just half way into the marsh due to landowner objections. The Forum agreed that with the purchase of this land by Suffolk Wildlife Trust there could be potential to achieve positive outcomes here.
- A recent article in the EDP highlighted safe routes for cyclists, particularly Freethorpe to Thorpe Green. With schools along this route it would be good to encourage greater use by school children.

4/8 Broads Forum updates

The Broads Forum met in on 27 April 2017 and the main items discussed were as follows:

- (1) Presentation from Paul Mace of LEADER on financing schemes that create employment in the area.
- (2) Discussion on salinity and angling and measures to mitigate saline incursion led by Steve Lane of the Environment Agency, Tony Gibbons and Kelvin Allen.
- (3) Presentation from Rob Rogers, Broads Authority Director of Operations on the mooring strategy and landowner arrangements and opportunities.
- (4) Chief Executive's update on Broads Authority activities.
- (5) Boat waste update and possible solution at Ludham and Womak (joint scheme between the parish council and district council).

Comments and answers to questions as follows:

- Public toilet provision in the Broads is the responsibility of district councils, but is not a statutory duty. These are loss making facilities and are difficult for smaller councils to support. This has resulted in some facilities having to be closed.

4/9 To receive any other items of urgent business

National Local Access Forum conference: This is taking place in Birmingham on 21 June 2017. The Vice-Chairman and SWRO will attend representing the BLAF. Agenda items include a Natural England update and various topic based workshops. It was agreed to bring a report of the conference to the next BLAF meeting.

Berney Arms path classification: Following up on a question raised at a previous BLAF meeting, the WRO confirmed that the Berney Arms path is classified as a bridleway.

Valentine's Meadow: The WRO reported that the kissing gates at Valentine's Meadow have been altered and are now DDA compliant.

4/10 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 06 September at 2pm. It is intended to include a site visit and lunch prior to this meeting.

The meeting concluded at 3.50pm.

Chairman