

**Engagement with key stakeholders  
and the role of the Broads Forum**  
Report by Chief Executive

**Summary:** The Authority's engagement with its stakeholders is continuing to develop. Two themes emerge: the ever growing importance of electronic communications and the importance of attendance at major public events such as the Royal Norfolk Show, the Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival and Norwich Science Festival.

**Recommendation**

The Authority considers the minutes from the last Broads Forum meeting and the wider issues around engagement with stakeholders.

**1 Engagement with Stakeholders**

- 1.1 The Broads Authority has a wide range of organisations and individuals who have both a stake in the Broads and an interest in the work of the Authority, and a wide number of ways are used to inform and engage them. The Authority regularly reviews these activities and their effectiveness. The last comprehensive review was carried out in 2013 and resulted in a review of all working and liaison groups, the use of area based parish forums and a public Open Day at the Dockyard.
- 1.2 With the growth of email, the rise of social media and the decline in more traditional forms of engagement for many people, it is important for the Authority to review the position and understand the new landscape and the impacts on its ways of engaging with different stakeholders/communities. The Peer Review Team encouraged the Authority to review these arrangements and the opportunity of the recent Broads Forum meeting was taken to engage the Members in a discussion about the effectiveness of the current arrangements in advance of the Broads Authority Members Away Day at the end of January.
- 1.3 The Broads Forum was set-up by the Broads Authority in May 2002, as a follow on to the Broads Consultative Committee to engage with stakeholders, to act as a reference group to offer advice and comment on the Broads Authority's strategic aim, to provide a consultative forum for discussion, and to promote a two-way communication between the Authority and a wide range of interest groups listed below. It currently has 26 members (3 vacancies) drawn from 49 organisations in ten groups:
  - Boating/water based recreational (12 organisations represented)
  - Commercial, land based recreation (6 organisations)

- Land based recreation (3 organisations)
- Fishing, angling and shooting (2 organisations)
- Wildlife and conservation (5 organisations)
- Farming/landowning and drainage (4 organisations)
- Education (7 organisations)
- Cultural heritage and landscape (6 organisations)
- Local charities (2 organisations)
- Local communities representing northern and southern Broads Parish Councils (2 organisations)

It was reviewed and refreshed in 2013-14 with revised Terms of Reference, an updated list of groups and the election from the membership of a Chair and Vice-Chair.

## **2 Broads Forum**

2.1 At the meeting of the Broads Forum (2 Nov 2017), the views of the Forum members were sought on how effective its meetings were in promoting two-way communication between the Authority and its key stakeholder groups and organisations. (See minutes of the meeting elsewhere on the agenda). The key points from that debate are highlighted below.

2.2 A thoughtful discussion followed between members of the Forum, the Chair and Chief Executive of the Authority. The following points were raised:

- The Broads Forum was set-up in 2002 by the Broads Authority and some of its Members are not clear about its terms of reference.
- Forum Members don't feel their views are properly heard by Broads Authority Members or that they are an influential part of the decision making process. Several members of the Forum commented that there is little or no evidence brought to them of if/how the Forum's views have been received by the Members of the Authority, and whether they have had any impact on the Authority's decisions.
- The Forum minutes are on the Broads Authority agenda, but it would be more useful to have a standing item on the Authority agenda to allow the Forum chair to bring key points and questions from the Forum meeting and have them discussed at the meeting. A regular Chair's report on the Forum agenda could then report back the feedback from the Authority meeting.
- Forum discussions have been instrumental to Broads Authority decisions in the past (e.g. trolling, water skiing), but Forum Members feel this is happening less often.
- Presentations to the Broads Forum (often made at the suggestion of Forum Members and sometimes given by them) have been interesting and useful, and some have later been presented at Authority meetings.

- Forum Members are primarily responsible for raising items for the agenda (rather than Broads Authority officers), but there is often a lack of agenda items.
- It was suggested that each meeting could focus on 2 to 3 interest groups (e.g. education, boating, access) to promote more understanding about these interests and share views. However, some Members said they are less likely to attend meetings if the agenda does not contain an area of interest to them, or they feel there is not something they can have an informed debate on.
- Meeting attendance by Members is high for some represented interest groups, and low for others. Substitutes are appointed but not always asked to stand in when necessary. Low attendance may be because of work commitments, transport issues, timing of meetings, locations, etc.
- The Member appointment process has become informal and there is no defined length of membership service. Serving Members do not represent a diverse demographic, in particular, there is a marked under-representation of women, working-age and younger people, and people from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The list of c.50 interest groups has changed little since the Forum was set up and the Forum members considered it would be helpful to review its current relevance in mapping stakeholder groups and organisations with active interests in the National Park. Some Members make regular contact with their represented interest groups. Others do not, meaning those groups do not have a voice at the Forum.

### **3 Summary of the Broads Authority engagement methods**

3.1 A selection of the Authority's communication and engagement methods are shown in the table in Appendix 1 below, with the more recent introductions in red. The table highlights the significant number of new means the Authority is using to communicate with and engage stakeholders and the wider public. Attendance at major public events has been a great success in reaching and engaging with new audiences.

#### **3.2 Key points about current engagement methods**

- Although attendance of the Annual Open Day has been low in recent years, a Broads Authority presence at public events has attracted a large and varied audience. So for example: at the Gt Yarmouth Maritime Festival 1,000 people visited the Broads Authority tent and engaged in conversation. Outside the tent members of staff and volunteers made 500 badges and 600 origami boats. Attendance at the Science Festival day in the Norwich Forum was even higher and members of staff and volunteers made over 600 badges, only having to stop when they ran out of materials. Well over 1,000 people were engaged in conversation. Both events provided relatively cheap ways of getting to talk to the public about the Broads and the work of the Authority. Most of them knew little about either but were interested and keen to learn more about the Broads.

- Communication through social media has expanded considerably in the last year with the appointment of a Digital and Media Officer. However it is recognised that not everyone uses electronic media, and other methods are still of value.
- Face-to-face working groups or public meetings can be useful in discussing particular topics in depth, or for timed consultations (e.g. Broads Plan review).
- However, the Broads Forum face-to-face committee style of engagement may no longer be effective in reaching all stakeholder interests to exchange information and debate current issues.
- The Authority has different ways of communicating with and engaging its various partners and stakeholders, and wants to continue improving these. It would be useful to assess them to see what works best for different interests, to make sure everyone's views are heard, responded to, and taken into account in decision making.
- Decline in number of, and availability of volunteers willing to serve on Broads Forum, as part of a wider change in civil society.

## 4 **Conclusions**

- 4.1 Members are invited to consider the points raised at the last Broads Forum meeting and the wider issues around engagement with stakeholders, and to contribute their ideas on the possible ways forward.

Background papers:	Draft Minutes from Broads Forum Meeting 2 November 2017
Author:	John Packman
Date of report:	8 November 2017
Broads Plan Objectives:	None

Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Selection of Current Broads Authority Communication and Engagement Methods
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## Selection of Current Broads Authority Communication and Engagement Methods

Communication Channel	Frequency and target audience
<b>1. Publications</b>	
Broadcaster	Annual, focused mainly on visitors. Well established publication produced at little cost to the Authority
Broadsheet	1 or 2 editions a year focused mainly on boat owners
Annual Report	Electronic copy distributed to stakeholders. Printed copy for MPs etc.
Broads Plan update	Published twice a year
Questionnaires and surveys	Wider independent stakeholder research (InsightTrack). Also Customer Satisfaction survey for Planning – agents and applicants
Interpretation materials – leaflets, guides, schools curriculums, public notices, signage, etc.	A full range of materials which are constantly reviewed and updated
<b>2. Partnerships</b>	
Whitlingham Charitable Trust	5 meetings per year
Broads Catchment Partnership	4 meetings per year and quarterly newsletter
Water Mills and Marshes board	Board meets quarterly. Plus updates to the board monthly by Programme manager. Target audience is tricky to define for the Board membership due to broad spectrum of interests – includes officers from County Councils, District Councils, Charities, Businesses, Local Enterprise Partnership, Drainage Board. Their interests range from landscape, history, heritage, archaeology, community action, education, training, nature conservation etc.
Climate Change Partnership	Stakeholder engagement through Broadland Futures Initiative
Broads Charitable Trust	Regular meetings involving two Authority members and supported by officers
<b>3. Meetings</b>	
Navigation Committee	6 arranged per year. 1 meeting in 2016/17 was replaced by a site visit
Local Access Forum	4 per year
Broads Forum	4 per year
BA Annual Public Meeting	For the last two years held at Whitlingham
Parish Forums	Work best when there is a live local issue. Recent Forum held in Norwich – committed to hold two more in 2018.
Boating interests, e.g. BHBF/NSBA	Chair and Chief Executive have regular meetings.

Communication Channel	Frequency and target audience
	Operational Staff also meet officers of the organisations
Statutory partners, e.g. Environment Agency, Natural England	Chief Executive has regular meetings with opposite numbers. Recently included rest of Management Team
Broads Tourism	Members meetings twice a year. Board and Marketing Steering Group every two months. Membership has increased as has attendance at the members' meetings and a Broads business community network has been established. Broads Tourism publishes 3 'Visit the Broads' printed publications per year for visitors. The authority contributes content. The Authority manages the 'Visit the Broads' website and social media channels with regular updates and posts.
Visit Norfolk	The Broads Authority is represented on the Marketing Group and the Board.
Other partners, e.g. Wildlife Trusts and RSPB, educators network, biodiversity networks,	
Local Authorities	Norfolk Strategic Planning Members Forum is one of the mediums as part of the Duty to Cooperate. Chair has initiated regular 1:1 meetings with the Leaders of the constituent local authorities. Ambition is to improve engagement and understanding of local authority concerns. Chief Executive meets CEOs.
Workshops and public drop in events	Used to discuss key issues or during consultations (e.g. Broads Local Plan)
Ad hoc community meetings attended by Chair, CEO and BA officers on request	As required for specific topics
<b>4. Electronic Communication</b>	
Websites	Broads Authority, Visit the Broads, Project specific sites (WMM, BCP). Accessible 24/7, updates made regularly. Contact us page enables direct contact through an online form as well as signposting traditional channels of communication.
Social media	There are Broads Authority, Broads National Park, Broads Volunteer and project specific social media (SM) accounts on Facebook/Twitter/Instagram. SM used in BA context (ad hoc) to inform public about what's going on, urgent updates and vacancies/ opportunities (and more). Broads NP used (daily) to inspire people to visit, inform them of events and promote local tourism. Project specific SM (e.g WMM, BCP) aims to engage with stakeholders, provide updates on project progress and advertise opportunities. Volunteer account (under trial) to share positive work of Broads volunteers.
Monthly briefing	Goes out early each month to staff, members, volunteers, parish councils and 558 subscribers. It is also widely

Communication Channel	Frequency and target audience
	disseminated on social media in Broads Facebook groups and on web forums.
Electronic and print media, e.g. local press, magazines	Ongoing proactive work from the communications team with regular media releases (examples can be found here <a href="http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/news-and-publications/news">http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/news-and-publications/news</a> ) as well as reactive statements and engagement with media to encourage features about the Broads in print electronic and broadcast media
Email direct to individuals/groups	As required for specific topics
<b>5. Public Events</b>	
Broads Outdoor Festival	Annual event in May
Royal Norfolk Show	Broads Village – 2016 and 2017
Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival	2017 for first time
Norwich Science Festival	2017 for first time
National Parks Week	National week of events (usually in July however there are proposals to make this earlier in the year from 2019) Locally this includes events such as the Teddy Bears Picnic at Whitlingham Country Park
Wider BA annual events programme	2018 events calendar currently being planned
<b>6. Face to face</b>	
Members Front line staff – Rangers, TIC staff, Planning staff, volunteer leaders, etc.	
Schools Engagement	Ongoing activity led by the Authority's Education Officer