

Broads Authority
Broads Local Access Forum
Minutes of the meeting held on 07 Mar 2018

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Kelvin Allen	Mrs Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Richard Webb
Dr Peter Mason	Mr Chris Yardley
Mr George Saunders	

In Attendance

Ms Lottie Carlton – Administrative Officer
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Mr Mark King - Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects

Also In Attendance

Dr Andy Hutcheson – Norfolk County Council

3/1 To receive apologies for absence and welcome new members

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Louis Baugh, Mr Tony Gibbons, Mrs Dawn Hatton, Mr Stephen Read, Mr Charles Swan and Mr Martin Symons

Members were welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

3/2 To receive declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting. Mr Kelvin Allen declared an interest as Chairman of Broads Angling Strategy Group at Item 3/8, bullet point 'Integrated Access Strategy'.

3/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 06 Dec 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 06 Dec 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/4 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 2/5 (1) How Hill Footpath

The matter of the bridge is still with the Environment Agency's legal department.

SWRO still to forward EA cutting programme to Forum members.

(2) Minute 2/5 (5) River Wensum Strategy consultation update

The strategy has been finalised and just needs to go through the various partners' Committee process for adoption. Election purdah may delay this.

Two problems arose during the consultation that have been dealt with in the new document:

- (i) St Edmunds Wharf (Whitefriars Bridge to Fye Bridge). Residents not happy with the proposals.
- (ii) NDR western link

All of BLAF's comments and actions have been included in the final strategy.

Comments and answers to questions:

Broads Authority Navigation Committee received a report on Residential Moorings in the city. It was noted that there are very few areas where residential moorings would be possible due to navigation restrictions. Broads Authority planning permission and a navigation works licence would be needed for any such proposals.

An issue concerning angling restrictions across the city due to lack of facilities prompted the suggestion of a meeting between Broads Angling Strategy Group Chairman Kelvin Allen, the SWRO and Judith Davison of Norwich City Council in order to identify banks that could be used.

(3) Minute 2/10 Miles without Stiles

Item deferred again. The English National Parks have been asked to resubmit their proposals focusing on sport participation outcomes.

3/5 Norfolk County Council update

Dr Andy Hutcheson of Norfolk County Council (NCC) gave a presentation updating Forum members on Norfolk County Council projects:

Draft Norfolk Access Improvement Plan 2018-2018

This document will replace the Right of Way Improvement Plan (2007-2017). The change of name is intended to reflect the wider access use.

There have been significant changes in focus and priority since the last plan, both nationally and locally, and these have been picked up in the new draft document.

BLAF are being asked to provide feedback prior to the consultation going out to public consultation. Dr Hutcheson agreed to circulate a link to the draft document to BLAF members.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks from mid-March 2018.

Comments and answers to questions:

Tourism seems not to be emphasised enough. The focus on leisure for locals needs clarity. Tourism can help the environment through increased understanding. Links could be made to the Broads Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The draft has a section on education and promoting walking and cycling to young people so it would be good to include children and schools in the consultation.

Volunteering is another key area where appreciation and funding support is needed. The Ramblers are heavily involved in volunteering and their input has been very useful. The Broad Sword group has been active in the Broads for decades. Lessons can be learnt from these examples.

It is important to recognise the importance of the National Park in the Plan. It is good to see access to water included. Front cover co-branding opportunities could be mutually beneficial.

There is an increased emphasis on partnership working with the Broads Authority and the Plan makes mention of the Integrated Access Strategy.

The Broads Authority has recently submitted a pilot proposal to Defra for post Brexit agri-schemes. This includes supporting access payments in future schemes.

More use could be made of Twinning Associations and involving them in access issues.

Forum members liked the widened brief looking at access as a whole rather than just PROW and the inclusion of National Park and coastal assets.

Looking at cross-boundary links could be useful. MVG agreed to investigate the Suffolk ROWIP and report back.

The Visitor Giving Scheme suggestion is already in place in the Broads. Love the Broads, administered by the Broads Trust, has been running for a number of years encouraging businesses to add a few pence to purchases/services etc. Direct donations are also available. Funding is used to support projects in the Broads area. This initiative was set up with advice and guidance from the Nurture Lakeland scheme.

Comments and answers to questions on other Norfolk County Council projects:

Reedham footpath: NCC has relocated the path while the landowner and parish council negotiate a new permissive path agreement. The landowner has requested an annual fee much higher than that received from countryside scheme payments. Some remedial work has been completed.

Coastal path erosion: The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 allows for paths being moved inland when erosion occurs.

Hardley Flood: Phase 1 is underway with contractor WSP undertaking a hydraulic study funded jointly by NCC and the Broads Authority. A further field study may follow dependent on the results of Phase 1.

3/6 Martham – Footpath 1 – Modification Order Public Hearing update

The Chairman and WRO attended the Public Hearing held at Martham Village Hall. Norfolk County Council did attend but they were presenting a neutral stance (due to avoidance of feared legal costs).

The Chairman put the case in support of NCC's proposal providing many examples that disproved the Boatyard's case asserting that rights of way across staithe interfere with staithe rights.

The inspector's decision has not yet been made.

3/7 Access Projects update 2017-18

The WRO gave a presentation updating Forum members on BLAF projects carried out during 2017-18 including Ranworth Canoe pontoons and Cary's Meadow.

Erosion problems were discovered at the site of the proposed Ellingham canoe launch which had forced a change of plans. Options are being scoped.

3/8 Access Projects 2018-19 draft (including Boat Census 2018)

How Hill permissive footpath: This is awaiting conclusion of the EA legal issue. Fencing has been installed to separate the Konik ponies from the path.

Horstead Mill canoe launch: The contractor is due to complete work by the end of March 2018. British Canoeing is happy with the siting of the launch.

Pyes Mill, Loddon: The Parish Council reported a bridge had collapsed due to livestock damage. It was discovered that BA had built the bridge as part of a Section 52 agreement in 1997. NCC and BA have entered into a partnership agreement to replace the damaged bridge with a culvert solution.

Boat Census: Every 4 years the Broads Authority undertakes a boat census at 14 sites in the Broads in order to gauge amounts and types of boats being used. This year the census will take place on Sunday 19th, Tuesday 21st and Thursday 23rd

August. BA staff and volunteers pick morning (9am-1pm) and/or afternoon (1pm-6pm) slots. Forum members are welcome to volunteer to take part. A training session takes place prior to the census to explain what is required. Forum members to contact the WRO if they would like to take part.

Integrated Access Strategy: IAS to be reviewed in 2018/19 and BLAF help will be required to suggest projects and update priorities.

Comments and answers to questions:

KA expressed concern that there seemed to be a greater focus on investment for canoeing than angling despite survey results showing angling as a more popular Broads activity. The SWRO gave assurance that any project put forward has multi-user considerations in the design, including angling.

An issue with landowners putting in angling pegs and fouling the river with cut material was raised.

A Broads Angling Strategy Group survey of anglers showed there was not a 'willingness to pay' regarding facility provision which posed a funding problem.

A focus on health and wellbeing and the benefits the natural environment brings means that funding could be available via this route.

3/9 Staithes and the Environment Agency

The Chairman gave background information on how some staithes had come into the ownership of the Environment Agency. In 1930 the Drainage Act ended Parish Drainage Commissioners and drains were given over to the Internal Drainage Boards and the riverbanks/protection to the new East Norfolk Rivers Catchment Board with staithes going to one of these organisation dependent on location. Over the years and many different changes of organising bodies, the Environment Agency inherited ownership of certain staithes.

There seems to be a lack of understanding of the obligations of staithe owners on the part of the Environment Agency who seem to view them purely as freehold assets to sell off.

The SWRO agreed to request a representative from the Environment Agency (Peterborough) to present a staithes position statement either at a BLAF meeting or written.

The Chairman agreed to put together an A4 page of bullet points outlining the issues of staithes that go wider than viewing them purely as assets.

3/10 Broads Forum updates

The February meeting was cancelled. A few members met unofficially.

Originally the Broads Forum was set up in 2002 with 20 representatives for 50 organisations, but feedback from representatives to the group and vice versa is not happening, so that only the representatives who attend have any input to the group.

Broads Authority has contacted all the Forum organisations to find out how much involvement they currently have and what they want regarding interaction with Broads Authority and other user groups.

Reporting to Broads Authority is via a Chairman's update at the main committee meeting but it tends to happen towards the end of the agenda.

One advantage of the Forum is having direct contact with other user groups which would not happen if the groups interacted with Broads Authority on an individual basis.

Some members of Broads Forum are very issue focussed and this makes it difficult for more general viewpoints to be discussed.

The group is under review. An update to be brought to the next BLAF meeting.

3/11 To receive any other items of urgent business

Agri-environment schemes and access implications post Brexit

A trial/pilot scheme proposal was submitted by BA to Defra outlining a potential trial post Brexit agri-scheme for the Broads to replace CAP schemes.

A Defra paper 'Food and Farming' is out to consultation and public access to the countryside is identified as a public good that could be supported by Government. Ranking of various environmental outcomes is requested.

The Forum agreed that the Chairman and SWRO should submit a response to the consultation with the following comments:

- (1) Order the items (f), (d), (b) backing the importance of public access.
- (2) Order the items (f), (e) pointing out this is not just 'uplands', (c).

Response to include the importance of permissive footpaths, the tourism link, the importance of bridleways and that these should be improved and added to in order to gain more off-road, safer options for riders. The burden of path registrations to 2026 falling to county councils and lack of funding/officers to deal with this.

The SWRO agreed to circulate a link to the Defra consultation.

Horning to Woodbastick Ferry

A recent EDP article had highlighted the difficulties of the private operator in securing funding to replace the engine risking closure of this ferry. The Forum agreed to include the importance of ferries in the Broads in the review of the Integrated Access Strategy and to identify those of key importance such as the example above.

3/12 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 06 June 2018 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.50pm.

Chairman