

## **Public Question Time**

### **Question submitted by Mr Tim Harris**

It is generally accepted that the Broads are experiencing a widespread decline in the growth of reed and calcareous plants. As the first statutory duty of the Broads Authority is stated to be conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Broads, please could you inform me:

1. What is the Broads Authority doing to determine the cause of and remedy for this?

And

2. Who in the Broads Authority is responsible and accountable for doing this work?

The Authority's response will be reported at the meeting and read out by the Chairman.

### **Statement submitted by Miss Heather Tew**

At the Navigation Committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013, I made a statement and asked questions concerning the level of consultation and fairness of the NSBA and BHBF proposal which would see some small/medium sized boats seeing a toll increase well beyond the average percentage, explicitly to reduce the tolls for the larger boats.

I'm afraid I have now got into this issue and wish to make two additional points to my previous statement.

I've looked at the Tolls Guiding Principles and Criteria which state that the structure of charges will take account of, amongst other points, 'Fairness' and 'Value for Money'. The 'Value for Money' principle requires "changes to compare favourably with other waterways whilst generating the required revenue", and the 'Fairness' principle requires the changes to be "justifiably and understandably fair". I have noted that the 'relative' difference in tolls is very significant between waterways such as the Thames and the Broads, with the smaller boats on the Broads having toll charges equivalent to about 95% of a similar sized boat on the Thames. This compares very unfavourably when you look at the larger boats on the Broads which

have toll charges of only 55% of those on the Thames. The decisions of the Broads Authority in 2012 started to address the inequalities of these relativities, whereas the NSBA/BHBF proposals seek to reverse this. I would suggest that such a reversal does not fit with the 'Value for Money' strategic principle and therefore also cannot meet the strategic principle of 'Fairness' for smaller/medium sized boats.

Secondly, the Navigation Committee's response to my question told me that the average Hire Boat multiplier on the Environment Agency's waters is 1.8 compared to the Broads 2.65. This seems hugely different. Using the principles above there must be a strong case to reduce the multiplier on the Broads for the hire boat fleets, to allow the hire boat industry to remain viable, thereby providing a boost to the local tourist economy and ensuring continued contributions to tolls income from the hire fleet. Clearly if applied in one year the hike to private toll payers would be excessive. But I do urge the Broads Authority to develop a strategy to work towards this.