

Broads Forum Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 02 November 2017

Present:

Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Andrew Alston
Brian Barker
Julian Barnwell
Michael Flett
Tony Gibbons

Peter Jermy
John Lurkins
Jennifer Parkhouse
Simon Partridge
Paul Savage

Richard Starling
Charles Swan
John Tibbenham
Peter Wall

In Attendance:

Mrs M Conti – Strategy and Projects Officer
Miss S Mullarney – Administrative Officer (Governance)
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mr R Rogers – Director of Operations
Ms M-P Tighe – Director of Strategy and Sustainable Communities

Also In Attendance:

Prof J Burgess – Chair of the Broads Authority

1/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from, Henry Cator, Robin Godber, Barbara Greasley, John Hiskett, Peter Mason, Philip Pearson, and Anthony Wright.

1/2 Appointment of Chair

The Chief Executive invited nominations for the appointment of Chairman to the Forum.

Nominations for both Keith Bacon and Paul Savage were proposed and seconded.

Members were asked to vote and it was

RESOLVED by 8 votes to 4

that Keith Bacon be appointed as Chairman of the Broads Forum.

Keith Bacon in the Chair.

1/3 Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chairman invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chairman to the Forum.

Simon Partridge nominated, seconded by Peter Wall, that Mike Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman. No other nominations were forthcoming.

RESOLVED

that Mike Flett be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Broads Forum.

1/4 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

Minute 4/3 Public Question Time, Para 3, 'Broads Authority' should read 'Broads Society'

Minute 4/5 Upper Thurne Working Group/Update on Hickling, Para 9, 'RS stressed that boats breaking down in that area were very isolated' should read 'RS stressed that boats were breaking down owing to weed growth in an area which was very isolated'

Minute 4/7 Publication Version Local Plan, Para 2, 'RS questioned the limited responses from parish councils and stated it was due to the length of the plan' should be amended to include 'and suggested the meeting not be held in Norwich but in the Broads, with one in the Southern parishes and one in the Northern parishes.'

Minute 4/9 Parish Issues, Para 6 delete 'Ludham Bridge'

1/5 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response taken following discussions at previous meetings

Members of the Forum received a report summarising the progress of current issues and were informed there were no further updates.

Michael Flett informed Members that Ludham Parish Council had signed a lease with the Environment Agency for the waste site at Ludham Bridge to continue, at a cost of £1 per annum.

In regards to the ownership of Ludham Staithe, the Chief Executive said that there had been a change in the way the Environment Agency property was managed and that the Authority was still trying to progress the purchase of the site.

Peter Jermy (PJ) added that Norfolk County Council owns the concrete abutments under Ludham Bridge and stressed concerns of the planned work to renew the timber at the site and how this would impede the navigation, making it narrower. The Director of Operations said that the Authority was aware of this and that they were speaking with the Council regarding the planned work.

In regards to the Staithes report the Chief Executive told the forum that there was no firm date for the publication of the report. John Tibbenham (JT) asked if

comments would be included in the report. It was confirmed that the report would be amended as necessary. Richard Starling (RS) further asked if commenters would be notified of responses to their comments. The Chairman said that the Authority was due to meet with Prof Williamson.

As the Chairman was unable to attend the last Broads Authority meeting, Paul Savage (PS) asked that his comments in the 27 July 2017 minutes (4/12 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting) be taken to the next Broads Authority meeting.

Members noted the report.

1/6 Chief Executive Update

The Chief Executive provided Members with a verbal update summarising the current position in respect of a number of important projects and events.

Parish Forum

The Chief Executive reported that the Parish Forum meeting on 20 September 2017 was well received with attendants receiving a briefing on the Broads Plan and the Broads Local Plan. Similar events had been scheduled for 21 March 2018 and 19 September 2018.

RS queried the attendance levels of the parish forum and stated that they should be held in the parishes, suggesting a survey be completed to determine where parish councils wanted the forum hosted. He further added that public notes should be made available for those unable to attend.

The Chief Executive responded that the September meeting had a higher than expected turn out. He said that Officers made notes which were fed back to the Authority but confirmed that no official minutes were taken. He said that the Authority intends to host the parish forums in Norwich as it makes the most sense logistically for all of the parish councils. Recent experience suggested that forum meetings held out in the Broads would be very poorly attended which was not a good use of resources.

Hickling

The Director of Operations gave the forum an update on the Hickling vision and the on-going dredging work and the reuse of sediment which had been successful this year. He added that the on-going work including the reed restoration was in the planning stage as the CANAPE funding had been agreed.

The Chief Executive introduced Marie-Pierre Tighe, the newly appointed Director of Strategy and Sustainable Communities who was attending her first Broads Forum meeting. Members were made aware that Marie-Pierre would be guiding the CANAPE project which had a focus on peat with work to take place in Hickling.

Members were told that Natural England had consented for a trial to be done to cut the stoneworts. This trial cut area has been monitored for 3 months but would need

more monitoring over a prolonged period of time in order to ascertain the longer term effects before any conclusion from the trial could be made.

Brian Barker referred to the cutting of the water plants to benefit the channel area; he questioned whether this would just affect the channel area, because outside this had been an issue for the Hickling sailing club to navigate. The Director of Operations responded that during the winter there would inevitably be a period of die back. He added that Natural England had agreed for cutting to take place outside of the channel up to a rate of 10% and this cutting had been carried out.

Andrew Alston (AA) commented on the increased geese population and how this could be controlled. The Director of Operations said that it was the responsibility of the land-owner to monitor the geese.

Water, Mills and Marshes

The Chief Executive updated the forum on the 5 year project. He said that there was a strong emphasis on engaging with young people and developing their understanding of the Broads.

Acle Bridge

Forum Members were updated on the purchase of Acle Bridge. The Chief Executive said that initial work would be focused on making the moorings safe but discussed the opportunities available at the site and welcomed ideas for what Members would like to see there.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Members were updated on the working group that met on 4 October; the group consisted of the Broads Authority, NSBA, Hire Boat Federation, and Broads Beat. The Group agreed collective actions to tackle anti-social behaviour consisting of evening patrols, safety days, combating speeding issues, and collecting information more systematically in order to share intelligence.

PS referred to the public question that was posed at the previous Broads Forum meeting, and asked if there had been any clarity on the differing information issued by the boat yards on the number of same sex parties. The Chief Executive confirmed that this information had been double checked and the original figures of 20/30 single sex parties at any one time were accurate. It was added that boat yards had an agreed code of conduct in respect of managing these groups.

Members also commented on issues with anti-social behaviour on day boats and problems with speeding. The benefits of GPS speedometers for hirers was discussed.

Tolls

The Chief Executive gave Members of the forum an update on the proposed navigation charges for the next year. The Navigation committee's recommendation of a 3% increase would go to the full Authority meeting on 24 November. One of the recommendations for the use of the additional income was for the purchase of tree shears; this would enable the Authority to mechanise the management of bankside vegetation and trees overhanging the waterways.

1/7 Value and Effectiveness of the Broads Forum

Prof J Burgess invited Members of the forum to discuss the value and effectiveness of the Broads Forum.

Members were given a hand out highlighting the key areas identified in the last review of the forum in 2012. The Strategy and Projects Officer stated that it was an opportunity for Members to discuss how things had changed since that review and to review how the Broads Authority engages with local communities and stakeholders.

The following points were raised in the discussion:

About the Broads Forum:

- 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. A lack of feedback is one reason for this perception, as Members don't get enough feedback on how the Authority is responding to their views.
- 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 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 2/3 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. Members do not represent a diverse demographic, in particular women and young people.
- The list of c.50 interest groups has changed little since the Forum was set up.

- Some Members make regular contact with their represented interest groups. Others do not, meaning those groups do not have a voice at the Forum.

About communication methods:

- Although attendance of the Annual Open Day is low, a Broads Authority presence at public events is successful, e.g. Royal Norfolk Show, Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival, Norwich Science Festival.
- Communication through social media has expanded considerably in recent years, and the Authority has recently appointed 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.

It was suggested that the Authority could contact the current list of interest groups to seek their views on the most effective means of engagement with them. Officers undertook to report the discussion points raised in the meeting to the next Broads Authority meeting and they could be discussed at the Broads Authority Member away day.

1/8 Broads Authority – Peer Review Process: Public participation and accountability of the process – Richard Starling

The Chief Executive explained to the forum the process behind the peer review and what initiated it. He said that the peer review was requested by Broads Authority Members to look specifically at the governance arrangements of the Broads Authority and the relationship with local authorities.

Initial feedback received from the review was that the Authority might consider reviewing its committee structure. The next step is for the panel to provide a report to Broads Authority Members of their findings; this is expected at the end of November/early December. This report will be considered by Broads Authority Members at a planned away day at the end of January. The Chief Executive emphasised that the report was for Members but that it would be made public.

1/9 Current and Parish Issues

Charles Swan informed the forum that Oulton Parish council was in dispute with Waveney District about issues covered by the neighbourhood plan. He added that the Suffolk Association of Local Councils had put a motion forward about the matter at their AGM.

John Lurkins asked whether the Heritage Lottery Fund incorporated on-going costs for maintaining the mills identified as part of the Water, Mills and Marshes project. The Chief Executive explained that there were 12 mills covered by the scheme and that the repair plans had been discussed with the owners. They had been selected based on their viability to generate an income. An apprentice scheme was being used to work on the mills to develop a more creative way of sustainability.

Tony Gibbons asked if the mills would be available for the public to visit. The Chairman responded that the potential for public access was one of the factors used in the selection of the mills.

It was confirmed that the maintenance of rights of way including the Wherryman's Way was a statutory duty of the County Council.

1/10 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority Meeting

The Chairman would report to the Broads Authority meeting on the discussion on the value and effectiveness of the Forum.

1/11 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

AA suggested the Environment Agency and Natural England could be invited to talk to the Forum about connecting floodplains to rivers.

PJ requested an update on the dredging schedule.

Simon Partridge asked for an item on life-long learning and the link to the volunteer strategy. AA added that there was a Norfolk County Council Local Investment in Future Talent (LIFT) project which focuses on funding people to be retrained and getting back into work.

RS commented that wildlife was doing well in the Broads and suggested getting Natural England's view on the state of wildlife in the Broads.

1/12 To note the date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday 1 February 2018 at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.55pm

Chairman