

## **Broads Forum**

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016

### **Present:**

Dr Keith Bacon in the Chair

Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr Brian Holt	Mr Richard Starling (2/1-2/10)
Mr Ashley Cato	Mr Peter Jermy	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Michael Flett	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Hugh Taylor
Mr Tony Gibbons	Ms Jennifer Parkhouse	Mr John Tibbenham
Ms Barbara Greasley	Mr Philip Pearson	Mr Peter Waters
Mr Robin Godber	Mr Simon Partridge	Mr Anthony Wright
Mr John Hiskett	Mr Bryan Read	

### **In Attendance:**

Ms Natalie Beal – Planning Policy Officer  
Ms Maria Conti – Strategy and Projects Officer  
Mr Gavin Devaney – Environment Officer  
Ms Esmeralda Guds – Administrative Officer  
Mr Bruce Hanson – Tourism and Promotion Officer  
Dr Dan Hoare – Environment and Design Supervisor  
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects  
Ms Angie Leeper – Asset Officer  
Ms Andrea Long – Director of Planning and Resources  
Dr John Packman – Chief Executive  
Ms Trudi Wakelin – Director of Operations

### **Also in attendance:**

Rory Sanderson – Environment Agency  
Prof. Jackie Burgess – Chair, Broads Authority

### **2/1 Apologies and Welcome**

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Alston, Brian Barker, Henry Cator, Martyn Davey, Matthew Thwaites and Martin George

The Chair welcomed Prof. Jackie Burgess, Chair of the Broads Authority, Nick Deane, the substitute for Andrew Alston and Colin Dye, the substitute for Matthew Thwaites, to the meeting. Tribute was paid to Martin George who had resigned from the Forum and Paul Savage was welcomed to the Forum as his replacement.

### **2/2 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reported on the Broads Authority meetings of 20 March 2015 and the issues discussed including:

- (1) Climate Change
- (2) Fen Habitat
- (3) Strategic Priorities for 2016/17 – which are the same 5 as in 2015/16
- (4) National Park Partnership
- (5) Report Asset Management Plan
- (6) Tolls Review Group and Navigation Charges
- (7) Public Question – although it was not ideal it was an efficient system and therefore would continue for the time being

**2/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

- *Minute 1/9 Parish Issues. Para 2: boats moored at Loddon should read boats moored at Ludham.*

**2/4 Public Question Time**

No questions were raised by members of the public.

**2/5 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response taken following discussions at previous meetings**

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

Members were updated that in regards to the future plans of the Ludham Bridge area there was no further progress to report.

As regards to the Harbour Revision Order it was clarified that this related to the area of water enclosed within Mutford Lock.

Members noted the report.

**2/6 2015 Broads Water Plant Survey Results**

Member received a report which presented and discussed the findings from the annual water plant survey carried out during 2015. A total of 28 broads were surveyed using a standard rake sampling technique. Waxham Cut, as a navigable channel was surveyed for water plants, using a similar methodology, but specifically developed for rivers and channels. Barton and Hickling broads were surveyed using hydro-acoustic survey equipment, to gain greater accuracy and resolution of the volume of water plants growing in the water, and their spatial extent over the bed of these broads. The report summarised the key findings of the annual water plant surveys completed in July to August 2015.

Richard Starling (RS) expressed concern in respect of a project from Natural England at Hoveton Great Broad involving bringing in seeds and plants from elsewhere. RS also commented on the description of the 2015 spring weather within the water plant report.

Members were informed that widespread growth of water plants was found outside the marked 'navigable channel' in Hickling Broad but that within the channel there was none. Some members asked about the potential of using the weed harvester to cut outside of the marked navigable channel.

RS and some other members expressed the importance that the survey was continued and comparable with previous results to show the relevant changes within Broads.

When Phil Pearson asked which other surveys were carried out in the Broads, the Environment and Design Supervisor responded that the wetland bird survey organised by the BTO and the Broads Authority water plant survey were closely linked. Together with the water quality information generated by the Environment Agency these were the three main surveys being carried out.

Members noted the report and welcomed the presentation and hoped the Authority would continue carrying out these surveys given the value of this nationally important long-term dataset.

## **2/7 Environment Agency Water Quality Data Accessibility**

Concerns have been raised that the water quality data collected by the Environment Agency (EA) was not provided in a single easily accessible and understandable format that provided basic information such as annual trends.

Members received a report and were given a presentation by Rory Sanderson from the Environment Agency which provided an explanation and demonstration of how water quality data can be accessed and gave an overview of the type and extent of data collected.

RS believed the website was too confusing and suggested that the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority work together on producing a more user friendly annual report stating the water quality in the Broads and whether it was improving. Rory Sanderson said he would take that idea back and see what might be possible, contacting RS to discuss any options.

John Hiskett (JH) enquired whether in case of a planning application the EA would provide water quality results of run off into the catchment to which Rory replied it would be the applicant's responsibility to provide that assessment, however he recognised the possibility for the EA to work with the appropriate bodies and advise them what to do.

Phil Pearson (PP) said that a higher target of water quality often needed to be met where there were international wildlife designations. It was currently unclear how this was impacting on Water Framework Directive priorities and whether the objectives were being met.

Members welcomed the report.

## **2/8 Review of Waste Facilities**

Members received a report which set out the current position in relation to waste facilities throughout the Broads Authority's area and it was confirmed that this would be updated in the Broadcaster and the Green Book.

As the classification of waste was still causing concern, it was emphasised that since the new regulations had been introduced many discussions had been held with the local authorities and that it was agreed that waste from both private and hire boats was categorised as commercial waste.

Members were informed that with the exception of Potter Heigham, evidence of major issues with waste was weak. The situation was not as bad as expected because the pattern of disposal by the public was changing and therefore the overall impact had been felt more by increased loads in the commercial waste facilities provided by the hire boat industry and the Broads Authority rather than by increased fly tipping. Therefore the Authority had decided that the most appropriate action was to monitor the situation for a year.

It was noted that other inland navigation authorities, such as the Canals and Rivers Trust, did not face the same issues, because it was the landowner.

Mike Flett expressed concern because waste disposal facilities would be withdrawn by the end of February not allowing Parish Councils enough time to make alternative arrangements.

Barbara Greasley's (BG) commented that it might be time for the Authority to offer a contribution to the costs of waste disposal facilities, from the navigation funds if necessary, however the Chief Executive believed that going down this route would risk all waste disposal facilities being withdrawn by the councils.

When the Chief Executive mentioned that the issue was being discussed by Norman Lamb and Elizabeth Truss, RS suggested that the Authority should take part in this discussion.

JT and PP expressed concerns that the issue of waste disposal and fly tipping would have a negative impact on the tourism industry, the environment and wild life and believed this should be considered and brought to the table.

Members noted the report.

## **2/9 Broads Local Plan: Issues and Options**

Members received a report which introduced the Broads Local Plan Issues and Options Stage. This was the first stage in the preparation of a draft Local Plan and highlighted the key topics which future planning policies could cover

and also outlined some options for the direction of that planning policy. Local Planning Authorities were required to undertake public consultation at specific stages of plan preparation and it was anticipated that the Issues and Options would be the subject of public consultation beginning in February 2016.

Members were informed that there would be drop-in sessions on 19 March in Oulton and on 23 March in Brundall.

A suggested new approach to particular issues, such as peat, tranquillity, safety by the water and car parking were noted and RS suggested that the waste disposal issue would be added to the list of Issues and Options.

Members noted the report.

## **2/10 Broads Plan Review First Consultation Draft Broads Plan 2017**

The Broads Plan is the key strategic management plan for the Broads. The current plan was adopted in May 2011 and its review was a Strategic Priority for 2015/16. It was anticipated that a revised plan would be adopted in March 2017.

Members received a report which introduced the first draft Broads Plan 2017 prior to its publication for wider public consultation. The draft plan was taken to the Broads Authority on 22 January, seeking permission to publish the plan for consultation. Forum members were asked to publicise the plan within their various interest groups and parishes and to encourage responses to be made to the consultation

Members noted that the draft Broads Plan 2017 set out proposed actions under 11 aspirational headings. Alongside the Broads Local Plan (Issues and Options), the draft plan would be subject to public consultation, including a number of drop-in sessions around the Broads.

A discussion followed about identifying local food supplies and supporting the growth of this to help tourism in National Parks i.e. branded Broadland beef. This was an emerging priority for Defra.

PP mentioned that it was important to get the correct wording in the section of the plan that relates to green infrastructure and housing growth beyond the Broads boundaries, especially as the Authority was under extreme pressure from the Government for growth however it was important that this was not at any cost.

When PP mentioned that the plan should include targets it was explained that these would be incorporated in the second draft of the plan once there was Broads agreement on the themes and projects that it needed to cover.

Members noted the report.

## **2/11 Draft Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Broads 2016 - 2020**

Members received a report which presented the first draft of a Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Broads, for the years 2016–2020, following the review of the strategy covering the previous five years.

Members noted that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was not just a Broads Authority Strategy but a strategy for all who were involved with tourism. It was further noted that there might be a funding opportunity from the Government in regards to transport in the Broads.

Barbara Greasley (BG) believed that the Strategy should include a section which reviewed progress made in previous years. The Tourism and Promotion Officer responded that an annual Action Plan included in the Strategy would help with this process in future years.

In response to questions about how other areas supported tourism, it was explained that there was a mixed approach. Visit Norfolk for example was funded by core public authorities whilst Visit North Norfolk was primarily a membership organisation reflecting local businesses. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding was primarily for particular projects though tourism was not featuring so high on their list of priorities.

PP enquired whether there were any work plans on places tourists were visiting.

It was noted that the Authority recognised the potential of the Southern Broads and recognised the many opportunities it had to offer and members were assured that the Southern Broads would continue to be promoted. It was agreed that discussion would occur with Broads Tourism before distribution of the draft document to enable refinement of some of the elements especially with regard to implementation processes.

Members noted the report.

## **2/12 Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive presented his report, which summarised the current position of the Authority's strategic priorities.

The Chief Executive mentioned that a report commissioned by the Broads Climate Partnership would explore current understanding related to the coast from Eccles to Great Yarmouth and its relationship with the future of the Broads Flood Alleviation Project. This would help with short term applications for maintaining defences on the coast and help relate action to future options for flood risk management including the option of flood barriers. The results would be brought back to the Forum at a later meeting.

Members said they welcomed the emails from the Chief Executive updating them on the latest affairs.

It was noted that the National Park Grant was guaranteed for the next four years which essentially meant it would allow the Authority to improve its future planning. It was stressed however this did not mean the Authority would have access to extra funds so therefore would need to continue to watch its expenditure.

It was further noted that the Broads Authority was approached by the Norfolk Show. They were offered a good deal to have a presence in a new Broads Area on the showground. The Authority recognised this was most likely to be a one off offer, and so believed this would be the perfect opportunity to promote the Broads National Park and perhaps display a launch and the Fen Harvester.

The Chief Executive informed members that it had become apparent that supporting a single National Park was not of any interest to the largest companies. A new National Park Partnership has therefore been established to engage with big corporations to support the efforts of all 15 National Parks in the UK.

Members were updated on the Thorpe Island issue and the Chief Executive informed members that he had met with the landowner earlier in the day who had agreed to confirm his intentions with regard to the Enforcement Notice and the actions being considered for injunctions by the end of the week.

Members were further informed that Elizabeth Truss had given a speech about the budget in which the National Parks and the Broads had been highlighted as special landscapes and that Defra would put a 25 year plan together about the environment.

Nick Deane stated that Elizabeth Truss had mentioned the localism issue and enquired how this would affect the decision making process and where the control would come from. The Chief Executive responded that both Rory Stewart and Elizabeth Truss regarded the catchment approach as being central to a new way of working and so the partnership work in places like the Upper Thurne was likely to grow in importance.

PP enquired whether there were any more negotiations about the trial zone of waterskiing on Breydon Water to which the Chief Executive responded that any further information would be forwarded to him and Julian Barnwell (JB).

Members noted the report.

## **2/13 Parish Issues**

In relation to the closure of the Wherryman's Way between Chedgrave and Hardley, JL enquired whether the mats could be removed and suggested a meeting involving BA, BESL and the EA about re-opening the footpath. The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer replied that he was already due to have a meeting with the EA and Norfolk County Council concerning this

matter on the following Wednesday. He explained the issue was that Norfolk County Council wanted to cover the mats with soil instead of removing them in order to raise the bank, however this would need consent. The Authority wants to know whether it would be possible to simply replace the stakes instead.

On behalf of the Friends of the Earth, Jennifer Parkhouse (JP) enquired about Catfield Fen in relation to two water extraction licenses. PP and Keith Bacon said they would be in touch to brief her on the issue.

**2/14 Current Issues**

No items were proposed as current issues.

**2/15 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting**

The Chairman would report to the Broads Authority meeting on the various issues discussed by the Forum.

**2/16 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting**

It was noted that the Chair and Vice Chair would be elected at the next meeting and it was suggested to have an update on the Mooring Strategy.

**2/17 Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 28 April 2016 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.

Chairman