

Broads Local Access Forum

20 May 2026

Agenda item number 11

Broads Local Access Forum annual report 2025-2026

Report by Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary

This report summarises the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) activities to report to the Broads Authority's AGM in July 2026. The report outlines the activities and advice of the Broads Local Access Forum during the 2025–26 period, summarising the Forum's input on access to land and water for open-air recreation and its statutory advisory role to the Broads Authority under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is submitted annually to inform and support the Authority's strategic access planning.

BLAF members' views are sought on the draft report to be tabled at the Broads Authority AGM (sections 1-6).

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) has continued to fulfil its statutory role under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, providing strategic advice on matters of public access to land and water within the Broads Authority executive area. The Forum met formally twice during the period (in June and November 2025). BLAF has made valuable contributions to strategic access planning, infrastructure development through Authority delivery of specific access projects and stakeholder engagement.

2. Membership and governance

- 2.1. BLAF membership remained broadly representative, covering access interests across land and access to water: cycling, horse riding, walking, archaeology, angling, nature conservation, tourism and local business, and waterborne activities. Of the maximum possible 22 positions, 14 were filled, where one new member was recruited in April 2025 (Pat Holtom) and three members resigned. In November 2025 Keith Bacon was elected as Chair, with David Lilley appointed Vice-Chair, both bringing experience and continuity to the Forum's work. All meetings complied with the Forum's constitution and Broads Authority support ensured administrative transparency and public access to meeting documentation.

3. Advice and contribution to strategy

- 3.1. BLAF played an active role in supporting the Broads Authority's development of a new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), funded through Active Travel England, particularly reviewing proposed schemes as the Active Travel England National Parks Capability Fund heads into Phase 2 of its funding. The Forum provided significant feedback on proposed schemes, emphasising the importance of sustainable travel for the Broads' seven million annual visitors, especially considering the area's rural character and local population base. Members highlighted the value of inclusive infrastructure, such as safer routes, improved wayfinding and better integration with public transport and community venues. Specific suggestions included improvements to Haddiscoe bends, quiet lane options between Pilson Green and Upton, inclusion of connecting routes at How Hill, a cyclist crossing at Beighton, and extending the refurbished permissive path which runs from Acle to Acle Bridge to Stokesby turnoff.
- 3.2. BLAF reviewed the Integrated Access Strategy (IAS) report for Year 1 progress, and stressed the importance of having a Waterways and Recreation Officer since the role was (at the time, April 2025) vacant. It was noted that the Broads LCWIP brought more focussed to land based activities and that strategic priorities should not overlook land to water objectives.
- 3.3. "Paths lost to the river" continues to be a strong topic of interest, particularly regarding Bramerton (FP5) and Surlingham (FP1), with updates requested (and given) on these sections and others identified as 'vulnerable' such as FP4 at Burgh Castle. High project costs and meeting Biodiversity Net Gain requirements have played a large part in stalling progress, particularly with the Norfolk County Council led path reinstatement project at Bramerton FP5.

4. Access improvement

- 4.1. Access for All funding from Defra enabled completion of projects on the Broads Authority's permissive path from Acle to Acle Bridge (surface improvements) and path refurbishment works at Hoveton Riverside Park. BLAF recommendations included wayfinding to improve connectivity between routes and moorings.

5. Stakeholder engagement and public involvement

- 5.1 The Forum maintained strong relationships with partner organisations, including Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency, and Natural England. Though efforts to recruit new members will aim to strengthen representation, BLAF continues to offer valuable insight from landowners, user groups, conservationists and the general public.

6. Reflections and priorities

- 6.1. BLAF remained active and effective in offering strategic guidance. Key achievements during the year included supporting the Broads LCWIP, securing funding and delivery for access improvements, and continuing to advocate for long-term rights of way solutions and environmental protections.
- 6.2. Looking ahead, BLAF's priorities include:
- Broadening and diversifying membership through the April 2026 recruitment;
 - Promoting and monitoring the implementation of IAS and LCWIP recommendations;
 - Advocating for the reinstatement and protection of riverside rights of way;
 - Supporting further developments in accessible infrastructure and inclusive interpretation;
 - Continuing input into water quality, salinity monitoring, and climate resilience where these have a direct influence on public enjoyment and recreation;
 - Supporting Land to Water access with insight to key areas of interaction and access requirements within the Broads.
- 6.3. The Forum extends sincere thanks to all its members, supporting officers at the Broads Authority, and external stakeholders who contributed their time, expertise and enthusiasm throughout the year.

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[Broads Plan](#) objectives: Theme E: Promoting understand and enjoyment.