

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2017

Professor Jacquie Burgess – in the Chair

Present:

Mr K Allen
Mr J Ash
Mr M Barnard
Mr L Baugh
Mr M Bradbury

Mr W Dickson
Sir Peter Dixon
Ms G Harris
Ms S Mukherjee
Mr G Munford

Mrs N Talbot
Mr H Thirtle
Mr V Thomson
Mr J Timewell
Mr B Wilkins

In Attendance:

Dr J Packman – Chief Executive
Mrs S A Beckett – Administrative Officer
Mr S Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Mr D Harris – Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Dr D Hoare – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment
Mr S Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Ms E Krelle – Chief Financial Officer
Mr R Leigh – Head of Communications
Ms A Long – Director of Planning and Resources
Mr R Rogers – Director of Operations

Others Present: Mr Keith Bacon - Chairman of Broads Forum and Broads Local Access Forum
Mr Richard Holmes – for the Public Question

6/1 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting including members of the public.

Apologies were received from Mr B Isles, Mr G McGregor and Mr P Rice

6/2 Chairman's Announcements

(1) Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chairman reminded members that in line with the decision made previously, the proceedings from this meeting would be recorded. She emphasised that the Broads Authority retains the copyright and the purpose of recording was as a back for accuracy. The system was still being trialled. If a member wished to receive a copy of the recording, they should contact the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer. Following a request from the Chairman, no members of the public indicated that they would be recording or filming the proceedings.

(2) **General Proceedings**

The Chairman remarked that while conducting the annual reviews a number of members had praised the excellent quality and detail of the officers' reports and considered it was not necessary for officers to spend as much time going through the content of their reports as hitherto. This would save some time in meetings. Accepting this point, the Chairman said that she would take it that Members had read the papers and therefore the emphasis would be for members to ask questions and debate the issues. This was agreed.

(3) **Welcome to New Staff: Rob Leigh and Tom Waterfall**

The Chairman welcomed Rob Leigh as the Authority's new Head of Communications and Tom Waterfall as Digital Communications Officer. Rob Leigh had a decade of experience managing local authority communications and had recently been running the communications and engagement activity at Luton Borough Council. Tom Waterfall had studied at the Norwich Business School UEA and since graduating with a first class honours degree in Marketing Management in 2016 had worked as Marketing Assistant for M&H Plastics in Beccles before coming to the Authority.

(4) **Recognition of Twenty-Five Years' service**

The Chairman announced with great pleasure that Matt Dane had reached the milestone of having been with the Authority for 25 years. He had worked up through the system from being a Seasonal Warden at Toad Hole Cottage How Hill in 1992, a River Inspector (River Works) in 1996, Navigation Works Technician and now as Maintenance Team Supervisor of a very dedicated team who had 189 years of experience between them. The Chairman presented Matt with a small token of appreciation from the Authority as a recognition of his achievement.

(5) **Dates to Note:**

The Chairman informed members of the following events:

- Broads Planning Design Quality Tour: Friday 16 June 2017. This was for the Planning Committee but all members were invited.
- Broads Plan – Launch scheduled for 5 July 2017
- Members Annual Site Visit: 13 July 2017. This would focus on the Southern Broads and all Members were encouraged to attend.

6/3 Appointment of Two Co-opted Navigation Committee Members to the Broads Authority

The Authority received a report concerning the appointment of the two co-opted Members from the Navigation Committee to the Authority in accordance with the procedures and following the recommendation of the Navigation Committee on 20 April 2017.

The Navigation Committee agreed to appoint Mrs Nicky Talbot as Chairman and Mr Brian Wilkins as Vice-Chairman of the Navigation Committee and had recommended that they both be appointed to the Authority for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED unanimously

that Mrs Nicky Talbot and Mr Brian Wilkins be appointed to the Authority until the Broads Authority meeting on 18 May 2018.

6/4 Introduction of Members and Declarations of Interest

Members introduced themselves and expressed declarations of interest as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

6/5 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

6/6 Public Question Time

A public question had been received from Mr Richard Holmes concerning plant cutting in Hickling Broad. This was read out and the Chairman provided the Authority's response as set out at Appendix 2 to these minutes. In being invited to ask a supplementary question, he commented that he did not feel that it was a full enough answer in explaining the role and responsibilities of the Authority and carrying out its previous obligations. He considered that another survey, which appeared to change the methodology would make the issue more confusing. He considered that the best survey would be by taking a boat out on the water and therefore it was important to listen to those using the Broad.

The Director of Operations commented that a number of the concerns would be addressed in the presentation to be given at Agenda Item 9. Mr Holmes commented that unfortunately he would not be able to stay to listen to the presentation. Officers undertook to provide Mr Holmes with a further written response.

6/7 Minutes of Broads Authority Meeting held on 24 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6/8 Summary of Progress/Actions Taken Following Decisions of Previous Meetings

The Authority received and noted a schedule of progress/actions taken following decisions of previous meetings. It was noted that a number of the items on this agenda were very much interrelated.

In particular, members received updates concerning:

Network Rail - The Authority had recently received notification from Network Rail that the final report concerning Somerleyton and Reedham swing bridges had been completed but the Authority had not yet received a copy. The Authority was continuing to press for sight of the report. The Authority was liaising closely with Norwich City Council on information concerning Trowse Bridge.

CANAPE – the bid had passed the first technical test and a decision as to whether it had been accepted was due sometime in June 2017.

Landscape Partnership Scheme - The Heritage Lottery Fund second round application was being delivered at 2.00pm this afternoon 19 May 2017.

External Funding – It was clarified that as a result of the proposed Peer Review and the resources it would involve, it had been considered that development of an external funding strategy would have to be postponed. However, with the submission of the HLF Landscape Partnership scheme, this would free up the Project Manager together with the Head of Strategy and Projects to scope and develop a medium term funding strategy between now and October. Kelvin Allen, John Ash and Mathew Bradbury had agreed to act as an informal 'Member Reference Group' [MRG] for this.

Kelvin Allen was pleased to announce that the Angling Trust had secured a substantial external grant offer and there would be a meeting to take the matter forward.

6/9 Conservation Management – Update on practical work and monitoring with special reference to Hickling Broad.

As a result of the requests from members to be provided with more information on the practical conservation and operational work of the Authority the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment provided a report on the practical conservation work delivered by the Authority from its revenue budgets and operational workforce during the 2016/17 financial year together with an outline of the key work areas for delivery in 2017/18. This reflected the integrated work being planned, managed and undertaken by the Environment and Design team in the Operations Directorate to deliver a range of corporate priorities and projects.

The Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment provided a more detailed presentation on the work and complexities of the unique environment of Hickling Broad, which he emphasised, was only one small section of the team's work but did reflect the integrated approach and the sensitivities

required. He explained that with the technology now being used the subsequent mapping of aquatic water plants across Hickling was very accurate and provided illustrations of the areas of water plant predominance, the species of those plants, the water depths indicating the channel areas and the areas for open sailing. It was emphasised that as Hickling Broad was of national and international importance it had to be managed appropriately. Members noted that this involved all three of the Authority's purposes and required it to provide evidence to the designated regulator, Natural England in terms of the Habitats and Birds Directives in order to gain consent to carry out any work in a sustainable way and demonstrate that there would be no adverse impacts. Hickling Broad was a site that was not in the best of ecological conditions in terms of the Directive, but a complete cutting of all the water plants would have a significant adverse impact on the whole of the Broad by upsetting the ecological state of those plants and the area could lose those special unique plants altogether, affect the water quality and the other forms of biodiversity. In addition, changing the management in one area could have an effect on the species elsewhere.

Members noted that the Authority had to be mindful of all the sensitivities of the site, take account of all the stakeholders as well as its statutory duties. They also noted that they, as the Members of the Broads Authority, collectively who had the responsibility to work with all parties in the best interests of the site.

Members thanked the Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment for such a comprehensive presentation in aiding the understanding of the complexities and sensitivities of the Hickling Broad and the fragilities of the ecosystem. They recognised that it was one of the biggest challenges for the Authority and demonstrated the need for better communication of the complexities involved and in particular the uniqueness of the plant species to this area.

Members expressed considerable appreciation for the update on all the work being undertaken by the team, which had provided them with a greater understanding. In particular they noted the fen management work being undertaken, specifically with the fen harvester and that the marketing and energy conversion required further investigation and development. The importance of tackling invasive species was also noted together with the need to explore the financial implications. They considered that the report and presentations had provided an excellent demonstration of the practical integration of the Authority's three purposes.

RESOLVED unanimously

that the update on the Authority's practical conservation work and the current practice regarding Hickling Broad be noted and that such reports be provided on a regular basis.

6/10 Strategic Direction 2017/18 Update

The Authority received this year's first report on the progress of the Strategic Priorities identified at the January meeting for 2017/18, noting that the key topics were similar to those for the previous year but also included the Peer Review as agreed at the previous meeting in March (Minute 5/16)

In addition the report included a progress report in table form on the Authority's strategic documents all of which guided and informed the work of the Broads Authority. It was noted that this also helped to inform and guide other organisations within the Broads Area. The table set out the expected progress for the financial year 2017 – 18. It was noted that the principal strategy was the Broads Plan 2017 – 2022 which had been adopted in March 2017. The other strategic documents in the table contributed to the delivery of different aspects of the Broads Plan. The Biodiversity Strategy and Integrated Access Strategy were due to be reviewed in 2017-18.

Members noted that MRGs had been established for two of the priorities – the branding project and external funding, both of which were due to start in June 2017. They also agreed with the proposal to set up a further reference group to examine the governance arrangements in advance of the Peer Review and that this should include a member of the FSAC, a senior local authority member and two members with governance experience, to be agreed by the Chair.

Bill Dickson proposed, seconded by Sarah Mukherjee and it was

RESOLVED unanimously

- (i) that the updates for 2017/18 on the Strategic Priorities and the Authority's strategic documents ((Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the report) be noted.
- (ii) that a small Reference Group of Members be established by the Chair to:
 - (a) Review the governance of the Broads Authority and develop proposals on how the arrangements could be improved in both the short and long term;
 - (b) Advise and support the Chief Executive in the preparation for the Peer Review in October 2017.

6/11 Financial Performance and Direction: Income and Expenditure from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

The Authority received a report providing a strategic overview of the current key financial issues and items for decision. This included the consolidated income and expenditure figures from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, which also provided figures for the latest available budget and the overview of Forecast Outturn 2016/17.

The figures in the report in relation to Sections 2 – 7 of the report would form the basis of the draft Statement of Accounts and include the year-end adjustments. The deficit on the national park side was £810 and £1,531 on navigation, resulting in a consolidated deficit of £2,341. After the year end adjustment for interest to the earmarked reserves the general fund reserve was £1,041,796 and the navigation reserve £325,955. This meant that the navigation reserve sat slightly above the recommended 10% at 10.5% of net expenditure at the end of 2016/17.

Members were particularly pleased to note that with a budget of approximately £6 million, the Authority had a consolidated deficit of just £2,341 for the year. Officers were congratulated on the quality of their financial budgeting.

Members noted the timetable for the Statement of Accounts 2016/17 which involved these being completed by 31 May 2017, being scrutinised by the FSAC on 25 July, following the external audit in June and to be formally adopted at the Authority's meeting on 28 July 2017. The Chief Financial Officer emphasised that it was important for members to receive briefings on the Statement of Accounts prior to them being formally adopted and a date was being trawled. *(subsequently confirmed for 20 July 2017)*

Haydn Thirtle proposed, seconded by Nicky Talbot and it was

RESOLVED unanimously

- (i) that the income and expenditure figures for 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and the draft year end position (Table 4) and timetable (7.1) in Sections 2 – 7 of the report be noted.
- (ii) that the recommended carry forward requests in Section 8.2 of the report be approved and added to the 2017/18 budget as additional expenditure
- (iii) that the amended split to the earmarked reserves in Section 9 of the report be noted.

6/12 Ethical Standards in the Broads Authority

The Authority received a report that considered the requirements for meeting and maintaining high ethical standards in the context of governance, reviewed current available guidelines and gave consideration to appropriate recommendations. This followed a low-priority recommendation made by internal audit in 2016 and consideration by members at the workshop on Code of Conduct in January 2017.

Members welcomed the report and considered that together with the other reports on the agenda were timely. In particular the Chairman drew attention to the aim to have the Authority's core values embedded in all that it undertook and that the next stakeholder survey in 2019 should make

reference to how the Authority demonstrated its core values. In relation to procurement, it was noted that reference to the core values would be included in the tender specifics but details were still required.

With regard to accountability e.g. bullying, it was clarified that the Authority did have policies and procedures in place to deal with such issues. In addition staff had access to an independent organisation from which they could seek advice on a number of matters. This was totally confidential.

Bill Dickson proposed, seconded by John Timewell and it was

RESOLVED unanimously

that the report is noted and that the recommendations as to areas where the Authority could improve its use of or further demonstrate its commitment to ethical standards are supported:

These include:

- *The Members Induction programme to include reference to ethical standards*
- *That reviews of procedures and policies include the use of Independent Persons appointed under the Localism Act 2011 to provide external scrutiny of processes where appropriate.*
- *The current review of the Code of Corporate Governance includes a full implementation of those elements of the CIPFA framework as address ethical standards and procedures.*
- *The Broads Authority seeks to engage in dialogue with stakeholders and outside bodies to allow itself to draw a picture of how its ethical standards are perceived by those bodies.*
- *In the event of the Broads Authority repeating the stakeholder survey by Insight Track, or equivalent exercise, that this should include an assessment of ethics within it.*
- *Ensuring that when procuring contracts for the supply of goods and services to the Authority or on behalf of the Authority, that appropriate questionnaires are used and documents provided to it , to allow the Authority to be satisfied that it deals only with organisations which themselves have high ethical standards.*

6/13 Protocol on Member and Officer Relations

The Authority received a report providing amendments to the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations to take account of the Localism Act 2011 which put certain obligations on members and also took account of the Nolan principles as well as the developments in social media.

Members welcomed the report and considered that all members should be reminded of its content, particularly with reference to the revised Section 4 on Expectations, where all Members should show leadership and take responsibility for the decisions taken by the Authority, as well as Section 8 on

Communications at para 8.2 to ensure that the Authority was correctly represented whatever the communication medium being used. There was a request that para 8.3 should be redrafted to be consistent with para 4.3. A member raised the capacity of all members where they ran a private blog but commented on matters involving Authority business and whether the protocol should reflect the legal position. The Solicitor and Monitoring Officer clarified that this protocol served to define the relative responsibilities of members and officers and the situation raised by the member would be addressed in detail within the protocol on social media at present being developed.

With reference to Section 9 concerning the Provision of Information, Members considered that it was a general right for all members to be kept informed of all relevant matters, not just chairs, vice-chairs and lead members. Therefore it was suggested that the style and wording be amended in para 9.1 and that it would be useful to have a preamble in order to illustrate that the Authority was transparent and not exclusive or hierarchical.

Members commended and welcomed the proposed Protocol but requested some amendments be made before being finally adopted.

RESOLVED

that the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer be delegated to make amendments to the proposed draft Protocol on Member and Officer Relations as outlined in the discussion, to circulate these to all members for consultation and following consultation authorise for the Protocol to be adopted.

6/14 Amendments to Standing Orders

The Authority received a report on the proposed amendments to the Authority's standing orders for the regulation of Authority proceedings to include those amendments necessary as the result of the recent decision to audio record Authority meetings. The amendments also included specific provision for the Hearings Committee. It was clarified, that as for other reports reference had also been made to other National Parks and Local Authorities.

Members commended the need for members to have read all the reports before the meeting and the need to be respectful, courteous and pay attention to the debates within the meeting as indicated at Para 12 concerning the Recording of meetings and use of hand held electronic devices.

Members raised the issue of using Twitter and Facebook within meetings as in some organisations the use of this type of social media was being encouraged as part of increasing accessibility and transparency. The Head of Communications commented that officers would be developing a social media policy for members, clarifying that there was already one in place for staff. The parameters would need to be defined while acknowledging the Authority's core values.

Although it was recognised that the wording of the originally drafted standing orders was of necessity legalistic and could be difficult to understand, in future it would be worth considering whether the language in such documents could be made more accessible. The Solicitor and Monitoring Officer confirmed that the use of Plain English was the preferred method when drafting new documents.

Haydn Thirtle proposed, seconded by Mathew Bradbury and it was

RESOLVED unanimously

that the proposed draft amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders attached to the report, be approved to take effect from the next meeting or committee meeting of the Authority.

6/15 Health and Safety

The Authority received a report providing the annual information on health and safety together with the annual review of marine incidents. In addition, due to the recent changes in the membership of the Navigation Committee and subsequent membership of the Broads Authority there was a vacancy for the lead member responsible for safety. As acting Chairman of the Navigation Committee, Nicky Talbot had been attending these meetings. Now being Chairman and being an active sailor, she expressed willingness to continue to attend the meetings and be the lead member. This was welcomed.

Members noted the annual Health and Safety Report 2016 as well as the Annual Marine Incident Statistics that had been considered by the Navigation Committee. Members gave attention to the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and were assured that considerable efforts were being made to raise awareness of this through the boatyards and hirers, with the aid of the leaflets having been updated and their distribution, engagement with the public by the Rangers and through Super Safety days, through the Tourist Information Centres and Yacht Stations as well as through social media. As a parallel to this, the Boat Safety Technical Committee was reviewing the issue and over the coming months would be carrying out varying tests on equipment. The matter was due to be discussed at the next Safety Committee meeting in association with the need to consider management of risk to third parties. It was noted that British Marine was considering whether carbon monoxide detectors should be considered as essential equipment and therefore it being mandatory to have these fitted to all closed boats.

Members welcomed the report and the Chairman put the proposals to the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (i) that Nicky Talbot be appointed to represent the Authority as lead member for safety

- (ii) that the following priorities for action on internal health and safety for the coming year be noted:
 - (a) To continue to monitor application of the condition monitoring system on all Broads Authority navigation area assets;
 - (b) To continue to promote the safety observations system to help to influence a positive change in culture and to capture near miss events;
 - (c) To carry out five internal audits of key processes to audit control measures; and
- (iii) that the Annual Marine Incident Statistics be noted.

6/16 Summary of Formal Complaints 2016/17

The Authority received a report providing a summary of the formal complaints received within the last year, between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 made by members of the public and service users, together with the outcome of those complaints. It was noted that there were 10 complaints received in the last year, mostly relating to planning applications and tolls, and two complaints referred to the ombudsman, both of which were dismissed.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

6/17 Annual report on Requests to Waive Standing Orders

The Authority received a report providing the annual summary of instances where Contract Standing Orders had been waived by the Chief Executive during 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

that the annual report of instances where standing orders have been waived be noted.

6/18 The Port Marine Safety Code: To consider any items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

The Head of Safety reported that there were no items which needed to be raised under this item.

6/19 Minutes Received

The Chairman indicated that she would assume that members had read these minutes and the Chairman of each of the Committees would be available to answer any questions.

RESOLVED

(i) **Navigation Committee: 23 February 2017**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Navigation committee meeting held on 23 February 2017 be received.

(ii) **Planning Committee: 3 March and 31 March 2017**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 3 March and 31 March 2017 be received.

(iii) **Broads Forum – 27 April 2017**

The Chairman of the Committee drew attention to the very helpful and interesting presentation from the Broads Angling Strategy Group and Environment Agency on saline incursion and management of fisheries received at the meeting.

RESOLVED

that the Draft Broads Forum minutes from the meeting held on 27 April 2017 be received.

6/20 Feedback from Members appointed to represent the Authority on outside bodies

Members of the Authority appointed to outside bodies were invited to provide feedback on those meetings they had attended on behalf of the Authority.

Broads Tourism – Greg Munford reported that a membership in excess of 175 was expected by November 2017. Broads Tourism was now a limited company. At the last Directors' meeting, the members were very impressed by the activity of the Broads Authority through social media. A strategy was now in place and social media was being delivered exceptionally well. Broads Tourism was all about collaboration between the member organisations in order to promote the area in 2018 and the Authority must be commended on the hard decisions it had taken in helping in its promotion. He commended Lorna Marsh as former Head of Communications in helping in this regard.

Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust – John Ash reported that the Trust had taken on another employee with the help of the Authority and John Organ was now on board as a Trustee. There was now a new Chairman.

Norfolk Windmills Trust – Jacquie Burgess reported that as the Trust had limited funds, this demonstrated the importance of the Landscape Partnership Scheme in promoting and facilitating the restoration of mills.

Whitlingham Charitable Trust – Whitlingham Country Park. It was reported that the diary of events had been published and the swift tower was now successfully in place.

6/21 Items of Urgent Business

There were no other items of urgent business for consideration.

6/22 Formal Questions

There were no formal questions of which due notice had been given.

6/23 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday, 28 July 2017 at 10.00am at Yare House, 62 – 64 Thorpe Road, Norwich.

6/24 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the consideration of the items below on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraphs 1, 3, 5 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public benefit in disclosing the information.

Members of the Public left the meeting

Summary of Exempt Minutes

6/25 Exempt Minutes of the Broads Authority meeting – 24 March 2017

The exempt Minutes of the Authority's meeting on 24 March 2017 were received and signed as a correct record.

6/26 Priority for Moorings 2017/18

The Authority received a report containing exempt information concerning the opportunities and options of purchase, leasing and repair of three different mooring sites for 2017/18. The Navigation Committee had considered the progress on the matter at its meeting on 20 April 2017 and had wholeheartedly supported the proposed actions.

Vic Thomson proposed, seconded by Nicky Talbot and it was

RESOLVED

- (i) that the recommended actions in respect of the moorings at Acle Bridge, Hoveton Viaduct and Boundary Farm as set out in the report be supported and authorised.
- (ii) that subject to the successful outcome of the authorised actions and negotiations connected with the above, a further report setting out a full business case be provided to the Authority.

6/27 Corporate Sponsorship

The Authority received a report containing exempt information relating to the progress made by National Park Partnerships in its negotiations with an international clothing company.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Authority confirms its support for the partnership with the international clothing company and recognises the benefits and obligations.
- (ii) That the Authority authorises the Chief Executive, to sign the Letter of Agreement with the National Parks Partnership regarding the commercial partnership agreement with the international company to be the official clothing supplier to the UK's fourteen National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority for 5 years.

The meeting concluded at 13.16 pm

CHAIRMAN

APPENDIX 1**Code of Conduct for Members
Declaration of Interests****Committee:** Broads Authority 19 May 2017

Name	Agenda/ Minute No(s)	Nature of Interest (Please describe the nature of the interest)
Kelvin Allen		Chair of Broads Angling Strategy Group Member of Waveney River Trust
Greg Munford		Chairman Broads Tourism CEO Richardsons Toll Payer and Local Resident
Vic Thomson		Director Whitlingham Charitable Trust
Matthew Bradbury		Director of Whitlingham Charitable Trust Member BC, Toll Payer
John Ash		Toll Payer, Director/Trustee Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust. N&SB Charitable Trust, How Hill Trust
Gail Harris		Whitlingham Charitable Trust Trustee/Director Cllr Norwich City Council
Nicky Talbot		Chair of Navigation Committee Toll Payer, Member of NBYC and NSBA
Bill Dickson		None on this agenda
Peter Dixon	6/9 And 6/27	My boathouse access affected by weed growth National Parks Partnership Board Member
Louis Baugh		Director of Whitlingham Charitable Trust Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust.
Sarah Mukherjee		Chief Executive of Crop Protection Association None on this agenda.
Brian Wilkins	6/9	Chairman of NSBA, Upper Thurne Working Group

Public Question Time

Question submitted by Richard Holmes

Last year I raised the issue of water plants and the impact it has with sailing at the Hickling Broad area, it seems little action has been taken by the Broads Authority apart from a partial refund of my Broads Licence toll payment after I was told there were no actions to be taken by the Broads Authority apart from monitoring.

I read this year that it has again been brought to the attention of the Broads Authority by the Hickling Sailing Club and local business, highlighting this issue and safety aspects.

I would like to know what the role and responsibility of the Broads Authority is in this matter and what the future plan is and if any previous obligations required by the Broads Authority have not been met.

The Authority's response

Thank you for your question regarding the growth of water plants in Hickling Broad. You will see that there is reference to the topic in the report at Item No 9 on this agenda.

This is a matter where the Authority remains committed to a proactive stance, bringing together local interests, the landowner and the statutory agencies to achieve sustainable management of the Broad.

The Broads Authority fully appreciates the importance of Hickling Broad for sailing and also has a duty to consider its rare water plant community and birdlife which is of European significance for nature conservation and as such is protected by the Habitats and Birds Directives. Last year the Authority was granted consent by Natural England, the designated regulator, to carry out management of water plants within the marked channel.

In order to balance the needs of the sailing community with our obligations to conserve and enhance the wildlife and natural beauty of the Broads, the Authority is currently seeking the required statutory consent for managing a priority area for sailing in Hickling Broad. This may involve the cutting of some of the common water plants or even some of the protected stoneworts to establish the impacts of such action.

Water plants are growing well in the North Bay. The Authority continues to advise hirers to remain within the marked channel in Hickling where there are very few water plants. Overall, the distribution of the plants this spring is largely the same as last year.

An hydroacoustic survey has just been completed and as soon as the results are plotted the Authority will share the maps with all stakeholders including the Upper Thurne Working Group, the Hickling Broad Sailing Club (HBSC) and the Norfolk & Suffolk Boating Association (NSBA) so that so that they can set racing courses appropriately.