

Broads Authority

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2021

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Present

Bill Dickson – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Matthew Bradbury, Andrée Gee, Gail Harris, Lana Hemsall, Tristram Hilborn, Tim Jickells, Bruce Keith, James Knight, Greg Munford, Simon Roberts, Matthew Shardlow, Vic Thomson and Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

In attendance

John Packman – Chief Executive, Hilary Slater – Monitoring Officer, Christopher Bing – Deputy Monitoring Officer, Maria Conti – Head of Governance, Emma Krelle – Chief Financial Officer, Rob Rogers – Director of Operations, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services, Essie Guds - meeting moderator, Sarah Mullarney – meeting moderator and Sara Utting – Governance Officer.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Leslie Mogford, Simon Sparrow, Nicky Talbot and Fran Whymark.

2. Chairman's announcements

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and provisions of The Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings England and Wales) Regulations no. 392.

The Chairman reminded members that the meeting was being held under the provisions of the above regulations and in accordance with the Broads Authority's Standing Orders for remote meeting procedures agreed on 22 May 2020. The meeting was being live streamed and recorded and the Broads Authority retained the copyright. The minutes remained the record of the meeting.

Bruce Keith

The Chair reported that this would be Bruce's last Broads Authority meeting, with his four-year term of office as a Secretary of State appointee ending on 30 June. Bruce had carried out a number of roles, such as Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee when he had chaired two meetings, including one very recently at extremely short notice, and had undertaken the role with complete professionalism. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Heritage Asset Review Group. His qualities included an ability to balance reliability, sound judgement and a focus on strategic issues and direction. His external appointments as the BA representative included the Norfolk Strategic Planning Forum and the Broads Charitable Trust, championing the execution of the Trust's Strategic Plan which was invaluable. Personally, he would be dismayed at losing Bruce, who he considered to be a very supportive colleague and was not afraid to speak his mind, but in an appropriate manner, when the occasion required, and was a pleasant, no-nonsense character who always contributed in a positive way. In conclusion, the Chair wished Bruce all the best in his burgeoning literary career and wished him the very best for the future.

Bruce thanked the Chair for his comments, stating that he had enjoyed his time with the Authority hugely. Projects such as CANAPE and Water Mills and Marshes were particular favourites but, in his view, it was the people who mattered the most and they had all been very friendly and welcoming.

The Chair of the Planning Committee thanked Bruce for his support at Planning Committee meetings and particularly for chairing a recent meeting with no advance notice.

Hilary Slater

The Chair reported that this would be Hilary's last Broads Authority meeting, having first been appointed as the Authority's Monitoring Officer in June 2020. During her appointment, Hilary had been a truly worthy arbiter of standards, dealing with some really tricky issues. Hilary had been unflinching in providing excellent advice and guidance to the Authority and its officers. The Chair concluded that he was very sorry to lose Hilary but wished her all the very best for the future, following her retirement from East Suffolk Council.

Hilary thanked the Chair for his comments, saying that she had very much enjoyed working with the Authority which she considered was doing a fantastic job for which members should be proud. She also wished to thank the Chief Executive and his staff for their fantastic professional support, in particular the Governance Team. She had very much enjoyed her time working with the Authority.

Norfolk Constructing Excellence Awards

The Chair reported that the innovative Landscape Partnership Scheme Project, led by Andrew Farrell, had won the Norfolk Constructing Excellence Awards, the second year running, with the Water Mills and Marshes Project coming first in the Preservation and Rejuvenation Section and second overall for the Halvergate drainage mill project. The project's success was down to the hard work of Andrew and his team in tackling the difficult task of restoring our windmills, iconic features of the Broadland landscape. He wished to congratulate the team and all those involved. This, together with other awards received, demonstrated the wealth of talent within the team at the Authority.

Lana Hemsall joined the meeting at 10.12am.

3. Appointment of two co-opted members from the Navigation Committee to the Broads Authority

At its meeting on 15 April 2021, the Navigation Committee appointed Nicky Talbot as Chair and Simon Sparrow as Vice-Chair and had recommended that both be appointed as the two co-opted members to the Broads Authority for one year.

Lana Hemsall proposed, seconded by Matthew Bradbury, and

It was resolved unanimously to appoint Nicky Talbot and Simon Sparrow to the Broads Authority for one year, until 13 May 2022.

4. Introduction of members and declarations of interest

Members indicated they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered.

5. Items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

6. Public question time

No public questions had been received.

7. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

8. Summary of actions and outstanding issues

Members received the latest summary of actions and outstanding issues following decisions of previous meetings. In addition, the Chief Executive provided the following update covering a range of issues. He identified the lead officer for each project update and encouraged members to contact them if they wished to find out more about a project.

We continue to live in strange times and managing the workload across the Authority remains challenging. Demands and opportunities were coming thick and fast and often there was very little time to react. The inexperience of officials in Defra and our auditors and their lack of knowledge about the unique status of the Broads and the Broads Authority placed more work on our own staff in checking and interpreting the material that is sent to us. A case of COVID among our auditors had put back the internal audit programme. Government decisions, for example on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, had also been delayed, which gave us more uncertainty.

Consistent with our cautious approach in response to the pandemic, this meeting was brought to today so it could be held remotely under the current regulations. That had put extra pressure on staff in preparing reports and the agenda for this meeting.

In terms of the final item in the Summary of Actions, the Head of Governance has been working with the Monitoring Officer (MO) on a report on governance matters, covering Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, appointment to outside bodies, and the standing agenda item on feedback from Members appointed to represent the Authority on outside bodies. The MO had circulated a briefing to all members on the DPI item and unfortunately there was insufficient time to complete the item on appointments, which left just the matter of feedback from Members for consideration today.

Page 17 - Pilot agri-environment scheme for the Broads - Test and Trials of ELMS (Environmental Land Management Scheme)

Contact - Andrea Kelly

This continues to progress well and the trial Land Management Board is meeting regularly to look at key issues for the new Scheme.

Page 18 – Reference to Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL)

Contact – Chief Executive

A £52.5 million programme was announced in November in the Agricultural Transition Plan. Further information was due to be provided in February with the programme starting on 1 April. This was always an ambitious target. No information was provided in February and as detailed in the SoP, the Authority was expecting it to be signed off last week. That did not happen and there was uncertainty on the timescale going forward. The Chief Executive would be leading on this matter until the position was clearer from Defra.

Page 18 - Landscapes Review

Lead officer – Chief Executive (with Chair)

Both the Chair and Chief Executive had been very busy with colleagues in the other English

National Parks on this matter and the Chair had circulated a briefing note to members. A Written Ministerial Statement was initially proposed before Christmas and the Authority had been informed this was likely to be published in late May/early June, followed by a period of public consultation on the concept of a National Landscapes Service.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Chair and Chief Executive were given a further update from the civil servants. The current thinking on the Written Ministerial Statement is that the first part will contain a vision for protected areas with four priorities:

- (i) Nature – contributing to Nature Recovery and the Government’s commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030
- (ii) Climate – nature-based solutions helping the nation progress towards net zero and helping local communities adapt – for example in mitigating flooding.
- (iii) People and Communities – promoting access to nature and health and well-being;
- (iv) Place – promoting flourish and vibrant communities with strong local identities, thriving economies and supporting the agricultural transition.

The second part would indicate what the Government intends to do to achieve the vision. It will probably have three elements:

- (i) Increased investment in Protected Landscapes;
- (ii) More powers and protection; and
- (iii) Enabling local teams to do more.

Sight of the final statement and the details of the consultation were awaited. One option discussed between the Chair and Chief Executive was to arrange a workshop for all members to look at the implications when the documents were published.

Page 19 - Collaboration with Norfolk County Council

Contact - Marie-Pierre Tighe

Our work with both County Councils was going well. The Authority contributed to the development of the 2021-24 Norfolk Rural Strategy led by Norfolk County Council, to be launched in May.

The Authority was taking part to the newly created Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance and the Norfolk Sustainable Water Management Plan Steering Group.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Environment Plan Group was evolving into a Nature Recovery Partnership. Draft Terms of Reference had been circulated, and discussed with Natural England. There was strong support for a joint approach between Norfolk and Suffolk, and the Broads Authority was a key stakeholder.

- The Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership brought together a wide range of organisations in the common goal of delivering nature recovery across Norfolk and

Suffolk, including its coast and associated marine waters, to the benefit of people and biodiversity, through securing healthier and more resilient natural systems.

- One key role would be to identify and develop new opportunities for securing investment in Norfolk and Suffolk's natural capital and nature recovery.
- This was aligned with the future statutory requirement to produce nature recovery strategies to create a nation's nature recovery network, which will be introduced in the Environment Bill, currently making its way through Parliament.
- The next meeting of the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership was scheduled for 13 May.

Page 19 - Other collaboration with Norfolk County Council

Contact – Rob Rogers

The Authority is working with Norfolk County Council, Network Rail, Abellio Greater Anglia and New Anglia on the future of Trowse Rail Bridge and the repairs to Carrow Bridge.

Swinging bridges had significant implications for the Authority and its users of the waterways. The closure of Haven Bridge had meant a major reorganisation of the Authority's maintenance programme. Contractors had been appointed to install replacement marker posts on Breydon water. However, they were stationed on the other side of the bridge and unable to get through. Given the importance of this task, the Authority's work programme was reprioritised to allow the Operations Team to commence the installation of the posts.

Two weeks ago, the Chief Executive briefed the Navigation Committee on Norfolk County Council's plans for the future maintenance of Carrow Bridge. The Director of Operations and Chief Executive had met with the County Council's Director of Operations who had explained that the plywood decking on Carrow Bridge was replaced by the County Council every six months, which involved drilling into the concrete base underneath. This concrete had reached its end of life and required substantial works to replace it. The County Council estimated it would take a minimum of three months to undertake the work, depending on the condition of the bridge. A road closure would be required for the duration of the works, which would cause serious disruption to the city.

The County Council's summary report also identified fixing the bridge in place, as a temporary solution, in order to undertake necessary investigations to find a permanent solution. The County Council's viewed a 'temporary period' as a minimum of five years.

At its recent meeting, the Navigation Committee was advised that additional information was required for the Committee to give a view on the future of the bridge; including the legal background, structural condition of the bridge, different repair options explored by the County Council and the cost implications. The County Council's Director of Operations had agreed to work with the Authority to supply this information so a more substantial report could be presented to members at the next committee meeting. This would then come to the Broads Authority for decision.

Page 19 - UK's National Parks Communications Unit

Contact – Ally Barber

Last week saw a meeting of the 15 UK National Park CEOs with a focus on two matters – climate change and in particular the arrangements for COP26 and an update on the work of the Communications Unit. It was pleasing to report that all were full of praise for the work of Ally Barber and Tobie Galvin. They were currently working on a campaign to try and influence the behaviour of young people in the 16-24 year-old age bracket as we emerged from lockdown. This followed on from the success in the Festival UK 2022 bidding process as one of 10 out of 300 winning teams to create a series of major events next year. This had attracted £5.7 million of investment to the National Parks and AONBs. The immediate task was to secure a further three years' funding for the Unit from the National Park Authorities.

Page 22 - Responding to the climate emergency

Contact – Harry Mach

The climate emergency had had a high profile in the news with the announcements by the President of the United States and our own Government's revised targets for greenhouse emissions for 2030. One issue the Authority had been discussing with the UK Parks was its collective targets for net zero with the suggestion that we should be aiming for 2030 for National Park Authorities and 2040 for National Parks.

Looking at the Authority's own emissions, it was exploring ways reduce the carbon budget of its operational work. A supply of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) had been secured and various plant and vessels would be run on this to check for any running issues with the older engines in use. As the fuel was certified as a direct diesel replacement, even capable of being mixed in the same tank, few issues were expected. The fuel gave a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, so could potentially be a very positive route, whilst other technological developments were brought to the marine and heavy plant engine markets, such as hydrogen fuel cells. As ever in the Broads, supply logistics were a major challenge, with the Authority ideally being one of many customers bulk purchasing in the Norfolk/Suffolk area to make the cost per litre more attractive.

Work was ongoing with Small World Consulting Limited to deliver Consumption Baseline Carbon figures for the Broads. This work had been pioneered by both the Lake District and the Broads Authority with the South Downs are using the same methodology and it was pleasing to note that seven other National Parks had agreed to joined. Last week Harry Mach was defining the precise boundary for the assessment.

Close work was also continuing with boating businesses, including work with New Anglia and Hethel Innovation on plans to promote the use of new technologies. An Electrifying the Broads bid was being developed for submission to the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition.

The Authority was also part of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership, which included all the Norfolk Local Authorities. The Partnership was working up a bid to the Community Renewal Fund for three projects to trial new technologies to aid decarbonisation.

Page 22/23 - Visitor Services

In terms of Carlton Marshes, the concrete pads for the new pontoons were being installed next week. This would provide those on a boat with enhanced opportunities to use the long-distance footpath and visit the new Suffolk Wildlife Trust visitor centre.

Page 23 - Response to the COVID-19 emergency

Staff surveys

Two staff surveys had been conducted to find out how they were managing with the working conditions put in place in response to the COVID social distancing restrictions, and how they felt about future working arrangements. The first one was in August 2020, and the second one in March 2021. A total of 88 responses were received to the second survey, which provided a good representation of how teams across the organisation were feeling.

Some key points to note:

- The restrictions were impacting the working day for 92% of staff, with most seeing minor or medium changes.
- For those working from home:
 - The 3 most positive impacts were: more flexibility, better work/life balance, and not having to commute. This is the same picture as the 2020 survey.
 - On the other hand, 65% missed the interaction with colleagues, which was the main drawback identified by all. This was an increase from the 2020 survey, where 50% indicating missed the interaction with colleagues.
 - The 3 most liked ways to “feel connected with colleagues” continued to be: video calls, phone calls and team meetings.
 - The most significant challenges were: access to equipment and resources (eg printers and files), advice and contact with colleagues, and an increased workload. The issue of home schooling was also raised as a challenge in response to the situation with schools earlier in the year.
- Feedback from staff who joined the Authority since the first lockdown was that working from home was not the easiest set-up to get to know the organisation and colleagues.

Looking ahead

- 83% of staff would be interested in including homeworking in future working arrangements, if their role allowed it.
- The most common response in terms of the preferred ratio for splitting time between office and home was for over 50% of time working from home.

The approach going forward

- There was strong support for a hybrid system, with the flexibility to work both from home and in the office. The Authority would look at how to set-up those hybrid arrangements in more detail, with the support of HR.

Yare House

The future of Yare House had been raised, in terms of space requirements. Members noted that the next break in the Authority's lease of the building was November 2022, and six months' notice would be required to vacate the building (ie by May 2022). The location and the building served the Authority well and Management Team had taken the view that there needed to be a better understanding of the Authority's needs before members were asked to take a decision on the premises. This would also include the need for meeting space for committees.

It was acknowledged that the past year had been particularly difficult for new members who had not had the opportunity to meet colleagues face to face, and the feedback from the recent annual review showed that many members missed this interaction both with other members and with officers.

The application to the High Court made by ADSO, LLG and Hertfordshire County Council in relation to virtual meeting provision for local authorities was dismissed on Wednesday. This meant committee meetings would have to be held in person from 7 May and staff were looking at suitable venues while Yare House could not fulfil the requirements for a Covid-safe meeting space due to the number of participants.

It was planned to hold the Member Annual Site Visit on 8 July (conditions permitting) and this would provide an excellent opportunity for engagement between members and with officers. The Governance Team would be contacting members to check their availability on that date before arrangements were progressed.

The Chief Executive concluded that, for the time being, there were no plans to move offices and the focus would be to remain cautious and put the health and wellbeing of the staff, volunteers and members as the top priority.

A member referred to the temporary closure of Carrow Bridge meaning it would be closed to river traffic, and questioned if Norwich yacht station would also be closed. The Chief Executive responded that he understood that the County Council planned to undertake maintenance works next summer and there was still some uncertainty over the effect of the closure. There could be considerable obstruction beneath the bridge during the period of the works which were expected to last three months, but could be longer, depending if any additional issues were discovered once works commenced.

Another member commented that reassurance was needed from the County Council, as Highway Authority for the city of Norwich, and that Norwich City Council would be fully involved in the discussions. The Chief Executive responded that he was unaware of what discussions had taken place between the County and City Councils on this issue but there was a County Council report in the public domain. He, together with Rob Rogers, had met once with the Director of Highways and Waste at the County Council. There were the wider

discussions on the development opportunities to the East of Norwich, in which the City Council was an active partner, which included discussions on both Trowse and Carrow bridges.

In terms of the Wherryman's Way footpath, a member commented that this should include reference to both Surlingham and Bramerton and it was important to look at other forms of funding, following the recent unsuccessful bid.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his comprehensive report and encouraged members to contact the relevant officer direct if they wished for more detail on a particular item.

The report was noted.

9. Financial performance and direction

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) introduced the report, which provided a strategic overview of current key financial issues including the Consolidated Income and Expenditure from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and the recommended carry forward requests. Due to the timescales involved, the figures in the report were provisional and verbal updates were provided as follows:

Table 1 – surplus was now £182,568 (reduction of £26,650) or 168.76% of latest available budget)

The transfer of interest to Earmarked Reserves (ER) was now complete.

Table 3 – closing balance on ER now £2,338,470 with Navigation proportion of £952,346.

Page 29 – current surplus was now £54,053 for National Park and £128,515 for Navigation.

Reserves closed at exactly £913,595 for both National Park and Navigation equating to 26.4% and 26.7% respectively. However, it was worth noting that £250,000 had been transferred this financial year to fund the safety package for the years 2021/22 and 2022/23. This had been agreed with Defra. When considering what the Navigation percentage would be without the transfer it would be down to 19.4%.

Table 5 – closing balance for 2021/22 reserves now £786,874 for National Park and £610,334 for Navigation equating to 22.3% and 16.4% respectively. Navigation – would reduce to 12.9% as £130,00 was ringfenced for use in 2022/23 to fund the safety package.

Income for 2021/22 – as at 28 April 2021, tolls income was £601,906 under the annual budget for private boats and £19,847 for hire boats, which was actually a good position compared to 2020/21.

A member questioned the change in Ranger time allocation between National Park and Navigation. The CFO responded that this was in part a result of the impact of Covid – there were more visitors so more navigational advice was needed and this split was a fair reflection of the activity undertaken. Detailed records were kept by the Rangers and it was likely this

trend would continue for the foreseeable future, but information on percentages was reviewed on an annual basis.

Matthew Bradbury proposed, seconded by Simon Roberts and

It was resolved unanimously to

- (i) note the income and expenditure figures and the draft year end position, and timetable and
- (ii) approve the recommended carry forward requests and agree they be added to the 2021/22 as additional expenditure.

10. Health & Safety – 2020 Annual Safety Report and 2021/22 Annual Safety Audit Programme

The Director of Operations presented the report on the annual review of marine accidents for 2020/21 and the annual safety audit programme for 2021/22. He stated that it had been a challenging year on the water and it was noted that the report from the Marine Accident Investigation Board was awaited.

The report was noted.

11. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

The Chief Executive introduced the report for the formal appointment of a new Monitoring Officer (MO), following the retirement of Hilary Slater from East Suffolk Council at the end of May. He thanked Hilary for her services as MO and the staunch support and advice she had provided to the Authority, through its Section 113 Agreement with East Suffolk Council. Mr Christopher Bing, currently the Deputy MO, would be acting MO at the Council pending its recruitment process.

A member commented that a long-term solution was needed, as they did not consider it helpful to have frequent staff changes and continuity was needed. The CE responded that the legal agreement with East Suffolk Council did provide continuity and that the service was working well.

Another member added their thanks to Hilary Slater and also took the opportunity to welcome Christopher Bing as her replacement.

Gail Harris proposed, seconded by Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, and

It was resolved by 15 votes for and with one abstention (due to the member having lost connection) to appoint Mr Christopher Bing as the Authority's Monitoring Officer with effect from 15 May 2021 and to formally thank Mrs Hilary Slater for her services.

12. Agenda item on feedback from outside bodies

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which proposed alternatives for providing a more effective method for members to report to the Authority on the work of outside bodies to which the Authority appointed member representatives, following the discussions at the Broads Authority meeting in January.

Having considered the distinction between agenda items “for discussion” and those “for information only”, the legislative background and the current arrangements for members to raise issues with the Chair and Chief Executive, it was considered that it was not appropriate to continue with the standing item on feedback from outside bodies. The most appropriate option would be for each member representative to submit a brief written report, once or twice a year, on a rolling basis, about the work of the outside body. This would enable members and the public to see the report in advance of the meeting, when the agenda was published, and provide an opportunity to raise questions as appropriate. It was noted that this was the process a number of local authorities adopted and would provide the Authority with a more effective and transparent method than the current standing item on the agenda.

Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro proposed, seconded by Bruce Keith, and

It was resolved by 15 votes for and with one abstention (due to the member having lost connection) to amend the current standing item on the agenda for member feedback on outside bodies as detailed above.

13. Annual report on requests to waive Standing Orders in 2020/21

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) introduced the report, which detailed the summary of instances where Standing Orders were waived by the Chief Executive for the 2021/22 financial year. It was noted that all waivers authorised under delegated powers must be reported to the Authority on an annual basis.

In response to a question on whether there was a maximum financial limit, the CFO responded that this was currently up to £150,000 and anything which exceeded this would need to be referred for member approval.

A member questioned if the £12,000 to design and build a website for National Parks UK was a shared cost which would be defrayed or the cost to the Broads Authority solely. The CFO responded this was a cost with the Authority, incurred on behalf of the UK National Parks. The Communications Team’s work was funded by an upfront contribution at the start of the financial year by each of the National Parks and National Parks Partnerships (NPP), which provided the team’s operational budget for the year. She confirmed that the cost was split across the 15 National Parks and National Park Partnerships. (See footnote¹ below).

The report was noted.

14. Summary of formal complaints for 2020/21

Members noted the summary of formal complaints received by the Broads Authority in 2020/21 together with the outcome of those complaints.

15. Items of business raised by the Designated Person in respect of the Port Marine Safety Code

There were no matters to report under this item.

16. Minutes to be received

Members received the minutes of the following meetings:

Broads Local Access Forum – 2 December 2020

Planning Committee – 5 March 2021

Planning Committee – 26 March 2021

17. Feedback from members appointed to outside bodies

Following the decision at minute 12 above, the Chair advised that this item was now no longer applicable in the format included on the agenda.

18. Other items of business

There were no other items of business which the Chair decided should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

19. Formal questions

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

20. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Friday 23 July 2021 at 10.00am and members would be advised of the location in due course.

The meeting ended at 11:37am

Signed by

Chairman

Footnote¹ – Since the meeting, the CFO provided clarification that the UK team was also funded by National Park Partnerships. All of the parks pay an equal contribution but National Park Partnerships pays more so not a total equal split.