

**Broads Local Access Forum Membership Update and
Audit Recommendation: Effectiveness of the Consultative Review Action Plan**
Report by Director of Planning and Resources and
Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report provides Members with an update on the recent review of the membership of the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) and also updates Members upon the progress achieved towards compliance with Audit recommendations relating to the Consultative Review Action Plan

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

1 Review of Broads Local Access Forum membership

- 1.1 The Broads Authority considered that it would be appropriate to review the membership of the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) to ensure that the membership reflected Government guidance which states that members should be people who appear to be representative of:
- “(i) Users of local rights of way or open access land (e.g. walkers, horse riders, cyclists and carriage drivers);
 - (ii) Owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist; or
 - (iii) Any other interests especially relevant to the appointing authority’s area.”
- 1.2 Members of the BLAF had recognised that, due to the fact that there had been several resignations from the BLAF, a number of interest groups were unrepresented. In particular it was identified that members representing canoeing, angling and recreational boating needed to be recruited
- 1.3 As so many members’ appointments were due to come to an end it was decided that the fairest, most open and transparent way of recruiting members to the BLAF would be not to simply reappoint the existing members but to advertise all potential BLAF vacancies using the Broads Authority’s adopted appointment process
- 1.4 The Broads Authority approved the recruitment process on 25 September 2015 and the vacancies were advertised in October 2015. In accordance with the agreed process the Chief Executive matched the applicants to the different categories and the provision for the Chair and Chief Executive to hold interviews proved unnecessary. The new members were successfully

appointed in time for the meeting of the BLAF on 9 December 2015 (see Appendix A for a list of members).

2 Audit Recommendation: Effectiveness of the Consultative Review Action Plan

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Broads Authority undertook a Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/Stakeholder Engagement in 2012/2013 and implemented an Action Plan in 2013/14. A key output of the review was a revised Terms of Reference for the Broads Forum which was subsequently agreed by Forum Members in February 2013 and by the Broads Authority in March 2013.

2.1.2 In January 2015, the Broads Authority's Auditors examined the Authority's Consultation Activities and Partnership Provisions, including the implementation of the above Action Plan.

2.2 Audit Findings

2.2.1 The Auditors produced their report in February/March 2015. Of the four possible assurance ratings – Unsatisfactory, Limited, Adequate and Good – the Authority received an 'adequate' rating for this audit.

2.2.2 The Auditors made three recommendations all of which they considered to be of medium priority which are outlined below:

(1) Parish Forum Feedback is provided to the Broads Authority

Consideration should be given to providing a more formal feedback report, covering attendees, issues raised and the advice given at the Parish Forum meetings. (Target date – May 2015)

Formal feedback from each Parish Forum is now presented to the following Broads Authority meeting under the Strategic Priorities item.

(2) Parish Forums are consulted on Strategic Priorities

Consideration should be given to increasing the Parish Forums participation in the setting of the Strategic Priorities by holding a joint meeting / workshop during the consultation period for the Parish Forums. (Target Date – January 2016)

The Hickling Broad Enhancement Project has been identified as a Strategic Priority for 2015-16 (and beyond). The Parish Forum held in Hickling in October provided an opportunity for local community engagement about the project, with around 80 people attending. It is intended that the next Parish Forum in early 2016 will focus on another long-term Strategic Priority, the Broads Landscape Partnership Scheme. It is not considered necessary to hold a parish forum to discuss Strategic

Priorities for 2016-17, as they are anticipated to be broadly similar to those in 2015-16.. In any event, it is doubtful that such a general topic would attract a meaningful public attendance. (See Section 3 below)

(3) Consultative Review Action Plan

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures put in place to implement the Review of Consultative Arrangements recommendations should be carried out. (Target Date – March 2016) See section 3 below.

- 2.2.3 These recommendations have been included in the Broads Authority's Annual Governance Statement, adopted by the Authority in September 2015 for implementation before the end of the financial year 2015/16.

3 The Effectiveness of the Action Plan

- 3.1 During 2015, work has been carried out to assess the effectiveness of measures in the Action Plan (see Appendix B). The two main areas of activity covered by the Plan are Broads Forum and Community Engagement, together with some general consultation and information work that has now been included on the website. In carrying out the Audit in January 2015, the Auditors noted that the recommendations had all been implemented but were keen to focus on the effectiveness of the measures put in place – principally those related to the operation of the Broads Forum and the Parish Forums. These have been the key focus for the work this year.
- 3.2 Feedback on the Parish Forums held in 2013 and 2014 was sought from Parish Councils. This evidence was provided to the Auditors and is periodically fed back to Members. In summary, members of the public that have attended the forums have found them useful and informative.
- 3.3 Members received a paper on the Parish Forums at the Broads Authority meeting in July. They resolved to continue with Parish Forums but to tailor their content and timing to tie in to specific project proposals and events in the locality, rather than holding more open, generally themed events. It was hoped that this would make the forums more relevant and appealing to local communities. The marked difference in attendance between the Ranworth (June 2015) and Hickling (October 2015) forums would seem to suggest that this is indeed the case, and that if these principles are maintained that they are an effective method of engagement. The next forum will be held in early 2016, covering the Yare/Chet/Waveney valleys and focussing on the Broads Landscape Partnership Scheme, which is being developed for that area.
- 3.4 In November 2015, the Broads Forum received a report on the impact of the changes to its operation following the implementation of the Action Plan. There has been some notable success in a higher level of participation in report writing and presentation of agenda items from Forum Members. Members felt their meetings were more democratic and that the new charring arrangements were working well. They were disappointed that, despite the introduction of the standing item to allow members of the public to attend on

the day and ask questions, that this had not yet been used. However, the Parish Council representatives on the Forum were able to use the standing item on parish issues to raise a number of matters on behalf of local communities. In conclusion, Broads Forum members felt that the new arrangements are working well and are effective.

Background Papers:	<u>Terms of Reference for the Broads Forum</u> <u>http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/467335/Review-of-Consultative-Arrangeents-and-Community-Stakeholder-Engagement-Final-Report-with-App-2.pdf</u> <u>http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/584780/Strategic-Direction-ba100715.pdf</u> <u>http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/644501/Review-of-Consultative-Arrangement-Evaluation-of-Changes-to-Broads-Forum.pdf</u>
Authors:	Andrea Long and Adrian Clarke
Date of report:	12 January 2016
Broads Plan Objectives:	None
Appendices:	APPENDIX A – Broads Local Access Forum Membership APPENDIX B - Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community Engagement 2013 – Action Plan

Broads Local Access Forum Members

Name	Interest
Keith Bacon	Archaeology and landscape heritage
OllyBarnes	Local Authority / Waterborne recreational users
Louis Baugh	Landowners and managers
Liz Brooks	Equestrian riding and driving
TonyBrown	Nature conservation
Robin Buxton	Landowners and managers / Tourism and local businesses
Nick Dennis	Waterborne recreational users (canoe users)
Mike Flett	Local Authority (Parish Councils)
Tony Gibbons	Angling
Dawn Hatton	Walking / People with disabilities/Access for all
Alec Hartley	Wensum River Parkway Partnership
Lana Hemsall	Broads Authority
Peter Mason	Walking / Tourism and local business
Stephen Read	Walking / Water borne recreational users
George Saunders	People with disabilities/ Access for all
Charles Swan	Local Authorities (Parish Councils) / Educational establishments
Martin Symons	Cycling / People with disabilities / Access for all
Ray Walpole	Walking / Cycling
Peter Warner	Broads Authority
Richard Webb	Walking
Christopher Yardley	Waterborne recreational users / Nature conservation

Secretary to the Broads Local Access Forum:

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Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community Engagement 2013 – Action Plan

Recommendations	Actions	Lead	Progress
A. General engagement principles and guidelines			
A1: Clarify BA decision making structure and rationale	Provide diagram of key BA decision making mechanisms and processes - include in stakeholder engagement guidance and on BA website	JO/ MIC	Included in document (see A3 below) COMPLETED
	Assess all stakeholder working/liaison groups led or regularly attended by BA and identify need for rationalisation/improvement	AL/ MIC	List prepared; improvements to be discussed with relevant officers COMPLETED
A2: Provide clear and consistent guidance on stakeholder engagement	Produce internal working guidance for BA staff (and Member reference) on stakeholder engagement principles and procedures	MIC	Draft document prepared COMPLETED
	Produce information for public on how BA consults them and how to get involved – publish details of consultations on BA website	MIC/ JL	. COMPLETED (See consultations page on website)
	Assess staff knowledge and skills in stakeholder engagement and provide necessary training, e.g. in running facilitated workshops and events	AL/ MIC	Ongoing..
A3: Provide guidance to BA staff on strategy/ plan preparation	Produce internal working guidance for BA staff on strategy/plan preparation, linked to stakeholder engagement guidance	MIC	COMPLETED
A4: Raise public profile of BA members	Update 'who's who' thumb nail biographies of BA members and publish on website	JO/ JL	COMPLETED
	Assign members to Parish Forum areas (see below)	AL	COMPLETED
	Include section in engagement guidelines for staff that sets out the key role of Members in this process	MIC	COMPLETED (see A3 below)
B. Regular consultative committees/forums - Broads Forum			
B1: Forum members to elect Chair and Vice Chair	Run process to elect new Chair and Vice Chair	JO	COMPLETED WITH EFFECT FROM April 2013 meeting
B2: Strengthen communication between Forum members and constituent groups	Nominate 'correspondent' for each group on Forum with whom the Forum representative member will liaise, and provide supporting information	JO/ MIC	COMPLETED WITH EFFECT FROM April 2013
	Review list of Forum groups and invite	JO	COMPLETED

APPENDIX A

Recommendations	Actions	Lead	Progress
	suggestions for new groups		
B3: Raise profile of Forum and its members	Provide dedicated Broads Forum page on BA website – to include who's who of members, meetings timetables, contacts, etc	Comms /MIC	COMPLETED July 2013
B4: Encourage more ownership of Agenda by Forum groups	Include 'Parish issues' as standing item on agenda	JO	COMPLETED WITH EFFECT From April 2013
	Strengthen membership attendance rules	JO	COMPLETED New wording included in revised Terms of Reference
	Publicise timetable of meetings to all Forum groups (via correspondent) and wider public (via BA website)	JO	COMPLETED April 2013
B4: Increase public access to Forum	Reinforce ability of members of public to attend Forum meetings and pose issues for debate by Forum members	JO	COMPLETED New wording included in revised Terms of Reference
	Create and publicise Forum website page on BA website (see above)	JL	COMPLETED
B5: Review Terms of Reference	Review and as necessary redraft Terms of Reference to reflect agreed review recommendations	AL/JO	COMPLETED Terms of Reference adopted in April 2013
C. Regular consultative committees/forums - other			
C1: Review Broads Local Access Forum (LAF)	Examine arrangements of National Park Authorities in regard to County Council access officer attendance at LAF meetings and encourage stronger links	BLAF chair/ BA chair	COMPLETED - County Council officers have standing item on BLAF agenda.
C2: Review Navigation Committee	No changes recommended		n/a
D. Community engagement mechanisms			
D1: Establish Parish Forums	Prepare proposals for establishment of (x4) area based parish forums in consultation with parish councils. Pilot and review proposal	AL	COMPLETED
D2: Consider establishment of BA online public forum	Online forums researched and BA/Broads Forum members consulted; idea not progressed at this stage		n/a
D3: Review structure/format of BA annual meeting	Dockyard Open Day to be held in June 2013 as a trial of a new format; other formats to be considered	JP	Initial Trial COMPLETED, but consideration of new formats is ongoing
D4: Improve information delivery to Broads residents	Produce residents' newsletter	Comms	Identified in BA Comms Team Work Programme for 2013-14, however budget and Staff Cuts in 2015 led to this being dropped. Bulletin now

APPENDIX A

Recommendations	Actions	Lead	Progress
			receives wider circulation instead
D5: Make better use of non-BA led engagement methods	Investigate use of citizens panels (including Norfolk County Council citizens' panel), council newsletters/ mailouts, etc	AL	COMPLETED Stakeholder Surveys undertaken by independent consultants in 2014. Use of Parish Magazines etc is ongoing