

Chief Executive's Report

Summary: This report summarises the current position in respect of a number of important projects and events, including any decisions taken during the recent cycle of committee meetings. It does not include matters which are already on the agenda for this meeting. Members are asked to note the report.

1 Strategic Response to National Park Grant Reductions

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: John Packman/Nil

- 1.1 At its meeting on 21 March 2014, the Broads Authority considered a strategic response to the National Park Grant reductions which will reduce grant by £302,054 for 2014/15 and a further £56,441 for 2015/16. The Authority noted that no announcement has been made in respect of grant allocations for 2016/17 and beyond, but that continuing downward pressure on public sector finances should be expected over this period.
- 1.2 In 2010/11 when the Authority was considering how it should respond to a substantial reduction in funding it used a series of key principles to guide it and the Authority considered that these are still relevant.
- (a) **Minimising Impact on Staff**
The Authority's members of staff are its most important resource. They are skilled, well trained and committed to their work. Much of what the organisation achieves is through its people. The Authority therefore did what it could to minimise the impact on the workforce and took action to reduce non staff costs such as premises and vehicles and increase its income. Terms and conditions of employment were changed to make savings and the number of redundancies kept to a minimum.
- (b) **Protecting the Front Line**
Last time the Authority was faced by cuts in National Park Grant it moved to larger teams reducing the number of managers rather than front line staff. Streamlining management to protect the front line also had the benefit of increasing flexibility. There is now only limited scope for the further amalgamation of teams. However the focus on protecting 'front line' services is still relevant.
- (c) **Integrated Approach to Management of the Broads**
National Park Authorities were established to provide a coordinated and rounded approach to the maintenance and enhancement of the special qualities of the Parks. Improving this integrated management saves money as well as providing a joined up way of delivering park purposes.

- 1.3 The focus of the Authority's considerations for reductions has been on the central services – legal, human resources, governance and communications. This is specifically to protect and minimise reductions to the Authority's practical work, research and policy functions and the planning service.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 21 March 2014, the Authority adopted the following five proposals to enable the necessary savings to be achieved.
- (i) End the programme of Sustainable Development Fund Grants with all the existing funded projects supported to a conclusion to March 2015 and a celebratory event held this summer. **(Saving £150,000 per annum)**
 - (ii) Amalgamate and reduce project funding combined with a new emphasis on seeking financial support from sources such as the Local Economic Partnership, the Lottery, Europe and corporate sponsors, the latter activity undertaken with the rest of the national park family. **(Saving £90,000 per annum)**
 - (iii) Replace the bulk of the outsourced legal work with a new post of Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, who will have management responsibility for restructured and realigned Governance and HR teams. Move to the electronic provision of papers for Broads Authority and Committee meetings. **(Saving £75,000 per annum from 2015/16)**
 - (iv) Restructure the Communications Team and reduce project expenditure on communications. **(Saving £75,000 per annum from 2015/16)**
 - (v) Change the apportionment for Operations work from the current level of 40:60 between National Park and Navigation, to 35:65 in 2015/16 with a view to further increasing the proportion devoted to Navigation to 70% in 2016/17. **(Net Saving nil)**
- 1.5 The next step is to consult and work with staff in the teams impacted by these changes to finalise the new arrangements for introduction in April 2015.

2 Network Rail Workshop

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: Angie Leeper/NA5.1

- 2.1 The workshop arranged for members was held on 24 March 2014 with 27 people in attendance. Mott Mac Donald who has been commissioned by Network Rail to undertake a report on the Whole Life Management Strategy Study for Reedham and Somerleyton Swing bridges presented their final options report.
- 2.2 Members and officers were given the opportunity to question the findings in the report and feedback to Network Rail on their opinion in relation to the two bridges.
- 2.3 Network Rail will now be submitting their plans for the bridges to the next 5 funding stream cycle which is only undertaken every five years. Plans and

details for the bridges may also take up to two years including obtaining the necessary permissions such as planning.

3 Mutford Lock and Breydon Bridge Updates

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: Angie Leeper/NA4 and NA5

- 3.1 In respect of the Harbour Revision Order, we have this week confirmed the final maps to be included in the tripartite agreement. Once the tripartite agreement has been agreed, the Harbour revision order will be submitted to the MMO to be signed off and agreed having already suggested that the draft was acceptable.
- 3.2 Mutford Lock is currently being operated manually with the paid assistance of local marina personnel due to the fact that currently the gates require at least 4 persons to operate them. The portable hydraulic pack was investigated but proved too costly as an interim measure.
- 3.3 The replacement of the hydraulic control system is progressing. The contractor has completed all design work and fabrication, the components and housing has begun and an engineer has started on site disconnecting the existing damaged system. Fabrication of the separate parts is expected to be completed by the end of April ready for assembly and installation to start on site in May.
- 3.4 The Authority was advised by Eastport UK that Breydon bridge was not operational due to a hydraulic failure on 10 January 2014. Investigative and temporary works were undertaken during February and the final repairs have now been completed and the bridge is fully operational.

4 Impact of Otters on the Broads Ecosystem

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: Andrea Kelly/BD1

- 4.1 Members of the Forum have previously requested information concerning the impact of otters on the Broads ecosystem. The Environment Agency has provided some useful information in this regard, which is accessible from the following link:

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/wildlife/110740.aspx>
- 4.2 This information includes a jointly agreed statement between the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Angling Trust to address some of the widely-held misconceptions about otters and their impact on freshwater fisheries. It also provides the joint Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency leaflet on still water fisheries.
- 4.3 Other research in other wetlands proves that otters' diets are predominantly fish, but they can take other items when fish populations are limited. Otters, although doing well in the Broads, are still threatened by accumulation issues and several indicators of male reproductive health give cause for concern for the health of otters, including a decrease in baculum (penile bone) weight over time, and an increase in reproductive abnormalities including cysts.

5 Strategic Priorities 2014/15

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: John Packman/Multiple

- 5.1 Following consultation with the Broads Forum on 7 November 2013 and 6 February 2014, the strategic priorities objectives for 2014/15 were adopted by the Authority on 21 March 2014.

6 Timetable of Meetings

Contact Officer/Broads Plan Objective: John Organ/None

- 6.1 The Authority agreed the timetable of meetings for the period July 2014 to July 2015. This is detailed at Appendix 6. Members will note that Broads Forum meetings during this period are scheduled on 31 July 2014, 6 November 2014, 5 February 2015, 30 April 2015 and 30 July 2015.

Author: John Organ

Date of report: 3 April 2014

Broads Plan Objectives: Multiple

Appendix: APPENDIX 1 – Committee Timetable

Committee Timetable 2014/15

	2014								2015							
	Day	Time	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Planning	Fri	10.00 am	18	15	12	10	7	5	9	6	6	Thurs 2	1/29	26	24	21
Planning Cttee Site Visit	Fri	10.00 am	4	1/29		3/24	28	19	30	20	27	17	22	12	17	7
Broads Forum	Thurs	2.00 pm	31				6			5		30			30	
Local Access Forum	Wed	2.00 pm			10			3			4			10		
Navigation Committee	Thurs	1.00 pm			4	23		11		26		23		4		
Financial Scrutiny and Audit Committee	Tues	2.00 pm	8		23					10					7	
BROADS AUTHORITY	FRI	10.00 am	11		26		21		23		20		15		10	
Member Development Day																
New Members Induction Day	Wed				17											