

**Supporting and Developing the Role of Members**  
Report by Chief Executive

**Summary:** The report builds on the feedback from Members in their Annual Development Interviews and the Stakeholder Survey results concerning engagement with local people.

**Recommendation:**

Members are asked to consider whether the four ambitions accurately reflect the feedback from the Development Interviews and the Stakeholder Surveys.

It is recommended that:

- (i) Broads Authority Members are allocated to four Parish Forum Teams and asked to participate in the development of the programme for 2015;
- (ii) a Chairs' Group in line with the description in paragraph 8 be established;
- (iii) a report, in line with the suggestions in paragraph 5, on Lead Members and the Appointment of Members to Outside Bodies is brought to the next meeting of the Authority, the Annual Meeting, when these appointments are normally made; and
- (iv) the constitution, including membership, period of office, and selection of members for the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) be reviewed with the current members of the BLAF.

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The results of the four Stakeholder Surveys and the feedback from Members in their Development Interviews have provided valuable suggestions on areas where the Authority could improve its performance and engagement with the public. The new Chair of the Authority has taken the opportunity to talk to both Members and key representatives of local organisations and a number of suggestions to support and enhance the role of Members have been made which are summarised in this report. The ambition is to:

- (i) increase the quality of the Authority's communication with local residents, parish councils, local businesses and other stakeholders through a more active ambassadorial role for all Members of the Authority;

- (ii) enable Members to gain a deeper collective understanding and engagement in the key issues for the Broads and the work of the Authority;
- (iii) consider how the important work of the Local Access Forum can be brought more into the mainstream of the Broads Authority's discussion and debate; and to
- (iv) re-assess the areas of responsibility for Lead Members so that they match issues of strategic relevance to the Authority.

## **2 The Way We Do Business**

2.1 There is awareness and agreement that while the formal meetings of the Authority are essential for decision making they are not necessarily the most appropriate vehicles for building common understanding and trust on complicated issues. The recent workshops on moorings and the Lake Review research involving Broads Authority Members and officers, experts in the field and representatives from key stakeholder organisations have been very well received and developed a common platform on which difficult and complex decisions can be made. The feedback from the Member Development Interviews is that they would like more of this approach and it is proposed to develop a programme linked in part, though not exclusively, to the key issues for the Broads Plan Review.

### **3.1 Parish Forums**

3.1.1 Parish Forums have been a great success in the Authority's ambition to increase its engagement with local people. The opportunity for individuals to discuss with Members and officers issues of the day has been welcomed and in general the events have been well attended.

3.1.2 There was, however, uncertainty amongst Members about whose responsibility the Parish Forums were, and who was expected to attend. Consequently, Member engagement and attendance at the Parish Forums held in 2014 was perhaps less than was hoped. It is therefore proposed that Members should be allocated to a geographical patch relating to one of the Parish Forums. Members could then take ownership of the Forum arrangements – contributing to suggestions for dates and venue, planning the agenda and would be expected to attend the meetings. Members would be invited to choose which Parish Forum they would like to be attached to. Members may wish to note that the geographical spread of the Parish Forums is based on the Ranger areas. The benefit of such an approach would be to develop the ambassadorial role so that Members become better known to sections of the Broads' Communities. In addition, it would strengthen relations between Members as they work together in the context of their shared group of parishes.

## **4 Parish Council Briefings**

4.1 The Authority has previously organised briefings for Parish Councils with a particular focus on planning matters. These have been well attended and

appreciated. It is proposed that at least once a year all parish councils in the Broads area should be invited to a briefing at Yare House to cover all aspects of the Authority's activities, meeting Members and officers.

## **5 Lead Members and Representation on Outside Bodies**

- 5.1 The role of Lead Members was set out in the March 2015 report and is reproduced in Appendix 1. Lead Member subjects were allocated in 2010 and the substantive topic areas reflect concerns at the time. Some are still very relevant but many others may no longer be so. With the retirement of some Lead Members it is appropriate to review the arrangements. One suggestion is that Lead Member roles could be allocated in line with the key areas for the Broads Plan Review and the Strategic Priorities matching them with Members' interests and skills.
- 5.2 The representation of the Authority on other bodies by Members is another area where the Authority could think more strategically about the organisations it needs to influence, and where officers would appreciate more active support. Authority Members have a wide range of skills and expertise that could be particularly helpful in building external relationships and contributing to more effective partnership working. More thought could be given to the mechanisms by which Members are chosen to represent the Authority on outside bodies and how their work is fed-back into the work of the Authority.

## **6 Induction of Members**

- 6.1 The induction of new Members of the Navigation Committee appears to have gone well with 1:1 briefings with the Chief Executive and a site visit with the rest of the Committee, combined with a round table discussion with members and officers. It is proposed that in future the induction of new Members should have a strong focus on site visits, workshops and briefings on key issues. The suggestion that Broads Authority Members be allocated to a Parish Patch will automatically 'buddy' new Members with existing Broads Authority colleagues, though the offer of an identified Member mentor may also be helpful.
- 6.2 It is planned to continue with the Annual Site Visit, which is an important mechanism for briefing Members on current issues. This year a focus on the Lower Yare in July is being proposed which could highlight the Landscape Partnership bid and other work in the area.

## **7 Member Development Interviews**

- 7.1 Most Members of the Authority have embraced and welcomed the annual opportunity for a discussion with the Chair of the Authority on the level and quality of their engagement and involvement over the previous year. It is suggested that it would be good practice to extend the practice of the Annual Member Development Reviews to the Co-opted Members of the Navigation Committee, including seeking ideas for workshops and identifying training needs.

## **8 Establishment of a Chairs Group**

- 8.1 Determining the agenda for Broads Authority meetings has largely been a matter for the Chairman of the Authority and the Management Team. It is suggested that a wider group of Members could be involved in this process. It is therefore proposed that a Chairs Group be established, not only to consider the agenda for the forthcoming meeting but also to ensure greater join-up between Members and officers. It would meet in-between Broads Authority meetings and, while it would have no decision-making powers, a formal note of its meeting would be made available to Members and the general public and this would provide greater understanding of both forthcoming agenda items and progress on key projects. It is proposed that the Chairs Group would consist of five members and five officers:

Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority  
Chairman of the Planning Committee (or V-C as substitute)  
Chairman of the Finance Scrutiny and Audit Committee (or V-C as substitute)  
Chairman of the Navigation Committee (or V-C as substitute)  
The Authority's Management Team  
(Chief Executive, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, Director of Planning and Resources, Director of Operations and Head of Finance) or substitutes

## **9 Local Access Forum**

- 9.1 As with the Navigation Committee, the Local Access Forum is a Statutory Committee of the Authority and yet, because of the structure of the Authority, its formal links with the Authority are more tenuous. The Stakeholder Survey results highlighted the importance of land based activity – walking, bird watching etc. and it is suggested that the Forum deserves greater prominence than it is currently given.
- 9.2 It is therefore proposed that, working with the current members of the Forum, a review of its constitution, including membership, period of office, selection of members, etc ought to be undertaken. For example, in parallel with the Navigation Committee, should there be more than one Broads Authority Member on the Forum to make a stronger link between the two bodies? If the principle of a review is agreed, then it is suggested that for the time being the current membership of the Forum should stand until this work is completed and the Authority is clear how the status, role and constitution of the Forum can be improved.

Background papers: None

Author: John Packman  
Date of report: 24 April 2015

Broads Plan Objectives: None  
Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Role of Lead Members

**Role of Lead Members**

- To develop and maintain an interest in specific area(s) of the Authority's work or policy;
- To liaise with appropriate staff on the Authority's approach to the issue, and particularly when a policy is being developed;
- To support staff where necessary in meetings with external bodies;
- To attend briefings and/or training on the issue as required;
- To be prepared to inform other Members on key aspects of the issue, and speak on the topic in Authority and other meetings;
- To assist Communications staff, as required, in preparing significant media releases in the Lead Member's subject area; and
- To be available to offer strategic advice on the issue to staff as and when requested.

It should be noted that Lead Members are not responsible for making decisions; ultimately that rests with the Broads Authority as a whole. Decisions on strategy and policy are made by the Authority and operational matters are delegated to officers.