

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2015

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr David Broad	Mr Stephen Read
Ms Liz Brooks	Mr George Saunders
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Charles Swan
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Chris Yardley

In Attendance

Mr Steve Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Ms Lottie Carlton - Administrative Officer
Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Mr Simon Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects
Mr Mark King – Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mrs Alison Macnab – Planning Officer
Mrs Lesley Marsden – Landscape Officer

Also In Attendance

Professor Trevor Davies – Generation Park Project Spokesman/UEA
Mr Martin Symons – Not about the Bike/Norwich Access Group
Mr Russell Wilson – Senior Trails Officer, Norfolk County Council
Mr Matt Worden – Maintenance Projects Manager, Norfolk County Council

3/0 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

An extra item was included at the start of the meeting. The SWRO invited members to nominate a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. RW nominated Keith Bacon as Chairman and CS seconded this nomination. Keith Bacon accepted the role of Chairman of the Broads Local Access Forum. RW nominated Peter Medhurst as Vice-Chairman and CS seconded this nomination. Peter Medhurst accepted the role of Vice-Chairman of the Broads Local Access Forum.

3/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Louis Baugh, Mr Robin Buxton, Mr John Gregory, Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies, Mrs Jo Parmenter, Mr Gary Simons and Mr Hugh Taylor.

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

3/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 03 Dec 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the addition of Peter Medhurst in section 2/1 Apologies and to amending Horning to Honing in section 2/11 and 04 March 2014 to 04 March 2015 in section 2/13, and signed by the Chairman.

3/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 2/3 (2) Staithes – Current information and role of Staithes Management

Following meetings with Tom Williamson of UEA a research brief had been put together and projected costs had been received. The Broads Authority Project Development Group had provisionally approved funding for the project subject to Management Team approval. BLAF members were supportive of the project, but were mindful of management issues. Subject to funding approval work would start in the next few months and should be completed within 5 months.

(2) Minute 2/3 (3): Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project

Planning permission had been granted but Broads Authority members had reasserted that without a significant shift on access provision of the project they could not lend support to the HLF funding bid.

(3) Minute 2/3 (4): Boundary Farm Mooring

Talks were ongoing with the landowner and a more positive outcome now seemed likely.

(4) Minute 2/3 (5): Norwich City Council River Corridor Strategy

At the inception meeting of the Norwich City Council River Corridor Strategy Group basic guidelines were agreed. Core group meetings following this had produced a spreadsheet of timescales for actions and mapping work for land access routes, moorings and water access routes had been completed. Officers would be meeting to agree responsibilities. Consultation on potential access improvements would take place after the May elections. BLAF input would be welcomed and an agenda item was requested to cover this.

(5) Minute 2/3 (6): Review of BLAF membership

Confirmation of the BLAF membership process was given to members: The maximum membership was 22. To appoint a new member the Chairman, Head of Strategy and Projects and Head of Governance and Executive Assistant had to be in agreement. User group representation was a key consideration in appointing new members.

It was confirmed that Tony Howes and Patrick Hacon had stepped down. John Gregory had been appointed to represent anglers. Martin Symons was considering becoming a member. This was David Broad's last meeting as a

Broads Authority Member. Thanks were given for his contribution and important liaison work with the Authority. A replacement would be made from Broads Authority membership.

At the December BLAF meeting it had been agreed that potential areas to encourage representation from included: cycling, carriage riding and boating.

It was hoped to have a full membership for the BLAF in place for the June meeting.

(6) Minute 2/3 (8): Sale of Geldeston Woodland and Marsh

Tenders had been received and were under review by the Broads Authority. Public access would be a condition of sale.

(7) Minute 2/3 (9): Ludham Footpath

The permissive path agreement had been finalised by NPS and was under review by Norfolk County Council's legal department and would then be circulated to landowners for signatures. It was hoped that the agreement would be in place by the end of March 2015. The Outdoors Festival launch was due to take place at St Benet's Abbey and it was hoped the footpath would be open by this date. Concerning the gateway across the bridleway at St Benet's Abbey; the SWRO agreed to make enquires to Sarah Price of Norfolk County Council, noting that it was possible to apply to have the gateway removed as an illegal obstruction.

(8) Minute 2/3 (10): How Hill Footpath

The SWRO had written to Natural England to ask them to look at the Habitats Regulation Assessment. Once an agreement was in place work could start.

(9) Minute 2/4: Broads Heritage Lottery Fund Bid

The Broads Heritage Lottery Fund bid was on track to be submitted in May.

(10) Minute 2/6: Rights of Way changes in the draft Deregulation Bill

Once the Bill had gone through the parliamentary process members would be updated.

(11) Minute 2/8: Accessible Britain Challenge

Valentine's Meadow: A site meeting had taken place and officers had agreed to address the kissing gate issue.

(12) Minute 2/11: Ordnance Survey Maps – Other routes of public access

A meeting had taken place with Ordnance Survey, with more planned for the future, in order to plan how to best map 'other' public access routes. It was noted that Norfolk County Council keeps records of surfaced and unsurfaced

adopted PROW and Green Lanes. The SWRO agreed to circulate a link to the Highways public mapping system to BLAF members.

(13) Minute 2/12: To receive any other items of urgent business

- (1) Marcia Leigh of Norfolk County Council was dealing with the Cess Staithe, Martham issue.
- (2) The Broads Authority had approved adoption of National Park branding and had also removed the long term ambition to legally change their status to a National Park. The three statutory duties remained, with equal importance attached to each, and this had reassured some of the navigation community who had expressed concerns.
- (3) The request for a Wensum Forum had been passed to Andrea Long.
- (4) The consultation document made it clear that Norwich was considered an important part of navigation.
- (5) Trudi Wakelin, Director of Operations, had confirmed that the tripartite agreement was ready for signatures. Once these were secured an application for a Harbour Revision Order would be submitted for consideration by the Marine Management Organisation. Charles Swan agreed to pass on this information to the volunteer group.

3/4 Generation Park Norwich

It was agreed to move this item forward in the agenda after item 3/2.

Professor Trevor Davies of UEA and Spokesperson for Generation Park Norwich gave a presentation on Generation Park Norwich.

Presentation summary:

Generation Park Norwich is a development proposal for the Utilities Site close to Norwich railway station and the Crown Point railway depot, across the river from Whitlingham Country Park. It is intended to provide an exemplar, low carbon, sustainable energy provision for Norwich. The proposal includes provision of district heating for Norwich homes and businesses via a renewable energy production centre (using straw pellets), a renewable energy research centre, a public education centre, eco-friendly student accommodation (UEA, Norwich University of the Arts and City College) and private residential housing, a data centre, cycle and pedestrian routes linking to current riverside paths, opening up access to a large parkland area of the site, a new access bridge via the Dealground and a performance area. Consideration had been given to past and present planning policy guidance, minimising traffic access into and out of the development and mitigation against climate change and flood risk.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- (1) Discussion was ongoing regarding the feasibility of also using fen litter pellets.

- (2) The partners and consultants of NPH (Norwich) LLP, a limited liability partnership set up to develop the project, included UEA (main partner), EON (district heating infrastructure), Grimshaw Architects, Axis (planning specialist), BWSC (large scale power plant design, development, management), Royal Dahlman (tailor made solutions for renewable energy markets), Ramboll (engineering and design particularly renewable energy schemes).
- (3) Projected income streams were not yet known. UEA would use their share of profits to re-invest into progressing the aspirations of the site.
- (4) While the driver for energy production would be biomass, other renewable energy options would be demonstrated or trialled and this could include tidal considerations.
- (5) With green banks either side of the development there was no bridge connection between the two in the current plans. Meetings were ongoing with Whitlingham Charitable Trust who were concerned at large numbers of extra visitors impacting on 'quiet enjoyment' and increasing maintenance costs of the Country Park. With car parking providing the vast majority of the Trust's income, large numbers of extra visitors arriving on foot/cycle would not provide income to mitigate the extra maintenance required. Norwich City Council did not contribute currently. There were also concerns regarding siting of a bridge impacting on the Whitlingham Outdoor Education Centre and Boathouse activities.
- (6) The site's condition of sale included public access to the parkland area; the power plant obviously being a safety issue would not be included in this. The Forum felt that Open Access could be relevant to the site.
- (7) The riverside access proposed would include shared pedestrian/ cycle paths that linked to existing riverside pathways.
- (8) Public transport links: Talks were ongoing regarding the potential for public buses to stop closer to the site, beyond Morrison's supermarket.
- (9) Public moorings planned were relatively small in number. Launching for small craft had not so far been considered, but this addition could potentially introduce extra traffic to the site, which the project was aiming to avoid.
- (10) A water sports venture was suggested.
- (11) The partnership was aware of the Norwich River Strategy and would want to link with projects to develop access.

Professor Davies was thanked for his presentation.

3/5 Cycling Ambition in National Parks funding

Norfolk Country Council Highways and Broads Authority had been awarded £712k from the Cycling Ambition fund. With the addition of further funding from NCC and BA a total of £1.2million was available for the section of Three Rivers Way between

Hoveton and Horning. The work was due to be finished by June 2016. Feasibility was also under way for further sections should a similar funding opportunity arise.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- Provision for horse riding would be considered as part of the route from Horning to Potter Heigham.
- Similar initiatives would be welcomed in the southern Broads. It was noted that David Faulk, who had attended BLAF in the past, no longer worked for Suffolk County Council, but Suffolk County Council had not let the Forum know despite information being sent to them on a regular basis. Once this was realised a replacement contact had been sourced and the SWRO would meet to discuss Suffolk access issues and engagement with BLAF. Richard Laycock was suggested as a further contact to help progress southern Broads access issues.
- CTC, National Cycling Charity, information had been circulated to members. There was potential to engage with this organisation to get support for cycling schemes generally.

3/6 Norfolk County Council update

Matt Worden of Norfolk County Council's Highways Team gave an update on the Council's position regarding footpath maintenance. Following a consultation in 2011 on PROW it had been decided in May 2012 to concentrate resources on the Norfolk Trails, working only on a reactive basis to maintenance of PROWs. This decision had produced criticism regarding performance from Norfolk LAF, CPRE, the Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society. Following meetings with the above groups, in February 2014 it had been agreed to move £75k from the road maintenance budget to PROW for some proactive grass cutting. Contractor engagement had been difficult in 2014 and therefore improvements in service were expected for 2015. PROWs were now managed by Area Officers, each with three sectors. A formal inspection regime had been introduced; once a year for high use paths and once every 5 years for less used paths. Parish Clerks had been used to liaise regarding complaints resulting in a reduction in these in 2014 compared to 2013. NCC was happy to share cutting regimes to avoid duplication of effort and would be liaising with the SWRO over this.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- The Forum felt that once every 5 years was too long for inspection. It was explained that this time scale was based on a national code of practice: A-roads once a month, B-roads once every 3 months, rural roads once every 6 months, green lanes once every 5 years. It was recognised that reliance was therefore placed on the public to inform the Council of particular problems/issues.
- 'Quiet Lanes' designations were discussed. It was noted that two pilot studies in Norfolk had shown that impact was temporary; visitors were influenced, but locals tended to get used to the signage and ignore it.

- Reported footpath problems were recorded and sent out to the most appropriate local team who would respond to the enquiry.
- It had been demonstrated in a Broads Authority survey that one of the most appreciated activities overall was walking and footpath maintenance was therefore key to economy and tourism in the area.
- Clarification was given regarding legality of removal of overhanging branches that obstructed a PROW. If the whole trunk was within the Highway it was permissible for members of the public to thin back branches, but the arisings had to be left behind.
- It was confirmed that most roads were owned by landowners, however Highways rights were stronger than freehold rights.
- It was noted that although Parish Councils could include footpath maintenance in Local Plans they were reluctant to do so as there was a feeling that Norfolk County Council would no longer carry out such work in the future.

The Forum recognised the difficulties faced by funding and politics and thanked Matt Worden for his informative update.

3/7 East of England Local Access Forum Regional Meeting

The minutes of the East of England Local Access Forum Regional Meeting had been circulated. George Saunders had attended the meeting on behalf of BLAF and gave an update of the site visit to Coton Countryside Reserve that accompanied the meeting. The group inspected a new bridge that had been put in with access to the village and various styles of gates. These had been easy to use and accessible via wheelchair. Signage around the site was good. The work had been completed with funding from Pathways for Communities following consultation with the local village regarding useage and aspirations for the Reserve. Although the visit was informative and enjoyable George Saunders was pleased to return to Norfolk.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- Some gates had catches that were easily used when in a wheelchair but others would need an accompanying friend to help.
- Often gates were retained historically and not actually required functionally. It was important to remove such obstacles when there were longer necessary.
- Regarding information available for wheelchair users and potential barriers to access, cycle routes could generally be assumed to be barrier free. The Ordnance Survey 'upsy-downsy' work would provide information on obstructions and surfaces. Disabled Ramblers were assisting OS with grading and matching surfaces to different types of machines e.g. trampers.

George Saunders was thanked for his update on the Regional LAF Meeting.

3/8 Safety Management System – Land-based Sites

Steve Birtles, Head of Safety Management, was seeking the Forums views on the Hazard Log for the Safety Management System – Land Based Sites. It was noted that no incidents had been reported that affected any change.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

Item 5: Often with stiles the design created unnecessary difficulties e.g. too high, absence of pole to assist climbing over. It was noted that the Safety Management System – Land-based Sites only covered land managed or leased by the Broads Authority, but the Authority intended to develop a style book for countryside furniture with design standards such as those suggested by the Forum. These would be consulted on and then circulated more widely.

Item 13: An extra item was suggested – lighting columns/electrical supplies - a hazard due to vandalism and shallow underground cables. The Broads Authority could link inspection of these into current inspection regimes of moorings and charging points.

Item 7/8: A public reporting system would be useful. This was being looked at using the Broads Authority website as a conduit for reporting.

It was noted that there was a corresponding Marine table and similar items would be merged.

3/9 Broads Authority Stakeholder Surveys Analysis

The SWRO used the Insite Track presentation to highlight relevant areas of the Broads Authority commissioned Stakeholder Surveys of four user groups; Hire Boat Operators, Private Boat Owners, Residents and Visitors.

The range of issues raised and the statistically robust opinions gathered would help to inform strategic priorities for the Authority.

An action plan would be developed in response to the survey and this would go first to Broads Authority and then to wider consultation. BLAF comments would be welcomed.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- The Broads Authority should be encouraged by the results. It was interesting to see that large percentages of respondents wanted more access generally, but particularly walking.
- The survey demonstrated the integrated approach was proving useful and worked well with all groups surveyed.
- It was noted that the survey was not likely to be repeated for about 5 years.

BLAF members were encouraged to read the full report which could be obtained

via the link circulated in the accompanying report.

3/10 Broads Forum Update

The following items had been discussed at the last Broads Forum:

- (1) The 10 year mooring strategy had been accepted by Broads Authority.
- (2) Waste Review – there was support for collections at Ranworth.
- (3) It was agreed that the 24hour free moorings at Geldeston should be retained.
- (4) Agricultural schemes were noted and discussed.
- (5) Electronic paperwork only would be used at full Broads Authority.
- (6) A 1.7% toll increase was supported.
- (7) Positive discussions on Climate Change and a Workshop on Fen ecology/hydrology. The importance of public access was stressed.
- (8) Long term planning for Hickling Broad was discussed.

3/11 To receive any other items of urgent business

A request was made by Charles Swan for an enforcement officer to investigate two planning issues at Boat House Lane 0054 and 0043, both of which were in a conservation area and appeared to be convening planning regulations. The SWRO agreed to pass this information on to appropriate planning officers.

A reminder was given regarding the Joint LAF meeting with Norfolk LAF on 26 March to which all BLAF members were invited (10am, Research Park, UEA). Suggestions for agenda items were welcomed. A joint Suffolk LAF meeting was also requested.

3/12 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 10 June 2015 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.20 p.m.

Chairman