

Broads Authority

20 November 2020

Agenda item number 10

Discovery Hubs

Report by Director of Strategic Services

Purpose

The Broads Charitable Trust has developed a vision to enthuse visitors with the magic of the Broads. The vision includes a network of 'Discovery Hubs', which will be both destinations in themselves and gateways to other sites in the Broads.

Broads Plan context

The initiative meets several strategic objectives, including improving access for people with mobility needs, enhancing sites that are strategically important for their green infrastructure value (such as Hoveton Riverside Park), attracting more visitors outside peak season, and widening the range of entry level locations in the Broads environment. It also supports Broads National Park branding, which BCT considers as a positive brand to reinforce their fundraising.

Recommended decision

To support the Discovery Hub initiative developed by the Broads Charitable Trust.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The objectives of the Broads Charitable Trust (BCT) are outlined in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. About two years ago, BCT trustees decided to increase the Trust's ambition and widen its scope to make it more sustainable and to attract more income. As part of this ambition, they developed a vision to create a network of sites or 'Discovery Hubs' around the Broads.
- 1.3. BCT's aim is to increase the visitor offer as well as attracting funding to the Trust, thanks to a coherent vision that can be presented to local businesses, larger corporate organisations, other charitable trusts and funding bodies.

2. Collaboration between the BCT and the Authority

- 2.1. Broads Authority officers attend BCT meetings, which are held every two months. Officer attendance varies according to the agenda, and the Director of Strategic Services attends on a regular basis.
- 2.2. The Discovery Hub project is another collaborative idea arising from the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BCT and the Authority to attract external

funding. The MOU was agreed by Authority members in January 2020. To date, there have been three successful bids.

- 2.3. In May, the BCT issued a leaflet to tell Trust members about the Discovery Hubs idea, as follows:

New Ways to Discover the Broads National Park

“Our vision is to enthuse visitors with the magic of the Broads and create multiple sites – ‘Discovery Hubs’ – in a variety of locations that are not only destinations in themselves but also act as gateways to the riches that lie beyond. In time, we will create at least a dozen such themed entry-points across the National Park, each one a place to experience the Broads but also an opportunity to explore deeper into its unique landscape, history and culture.

The aim is for each site or hub to be an attractive entry-point to the national park, with information and interpretation on things to see and do on foot, by bike and on the water. The hubs will be accessible to all, with specific pointers for the less able. Some may offer an unrivalled and unique view, others maybe a little playful. They will all be places to relax and soak up the atmosphere around and from which to access local services, attractions and experiences.

Funding will be found through collaborations with public bodies and sponsorship from local businesses – all of whom would benefit greatly from the success of this project – along with other charitable trusts or via crowd-funding.

The Broads Trust will – through the Love the Broads scheme – launch an ongoing campaign to raise significant sums of money from various sources to fund these exciting ideas. We hope that local and regional businesses will not only encourage their customers to identify with our vision for the future of The Broads and to contribute it, but also to contribute themselves.”

- 2.4. The Discovery Hub initiative has been developed further in recent months to create a presentation pack illustrating what BCT could deliver on the ground, with a view to start implementing the first phase of the plan in 2021. Details are shown in Appendix 2.
- 2.5. The Authority does not have the capacity to deliver such a project, as some actions to raise the necessary funding would not be accessible to it as a local authority, nor would it have the same capacity to make agreements with third parties such as landowners and private businesses.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1. The Authority is not be expected to give funds directly to the BCT. However, we would share any opportunities for external funding, align programmes of work (such as piling) where possible, and provide letters of support when required.
- 3.2. The Authority would also provide officer time (such as the Waterways and Recreation Officer or the Communications Officer) to support the development of the project.

4. Risk implications

- 4.1. There is no direct risk to the Authority, as its involvement consists of providing support to BCT activities. The issue of long-term maintenance has been raised with BCT, who will assess the maintenance for each site on a case by case basis. BCT recognises that the design of any structures and the information provided must be such as to require minimum maintenance, with clear responsibilities to ensure a lasting legacy.
- 4.2. Some development may be subject to the need for planning permission. Any BCT member who is also member of the Authority's Planning Committee would need to declare an interest.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Members are encouraged to support the Discovery Hub initiative. It is a good concept for BCT to grow its ambitions and attract more funding, and it contributes to Broads Plan objectives.

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Date of report: 30 October 2020

[Broads Plan](#) strategic actions: 6.1, 7.2, 8.2, 9.1, 9.3

Appendix 1 – Broads Charitable Trust objectives

Appendix 2 – Discovery Hub presentation

Appendix 1 – Broads Charitable Trust objectives

The Trust acts as a fundraising charity and works with other Broads-related charities and interested bodies to stimulate and support sustainable and high-quality projects with clear public and community benefits. Any projects the Trust supports or undertakes will be expected to contribute to one or more of the following aims:

1. Protect biodiversity
2. Conserve and enhance the natural environment, including wildlife
3. Provide appropriate facilities for residents and visitors
4. Maintain and improve the navigable waterways of the Broads
5. Promote the responsible use of land and water resources
6. Interpret the unique ecosystem that is the Broads
7. Create educational resources to promote better understanding
8. Inform and engage the interest of young people
9. Sustain community life in the Broads area
10. Maintain the cultural heritage of the Broads
11. Address the local consequences of climate change