

Broads Authority

23 July 2021

Agenda item number 19

Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21

Report by Waterways and Recreation Officer

Purpose

This report presents the Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report for 2020/21 on the development and improvement of public access within the Broads.

Recommended decision

To note the Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21.

1. Annual Report 2020/21

- 1.1. The Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21 is at Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The Forum held four public meetings in the year to consider and agree its advice to the Broads Authority on access matters and potential improvements. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all meetings were held remotely and live streamed on the Authority's website.
- 1.3. The Forum had a successful recruitment drive at the start of 2021, receiving many applications and selecting six new members to fill the Forum to its capacity of 22. The two Broads Authority members appointed to the Forum left the Authority prior to 31 March 2021, and the Authority will, at its annual meeting on 23 July, will be invited to appoint at least two members to the Forum.
- 1.4. During the year, the Forum continued to provide feedback to the Waterways and Recreation Officer on Integrated Access Strategy matters, project development and work progress. Forum members also began to develop their own initiatives and give presentations to the Forum, representing their relevant interest areas/groups.

Author: Lewis Treloar

Date of report: 23 June 2021

[Broads Plan](#) strategic actions: 6.1, 6.2

Appendix 1 – BLAF Annual Report 2020/2021

Broads Local Access Forum

Annual Report 2020/21

June 2021

Broads Authority
Yare House
62-64 Thorpe Road
Norwich NR1 1RY

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Statutory purpose

The Broads Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established by the Broads Authority in 2003, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Act states that the purpose of the Forum is to be a statutory advisory body to provide guidance and advice to the Broads Authority and other organisations on the improvement of public access within the Broads, and to contribute to opportunities for open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. In providing advice, the Forum will have regard to:

- The needs of land management
- The conservation of the natural beauty of the area
- The management and maintenance of recreational access whilst balancing this against the needs of nature conservation, agriculture, the interests of landowners and managers, navigation and countryside management projects within the Broads.

The Forum's Vision

The Broads is an unrivalled wetland of natural diversity, heritage and special character. It is a place where people come to explore, enjoy and find spiritual refreshment. Access to the Broads should be clear and easy to use, respectful of wildlife and land management, meet users' needs and promote responsible and harmonious behaviour. The Broads Local Access Forum will champion access improvements and management, represent a wide range of interests and contribute to sustainability for the environment, communities and the economy.

What has happened during the year?

The Forum at work

The Forum delivered its purpose in a number of ways between April 2020 and March 2021:

- (i) Four public (virtual) meetings held to agree its advice to the Broads Authority and other organisations.
- (ii) [Review and adoption of a new constitution](#)
- (iii) Advertisement and selection of new members.
- (iv) Representation and guidance to the Norfolk Local Access Forum. Unfortunately, due to Covid, no Regional LAF meetings took place.
- (v) Provision of suggestions and advice on a number of projects being delivered.
- (vi) Presentations by members, giving their opinions and suggested ideas on behalf of their relevant interest groups. By doing so, they have helped to bridge the gap between Broads Authority staff and the relevant user groups.

Challenges faced by the Forum

The Forum has faced some major challenges over the last year, particularly as Covid-19 has meant that face-to-face meetings and site visits have not been possible. Three members

also left the Forum, leaving a gap in some of the interest groups represented. The group overcame this obstacle by proactively searching for new members to fill the vacancies, which they did successfully. One of the main challenges the Forum continues to face is the continuing pressure on public funding for countryside access across all local authorities.

Advising the Broads Authority and other bodies

The Forum has given advice to a number of bodies over the year:

- Norfolk County Council, general Public Rights of Way (PROW) improvements and recommendations.
- River Wensum Strategy Group and the delivery plan.

The Forum has also advised the Broads Authority on:

- The Integrated Access Strategy prioritisation plan
- Angling provision and access within the Broads
- Restrictions over Open Access Land
- A number of individual projects for access improvements

Access reports and presentations

The Forum received the following access reports and presentations:

- [Integrated Access Strategy updates](#) – Waterways and Recreation Officer
- [Objectives of the Broads Angling Services Group \(BASG\) and current areas of focus](#) - BASG
- [Opening access to Environment Agency \(EA\) owned riverbanks](#) – Tony Gibbons
- [EXPERIENCE Cycle hubs project](#) – Cycling UK
- [Broadland Futures Initiative](#) – Environment Agency
- [Setting the Agenda](#) – Head of Construction, Maintenance and Environment

Working in partnership

The Forum worked with the following partner organisations:

- Norfolk County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Norwich City Council
- River Wensum Strategy Group
- Cycling UK
- Norfolk LAF
- Environment Agency
- BASG
- Broadland District Council
- Norfolk Trails

Observers and advisors to the Forum

- Mike Auger, Norfolk County Council
- Matt Hayward, Norfolk County Council
- Ken Hawkins, Norfolk Local Access Forum
- Martin Sullivan, Norfolk Local Access Forum
- Marie-Pierre Tighe, Broads Authority
- Dan Hoare, Broads Authority
- Lewis Treloar, Broads Authority
- Kylie Moos, Broads Authority

Who makes up the Broads Local Access Forum?

Chair and Vice Chair

In June 2021, the Forum re-appointed Keith Bacon as Chair. The Vice Chair position is vacant. Mike Flett, who served as Vice Chair for a number of years, decided to step down from the role and from the Forum in January 2021.

Members and representation

Chairman: Keith Bacon – Catfield

Representing archaeology and landscape heritage

Vice Chair: Mike Flett – Ludham

Representing Local Authority (Parish Councils) – **Left in Jan 2021**

Kelvin Allen - Downham Market

Representing Broads Authority - **Left in Mar 2021**

Linda Aspland – Wroxham

Representing waterborne recreational users and paddle sports

Louis Baugh – Neatishead

Representing landowners and managers

Harry Blathwayt – Ludham

Representing Local Authority (District Council), tourism and local business

Liz Brooks – Ludham

Representing equestrian riding and driving – **Left in Mar 2021**

Robin Buxton – Lingwood

Representing landowners and managers, tourism and local businesses

Tony Gibbons – Norwich

Representing angling

Tim Harris – Catfield

Representing nature conservation, archaeology and landscape heritage

Dawn Hatton – Norwich

Representing walking, people with disabilities and access for all

Peter Mason - Catfield

Representing walking, tourism and local business

John Murray – Lowestoft

Representing walking, people with disabilities and access for all

Stephen Read – Oulton Broad

Representing walking and waterborne recreational users

Richard Webb – Norwich

Representing walking and sailing

Christopher Yardley – Burnham Thorpe

Representing waterborne recreational users and nature conservation

New members

Richard Atkins - Surlingham

Representing paddle sports and walking

Katie Baxter - Wroxham

Representing paddle sports, tourism and local business

Christine Cane - Wymondham

Representing equestrian riding and driving

Peter Dixon - Hickling

Representing waterborne recreational users

Martin Rendle – Norwich

Representing paddle sports, tourism and local business

Paul Saunders - Norwich

Representing open water swimming