

**BLAF Membership Review**  
**Report by the Waterways and Recreation Officer**

<b>Summary:</b>	This report considers the issue of membership of the Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) and puts forward a proposal to recruit new members to represent the interest groups identified within this report.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That members support the proposal for the recruitment and appointment of members to the BLAF outlined in this report.

## **1 Background**

1.1 Local access forums are statutorily prescribed bodies under Sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 1990 (CROW). Their main function is to advise their appointing authority, i.e. either a local highway authority (LHA) or a national park authority (NPA) for their area, as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. The regulations governing the composition of local access forums state:

“forums should have at least 10 and a maximum of 22 members, and that these should be people who appear to be representative of:

- a) Users of local rights of way or open access land (e.g. walkers, horse riders, cyclists and carriage drivers);
- b) Owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist; or
- c) Any other interests especially relevant to the appointing authority’s area”.

1.2 Terms of membership are covered by the regulations and state that “a member of a local access forum shall be appointed for not less than one and not more than three years”.

1.3 However, the regulations also make it plain that an appointing authority may reappoint a person to membership of a forum on the expiry of his or her term.

- 1.4 Members were written to in late 2018 asking if they wished to be reappointed to membership of the BLAF and 14 members opted to be reappointed.
- 1.5 This means that the BLAF now consists of 14 renewed members along with a member of the Broads Authority.
- 1.6 The Authority usually appoints two members of the Broads Authority to membership of the BLAF so there will be a need to appoint an additional Broads Authority member to membership of the BLAF.

## **2 Recruitment and Appointment of Forum Members**

- 2.1 The guidance from Government regarding the recruitment and appointment of new members to local access forums is very detailed. Appointing authorities are obliged to advertise vacancies in local or regional newspapers and consult with such bodies or individuals that they consider appropriate prior to the appointment of members.
- 2.2 The appointment process must be fair and transparent and comply with any relevant policies on social inclusion and diversity that the authority may have. The Regulations advise appointing authorities to adopt a creative and proactive approach in advertising vacancies in order to attract applicants from as wide a background as possible. The appointment process should also take account of the needs of all relevant social groups.
- 2.3 Government advice to appointing authorities is that they should ensure there is a reasonable balance of representation between the interest groups defined in the Regulations. Officers consider that the current membership of the Broads Local Access Forum broadly achieves this balance, but recognise that, some groups still require representation of the forum.

## **3 Proposal for Recruitment and Appointment of Members to the Broads Local Access Forum**

- 3.1 Members of the BLAF have also recognised that there are gaps in representation and identified the interest groups that should be prioritised in a recruitment exercise.
- 3.2 As advised by the BLAF Officers now propose to go through the recruitment process set out in the regulations seeking to recruit new members from the following interest groups which are those identified by members at the last meeting:
  - Tourism business (business owner /manager)
  - Nature Conservation
  - Entry level craft
- 3.3 Following discussion with the Chairman, Officers also feel that it would be appropriate to seek additional members from the following interest groups:

- Cycling
- Youth ambassador
- Health and wellbeing
- Diversity

3.4 This will enable the Authority to demonstrate that the membership of the BLAF meets the requirements of the Regulations and ensure that appointed members cover all the interests that are relevant to the Broads, potentially contributing additional skills and perspectives to the work of the BLAF.

#### **4 Appointment Process**

4.1 The Chief Executive has delegated powers to appoint and re-appoint members to the Broads Local Access Forum, in consultation with the Chairman of the Forum.

#### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The BLAF provides valuable advice to the Broads Authority on access related issues and contributes greatly to the delivery of the Authority's Integrated Access Strategy. Officers are therefore keen to complete the recruitment and appointment of members as soon as possible and seek members' support for the recruitment exercise outlined in this report.

Background papers:	Nil
Author:	Mark King
Date of report:	13 February 2019
Broads Plan Objectives:	6.1
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Application for membership of the BLAF Appendix 2: BLAF Constitution