

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2019

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Present

Keith Bacon – in the Chair, Kelvin Allen, Linda Aspland, Harry Blathwayt, Liz Brooks, Robin Buxton, Michael Flett, Tony Gibbons, Tim Harris, Dawn Hatton, Peter Mason, John Murray, Steve Read, Christopher Yardley.

In attendance

Kylie Moos – Administrative Officer, Marie-Pierre Tighe – Director of Strategic Services, Lewis Treloar – Waterways and Recreation Officer, Matt Gooch – Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ken Hawkins – Norfolk Local Access Forum.

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies received from Louis Baugh, Julie Brociek-Coulton, Richard Webb, Dan Hoare.

Marie-Pierre Tighe welcomed new member Tim Harris, new Administrative Officer Kylie Moos, Matt Gooch from Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Ken Hawkins from the Norfolk Local Access Forum.

Tim Harris introduced himself, noting his experience and interests in conservation and heritage.

2. Declarations of interest

None declared.

3. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Keith Bacon was nominated for the position of Chairman of the Broads Local Access Forum. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously to appoint Keith Bacon to this role.

Michael Flett was nominated for the position of Vice Chairman of the Broads Local Access Forum. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously to appoint Michael Flett to this role.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

How Hill footpath

Broads Authority Rangers have been checking regularly that boats are not mooring at the 'no mooring' signs near Clay Rack Mill. Members confirmed that there had been an improvement since the Ranger checks had been taking place and there were no boats moored there at the moment.

River Wensum Strategy

Lewis Treloar attended the River Wensum Strategy Group meeting on 28 November 2019 at Norwich City Council and confirmed that five projects had been completed by the Broads Authority.

It was noted that no one in the Broads Local Access Forum was personally involved.

Staithe Report

Copy available online, to be discussed at agenda point 9.

Reedham permissive footpath

Lewis Treloar attended a meeting with Reedham Parish Council. The Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council are supporting the Parish. Catherine Webb from Norfolk County Council is looking for evidence from the archive centre.

If a permissive path cannot be agreed and the public right of way records can be confirmed, then a creation order for this section of path would need to be created.

The Forum were pleased with the Broads Authority's support in this matter.

The Forum agreed to send Lewis Treloar contacts of people who remember the footpath, to ask them to provide statements.

Ken Hawkins agreed to take a copy of the map to the Norfolk Local Access Forum to get user evidence.

Norfolk FWAG

Lewis Treloar had received the data from Mike Edwards from Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. He is now investigating how to establish 10 permissive footpaths. The process has progressed well for one footpath where the landowners' solicitors are reviewing the lease agreement.

Mooring and angling priorities

The Forum noted that some mooring signs were not consistent across the Broads with regard to angling restrictions. The fishing season runs from 16 June to 14 March.

It was agreed to leave the sign at St Benet's as it is now.

6. Consultation on BLAF Constitution

The Chair noted the unusual situation of the Broads Local Access Forum in dealing with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils as Highways Authorities, as well as the Broads Authority as a Special Statutory Authority and member of the UK National Parks family. A member noted that the Forum could reflect on putting more emphasis on people living in the Broads.

Forum members agreed that the consultation should take place from 11 December 2019 to 5 February 2020. Responses will need to be submitted by email to BLAF@broads-authority.gov.uk.

Broads Authority members will receive a copy of the consultation by email. Parish councils will be made aware of the consultation dates.

Forum members requested that copies of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Access Forums' constitutions are included in the email for comparison.

Officers will present the outcome from the consultation at a future BLAF meeting.

7. Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve

Matt Gooch, Broads Reserves Warden from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, gave a presentation on the Carlton Marshes project and the routes around the reserve.

In April 2018, Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) received a grant of £4.1 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the project, which will focus on habitat restoration, wetland creation and improved access to all. Highlights of the project include:

- New and improved boardwalks, trails, viewing structures due to open in May 2020.
- New visitor centre opening in spring 2020 to include toilets, changing places, shop and café.
- Updating paths with type 1 aggregate to improve accessibility.
- Purchase of an additional 348 acres surround Carlton Marshes to assist with the target of 1,000 acres of wildness in the Broads.
- Once the project is completed annual visitors are expected to rise from 55,000 to 120,000.

Small sections of land around Carlton Marshes are the responsibility of the Environment Agency as a flood defence, but on privately owned land. Following the flood defence work carried out by BESL on behalf of the Environment Agency, a number of footpaths and bridleways no longer serve their purpose to the public at Carlton Marshes. These changes to the public rights of way have yet to be legally formalised.

Together with the change of land ownership to SWT, this creates an opportunity to improve the routes, including creating a bridleway linking the nature reserve centre to the ferry crossing on the River Waveney.

The Forum agreed to give full support to the project to create a bridleway to link the nature reserve to the ferry, and recommend this to the Broads Authority.

8. Visit to Aston Rowant National Land Access Centre

Lewis Treloar and Forum members Tim Harris and Steve Read visited the Aston Rowant National Land Access Centre for a presentation on access to bridleways and footpaths. They presented to the group their findings:

- If using a gate, gap or stile, the most accessible or least restrictive option should be selected.
- It is a good thing to remove barriers when possible.
- Many of the structures used in the past may no longer serve the same purpose, that is to contain cattle, and landowners should regularly review whether the structures are still required and remove them where possible.
- Adjustments to existing structures can be beneficial, such as using yellow paint to help those with visual impairments and installing RADAR locks at kissing gates.

Working with Norfolk County Council, work has already commenced to remove gates on Wherryman's Way.

Comments and answers to questions

- Changes have been made recently to the Highways Act 1980, Section 147 with the aim to have structures that are easy to use for as many people as possible.
- If too many structures are removed it could attract motorbikes travelling at dangerous speeds. Motorbike inhibitors can be installed to deter this.
- Landowners would be responsible for the cost of removing and installing and updating structures, in line with access guidance.
- Locked gates have previously been used to prevent fly tipping and restricting vehicle access to staithe. Each gate would need careful consideration before any adjustments were made.

9. Update on publicly accessible slipways and launching points

The list of publicly accessible slipways and launching points was reviewed by the Forum and it was noted that Ludham Bridge slipway is to be added to the list.

The Forum agreed to email any amendments to the list to Lewis Treloar.

Staithe Report

The final version of the Staithe Report, which covers the history of 85 staithe, has been reviewed by Forum members and the following observations were made:

- The report is very informative; however, it was written by an historian and must be used for information purposes only, it does not examine current ownership nor should it be used for legal guidance.
- It is a good starting point for any issues that may arise from staithe in the future, but does not detail all staithe within the Broads National Park. There are approximately a further 50 staithe that could be used for future reports.
- Prior to Professor Tom Williamson's report there had only been a small staithe report, written in 1986, of which Keith Bacon had a copy.

- With Professor Williamson's staithe report now published, the information on staithe is available for the public. There is concern that the number of public staithe available is decreasing, but the staithe report is a starting point to start further investigation on specific staithe.

The Chair agreed to circulate a copy of a previous staithe report from 1986 to forum members.

The Forum agreed for the Chair to contact the Environment Agency for its opinion as a follow-up to the publication of the staithe report.

10. Any other business

Footpath extinguishment

Lewis Treloar explained the situation regarding the PROWs diverted as a consequence of the Broadland Flood Alleviation Project, and the need to extinguish the previous routes.

The preparation of Public Path Extinguishment Orders was under way for the PROWs that have been diverted and for which new Dedication Agreements were in place. This concerned PROWs at Stokesby with Herringby, Cantley and Mautby.

A member noted a concern should any angling rights change as a result of the paths being relocated. It was confirmed that the process for extinguishment orders included a full consultation, which members could respond to.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Broads Local Access Forum would be held on Wednesday 11 March 2020 at 2.00pm at Yare House, 62 – 64 Thorpe Road, Norwich

The meeting ended at 16:20.

Signed by

Chairman

Summary of progress

Outstanding actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Contact the Environment Agency asking their opinion as a follow-up from the publication of the staithe report	04/12/2019	BLAF Chair
Circulate a copy of a previous staithe report from 1986 with forum members	04/12/2019	BLAF Chair
Present the outcome from the consultation at a future BLAF meeting.	04/12/2019	BA Officers
Circulation of Reedham Permissive Footpath maps with NLA	04/12/2019	Ken Hawkins
Forum members to provide feedback and suggestions on amendments to the Broads Local Access Constitution	04/09/2019	BLAF members

Completed actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Broads Authority Rangers to make checks on the no mooring situation near Clay Rack Mill and report back	04/09/2019	Dan Hoare
Discuss potential further work related to staithe at the 4 December meeting	05/06/2019	BLAF members
Discuss matter related to signs wording with Tony Gibbons	04/09/2019	Dan Hoare
BA officer to attend a meeting with Reedham parish council and report back to the Forum	04/09/2019	Lewis Treloar
Organise a trip to the Aston Rowant Centre	04/09/2019	Lewis Treloar
Circulate Broads data on permissive footpaths	04/09/2019	Mike Edwards