

Broads Authority

Broads Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014

Present:

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Mr Louis Baugh	Mr Stephen Read
Mr David Broad	Mr George Saunders
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Charles Swan
Mrs Jo Parmenter	Mr Ray Walpole
Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Chris Yardley

In Attendance

Mr Adrian Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer (SWRO)
Ms Lottie Carlton - Administrative Officer
Mr Mark King – Waterways and Recreation Officer (WRO)
Mrs Trudi Wakelin – Director of Operations

Also In Attendance

Mr Chris Bielby – Broads Water Framework Directive Specialist, Natural England
Mr Andrew Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council
Mr Russell Wilson – Senior Trails Officer, Norfolk County Council

4/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Liz Brooks, Mr Robin Buxton, Mr Mike Flett, Mr Patrick Hacon, Mr Tony Howes, and Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies.

4/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to amendment 3/6 (6) 'Professor Tom Williamson' and signed by the Chairman.

4/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes

(1) Minute 3/6 (3): Update on Waveney River Centre Ferry

It was confirmed that a potential shared use footpath could not be accommodated as part of the BESL works at Carlton Marshes due to the

increased footprint requirement. General footpath improvements could be possible but BESL had indicated these would require external funding. The Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council were also not in a position to fund either option.

(2) **Minute 3/6 (5): Integrated Access Strategy Project Delivery**

The Director of Operations updated the forum on the Whitlingham Country Park item. Information regarding Heads of Terms for the lease agreement had been received from the landowners. A project board meeting was due on 10 July 2014 and the Broads Authority would make a decision regarding the potential development project at their meeting on the 11 July 2014.

The SWRO confirmed that improvements to footpaths at Whitlingham Country Park would either be included within the wider development project or as a separate project, subject to sourcing funding.

It was confirmed that the Broads Authority managed the site on behalf of the Whitlingham Charitable Trust through a Service Level Agreement that the majority of the Trust's income was derived from parking charges and that budgets had been confirmed regarding a rolling programmed of footpath improvements.

(3) **Minute 3/6 (6): Staithes – Current information and role of Staithes Management**

The Chairman had contacted Tom Williamson who had indicated an interest in working on Broads Staithes research, but he would need some finance in order to undertake the work. The Chairman and SWRO agreed to meet to discuss how to proceed with this potential project.

4/4 Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project

Natural England's Broads Water Framework Directive Specialist gave a presentation on the Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project.

This £4million partnership project was being developed by Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Hoveton Estate. It aimed to improve both the ecological condition of Hoveton Great Broad and the visitor experience. Funding would be sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Life+.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- It was confirmed that the Hoveton Estate were the owners of the site, but they were not contributing any funding to the project.
- Access was an integral part of the project and part of the funding bid.

- Consultation to date had revealed a desire to keep areas of the Broads such as Hoveton Great Broad as havens of tranquillity.
- It was confirmed that the Estate would be in charge of the wild canoe access. A 20 year agreement to ensure continuity of such provision was being included in the proposals. The Forum expressed a view that any access provision should be under the control of a third party to ensure the commercial aspect of the operation did not exclude the public due to cost. The current proposal was therefore seen as an inappropriate use of public money.
- The potential to link the canoe trail to the Nature Trail was seen as a key improvement to the current proposal. Navigational access to the Broad by non powered craft was a preferred aspiration for the project by the majority of the Forum.
- It was confirmed that the biomanipulation requirement would close the Broad to any potential access for approximately 10 years, although certain technological improvements could reduce this period.
- The reason behind the submission of two separate planning applications was to tie in to funding applications.
- The reason for Hoveton Great Broad being chosen rather than Hickling Broad was due to known effects of work on this Broad compared to inconclusive effects of potential work at Hickling. Further investigation was necessary in Hickling Broad's case.
- It was confirmed that the Broads Authority supported the lake restoration aspect of the project but felt the access proposals were weak and they were therefore not involved as funding partners. They would be providing technical advice regarding the mudpumping proposals, advice regarding low impact boating and would support an increase in visitor moorings at the Trail.

The Forum summarised their views as follows: For the scale of funding involved the access proposals of the project were very limited and ought to include access to the open water with a link to the Nature Trail. The access should not be controlled or costly. Independent, free access to the Broad was advised to ensure public money was being spent appropriately.

4/5 Norfolk County Council Update

Norfolk County Council's Countryside Access Manager gave a presentation on two projects being developed by the Norfolk Trails team: 'A Route in Time' and 'The Green Loop'.

'The Green Loop' involved a 68km circular route connecting the Marriott's Way and the Bure Valley footpath with a new trail from Wroxham to Norwich to be called the 'Broadland Way'. Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) would be sought to progress the project.

'A Route in Time' involved improving interpretation and infrastructure of the heritage railway features of the trails. An HLF bid would also be sought for this project.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- There was potential to link with the Three Rivers Way.
- The Norwich to Wroxham route was crucial to cycle access to the Broads and the proposed Broadland Way route was therefore welcomed.
- A route across Norwich city was not envisaged as part of the project, but the Pink Pedal Way had been adjusted to fit with these new projects. The Forum suggested greater liaison with Norwich City Council was required to improve safe cycle access in the city to link with the proposed projects.
- With the proposed large development at Rackheath this new route was viewed as an essential access project.
- Large scale heritage interpretation was welcomed.

4/6 Government Consultation on Guidance Relating to Countryside Access

The SWRO updated the Forum on the Government's consultation on guidance relating to countryside access. The Forum had the opportunity to respond with comments and suggestions regarding potential missing information.

Comments arose as follows:

- Some advice on enforcement would be useful.
- Summary advice on Open access was missing.
- Permissive access and links to the ROW network was missing from the document. Guidance on standard agreements was needed.
- With HLS finishing a replacement mechanism was required.
- Best practice guidance regarding funding projects would be useful.
- Guidance regarding new road builds and crossings was missing.
- Strengthening of the CROW act was suggested.
- Guidance on lost ROW was suggested.

The Chairman and SWRO agreed to put together a response to the consultation on behalf of the Forum.

4/7 Integrated Access Strategy Projects Update

The SWRO updated the Forum on the Integrated Access Strategy (IAS) action plan progress. The plan was shown with completed actions highlighted.

A Stakeholder Mooring Workshop was being held on 22 July 2014. Broads Local Access Forum representation would be useful regarding potential progress of IAS actions. The Chairman agreed to attend this workshop on behalf of the Forum.

Forum members agreed that a review of the IAS action plan was needed and a whole meeting would need to be set aside for this. The SWRO agreed to set up an IAS action plan review meeting.

4/8 Wherryman's Way Works, River Chet

The SWRO updated the Forum on a problem that had arisen along the section of Wherryman's Way near to the new weir that had been installed at Hardley Flood. A wooden culvert had gone from a section of the bank leaving a hole with the result that the bank was rapidly eroding. The bridge that spanned the section was now in danger of collapse and erosion of the bank was also putting the footpath at risk.

The Broads Authority viewed this as an urgent problem but as the section of bank was privately owned and the footpath was part of Norfolk County Council's Wherryman's Way trail, it was felt that a partnership project approach was required to resolve the issue.

Preliminary discussions between Norfolk County Council, the BA and BESL had identified two potential options: filling the gap, no bridge, and building up the bank with river dredgings. This option would cost in the region of £12k. However, this would not address further holes potentially appearing in the bank further along this stretch of river. The second option involved a wider project looking at improving the entire section of footpath and bank. This option had the advantage of producing multiple benefits; flood defence, public access, tourism, community involvement and circular routes.

A further meeting was suggested between NCC, BA, BESL and South Norfolk Council.

It was confirmed that the options would not prevent the twice daily flushing of Hardley Flood and that functioning of the new weir would not be compromised.

Forum members welcomed the support for the wider project by NCC and agreed that work had to happen quickly to prevent further erosion and bank collapse. The Forum supported the conclusions of the report and agreed that the Broads Authority should not proceed with the project to deal with the failed culvert unless Norfolk County Council agrees to enter into an appropriate partnership agreement with the Authority covering costs and ongoing maintenance liabilities.

4/9 Norwich City Council River Corridor Strategy

Access opportunities for the river through Norwich were being considered by Norwich City Council via a draft River Corridor Strategy. Phase 1 involved taking a list of potential projects/improvements to consultation. Further project suggestions were welcomed at this stage and the Forum was asked to put forward ideas:

Suggestions were received as follows:

- Student projects e.g. arts college involvement.
- Address the steps on Riverside Walk.
- Ownership clarifications.
- Better information regarding termination of Boudica's Way at Norwich station.
- Integration between Norwich and the Broads.
- A suggestion to consult Broads Society and the BA Navigation Committee.
- A suggestion to involve the BA's member representing Norwich City Council, Julie Brociek-Coulton.

4/10 BLAF Annual Review Form

Forum members discussed Natural England's Local Access Forum annual review form.

The following items were agreed for inclusion in the Broads Local Access Forum annual review submission:

- Section 2 Operational difficulties: Agri schemes and withdrawal of HLS, footpath maintenance issues, budget cuts and refuse collection withdrawal.
- Section 3 Partnership working: The Forum viewed partnership working as extremely important with dramatic improvements occurring as a result. Pooling of resources, enthusiasm, information to be highlighted.
- Section 4 Direction: Develop partnerships, joint LAF conference for local LAFs (Broads, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridge) with 'Access and Health' theme, maximising external funding opportunities, improving communication with adjacent LAFs.

- Membership: A review of membership was agreed. A need to cover interest groups via targeted recruitment was recognised. It was noted that Hugh Taylor of the River Waveney Trust had expressed an interest in joining the Forum.

The SWRO agreed to complete the first section of the form with other sections being completed using the Forum's suggestions as above.

4/11 Annual Report of the Broads Local Access Forum

A draft Annual Report of the Broads Local Access Forum was approved by members subject to inclusion of certain member profile updates. Members agreed to provide updated profiles if appropriate. The report would go to Broads Authority on 11 July 2014.

4/12 To receive any other items of urgent business

- (1) The issue of waste collection at moorings was raised. It was noted that Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC) had announced it would no longer collect waste from moorings due to Defra's reclassification of such waste as 'commercial waste' and would be removing facilities from 16 June 2014. There had been no consultation. GYBC's interpretation of Defra's classification was disputed as walkers, cyclists and anglers also used the facilities. The Broads Authority had informed local parishes and landowners. It was agreed that in the short term a request should be made to GYBC to defer removal of waste collection facilities until the end of the season. In the longer term clarification would be sought from Defra regarding interpretation of the classification of commercial waste and the impacts on the Broads. The Chairman agreed to send a letter to GYBC on behalf of BLAF.
- (2) The SWRO reported that following damage to Mutford Lock caused by the tidal surge, Defra had awarded the Broads Authority £82k to go towards the repair work. Waveney District Council had been contracted to complete the work
- (3) It was noted that the Nancy Oldfield Trust were holding an Open Day on 21 June from 12-4pm. Forum members were welcome to attend.
- (4) Broads Forum update: Keith Bacon had been appointed as interim Chairman to the Broads Forum. Members' comments on the Terms of Reference and membership were being taken to Broads Authority. The Forum had discussed boat testing areas, the Lake Review and Oulton Broad and Mutford Lock access.
- (5) A site visit was suggested for the September BLAF meeting. Alternatively a joint conference between local BLAFs could take place, potentially at Beccles or at another site to be confirmed.

4/13 To note the date of the next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 10 September 2014 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman