

## **Broads Authority**

### **Broads Local Access Forum**

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014

#### **Present:**

Dr Keith Bacon (Chairman)

Ms Liz Brooks	Mr Stephen Read
Mr Robin Buxton	Mr George Saunders
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Gary Simons
Mr Alec Hartley	Mr Hugh Taylor
Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Ray Walpole
Mrs Jo Parmenter	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 Jacquie Burgess – Vice-Chairman, Broads Authority

#### **Also In Attendance**

Mr Ian Robinson – Broads Area Manager, RSPB  
Mr Andrew Hutcheson – Countryside Access Manager, Norfolk County Council

#### **1/1 To receive apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Louis Baugh, Mr David Broad Mr Patrick Hacon, Mr Tony Howes and Mrs Hattie Llewelyn-Davies.

#### **1/2 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to amendment 4/3 (1) 'Suffolk County Council' and signed by the Chairman.

### **1/3 To receive any points of information arising from the minutes**

#### **(1) Minute 4/3 (1): Update on Waveney River Centre Ferry**

It was confirmed that BESL would charge to carry out a costing exercise regarding potential widening of the banks to incorporate a shared use footpath. It was noted that a similar project at Potter Heigham had added approximately 25% to the cost. The SWRO agreed to ask Suffolk County Council (SCC) if they would be willing to cover BESL's fee for costing work and to arrange a meeting with himself, Stephen Read and SCC on site.

#### **(2) Minute 4/3 (2): Integrated Access Strategy Project Delivery**

It was confirmed that agreement had been reached not to go ahead with a new build youth hostel at Whitlingham Country Park due to unresolvable issues concerning lease arrangements and management of the proposed operation.

#### **(3) Minute 4/3 (3): Staithes – Current information and role of Staithes Management**

It was proposed to put in a Broads Authority project funding request to enlist Tom Williamson to undertake a staithes research project. This would not only provide useful historical information but would enable better decision making by the planning section. It was noted that staithes within Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft would be included in the scope of the proposed project.

#### **(4) Minute 4/4: Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project**

The Chairman had fed back BLAF views on the proposed Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project to Broads Authority and the Broads Forum. Chris Bielby, Natural England (NE), would be giving a presentation at the next Broads Authority meeting. The first stage planning application had been submitted and a site visit had taken place. It was reiterated that BLAF was against so much public money being spent on a private broad with no public access. It was noted that NE would need to convince the Heritage Lottery Fund that the access proposals were sufficient to justify the use of public money. It was noted that although Hickling Broad was arguably in greater need of restoration, it was a more complex system and the reasons for the decline in its water quality and ecology were not understood well enough to proceed with any large scale projects at this time.

#### **(5) Minute 4/6: Government Consultation on Guidance Relating to Countryside Access**

An online response had been submitted on behalf of BLAF incorporating comments made at the June BLAF meeting.

(6) **Minute 4/7: Integrated Access Strategy Projects Update**

The Stakeholder Moorings Workshop had been well attended and had resulted in the production of a list of prioritised moorings. A report would go to Navigation Committee and Broads Authority. The Broads Authority Rivers Engineer was recalculating annual maintenance costs resulting from the prioritisation recommendations.

(7) **Minute 4/9: Norwich City Council River Corridor Strategy**

Constructive meetings had taken place with Norwich City Council. An initial document had been produced and this included Phase 1 (assets and liabilities) with Phase 2 (access and planning) to come. There was the opportunity to input into identifying opportunities for enhancements. The SWRO and WRO had undertaken a walkover survey identifying problems and potential improvements. George Saunders agreed to review these and add comments from a disabled access perspective. The Broads Authority had agreed to produce a GIS map of opportunities and constraints on a test section of river for joint use by the BA and Norwich City Council.

(8) **Minute 4/12 (1):**

Discussions were still underway between BA and the District Councils regarding refuse collection in the Broads. A temporary solution was in place at Potter Heigham. It was agreed to raise the issue via Broads Forum with a view to a representation being made to Defra.

**1/4 Review of BLAF membership**

It was confirmed that the Forum could have between 10 and 22 members who should represent specified groups as laid out in the report. It was noted that currently there was no representation for canoeists or anglers and underrepresentation of cycling and boating.

Following agreement by BLAF at the June meeting the appointment of Hugh Taylor to the Forum, following correct LAF procedures, had been confirmed.

The following groups/activities were agreed as potential areas for representation on the BLAF: canoeing, angling, cycling, boating, Broads Tourism, Norfolk Geodiversity, RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, interpretation and safeguarding features. The SWRO agreed to investigate these options further and report back to the Forum.

**1/5 RSPB – Presentation re Sport England Cycling Bid**

The RSPB's Broads Area Manager updated the Forum on a Sport England Cycling bid they had submitted. The two-year pilot project would deliver a programme of taster cycle and canoe activities designed to engage new audiences in a leisure based sporting offer at RSPB Strumpshaw Fen and

partner sites within the Broads. The project was intended to provide a long term, sustainable sport offer in the Broads; attract new participants to cycling and canoeing; increase the support for the RSPB and partners; and increase the number of repeat visitors. The bid had been well received by Sport England who had required a few minor modifications.

Comments and answers to questions arose as follows:

- (1) It was agreed that there was scope within the project to work with partners such as the Broads Authority to increase the number of canoe launch points and to publicise these facilities, particularly through established events such as the Broads Outdoors Festival.
- (2) There was support from the RSPB for a proposal to link access routes from Norwich to Whitlingham Country Park and out to Strumpshaw Fen.
- (3) The Broads Authority would be interested in supporting the project pending further details.
- (4) It was noted that the project linked well to the Broads Authority's Integrated Access Strategy objectives regarding canoeing and cycling.
- (5) BLAF was supportive of the RSPB project and thanked the Broads Area Manager for his update.

## **1/6 Norfolk County Council Update**

Norfolk County Council's Countryside Access Manager updated the Forum on current projects and work being undertaken by the Norfolk Trails team as follows:

- (1) As part of the COOL Tourism project, updated signage had either been completed or was soon to be completed on both the Paston Way and the Weavers Way. These included links to local heritage and businesses. Three ICT workshops for tourism businesses in the COOL Tourism triangle area had taken place.
- (2) NCC were working with Natural England to extend the Norfolk Coast path as part of NE's ambitious project to link up footpaths around the entire English coast. The stretch from Weybourne to Sea Palling was due to be completed by late November with a launch date in December. The stretch from Sea Palling to Hopton on Sea was due to be completed by autumn 2015.
- (3) NCC had applied to the Coastal Community Fund for a £200,000 grant to deliver promotional marketing and links to businesses.
- (4) The Angles Way had celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an event at Lopham Fen and a celebration walk with the Ramblers.

- (5) A partnership project between NCC and BA was looking at providing solutions to footpath erosion at Hardley Flood. The problem had arisen as the bank was not a flood defence and therefore had not been maintained as such since the 1950s. The underlying peat structure of the bank meant the path was sinking and therefore it was proposed to use dredged material to raise the level of the bank. The proposal also included replacing the bridge, sited at the narrowest point of the river, by filling the hole in the bank at this point. The new weir would then be the sole means of water flow in and out of the flood. A habitats regulation assessment would need to be undertaken. An application for funding would be made to WREN and to the BA projects budget.

Comments and answers to questions and comments arose as follows:

- The circular footpath route included a section on the road. Investigation of an off road alternative was suggested.
  - Discussions were under way with South Norfolk Council regarding promotion of Loddon from the recently completed Hardley Cross moorings. Market Towns Initiative funding would be used. The BA graphics team were producing circular walks, facilities and mooring information for interpretative material at the site. A launch event would publicise the work.
- (6) It was agreed to invite a Norfolk County Council Highways representative to the next Forum meeting to discuss footpath cutting and maintenance on PROWs not covered by the Norfolk Trails team.
- (7) Discussions were underway between NCC and Yarmouth Borough Council regarding improvements to signage to trails from Great Yarmouth. The manager of the ASDA supermarket was keen to encourage use of the trails and had offered to set aside car park space for trail users.
- (8) A Broadland Way and Green Loop feasibility study was being undertaken regarding potential for funding.

## **1/7 Sale of Geldeston Woodland and Marsh**

The SWRO displayed a map showing the areas of woodland, marsh and 'car park' highlighted in the report.

Woodland Area: Local groups had expressed concern over the proposed sale by the Broads Authority of the woodland area and were advised that an application to place the woodland on the Community Asset Register for South Norfolk had been approved by South Norfolk Council. The BA would include a covenant of sale to mitigate any fears of lost amenity.

Marshland Area: The area was used for sediment disposal with no public access due to the dangerous nature of what is essentially an industrial site.

There was potential for cattle grazing in this area.

'Car park Area': An unofficial car park had been used by the public for many years. As there was not planning permission for such use any purchaser would need to put in a planning application for continued use of the site as a car park.

It was confirmed that any sale of land would not affect public access in the area and that any potential purchasers of the woodland would need to accept certain covenants of sale that protected public access. The BLAF confirmed that it would not object to a sale proceeding provided that appropriate covenants were in place.

## **1/8 Coastal Access Hopton on Sea to Sea Palling**

It was noted that Natural England's five staged process regarding coastal routes included preparation, development, proposals, determination and opening via the Secretary of State. Representations could be made at stage three. This meant that BLAF had the opportunity to raise issues and opportunities once the current stage two for Hopton on Sea to Sea Palling had been completed.

The map of the proposed route highlighted the close proximity to the Broads.

It was confirmed that routes tended to follow the coast line and there was a requirement for roll back provision. Any area of land from the sea to the path was treated as 'open access'. Where nature reserves were within these areas negotiations had to take place regarding management.

It was noted that NE did not look at circular routes off the coastal path. This would be something for Norfolk County Council to investigate via the 'Explore More' funding stream.

The SWRO would be having further discussions with NE regarding the proposed routes prior to production of a report for the next BLAF meeting. NE would be invited to attend.

## **1/9 Broads Forum Update**

Keith Bacon had been confirmed as Chairman for the Broads Forum.

Topics discussed included sediment and heavy metal records, historical boating in the Broads and the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan had been discussed. A presentation by Richard Starling of the Broads Reed and Sedge Cutters Association had been well received and problems highlighted included training and available housing for future reed and sedge cutters.

## **1/10 Natural England Dog Walking Advice – Consultation Draft**

Comments had been requested from LAFs for NE's dog walking guidance. The SWRO agreed to collate members' responses and submit these to the consultation.

## **1/11 To receive any other items of urgent business**

- (1) The Ludham to St Benet's footpath project had experienced further delays due to one of the landowner's new requirement for a ditch to be dug out and a bank built up around the adjacent fields. A site meeting would take place with the Broads Authority's Operations team. It was noted that although it was possible to show continuous 21 years use through part of the Environment Agency's boatyard part of the route was only 5 years old due to BESL work. It wasn't therefore possible to bypass the remaining landowner's section of path to complete the Ludham to St Benet's footpath via this suggested alternative route.
- (2) A habitat regulations assessment had been undertaken by the Broads Authority for the How Hill to Crowes Staithe path. A permissive path submission was being made to Natural England.
- (3) A LAF survey had been circulated and it was agreed to include this as an agenda item at the next BLAF meeting with an accompanying report by the SWRO.

## **1/12 To note the date of the next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 3 December 2014 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman