

Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2012

Present:

Dr Stephen Johnson (Interim Chairman)

Mr Andrew Alston	Mr Mike Evans	Mr Peter Medhurst
Dr Keith Bacon	Mr Mike Flett	Dr Philip Pearson
Mr Brian Barker	Dr Martin George	Mr Bryan Read
Mr Julian Barnwell	Mr Brian Holt	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Simon Daniels	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Jeff Toser

In Attendance:

Mr S Birtles – Head of Safety Management
Mr A Clarke – Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer
Ms R Evitt – Administrative Officer
Mr R Holman – Director of Change Management and Resources
Mrs A Long – Director of Planning and Strategy
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance and Executive Assistant
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive

5/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr H Cator, Mr T Gibbons and Mr A Wright.

5/2 Chairman's announcements:

(1) Report back from Broads Authority meeting held on 21 September 2012

The Chairman reported that the Broads Authority meeting had covered a wide range of issues including the latest Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the New Premises Strategy.

(2) Membership Issues

There were no membership issues.

(3) Any Other Announcements

The Chairman read out a statement which the Authority had prepared on the current issue of the National Grid link from the North Sea to Norwich. He stated that the Authority was aiming to influence the relevant stakeholders to look at the bigger picture, exploring the strategic options and alternatives fully. A discussion by Forum

members ensued, in which the following points were made:

- There were already two sets of pylons of the Yare Valley running in the general direction of this link – was it not possible that they could be reused?
- It was important to influence any emerging National Grid strategy early in its formulation.
- The Authority needs to beware of overstated costs for undergrounding of cables.
- Recognise that CPRE and other organisations have had similar experiences of resisting National Grid proposals in South Suffolk.

5/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2012

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman at the meeting subject to the following change:

The attendance list was amended to include Dr Martin George.

5/4 Summary of Progress/Actions/Response Taken following Discussions at Previous Meetings

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

5/5 Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Forum members received a report detailing the progress made to date on the Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community and Stakeholder Engagement.

The report sought members' views on a range of options which had emerged through the work undertaken to date, including the workshop held on 3 October and the subsequent deliberations of the Member Working Group on 15 October.

It was noted that the output from the discussion would lead to further consideration by the Member Working Group and ultimately the Broads Authority in January 2013. The views of Forum members were invited on the suggestions set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the report.

Chairmanship

Richard Starling (RS) commented that it was imperative that the Broads Forum had an independent Chairperson. Bryan Read agreed that the Chairman must be completely independent and suggested that it could not be one of the current serving members of the Forum.

Keith Bacon (KB) commented that every serving Chairperson had a particular interest in something and that it was not possible to find someone without any interests whatsoever. The key issue was to find the person with the right qualities for the job.

It was noted that transparency was key to this process and though it was important to have an independent chair this person could already be serving on the Forum. The post was very important as it must give the Forum a channel to the Chief Executive as well as represent the Forum at Full Authority meetings.

Profile of the Forum

It was noted that it was important to raise the profile of the Forum within the groups that the Forum represented. It was suggested, as previously discussed, that a more prominent profile on the Authority website could be useful. It was noted that a specific Broads Forum page could be produced.

It was also suggested that there was potential for an open agenda item for parish councils to express any relevant issues. More access to the agenda for parish councils before the meeting was also a positive step forward.

Attendance

Members discussed the potential for introducing a 'rule that members who failed to attend three consecutive meetings should be asked to leave the Forum. However, there was no agreement that this would be seen positively, and the following comments were made:

- Perhaps the organisation had not engaged the right person?
- What were the reasons for not attending the meetings?
- Was it the organisation or the representative who should be removed or both?
- This could alienate organisations and give the wrong impression of the Forum.

Membership and Venue of Meetings

It was noted that some new groups were not currently represented e.g. The River Clean up Group. It was suggested that there was now an opportunity to engage with new groups and organisations, Norfolk Rivers Trust being another example.

KB raised the issue of venue and commented that it was not effective to hold the meetings in different venues on every occasion as there was potential to dilute any benefit by making the process inefficient. It was suggested that

using the conference facilities of local authorities could be investigated.

Dr Philip Pearson (PP) suggested that there was potential to have site visits for specific agenda times which could raise awareness of agenda items in a different and engaging way.

Members agreed that there should be a place for Broads Authority volunteers on the Forum and more work was needed to facilitate this. Members suggested that perhaps a newsletter could be produced for residents and the organisations represented on the Forum but they categorically dismissed the idea of an online forum.

The Chairman summarised the following points on this issue;

Chairman of the Forum:

- Majority was in favour of a Chairman voted in by the meeting itself (not by the wider membership)

Appointments to the Forum:

- It was up to the identified groups to decide how to appoint as different groups have different methods.
- It was good practice for some parish councils to be able to report back from the Forum as a standing item.
- More contact information about Forum members was useful for networking.

Communication with constituent organisations:

- To continue to be contacted to send active members (potential for querying attendance record for individual members, but not for organisations).
- Active membership involves having a nominated correspondent, and deputies needing to know what the hot topics were.

Ownership of agenda:

- There were possible gaps in Diss/Waveney Group, Norfolk Rivers Trust, volunteers.
- There was no great benefit seen in moving the Forum round the Broads – issue of availability of staff to serve the meeting.
- There was however the suggestion that meetings could be held in local authority offices.

- There was some support for site visits for topical and significant issues.
- There was no support for an online forum.

5/6 Breydon Water and Water Ski Zone Designation

Members received a report which set out the recent draft risk assessments for waterskiing on Breydon Water and the outcome of a recent Water Ski Stakeholder Review Panel meeting

The Forum's views were sought on the draft risk assessments, the Water Ski Review Panel's recommendation to the Authority and the proposed management options detailed in the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Members reiterated that the issue of safety was always the priority.

Martin George (MG) commented that there had never been a speed limit on Breydon and that large cruisers were known to travel at great speeds at certain times of year. He suggested that it would be pertinent to speak to the boat building yards at Brundall and advise them accordingly.

Julian Barnes (JB) stated that waterskiing was a generic term for a wide range of different disciplines of the sport. He commented that in the assessment period of 12 months it was important that the full calendar range of activities was carried out to ensure the most accurate results. However, there was concern that the monitoring regime over the next 12 month period had to continue to be transparent and that there was still potential for further discussions with a range of stakeholders.

Members commented that the work undertaken by the Senior Ecologist had shown just how complex Breydon was and that it had helped to focus minds on the vast diversity of the area and the wide range of work that still had to be done.

RS commented that the proposed zones for certain activities were a good suggestion. These zones were away from the North Eastern corner of Breydon which was where many birds settled. The references to Common Terns should include that, on Breydon, these birds do not nest on natural habitat but on wooden platforms. Efforts should be made to secure a more natural habitat (sand and shingle beach) for these birds to nest. It was noted that a bird count is undertaken every month by certain organisations.

Brian Holt enquired whether this range of activity and the new speed limits would have been put in place if the Authority had not taken over Breydon Water. He commented that wakeboarding, waterskiing and a wide range of other activities had been taking place on Breydon for several years but had not appeared to cause any problems in the past.

Officers explained that it was a requirement of the Broads Authority Act that

the relevant safety regulations and procedure had to be followed.

MG expressed his delight that the work now being done on Breydon Water was a major benefit for nature conservation, and would result in positive management of the area.

The Chief Executive commented that Breydon was indeed a success story. Bird numbers were rising, the waterskiing safety scheme was being brought into line with the rest of the Broads - improving conditions for all users - and navigation had improved dramatically. However, the Authority had been under pressure to carry out a large body of work very quickly, and working together with a variety of organisation had provided the best solution and the only way forward. There was still the potential for several more years of investigation and assessment.

JB commented that there were five SSSI's in the country that happily coexisted with a variety of water sports including waterskiing. He offered to send details of these locations, and their experiences, to those interested.

Members agreed that the message they wanted conveyed to the full Authority was that there was a wide range of activities that needed to be clarified and investigated and that it was an area that needed to be properly managed.

Members were requested to keep an eye on the progress at Breydon Water and to respond appropriately to any activities or events relevant to the organisations they represented.

The Chairman summarised the following points on this issue;

- Reminder to Authority about its duty of care for all users of Breydon and the dangers of permitting waterskiing in a busy and potentially high speed channel across the Estuary.
- The proposals to test the arrangements had to be subject to clarity about what activities were being tested and what data will be collected and how it would be monitored.
- Members welcomed the management attention which all aspects of Breydon were now receiving from the Authority.

5/7 Integrated Access Strategy

Members received a presentation on the evolving current situation of the Integrated Access Strategy.

JB requested an updated summary of accessible slipways. The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer suggested that any advice or information from JB on this matter would be very useful.

Members reiterated their concerns regarding the lack of moorings in certain key areas and encouraged officers to continue to identify potential sites and engage with the landowners to develop much needed new moorings. Though there had been issues with saturation in the past, new opportunities were continually arising and must be investigated.

PP commented positively on the work that had been done to date and praised the synergies that this work had produced. He noted that it was important to have all this information in one place and to look at the wider context – connecting more with the Broads area and its wildlife – in conjunction with a range of stakeholders.

5/8 Consultation on the Draft Strategic Priorities 2013/14

Members noted that the Authority needed to adopt objectives, projects and key milestones to meet the strategic priorities for 2013/14 during its meeting on 23 November 2012. Members received a report which set out the draft objectives and activities in this regard and sought the Forum's views on these.

Members raised the following points in response:

- There was concern about farmers, the implementation of HLS schemes, and the risk of grazing marshes being converted to arable.
- Education was crucial and it was important to support such endeavours.
- Water quality and water quantity was still a very pertinent issue and it was imperative that more work was done to look at the impacts of more housing and more pollution on the system, including more direct action and fundamental change by organisations such as Anglian Water.
- A Fen Audit was requested to record the area that was managed sustainably.

5/9 'Love the Broads' Visitor Giving Initiative

Broads Forum members were previously informed that a visitor giving initiative was to be established in the Broads, as part of the STEP Interreg programme. The latest report provided an update on the implementation of the pilot project involving seven tourism businesses during the summer season of 2012, and looked ahead to the future development of the scheme.

Kit Cator (KC) a Trustee of the Broads Charitable Trust, attended the Forum to give a presentation on the 'Love the Broads' Visitor Giving Initiative.

He commented that the scheme had been very successful in the Lake District National Park in particular, with 200 businesses contributing over two million pounds of funding over the last 17 years. He believed that there was no reason why the Broads initiative could not be as successful. However there were some modest administration costs attributed to the initiative and the project had to take this into account. Income from the scheme would come to the Trust, who would appoint a Grants Panel to assess applications. There would be a number of independent representatives on this Panel.

A pilot scheme was now in progress with a target of £5,000 for 2012, which was on course to be reached. The Trust was also on course to have secured 25 business sponsors by the end of 2012, making the reach of the scheme bigger by next season. The Trust had also received a RDPE grant to help funding for the initiative next year which would then be followed up with other funding streams to sustain the Trust into the future.

RS felt that the Broads Trust had not been set up with due diligence and was not in fact, as stated, an independent body. He commented that the trustees were not independent and the interests of the trustees and the accounts were not above board. He was especially concerned that the Authority had been far too influential in setting up the Trust and had unduly and inappropriately influenced the process.

RS and other members were also concerned that if visitors were not aware that they were paying for the initiative on top of the cost of their purchases it could bring bad publicity to the area and prevent visitors returning or even put off potential visitors in the future.

KC advised members that the Trust had been set up originally with a legacy received by the Broads Society: every activity of the trust was correct and accountable and completely independent from any influence of the Broads Authority. The addition to a Broads visitor's bill was minimal and there had been no negative feedback from other areas in the UK already employing the initiative. In fact the opposite appeared to be the case with visitors encouraged by the initiative.

There was no other organisation in existence that covered every aspect of the Broads making it necessary to create the Trust. Although the Authority

had assisted in setting up the Trust, it had been imperative that the Trust was an independent body.

KC concluded that the 'Love the Broads' Visitor Giving Initiative was not the Trust's scheme but '*your scheme*' and that it was a wonderful opportunity with a myriad of potential possibilities. It was also an excellent opportunity to gather funding to deliver exciting projects throughout the Broads area

The Chairman summarised the following points on this issue;

- The scheme was welcomed by members in principle.
- The scheme was not set up by the Authority, and the Forum paper was misleading in implying that this was the case.
- Questions were raised about the elements of the scheme which should be (or were) subject to a competitive process.
- The Broads Trust should make their trustees public and make every effort to make sure that visitors/donors know they are donating.

5/10 Chief Executive's Report

Members received a report which detailed the recent activities of the Broads Authority including the rationale as to why the Authority was moving to Yare House.

KB commented that he hoped a suitable retention strategy had been adopted to ensure historical documents had been looked after correctly.

A presentation on the Million Ponds project was requested for a future meeting

PP commended the Landscape Sensitivity Study and praised the 'excellent joined up thinking'. He requested that Authority Officers continued to engage with other stakeholders

John Lurkins (JL) requested further information regarding the weir for Hardley Flood. The Chief Executive commented that there had been numerous issues stemming from other organisations not taking responsibility for this issue but that there was now potential to move forward.

JL also requested more information regarding the dredging at this location. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would circulate some information from the upcoming Navigation Committee meeting about this issue.

5/11 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business.

5/12 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting

No matters were requested.

5/13 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday 7 February 2013 at Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich commencing at 2.00pm.

5/14 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting

The following matters would be considered at the next meeting:

- Climate Adaptation Plan – report on progress and next steps.
- Arrangements for the future running of the Forum.
- Landscape Sensitivity Study – analysis of the Yare and Waveney valleys.

The meeting concluded at 17.19

Chairman