

## Broads Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2012

### Present:

Dr Stephen Johnson (Interim Chairman)

Dr Keith Bacon	Dr Martin George	Mr Richard Starling
Mr Brian Barker	Mr Brian Holt	Mr Jeff Toser
Mr Richard Card	Mr John Lurkins	Mr Hugh Tusting
Mr Colin Dye	Mr Peter Medhurst	Mr Anthony Wright
Mr Mike Flett	Mr Bryan Read	

### In Attendance:

Ms M Conti – Strategy and Projects Officer  
Ms R Evitt – Administrative Officer  
Mr S Hooton – Head of Strategy and Projects  
Mr J Organ – Head of Governance and Executive Assistant  
Dr J Packman – Chief Executive

### 4/1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr H Cator, Mr M Davey, Mr M Evans, Mr T Gibbons and Mr M Thwaites.

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#### (1) Report back from Broads Authority meeting held on 13 July 2012

The Chairman reported that the Broads Authority meeting had covered a wide range of issues including the Statement of Accounts.

#### (2) Membership Issues

The Chairman raised the current vacancy of Chairman of the Broads Forum. Members agreed that they were happy with the interim arrangements until a permanent chair was appointed. Members confirmed that the Chairman should remain independent and possible candidates would be discussed as part of the consultation report. The Chair notified the Forum that an alternative interim Chair will have to be found for the meeting of 4 October 2012.

#### (3) Any Other Announcements

The Chair announced that there were two consultations taking place that members needed to be made aware of. These related to the review of consultation arrangements and priorities for future

expenditure. The details of these were distributed to members in two handouts.

The Chair suggested to members that the agenda be rearranged to facilitate a 'workshop' style meeting in regard to item 4/5, Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/Stakeholder Engagement and item 4/10, Priorities for Future Expenditure. This was agreed.

#### **4/3 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2012**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to amendments to the officers in attendance at the meeting.

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

A report summarising the progress of current issues was received.

Members enquired as to the progress of the following item:

##### **(1) Grant Aid for Anti Fouling Paints**

Members noted that students from Imperial College, London were involved in a comprehensive study regarding Anti Fouling Paints which was due for completion in 2013. Officers confirmed that they would remain engaged in this process and update the Forum of any developments.

#### **4/5 Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/Stakeholder Engagement**

Members received a report which advised Forum members of the progress made to date on the review of consultative arrangements and community stakeholder engagement. The views of Forum members were sought on the effectiveness of the Authority's consultative arrangements and how they could be improved.

The following points were noted from the resulting discussions:

##### **Group A**

- The Forum does try to be comprehensive, but some groups (eg Upper Thurne, Barton Broad, Yare Users & water skiers) are not represented as well as they could be.
- It is difficult to get everyone's views, so should some groups focus specifically on particular items of business?
- At the Forum, not everyone engages, so perhaps better engagement

could be secured by splitting into smaller groups – this style has worked particularly well in this context today.

- The interests represented at the Forum do get their voices heard, but are the issues raised really dealt with? We need a more robust way of following up on the issues.
- There should be more consultation with BA volunteers, who are an interest group in their own right. It has been muted that volunteers should have a representative on the Forum – is this still possible?
- The Forum agenda tends to be determined by 75% Authority, 25% members – can the balance shift to become more in favour of members, and if so how?

### **Group B**

- Interest groups on the Forum are appropriately identified – there are a few concerns that the right groups are not represented at the right time.
- Could be a better flow and links for information to travel between different sectors of interest. We need to look at how information is cascaded to the groups we represent.
- The wider the group of people involved in the Forum, the better informed it will be – how can this be achieved?
- Attendance at Forum meetings is patchy – find out why this is and try to improve coverage of interest groups and re-launch the Forum? It's a possible way forward to replicate the BA system where if members fail to attend for a certain number of meetings they lose their place.
- Members need to take responsibility and ownership of the agenda – could different interest groups give presentations? Take more ownership of the Forum back to the groups it represents.
- Forum could gather more summaries of views from other groups' websites, minutes and agendas.
- It is dominated by strong voices but does that make it effective?
- Members need to be clear why they are at the Forum, and get actively engaged. Perhaps an induction would be a suitable way to ensure members are more readily prepared and engaged?

### **Group C**

- Balance on interests on the Forum is good – there is no need for another specialist group (e.g. Environmental Committee).
- Representation is good – if people turn up. This needs more active management.
- More thought needs to be given to a cascading structure, with a flow of information out from the Forum to parish councils and other groups; some formalising of this structure might improve matters.
- There is a weighting of business from the BA, but where the Forum wants something discussed members can get it on the agenda and this needs to be highlighted.
- An online Forum was not favored by this group as they felt it was not a user friendly way to engage and could encourage negativity.

#### **Group D**

- Need to get a mix of views at the Forum to prevent the feeling that others are better represented.
- Interaction and the flow of information has to come from bottom up.
- If members of the public come to Forum meetings, they should get the chance to speak, the public should be made more welcome.
- To whom and how do the representative groups report?
- Chair of the Forum needs to stimulate grass roots to encourage the emergence of key issues and take ownership of directing the flow of information.

It is worth varying the format of the meeting according to needs as it was today.

Chair ought to be neutral, independent and from outside.

Is the BA website user-friendly enough?

It was noted that these discussions would be fed into the deliberations of the Review Working Group at a later date.

#### **4/6 Eccles to Winterton on Sea Coastal Defences**

Members received a paper which provided the history of the current flood management strategy for the area of coast between Eccles and Winterton on Sea. It outlined how the approach sought to retain a sufficiently large beach to cope with the energy of major storms and so support the main sea wall which

happen in an extreme event which would cause extensive flooding to the whole area if it was sufficient to breach the defences.

Reference was made to the agreed emergency planning and recovery process that would be undertaken by the relevant agencies. The paper also considered that the likely sea level rise and the, as yet poorly detailed, climate change impacts on the East coast may require a different approach to establish the resilience needed.

Members noted the general points of the paper and that any serious threat to the current defences would have to come from a major event. The size of event necessary would have affected the whole country and not just the Broads. Members were reassured that all attempts were being made to minimise any surge effect from salt incursion through the river system and the North Sea.

Members commented that their main concern was not the sea water topping the sea wall – which had been the risk in the 1990s – but the sea wall being undermined. Members noted that this defence was only as good as its weakest link and there was a wide range of fairly hostile environments to deal with. Finding a continuous stream of funding was also very challenging.

Members noted that the Resilience Forum, which was part of the Civil Contingency Act, was in place to manage such an event. The initial priority of the Resilience Forum was people and property; attention to a physical breach on any coastal frontage would take second place. Keith Bacon (KB) raised concerns that he was unaware of this group and their meetings. However, some members had attended the Resilience Forum meetings and were aware of the group by their alternative name: The Norfolk Major Incident Team.

KB commented that human life was the immediate priority but water quality was also a serious issue. He continued that only a few hundred acres had to flood for water quality to be dramatically affected. He raised serious concerns regarding the possible saline incursion in and around the Upper Thurne and queried if the proper planning and preparation was in place to prevent a serious incursion.

Members noted that the IDB pumps worked automatically in the event of a serious breach. However, practical and realistic solutions had to be considered. If the damage had already been done, was it possible that more damage was done by trying to resolve it?

Martin George (MG) commented that the last sentence of paragraph 4.2 in the report was slightly ambiguous. He also referred the creation of the 'reefs'. The original intention had been to create reefs along the coast all the way to Winterton. However the project had come to an abrupt halt and he remained extremely concerned about the reefs at the top end. The reefs had been created to maintain the integrity of the sediment in certain locations. It was widely understood that there was going to be 16 reefs in total and it was where the reef creation stopped that there were management issues. It was

gave protection against a breach. The report also explored what might happen in an extreme event which would cause extensive flooding to the whole area if it was sufficient to breach the defences.

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where the reef creation stopped that there were management issues. It was suggested that the Environment Agency kept a very close watch on this for a better understanding of the system and resulting effects.

Richard Starling (RS) commented that it was worthwhile noting that whilst there were a number of deaths caused by drowning; only seven had been caused by incursion. He also commented that it was important to highlight Great Yarmouth as a vulnerable section and unless something was done to resolve this the Broads remained at risk.

It was noted that the Forum was satisfied with the current process and what appeared to be an overall improvement. Members were keen however that more resources were put into maintaining and improving the current infrastructure.

The Chairman summarised the following points from the discussion:

- The Forum was reassured by the current coastal work on the sea defences.
- The Forum encouraged the relevant organisations to 'keep watch on the shoreline and beyond'.
- Members reiterated that organisations such as the EA must recognise that fresh water was key to the Broads and they must do what they can to retain it.

#### **4/7 Presentation on Eels**

The Members received a presentation on the current situation with the native eel population.

Members noted that there was a wide range of issues regarding the native eel population and that the current situation was of great concern. A current mortality rate of 97% was significantly depleting stocks.

RS enquired about the current commercial licences for eel fishing. It was confirmed that licences of a historic nature were being renewed but new licences were no longer being granted as a small measure to protect the population.

Members noted that the Environment Agency will be re-stocking the Thurne and other areas of Norfolk and Suffolk. Any suggestions for suitable new locations were welcomed and it was noted that private broads were very favourable.

#### **4/8 The Landscape Sensitivity Study**

This Item was deferred to a future meeting due to time constraints.

**4/11 7 \ ] Y Z ` 9 I Y Wi h ] j Y Đ g ` F Y d c f h**

Concern was raised regarding the Broads Trust which was currently responsible for the funds raised by the Visitor Pay Back Scheme. Members enquired how this Trust had been formed and how it would distribute and allocate funds.

Officers reported that the Trust was completely independent from the Broads Authority and the Broads Society. However, officers suggested that a full report on the Broads Visitor Pay Back initiative and the Trust should be on the agenda for the next Broads Forum meeting to fully explain and clarify the process and what had been proposed.

**4/12 Current Issues**

Members noted that work on the Weir at Hardley Flood was finally underway. It had taken over ten years for the work to commence.

It was noted that the Broads Authority had agreed pursue the necessary work and a planning application had been submitted.

**4/13 To note whether any items have been proposed as items of urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**4/14 Matters for Chairman to raise at next Broads Authority meeting**

The Chairman would raise the relevant items as detailed in these minutes, to the attention of the Broads Authority at its next meeting.

**4/15 Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 4 October 2012 at Dragonfly House commencing at 2.00pm.

**4/16 Matters to be discussed at the next meeting**

The following matters would be considered at the next meeting:

- An update on St Benets (*it was noted that an update had been given by SKH after a previous meeting*).
- An update on Sustainable Management and the Fen Harvester.
- An update on the Million Ponds Scheme.
- A report on the Visitor Pay Back Scheme and the Broads Trust that had been created to regulate it.



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