

Broads Authority

09 May 2025

Agenda item number 18

Merger of the Broads Charitable Trust with the Broads Society

Report by Paul Hayden

Purpose

Members appointed by the Authority to outside bodies are required to submit a written report on the organisation's work and activities.

Broads Plan context

The work of the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust supports the following Broads Authority Themes:

- A – responding to climate change and flood risk;
- B – improving landscapes for biodiversity and agriculture;
- D – protecting landscape character and the historic environment; and
- F – promoting understanding and enjoyment.

Recommended decision

- i. Broads Authority Members are asked to note the decision of the Broads Trust to dissolve itself and transfer its assets and operations to the Broads Society.
- ii. Broads Authority is invited to consider ways in which liaison with the Broads Society might be further enhanced, ensuring effective two-way communication on matters of joint interest.
- iii. Broads Authority is invited to consider ways in which future partnership with the Broads Society might be used to assist in delivery of jointly held objectives.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. An update report on the work of the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust was provided to the Broads Authority in November 2024, confirming the Trust's plans for delivery of work that supported multiple Broads Authority Themes.

- A – responding to climate change and flood risk;
- B – improving landscapes for biodiversity and agriculture;
- D – protecting landscape character and the historic environment; and
- F – promoting understanding and enjoyment.

- 1.2. The update report also informed Members that a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been agreed between the Broads Trust and Broads Society to investigate opportunities for better coordination of philanthropic activities across the Broads and to share and build up capacity and expertise.
- 1.3. A Joint Liaison Group, consisting of Trustees from Broads Trust and Broads Society, has examined the scale of challenges facing the Broads, and the current governance and resource challenges facing the Trust and Society. The Group concluded that the jointly held charitable objectives of the two organisations could be best supported through a single and more strategically focussed charity for the Broads. Having considered the options to achieve this objective, the Board of the Broads Trust has opted to dissolve itself and transfer its assets and current educational and fund-raising operations to the Society from where they can be further developed and expanded.
- 1.4. The Society's Board of Trustees has welcomed this decision, and several trustees of the Broads Trust will join the Broads Society's board to help guide and further develop the visitor giving scheme for the Broads "Love the Broads", and the Trust's public education and engagement vehicles, "Discovery Hubs". The Trust's founding father, Peter Howe, will become a Society vice president.
- 1.5. The dissolution of the Broads Trust and transfer of its assets and operations to the Broads Society, is taking place ahead of major changes for the Broads Society itself. In accordance with Charity Commission Guidance, the Broads Society has already strengthened its governance arrangements and is in the process of converting to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with limited liability, opening up new partnership opportunities. The new CIO strategy will combine the Trust's expertise in fundraising, education, and public information with the Society's knowledge of campaigns, events, and publications, creating a more powerful and successful Voice for the Broads. The new arrangement will also be more efficient in terms of administration, fundraising, and membership, saving valuable time and money. One organisation, expressing a unified voice and branding, will be better positioned to communicate clearly with the public at large and the many sponsors and donors that have supported previous Broads Trust initiatives.
- 1.6. The Board of the Broads Trust believes that dissolution of the Trust, transfer of its assets and operation to the Broads Society, and conversion of the Society to a CIO structure, will help to address concerns set out in the Glover Landscapes Review of 2019, pp 143-4, where the observation is made that there should be "an ambitious commercial and philanthropic programme of fundraising within National Parks, but this has been hampered by a failure of coordination, ambition and expertise". The end result will be to provide the Broads Authority with a stronger and more strategically focussed Charity partner for the Broads, with greater capacity to act. These changes are also being driven by Charity Commission Guidance that seeks to enhance the governance, transparency, and capacity of small charities.

2. Implications for the Broads Authority

- 2.1. The Broads Trust was originally established with the support of the Broads Authority and Broads Society, and there is significant alignment between the Charitable Objectives of the Broads Trust and Society, and the statutory duties of the Broads Authority.
- 2.2. The Broads Authority currently nominates two Trustees to the Broads Trust and receives regular updates on charitable activities in the Broads and a formal annual report submitted by its nominated Trustees. Officers of the Broads Authority have also attended Broads Trust meetings to discuss matters of joint interest.
- 2.3. With the dissolution of the Broads Trust, the Authority will no longer have nominated Trustees that can formally report back to the Authority on charitable activities in the Broads. In these circumstances, the Authority may wish to consider enhancing existing liaison arrangements between the Broads Authority and the Broads Society in order to maintain regular contact on issues of joint interest and to identify opportunities for partnership working, attracting external grants, and delivery of efficiencies.

For example, the November 2024 Broads Trust report to the Broads Authority outlined the benefits that have been delivered in other National Parks, such as the Lake District, by providing line of sight between visitor-giving schemes with specific volunteer actions; for example, providing funding to support works to help maintain access, footpaths, or enhance biodiversity. The intention at that time was for the Broads Trust to link its “Love the Broads” visitor-giving scheme with the Broads Society “Broads Guardians” volunteer action program. It is anticipated that the changes set out above and creation of a single Broads Charity with greater capacity to act will enhance these proposals, potentially providing opportunities for the Society to raise funds and undertake projects and works in partnership with statutory authorities.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Broads Authority Members are asked to note the decision of the Broads Trust to dissolve itself and transfer its assets and operations to the Broads Society.
- 3.2. The Broads Authority is invited to consider ways in which liaison with the Broads Society might be further enhanced, ensuring effective two-way communication on matters of joint interest.
- 3.3. The Broads Authority is invited to consider ways in which future partnership with the Broads Society might be used to assist in delivery of jointly held objectives.

Author: Paul Hayden

Date of report: 16 April 2025

Background papers: [Member report on outside bodies - Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust](#)