

**Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community/Stakeholder
Engagement: Update**
Report by Director of Planning and Strategy

Summary: This report advises members of the progress made to date on the review of consultative arrangements and community/stakeholder engagement. It also outlines the timetable and next steps.

Recommendation: That the report be noted.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Members may recall that, in response to the Government's consultation on the Governance of National Parks and the Broads, the Authority committed to carrying out a review of the role, composition and support provided to all the Authority's consultative bodies, particularly following its reorganisation in the light of the reduction in National Park Grant. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Government in its decisions. At its meeting on 18 November 2011, the Authority set out how it intended to review the way it engages with non-statutory stakeholders and local communities. The scope of the review was to include the Authority's three main consultative mechanisms - the Navigation Committee, the Broads Forum and the Broads Local Access Forum - but could potentially include other committees such as the Planning and Financial Scrutiny and Audit Committee. At its meeting in January 2012, the Authority agreed to extend the scope of the review to consider the effectiveness of its existing community engagement mechanisms, e.g. parish forums, parish pop-ins, local events, written consultations and newsletters.
- 1.2 A wide range of people have a keen interest in the future of the Broads and the way it is managed, and the review is looking at how the Authority can promote a more open, inclusive and consistent approach to communication and consultation as part of its decision making process.
- 1.3 The review is being led by Andrea Long, Director of Planning and Strategy with Maria Conti, Strategy and Projects Officer and guided by a small Working Group of Members including the Chairs of the relevant consultative committees. The Review is included within the Authority's Strategic Priorities for 2012-13. Originally it was anticipated that the review would be completed by December 2012, however it is now expected to conclude in March 2013 once the Broads Forum has had the opportunity to reflect on amendments proposed to its Terms of Reference in February.

2 Progress to Date

- 2.1 Given that the scope of the review has been broadened since its original inception, it has for ease of management been broken down into three separate but interlinked projects. The projects are as follows:
- (a) To establish an open and consistent consultation process for the preparation, delivery and review of Broads Authority strategies and policies, including the 'we asked, you said, we did' line of communication and feedback.
 - (b) To review the Authority's informal and ad hoc engagement with non-statutory stakeholders – e.g. local residents, interest and amenity groups, visitors, businesses, schools, volunteers – and the ways it engages with them.
 - (c) To review the Authority's more formal, regular consultative mechanisms, e.g. Broads Forum, Navigation Committee, Broads Local Access Forum.

Progress to date against each of these projects is set out for information below:

(a) Strategy Preparation and Consultation

An internal guidance framework has been developed for use by Broads Authority officers engaged in strategy production. This gives guidance on document design and structure, research, and consultation planning, delivery and feedback. Work is now underway to refine this framework and to give it a more formal footing.

(b) Review of Community Engagement Mechanisms

Officers have researched community engagement good practice in other organisations, including national park authorities, adjoining local authorities, harbour authorities and other inland navigation authorities.

A series of detailed interviews were undertaken with front line staff (those whose job roles bring them into regular contact with local communities and members of the public). Feedback was invited on their experience of public perceptions of, and interests in, the Broads and the purposes and work of the Authority, and how easy people felt it was to engage with the Authority, particularly in terms of getting information and giving their views.

Telephone interviews were also carried out with a number of stakeholders who represent a wide range of interests in the Broads and who have a past or present relationship with the Broads Authority. The interviews, which were carried out by an independent facilitator, sought

feedback on the effectiveness of the Authority's engagement methods and suggestions for improved or new ways of working.

This report will ultimately be made public as an agenda item when the Authority considers the results of the full review in March.

Using a similar range of questions, a written questionnaire was distributed to parish councils over the summer and the feedback and results of that exercise have been analysed and have helped to formulate the Parish Forum proposal outlined later in this report.

(c) Review of Consultative Arrangements

Information from the research outlined in (b) above is also being used to inform this part of the review.

The Planning Committee Procedures and scheme of delegations were reviewed by members in March 2012. A number of new procedures were adopted, relating largely to the Public Speaking Procedure, including an extension of time for each category of speaker from 3 minutes to 5 minutes.

A workshop for Broads Authority, Navigation Committees, Broads Forum and Broads Local Access Forum members was held on 3 October 2012 and issues discussed in detail.

The results of this part of the Review have focussed largely on the Broads Forum and at its last meeting in November 2012, Forum members considered a number of suggested changes to the operation of the Forum. These included the ability to elect its chair from within Forum membership, changes to the agenda setting process, improvements to communication between Forum members and nominating groups and the introduction of new measures to raise the profile of the Forum itself and that of individual Forum members. At its next meeting in February the Broads Forum will consider a revised Terms of Reference that includes these proposed changes.

3 Parish Forum Proposal

- 3.1 The issue of strengthening community engagement and the Authority's presence in the community has been a key issue, highlighted through the work undertaken on the review to date.
- 3.2 There appears to be widespread support for the idea of community or parish forums. The Authority has run some parish planning forum events in recent years, which have been well received and well attended by local communities. It has been suggested that this format be used, broadened to include all aspects of the Authority's work.

3.3 From the review feedback, a revised proposal for regular parish forums has been considered taking account of the following key drivers:

- Making them worthwhile, relevant and interesting to the community (unmissable!)
- Enabling Wider Broads Authority officer input
- Increasing the visibility and accessibility of members.

3.4 Taking this into consideration, together with the feedback from the parish surveys, Broads Forum, workshop staff interviews and research on best practice, the following suggestions for Parish Forums are emerging although still evolving:

Format

- Four Parish Forums to be set up, with parishes grouped on a valley basis (to mirror the BA ranger team areas as far as possible).
- Each Forum to meet twice a year; in addition, a joint site visit to be arranged in the summer for all forums to somewhere of “broads-wide” significance – this could be linked to the Annual Meeting.
- Each Forum to be chaired by a local person (potentially a parish councillor); chair to be elected annually.
- A member of Broads Authority Management Team or Management Forum to act as convener for each Parish Forum grouping.
- All parish councils to be invited to Forum meetings, with members of the public or other local interest groups also welcome to attend.
- Meetings to include opportunities for public question and answer sessions.
- Meetings to be held in the evening in the Forum area at appropriate venues.
- Meetings to consist of a mix of presentations, questions, and items of general interest to communities, e.g. broadband, funding opportunities, local projects, ranger plans, etc. Presentations, displays, etc, from other partners encouraged.
- Meetings to be publicised beforehand, including directly to parish councils and on Broads Authority website.
- Draft agendas to be published at least two weeks in advance of meetings, and final agendas to be published a week in advance of meetings.
- Formal minutes to be taken and published.

Broads Authority input

- BA Members (Local Authority and Secretary of State Appointees) to be “assigned” to each Parish Forum area with a remit to get to know and champion the communities of that area. Members will need to consider how they wish to do this.
- BA Chairman and Vice Chairman to have a “roving role”.
- Each Forum to have an identified Broads Authority convener (member of Management Team or Management Forum) who liaises with the Chairman of the Forum and oversees the organisation of the event and the agenda.

- Each Forum to have its own web page/part of the BA website.
- Broads Authority to publicise meetings/agendas widely.
- Broads Authority officer attendance to depend upon the agenda, but would normally be the Convener, the area Ranger and a planning officer as a minimum.

3.5 As with all methods of community engagement, there are advantages and disadvantages to this forum approach. The review and other feedback to date, particularly on the existing forum set up, was that communities appreciate a structured format but with opportunities to ask questions and raise issues for discussion and information. Eight forum meetings a year across the Broads (plus the annual joint site visit) will give the public the opportunity to raise issues through an identified mechanism and on a regular basis. However Members of the Working Group have identified that these may also have a strong pull on resources – most specifically member and officer time. If supported, the Parish Forums could begin in the new financial year although many of the details are still being worked on.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Broads Forum will be considering a revised Terms of Reference at its meeting on the 7 February 2013 with a view to its first meeting under its new arrangements taking place in April 2013. The views of the Broads Forum on the Parish Forum proposal will also be sought at the same meeting.
- 4.2 The Parish Forum concept will continue to be refined following feedback from today's meeting and the Broads Forum.
- 4.3 The Member Working Group will consider the Consultation Framework and review some of the non statutory working groups that the Broads Authority participates in at its next meeting on 31 January 2013.
- 4.4 At the Broads Authority meeting in March, members will be asked to consider a final report pulling together the various strands of the Review.

Background papers:	Nil
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Broads Plan Objectives:	Nil
Appendices:	Nil