

# THE BROADS SOCIETY

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22 November 2014 at How Hill, Ludham

The meeting was preceded by a talk by Robin Page on conserving the countryside.

### 1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Paul and Sheila Ashford, George Blake, Antony Coe, David Court, Michael Egginton, Elizabeth Goodyear, Chris Groves, Mollie Howes, Warren King, David Pinder, Chris Pulley, Malcolm Savory, Miss A Shaw, Mr G Shaw, Pat Simpson, David Skinner, Gill & Trevor Warren.

### 2 Minutes of the Meeting of 23 November 2013

The Minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting, having previously been published in "Harsner", were taken as read. Their acceptance was unanimously agreed and the minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

### 3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

### 4 To receive and adopt the Accounts and Trustees' Report for the period 1 April 2012 - 31 March 2013.

#### 4.1 Presentation of Accounts

The Treasurer, Richard Reid, presented the accounts and provided an oral report drawing attention to some matters of detail.

Following approval at last year's AGM, Debit & Credit Accountancy of Wroxham was appointed as the Society's Independent Examiner and had helped to reorganise and simplify the accounts. The Society was now accounting on a cash basis rather than accruals. The accounts presented had been prepared on this basis and, because less work was involved in their examination, the Society had achieved a significant saving on professional fees. The figure of £1,120 for Independent Examination shown in the accounts related to a payment for the previous year's fee. In future, the figure will be £150.

In 2013-2014 the in-year deficit had been reduced from £3,434 to £2,228. Although this was a welcome reduction, there was still a need for the Society to address the long term decline in cash balances which, would be depleted by fifty percent in 5 years' time if the current trend continued.

From the accounts, it appeared that there had been a reduction in income from donations and subscriptions. It had, in fact, increased slightly compared to 2012-13 but the figure shown in the accounts had been adjusted in the transition to the new accounting basis.

From now on Gift Aid income would be shown in the accounts during the year the payment from HMRC was received not in the year in which income eligible for claiming Gift Aid was received.

The donation of £3,150 from the 500 Club consisted of two donations for two financial years. The donation for the current financial year would be made in March 2015.

The Committee had approved a one-off additional payment to the Administrator for additional work carried out for the Society in the interregnum between Treasurers.

During the year a number of cost saving measures had been considered, for example reducing the frequency and content of "Harnser". However it had been agreed that the small savings would not justify the diminution of quality and reduced benefit to members. Despite increased postal charges the increase in the cost of "Harnser" had been contained.

In summary, cost savings and additional income from new members had been achieved and the Society's finances were under control. However, it was essential to continue the search for savings and, more importantly, to increase income by recruiting new members; this was a matter with which all members could help.

There were no questions and the Treasurer therefore proposed adoption of the Accounts. This was seconded by Ian Masters and unanimously agreed.

#### 4.2 500 Club

Although the 500 Club is supervised by appointed Trustees, the Treasurer wished to draw one matter to the attention of the meeting. He had stood down as a Trustee in order to be able to carry out an independent check of the 2012-13 accounts. However, following his election as Society Treasurer, he proposed that the 500 Club Trustees ask the Society's Examiner to carry out the independent examination at modest cost. Trustees had agreed and the Main Committee had approved this arrangement in the interests of transparency. Amendments to the Rules had been introduced to take account of the changes.

The 500 Club would benefit from 200 new members which would greatly improve the Society's financial position.

### 5 **To receive and adopt the following annual reports**

#### .1 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee (NRS-C) Report

The annual report had been published in "Harnser". Its adoption was proposed by the Chair of NRS-C, Paul Savage, seconded by Nick Balls, and unanimously agreed.

#### .2 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee (SRS-C) Report

The annual report had been published in "Harnser". Its adoption was proposed by the Chair of SRS-C, Colin Dye, seconded by Di Cornell, and unanimously agreed.

#### .3 Membership Report

The annual report had been published in "Harnser".

The Administrator reported that Christmas card sales had been excellent and she thanked Nick Balls for making numbered wooden discs for the 500 Club draw.

## 6 Chairman's Report

The Chairman gave a detailed report on a very busy year in which the Society had dealt with an unusually high number of important issues affecting the Broads. These included: Acle Straight; River Chet; Pegasus Boatyard development; Moorings at Reedham; Broads Forum; Upper Thurne Working Group; Development of links with the farming community through Henry Cator; Strumpshaw Fen; waste collection and the BA Moorings & Access Strategy. In addition, the Society was maintaining an ongoing review of other matters such as electricity pylons, solar farm, water skiing, water quality and climate change adaptation. The Society was exploring the possibility of a scheme to reduce or waive tolls for Heritage Boats. Considerable thought would be required to develop a detailed proposal and the views of members would be welcome.

The Chairman had attended the annual National Parks Societies Conference in the Yorkshire Dales and had been asked whether the Society would consider hosting the 2015 event. On this occasion he had declined the invitation as the Society was not currently in a position to take this on. However, he had given an undertaking that to explore the possibility of the Society acting as host in 2016 provided that he could recruit a group of members willing to take on the organisation.

The Arthur Ransome Society would be holding their international AGM in Bungay in May 2015 and had invited him to speak at their annual dinner. The Society would also mount a display stand.

Turning to internal matters, the Chairman was pleased to report the co-option to the Committee of Pat Simpson. Pat had since agreed to stand for election and his knowledge and experience of the Broads would be a great asset to the Society.

The Chairman went on to thank the Officers and Committee members (the Trustees of the Society) and the Sub-Committees for their support and hard work during the year, drawing particular attention to the contribution of Jill Wickens as Editor of "Harnser" and her work, with Nick Balls, in promoting the Society. He also thanked Nick for his vital role in developing and maintaining the Society's website, Richard Reid, both for his role as Treasurer and as the Society's correspondent for the regular column in "Anglia Afloat", and David Capp for leading the Broadsword Team.

He expressed his gratitude to Nigel Hughes and the Birkenhead YMCA for once again organising and sponsoring the Photographic Competition and acknowledged Alistair Clayton of Seaglaze Marine Windows for the loan of display boards.

He concluded his acknowledgements by thanking the Administrator, Carol Palfrey for her hard work, dedication and, sometimes forthright, advice.

Before finishing his report the Chairman wished to highlight two other extremely important issues which he had deliberately left to the end and which he hoped would be discussed in more detail during the Informal Meeting. These were the proposals for

restoration of Hoveton Great Broad and Re-Branding of the Broads as a “National Park”.

*[A copy of the full report, was published as the Chairman’s Letter in the January issue of “Harnser”].*

## **7 Election of Officers**

The President, Nick Barne, took the Chair for this item.

The following candidates had been nominated in accordance with Society Rules. Their re-election was unanimously agreed. *[These Officers are Trustees of the Broads Society].*

Chairman: Robin Godber - proposed by Colin Dye, seconded by Keith Bacon

Vice-Chairman : Keith Bacon – proposed by Jill Wickens, seconded by Nick Balls

Hon Treasurer : Richard Reid - proposed by Jill Wickens, seconded by Nick Balls

## **8 To elect members of the Committee**

The following candidates had been proposed and seconded and their re-election was unanimously agreed.

Nick Balls – proposed by Jill Wickens, seconded by Richard Reid

David Capp – proposed by Colin Dye, seconded by Paul Savage

Ian Masters – proposed by Mark Wells, seconded by Nick Balls

Mark Wells – proposed by Ian Masters, seconded by Jill Wickens

The following candidates had been proposed and seconded and their election was unanimously agreed.

Pat Simpson (currently a co-opted member) – proposed by Robin Godber, seconded by Peter Horsefield)

Anne Filgate – Proposed by Jill Wickens, seconded by Richard Reid

Peter Horsefield (immediate Past Chairman) and Jill Wickens (Editor of “Harnser”)

would remain on the Committee as ex officio members with full voting rights.

Appointments to the two remaining vacancies could be made by the Main Committee during the coming year.

The Chairs of the Northern and Southern Rivers Sub Committees would be appointed as ex officio members by the Main Committee in January.

*[Elected and ex officio members of the Committee are Trustees of the Broads Society].*

## **9 Appointment of Hon Solicitor**

The re-appointment of Malcolm Savory was proposed by Nick Barne, seconded by Jill Wickens and unanimously agreed.

## **10 Appointment of Independent Examiner**

Richard Reid proposed the re-appointment of Debit & Credit Accountancy. This was seconded by Di Cornell and unanimously agreed.

This concluded the formal business

## PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

### **Broads Society Trophy**

The Broads Society Trophy was presented to Vic Standley in recognition of his many years of service to the Society and, in particular, “News and Views of the Broads Authority” published in every issue of “Harnser”. The presentation was made by Vice-President, Keith McDougall who had made the initial suggestion that Vic’s invaluable contribution should be formally recognised.

### **Photographic Competition**

A salver and a cheque was presented to the winner of each Category

Class 1 - Four Seasons on the Broads - David Edleston

Class 2 - Broadland Landscape - Genevieve Godber

Class 3 - Broadland Boats - David Edleston

Class 4 - Broadland Wildlife - Penney Northover Smith

Class 5 - Broadland through the lens of Youth - **Clara Jackson** of Lynn Grove High School

The overall winner who received the Trophy and a cheque was Clara Jackson

The Chairman repeated his thanks to Nigel Hughes and Birkenhead YMCA for sponsoring and organising this competition.

## INFORMAL MEETING

### 1 Questions received by prior notification

From Peter Wall – What has the Society done to persuade the Broads Authority to cut down more vegetation so that sailing conditions do not continue to deteriorate?

The leader of Broadsword, David Capp, gave assurance that the Broads Authority was very conscious of the problems. BA volunteers and the Broadsword Team would be working up to Christmas on the stretch from Wroxham Bridge to Belaugh.

He pointed out that letters to the Authority, addressed to Andy Bartlett, were a more effective way of drawing attention to problems than phone calls.

Robin Godber said that the Society would continue to keep up the pressure for this type of maintenance work.

### 2 Questions and Comments from the Floor

#### 2.1 Hoveton Great Broad

Vic Standley requested clarification of the funding arrangements for the project to improve water quality in Hoveton Great Broad. Figures of £69k and £4 m had been mentioned.

Paul Savage explained that Natural England was responsible for the proposal which would be carried out in two stages:

Stage 1 – installation of a fish barrier. A planning application had been approved but, due to representations from the Parish Council, was being amended. The Society had objected strongly on the grounds that the “temporary” barrier proposed would be impossible to remove, thus removing any future opportunity for greater public access.

Stage 2 – major works within the Broad to improve water quality. The £69k was the sum required to prepare a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £4m to carry out the major work to achieve higher water quality.

Keith Bacon made the following points:

- the Local Access Forum, the Broads Forum and the Society had supported an alternative proposal to bid for funding to improve water quality at Hickling which had full public access.
- if Hoveton Great Broad were blocked off, this raised serious “right of navigation” issues.
- access in the current proposal was limited to guided canoe trails which was far from adequate.
- public access would need to be greatly increased to justify the investment of £4m of public funds and it was likely that the application for funding the project in its present form would be refused.

#### 2.2 Access to Cess Staithe, Martham

Di Cornell drew attention to the application by Martham Boatyard to divert the footpath at the Staithe which would prevent access to the river bank from

Cess Road. She urged the Society to support the River Thurne Tenants Association in their campaign against the application.

The Chairman gave assurance that this issue would be addressed through the North Rivers Sub-Committee and suggested that Di Cornell should contact Paul Savage, the Sub-Committee Chairman.

#### Branding of the Broads

Robin Godber informed members that the Trustees were currently drafting the Society's response to the Broads Authority consultation on branding. The issue had been discussed in detail at the Trustees' November meeting and followed up by email correspondence.

Di Cornell enquired whether there was an advantage in branding the Broads as a National Park. In response, Bryan Read said that the advantages to the Tourist Industry would be tremendous, particularly as it would simplify the information in literature provided to visitors. It was his view that the Society could rely on the Broads Authority to ensure that the exercise did not affect the current legislation and saw no disadvantage in the Broads being branded as a National Park.

Keith Bacon summarised the views currently being expressed by interested parties: Those in favour believed it would be good for tourism. Those against feared (a) this might be the "thin end of the wedge" leading eventually to full legal status as a National Park; (b) the impact on the Broads of encouraging too many tourists; (c) the legality of using the name to brand an area which was not strictly a National Park, despite the assertion of the BA Chief Executive that had the backing of DEFRA and the other National Parks.

Nick Balls assured members that the Trustees were looking very seriously at all the issues.

Paul Savage said that, although he would be prepared to go with the majority opinion, he wished to ensure that mechanisms were in place to hold the Broads Authority to account in respect of its status as a public body. He was particularly concerned about the provision and maintenance of moorings. Severe cuts were currently being planned because of inadequate financial planning dating back 8 years. As a lawyer he had questions about the legality of the branding proposal.

Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that the Society would endeavour to provide a carefully argued response which achieved a balance between supporting sustainable tourism and ensuring that the Broads maintained its special and unique status.

### 3 **500 Club Draw**

The winner was Member 414 – Mr Keith Lindsay of Goodmayes, Essex

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Signed .....  
Chairman

Date .....

