

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on 8 July 2008 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

Present: Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman), Richard Baguley, , Martin George, Anne Horsefield, Peter Horsefield, Patrick Larnar, Peter Waller, Jill Wickens and Paul Howes (by telephone).

Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

In the absence of the Society Chairman, Keith Bacon took the chair

1 Apologies for absence

Nick Barne (Chairman), Derek Rae (Treasurer), Gordon Craig, and Peter Howe.

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 13 May 2008 and Matters Arising

The minutes, having been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record. It was agreed that "live-aboard" should be used as the standard spelling in future.

2.1 Society Constitution and Rules (Minute 3.2)

The revised Constitution had been sent to the Charity Commission for approval and their response, received on 7 July, had confirmed that all the proposals were acceptable. However, the Commission had suggested that "aims" be replaced by "objects" in the interests of good practice, although this was not mandatory. Members agreed to adopt this change and the Administrator was asked to make the necessary amendments.

It was proposed by Richard Baguley, seconded by Paul Howes and unanimously agreed that the proposed revised constitution be put to the AGM in November. To comply with existing rules, this required written notification to the Hon Secretary (Paul Howes) signed by 10 Society members. Paul had agreed that a copy of the minute would suffice. Although only 8 members were present in person, Nick Barne, Gordon Craig and Peter Howe had confirmed their support in advance by email. The Administrator would ensure that the appropriate formalities were completed.

2.2 Society Solicitor and new Vice President (Minutes 3.4 and 3.5)

Standley Bushell had confirmed that he wished to stand down as Society Solicitor. As noted in the supplementary minute, he was already a Vice-President. Nick Barne had arranged to talk informally with a potential successor.

2.3 Royal Norfolk Show (Minute 9)

Peter Waller said that, in his view, participation in the Show was a waste of time and money. During the time he had been on duty, only two people had visited the Stand and no potential new members had come forward. Peter Horsefield countered this view reporting that he and Anne had been quite busy. Responding to Richard Baguley's enquiry the Administrator reported that no new members had joined since the Show.

The Administrator read out comments provided by Nick Barne who believed that it was a good thing for the Society to have a presence at the Show, a view supported by visitors' comments. The President of the Show had been photographed visiting the Stand and expressed great interest in the Society's work. Nick was, however, disappointed that so few of the members of the

three Committees had volunteered to man the stand. If the exercise was to be repeated, more volunteers must come forward as it was essential to have two people on the Stand for each shift. Peter Horsefield endorsed the need for two people. Richard Baguley supported the idea of the Society having a presence at the Show and suggested that, in future, applications forms handed out should be marked to identify new members originating from that source.

Despite Peter Waller's reservations, there was general agreement that it was a benefit for the Society to have a presence at the Show.

It was agreed to ask the Treasurer for an account showing the total cost of taking part in the Show.

2.4 Society Press Release (Minute 5)

The Administrator had not yet asked the Broads Authority for a list of publications to which the press release had been sent. She would do this as soon as possible.

3 Special Meeting with John Packman and Trudi Wakelin – 10 June 2008

- 3.1 The minutes had been circulated and were agreed as a true record subject to the amendment of two typographical errors. It was agreed that the Administrator and Richard Baguley would prepare an edited version of the minutes, to be vetted by the Committee, for publication on the website.

Natural England Report (Minute 2)

Richard Baguley said that he had not seen the "rapid response" posted on the BA website and wondered when, and for how long, it had been available. He also felt that the Broads Forum was not the best vehicle to publicise the Authority's position to the public at large; the local paper would be better. Keith Bacon pointed out that theoretically, Forum members were supposed to cascade information to the organisations which they represented but this was ineffective because of multiple representation.

Martin George said that, at the Broads Forum, he had raised the issue of the Authority's failure to communicate with the public about its work and achievements. The only mechanisms seemed to be the Broadcaster and press releases, instead of a dedicated news sheet. Even those with close connections to the Authority had difficulty in finding out what was going on and the general public were therefore completely unaware. He undertook to raise the issue of communication again at the next meeting of the Forum. Pat Lerner would also raise the matter at the Navigation Committee. Peter Waller pointed out that the press had been excluded from recent Authority Public Meetings.

Supporting the views expressed, Peter Horsefield said that he was unaware that the Broads Authority had done anything to make public their views on the shoreline management plan.

It was agreed to include this issue on the agenda of the Committee's next meeting with the Broads Authority

Broads Forum (Minute 3)

The problem with Parish Council representation was being addressed.

Carbon Footprint (Minute 5)

This topic was included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Broads Forum. It was suggested that the Society should consider sponsoring a public meeting on this issue.

Slipways (Minute 8)

It was noted that the Broads Authority's Slipway Strategy would be presented to the next meeting of the Broads Forum. Peter Horsefield informed members that the problem at Irstead, reported by the Northern Rivers Sub-Committee, had now been resolved.

- 3.2 Members considered a letter from Roy Kemp, Vice President, expressing his concern about the Broads Bill in particular and the role of the Broads Authority in general

The Society had contributed to the consultation on the Broads Bill and a number of changes had been made as a result of its comments. It was, however, agreed that the Society was right not to adopt a formal position on the Bill because of the wide range of views held by individual members. Taking such action would have been divisive and damaging.

Members agreed with Roy Kemp that democratic control by local people was important but pointed out that the bureaucracy of which he complained was inevitable because of the requirements imposed by Government; this was common to all local authorities. Peter Waller suggested there might be a role for the Society in helping to remove the barriers created by these statutory obligations.

Richard Baguley reported a conversation with Roy Kemp about the relationship between National Park Societies and the National Parks. Roy had quoted a previous Chairman's opinion, just after the BA had been formed, that the role of the Society should be a "ginger group".. The Administrator drew attention to the use of this phrase in recruitment literature prepared some years ago.

Peter Horsefield proposed that the Society, if it were confident in its own purpose, should support organisations working in the same direction and offer criticism where appropriate. As far as the Broads Authority was concerned, this could be achieved through dialogue at meetings of the Main Committee with the Chief Executive and other relevant Authority Officers. Members stressed the importance of the whole committee being involved in such meetings and agreed they should be arranged only when there were sufficient items to discuss not at regular intervals as implied in the minutes of meeting with John Packman and Trudi Wakelin on 10 June.

Martin George referred to comments by Peter Howe that the relationship between National Park Societies and the National Parks came up at every meeting of CNP representatives. He therefore felt sure that Peter would agree with what had been said.

The Administrator was asked to draft a letter for the Chairman to send to Roy Kemp.

4 Special Meeting on the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

4.1 Minutes

The minutes had been circulated and were agreed as a true record. Members thanked Keith Bacon for chairing this meeting. It was agreed that the Administrator and Richard Baguley would prepare an edited version of the minutes, to be vetted by the Committee, for publication on the web

The Administrator reported receipt of a letter from Peter Howe, on behalf of the Trustees of the new Charitable Trust, thanking the Society for the donation of £11,552. The letter confirmed that the money would be used to set up the administrative systems and to employ a suitably qualified part-time administrator.

4.2 Nomination of Trustees

It was proposed by Martin George, seconded by Jill Wickens and unanimously agreed that Nick Barne and Peter Howe should be formally nominated as the Broads Society's nominated Trustees.

Martin George proposed that Nick Barne or Peter Howe be asked to provide regular updates to the Main Committee and in "Harnser" to keep the general membership informed. This was unanimously agreed.

At Peter Horsefield's suggestion, it was agreed to draw to the attention of Peter Howe and the Trustees of the Charitable Trust (a) the inconsistency between Peter's report at the last meeting and the actual terms of the constitution and (b) the potential problems which result from the reference to a "legacy" in the application form.

5 Finance

5.1 Treasurer's Report

The Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account as at 4 July 2008 had been circulated. It was understood that the sum under "creditors" arose from accrual of subscriptions and that "retained earnings" was interest. The Treasurer would be asked to confirm that this was correct.

5.2 Bequest

A bequest of £10,000 had been received from the estate of a Life Member. This member had donated £1,000 in 2006 in memory of his late wife on the occasion of the Society's fiftieth anniversary and had requested to remain anonymous. The Administrator had written to the family who had decided that it would be best for the bequest also to be anonymous.

Based on her previous correspondence with the gentleman concerned, the Administrator felt sure that he would wish the funds to be used for the direct benefit of the Society. She therefore suggested that the Committee might consider using some of the money to improve "Harnser" by increasing the number of pages, introducing colour photographs and paying for the additional postage required. This course of action was formally proposed by Pat Lerner, seconded by Richard Baguley and unanimously agreed.

5.3 Donation to the Museum of the Broads

Keith Bacon circulated details of the appeal by the Museum for contributions to their project to purchase a new site. Donations would be recognised in a number of ways depending on the amount given. Donations of £5,000 and above would be used to support each of the proposed four new buildings. Before considering the size of a donation to the Museum, members agreed in principle that the maximum donation to any organisation should be £5,000. Members were generally in favour of a proposal to donate £5,000 to the Museum and supported the suggestion by Paul Howes that it should be named the Len Ramuz Building in memory of the Society's founder. Richard Baguley suggested an inscription along the lines of "Building sponsored by the Broads Society in memory of its founder Len Ramuz" might be appropriate. However, it was agreed that a final decision could not be made without advice from the Treasurer to ensure that a donation of this size would not be fiscally detrimental to the Society. Nonetheless, Keith Bacon was mandated to give the Museum a provisional indication of the amount the Society was likely to

donate. Although it was highly unlikely that the objects of the Museum would conflict with those of the Society, it was also agreed that the Museum's constitution should be formally checked in the interests of good governance.

5.4 Green Boat Show

Peter Howe had provided a budget showing an anticipated surplus of £847.88. However, if there was a shortfall on income the Society would need to cover this. It was accepted that the Society was already committed to supporting this event and, although some members had personal reservations about its green credentials, there was general agreement that, because of the publicity, it was good for the Society's image.

It was therefore proposed by Jill Wickens, seconded by Martin George and unanimously agreed that the Society should underwrite the 2008 event to a maximum of £1300 but there was some discussion as to whether the Society should continue such financial support in future years.

6 Insurance

The Administrator had been contacted by the IWA who offered insurance at competitive rates to corporate members. She had therefore completed a proposal form in draft for approval by the Committee. She pointed out that the responsibility for ensuring appropriate insurance cover rested with the Committee as Trustees and that, although she was willing to take on the administrative aspects of obtaining suitable cover, she wished to make it clear that she did not accept responsibility for insurance matters. Members supported this stance and agreed that responsibility for insurance matters should revert to the Treasurer.

Public Liability Insurance

Members approved the draft application form and confirmed that the response to question 5 – "Do you own any land or are you responsible for any land of any sort" – should be "Not applicable". (It was noted that "ownership" of the Eel Sett was a highly complicated legal arrangement and there was no requirement to obtain insurance).

Other amendments to the draft were:

Q3 – Add "navigation" to list of mission statement

Q3 – Activities – add "donations to relevant charities and voluntary organisations

Q9 – Cash handling – insert £1,000 for one-off event.

It was anticipated that the insurance through IWA would cover the Green Boat Show and that no additional cover would be required as had been the case in 2007, saving a significant amount of money. The Administrator would ask for a quote as a matter of urgency since the existing policy was due to expire on 29 July.

Indemnity Insurance

The Administrator had circulated details of the Trustees' Indemnity Insurance provided for IWA members by Sun Alliance. She drew members' attention to the criteria under which the Charity Commission's had agreed that charities might take out such insurance:

- It must not cover conduct that the a trustee knew was not in the charity's best interests
- The trustees consider it reasonable for funds to be expended in this way
- The constitution includes the appropriate power

It was agreed that the Hon Secretary should insert a clause into the revised constitution giving the Trustees the power to take out indemnity insurance if they considered it necessary. The Administrator would complete a proposal form in draft for consideration at the next meeting.

7 Natural England Report

Keith Bacon had attended a series of meetings on the draft Report culminating in the visit by the Floods Minister, Phil Woolas, on 7 July. He had confirmed the Government's undertaking to hold the line for 50 years, and possibly beyond, and had stated clearly that the possibility of the sea flooding the Broads was very remote; this had helped to restore confidence in those villages affected by adverse publicity. Keith was pleased to report that Natural England was likely to remove the map from their final report.

Martin George proposed that the Society should not invite further debate now that the immediate fears had been allayed. Pat Larnar and Richard Baguley were, however, in favour of pursuing the idea of a Yare barrier in a low key way.

Subject to Committee's agreement, Martin proposed to raise at the Broads Forum his concerns about flooding of the grazing marshes. He believed that it was a good thing for the Society to get involved in this debate. Members supported this proposal.

8 Harnser

Jill Wickens informed members that she had reconsidered her decision to stand down as Editor and was willing to continue in this role, but only if she received help from the Committee in obtaining material for publication. She explained that she had been left to find copy and she felt it unreasonable for this way of working to continue. Members were pleased and grateful that Jill was willing to continue and confirmed that they would give her their support.

Jill requested copy for the October issue, which included reports for the AGM, by no later than 3 September. It was noted that the printer had apologised for the printing error in the previous issue and had provided an erratum sheet.

9 Society Trophies

9.1 Lady Mayhew Trophy

Two nominations had been received to date. The closing date was 1 September. Three volunteers were required to serve on the selection. The Administrator would check whether Peter Howe wished to continue as a panel member, in which case only two new members would be required. Anne Horsefield and Paul Howes offered to serve; Pat Larnar was also willing to join if Peter Howe wished to stand down.

Richard Baguley and Paul Howes had been exploring possibilities for the Society to play a greater role in involving young people in the Broads. Richard had talked with Alex Howe, a governor of Broadland High School. Pat Larnar offered to assist in view of his position as a governor of Bignold Primary School, Norwich. A formal proposal would be presented to the next meeting.

9.2 Society Trophy

Anne Horsefield suggested a potential candidate and undertook to provide full details for the next meeting.

10 CNP

In view of the current debate about direct elections to the Broads Authority, Peter Howe had provided a paper outlining the reasons why CNP were not in favour of direct elections to National Parks. Peter supported their position. As far as the Broads Authority was concerned, Paul Howes favoured direct elections, within certain limits, and had circulated his views on the issue. It was agreed to note these views and continue discussion at a later date.

Peter Horsefield doubted whether the Society could have any influence on changing CNP's views.

11 Broads Forum

The next meeting was on 17 July. Martin George drew attention to the River Wensum project which involved management of the catchment area. As he had pointed out before, management of river catchment areas was vital for the future wellbeing of the Broads but the Broads Authority were not aware of what was going on in these areas. He planned to raise the issue at the October meeting of the Forum with a view to urging the Authority to work with other local authorities to manage the catchment areas.

Other major items on the agenda included: the Slipway Strategy and the Sediment Management Strategy.

Paul Howes referred to the Boundary Commissions proposals for reorganising local government and wondered about the future management of The Broads in the context of a Unitary structure for the county. This aspect needed to be considered during the consultation.

12 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee

12.1 The minutes of the meeting of 30 June were not available but would be circulated in the near future. Peter Horsefield reported briefly on the following items:

- all local planning authorities had now confirmed they would invite the Society to comment on planning applications for windfarms likely to impact on The Broads;
- the proposals for the Society to encourage the relevant authorities to issue a statement publicising the “hold the line” policy had been superseded by recent events;
- the planning application to install floating pontoons at Thorpe Island had been refused;
- the Committee had objected strongly to the proposal for development on the site owned by the Broads Hotel at Hoveton;

Peter went on to describe the opportunity, created by BESL work, to create a long distance path from from Ludham Bridge to Wood End Staithe and suggested that the Society should give its full support to the project.

12.2 The Coarse Fishing Close Season

John Pitchers had, on behalf of the Northern Rivers Committee, prepared a paper urging the Society to support continuation of the Environment Agency’s coarse fishing close season. It was agreed that the Society should adopt this stance so that, in the event of growing pressure from the commercial sector, an immediate objection could be lodged to any attempt to remove the close season.

13 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee

13.1 The minutes of the meeting of 12 June had been circulated. Peter Waller drew attention to the Committee’s representations concerning the River Chet. The Pegasus boatyard site was becoming an eyesore and the Committee were seeking enforcement action from the Broads Authority to tidy up the area pending future development.

13.2 Planning Application – Shipmeadow Marshes, opposite Geldeston Lock
Under normal arrangements, this planning application would have been dealt with by the Southern Rivers Sub-Committee without reference to the Main Committee. However, in view of debate on the Forum, the issue had been raised on the agenda. In the meantime, the Administrator had circulated comments from John Heasman (the member normally responsible for dealing

with applications at Geldeston) and Chris Groves. The Main Committee did not disagree with the response.

The Committee then discussed the principles under which the Sub-Committees had been given delegated authority to act on the Society's behalf and agreed that they were satisfactory. It was the responsibility of Sub-Committee chairmen to decide whether an application had wider implications for the Broads, in which case it should be referred to the Main Committee.

14 IWA

Chris Groves had confirmed that there was nothing to report from the latest IWA Bulletin

15 A.O.B.

Broadsword

David Capp and John Harden had volunteered to take over management of the Northern Team from John Atkins and David had also agreed to manage the Southern Team. Both teams would operate in conjunction with the Broads Authority rangers and would be covered by their insurance. David and John had requested a formal letter from the Main Committee authorising these arrangements. Members expressed their appreciation of David's efforts in setting up consistent working arrangements for both teams and asked the Administrator to write a letter on their behalf conferring authority on David and John to take on responsibility for Broadsword.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 22.40