

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on Thursday 9 July 2009 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

Present: Peter Horsefield (Chairman), Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman), Chris Pulley (Treasurer), Richard Baguley, Nick Barne, Colin Dye, Anne Horsefield, Paul Howes, Patrick Lerner, Richard Starling, Peter Waller and Jill Wickens.

In attendance: Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

1 Apologies for absence

Lesley Bonshor and Gordon Craig

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 14 May 2009

The minutes, having been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 15.4 – Amend to read Simon Hooton (BA)

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Natural England Report (Minute 5.2)

The Chairman had, with assistance from Richard Starling, written a letter to Lord Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency (and copied to Norman Lamb), which had been posted on the Committee Forum. Norman Lamb prompted Lord Smith to reply. A reply had been promised by Lord Smith's office within ten working days from 30th June.

3.2 Pub Closures Minute 8.2)

The Chairman had written to the Broads Authority and posted his letter on the Committee Forum. Committee members reported the welcome news that Coldham Hall, Ranworth Maltsters and Hickling Pleasure Boat were all re-opening for business. Keith Bacon drew attention to the importance of retaining short term moorings for use by pub customers, for example at the Pleasure Boat. It was agreed that the Chairman would write to John Packman urging the Authority to refuse applications for change of use to long term moorings at these locations.

Pat Lerner expressed concern at the adverse impact of the BA's decision to raise an enforcement notice against the New Inn Horning requiring removal of the raised balcony and reinstatement of the grassed area. He would raise the matter with the relevant Planning Officer. Paul Howes believed the concern was well founded. Keith Bacon said that it would be prudent to verify the facts before taking any action. Pat would check with Paul Thomas, Editor of Anglia Afloat before taking any further action and Paul Howes would visit the pub.

Richard Baguley reported that premises holding the BA Quality Charter Mark were now being asked to pay a fee.

3.3 Review of dykes and streams (Minute 9)

Peter Waller, who had proposed a review, reported John Packman's opinion that dykes and streams were not included in the waterways for which the Broads Authority was responsible. Taking up Keith Bacon's suggestion, the Chairman undertook to write to the BA requesting a definitive map of the navigable waters. It was accepted that it was not tenable to argue that all waterways leading to Parish staithe should be regarded as part of the navigation system as some of them had been inaccessible for years. Peter Waller also pointed out the interest of wildlife conservation bodies in keeping dykes and streams free of traffic.

3.4 Questionnaire on tolls (Minute 9)

Richard Baguley understood that John Packman was pleased at the results from the questionnaire. Pat Larnar assured members that the tolls questionnaire would be discussed at the next meeting of the Navigation Committee whose members had been refused access to the raw data. It was believed that the September review of tolls could result in a higher than expected increase in tolls despite the increase of registrations (thought in fact by some to be those of dinghies – because of the reduction in tolls for these vessels).

Keith Bacon suggested that the comments on responsibility for water quality included in the Chairman's letter to the Authority had been counter-productive. Defending what he had said, Peter Horsefield pointed out that there was no point in giving the Broads Authority responsibility for water quality when the power to control it rested mostly with the Environment Agency. It was agreed that Peter should write to Stephen Johnson on this matter.

3.5 How Hill Trust (Minute 5.1)

No meeting had taken place since the Committee last met and there were no developments to report.

3.6 Broads Tourism Forum (Minute 15.1)

Pat Larnar had, as requested, raised with Ian Russell, Chairman of the Tourism Forum, the Society's concerns at his description of the Broads as "A Member of the National Parks". Mr Russell had explained that he had used the term as it was well understood by the tourist industry which was not interested in technical definitions. (See also Minute 9 – Letters from the President).

4 Finance

4.1 The Treasurer had circulated the Receipts and Payments Account as at 30 June. He had no items of special significance to report.

Nick Barne asked whether comparative figures for the previous year could be included in the report without too much extra work. The Treasurer undertook to see if this was feasible.

4.2 500 Club

The Administrator had tried unsuccessfully to organise a meeting of Trustees to review the annual account and to decide on the sum to be transferred to the Society. She would attempt to arrange a meeting in the next month.

5 Planning

5.1 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of 15 June had been circulated.

a) Planning Policy (Minute 6)

Speaking as Chairman of the NRS-C Peter Horsefield pointed out that members of the Sub-Committee were antagonistic towards the proposals of the Planning Sub-Group and had endorsed all the detailed written comments submitted by John Pitchers. Peter stressed that there was a grave danger of losing the goodwill of the NRS-C members who had carried out an excellent job for many years in a voluntary capacity. It was agreed that the best way forward would be to organise an informal meeting of the Main Committee and both Sub-Committees. Richard Baguley would make the arrangements.

b) Tree Clearance Project (Minute 5.2)

Anne Horsefield reported that according to an article in Anglia Afloat the estimated cost would be £250,000 per annum. John Packman had allocated staff to investigate potential sources of funding. Richard Starling pointed out that the minutes of the Broads Forum had included a misleading statement implying that the Broads Society would provide funding from its own resources.

5.2 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of 4 June had been circulated.

a) Moorings (Minute 5)

Peter Waller reported receipt of an email from a member complaining about the loss of moorings at Beccles Marina caused by the introduction of wooden piling stakes. The Administrator had contacted the Broads Authority who had confirmed that they were currently investigating the situation and had arranged a meeting with Waveney District Council. Richard Baguley said that loss of moorings also affected Oulton Broad.

Peter Waller referred to removal of land to improve the standard of moorings at Burgh Castle. The Administrator was asked to check whether the Society had received the planning application submitted in 2007 and also whether a planning application had been submitted for a pontoon installed at Waveney River Centre. It was noted that the Society had objected to the loss of moorings on the Waveney resulting from flood defence proposals for Compartments 21 and 22.

b) Trophy for commercial enterprises (Minute 11.2)

It was agreed to defer to a future meeting consideration of a proposal to introduce such a trophy. There had been no new nominations for the Lady Mayhew Trophy (LMT) and it was therefore agreed that the LMT Panel should consider a previous nominee together with any others submitted prior to the closing date of 1 September.

c) New Signage (Minute 6.2)

It was agreed that it was unacceptable for information signs erected by the Broads Authority to include commercial advertising. The Chairman agreed to write to Stephen Johnson. Richard Starling suggested that the Society should ask for clarification of the policy on advertising set out in Section PO48 of the Broads Local Plan.

6 North Walsham and Dilham Canal

Richard Baguley had attended a meeting of Trustees on 23 June. The Working Group had made the canal navigable for canoeists, had recreated Honing Staithe and cleared footpaths. The owner of the mill at Bacton Woods was interested in using the canal for lighters to carry timber. Richard agreed to write an article for the next edition of "Harnser". (*NB: this article has been deferred.*)

7 Consultation on Proposed Minor Amendments to the Conservation (Natural Habitat etc) Regulations 1994

Richard Baguley explained that the Regulations currently applied only to sites on land. The amendment would extend the regulations to the water. The proposed amendment had been introduced to deal with problems of oil pollution on the South Coast with no consideration for the effect on areas such as the Broads. It was noted that there was already provision for nations to take account of local cultures when implementing regulations and it was vitally important for Authorities to be aware of this. The Broads Authority was concerned about the proposal. Peter Horsefield had sent the consultation documents to Martin George and asked him to raise the issue at the Broads Forum. It was agreed that Peter should contact Keir Hounsome, the Broads Authority Solicitor, to ascertain his views before writing to DEFRA.

8 Stakeholder Panel to Review and Advise The Broads Authority on an appropriate Management Framework for Managing Water Ski-ing on The Broads

Peter Horsefield would be the Society's nominated representative and attend the first meeting provisionally arranged for 13 August. The Administrator would notify the Authority. It was confirmed that the Society's policy was (a) to support the allocation of designated areas for of water ski-ing provided the activity was properly controlled and managed and (b) to oppose wakeboarding throughout the Broads. It was noted from the Broads Forum papers that, as previously, the Panel would have an independent Chairman and Ian White had been reappointed to this role.

9 Letters from the President

The President had written two letters to the Chairman

a) Branding of the The Broads

The President had seen the reference in the Minutes to use of the term "National Park" by the Chairman of the Broads Tourism Forum. He was concerned about the Society getting embroiled in a debate about the use of the term which had the potential to split the Society. Peter Horsefield intended to reply assuring the President that the Society had no intention of getting involved in this contentious issue.

b) On-line and telephone decision making

The President could see no justifiable reason for amending the constitution as proposed at the Committee's last meeting, although he declared himself willing to listen to arguments. Peter Horsefield had obtained a document from the Charity Commission which included a number of paragraphs relevant to the Society's proposals for conducting its business on-line and by telephone and undertook to arrange a meeting with the President to discuss the situation.

Peter Horsefield had posted both the President's letters on the Main Committee Forum and explained his intention to make Bryan Read aware that this would, in future, be his normal practice. However, Keith Bacon pointed out that an important part of the President's role was to give confidential and personal advice to the Chairman; the Chairman's proposal would remove this valuable source of guidance. Accepting this point, Peter undertook to ask the President to make clear whether a letter was personal or to be shared with the Committee.

10 Harnser

The Chairman congratulated the Editor, Jill Wickens, on yet another excellent issue. Jill reported that she had received the following items for the next edition:

Member's letter regretting the Society's absence from the Norfolk Show
Article on the restoration of Hardley Mill

The following items were promised:

Restoration of North Walsham and Dilham Canal – Richard Baguley
(deferred)
60th Anniversary of the founding of Herbert Woods
Update on the tree restoration project
Report on the event to celebrate Ted Ellis
Trinity Broads

The AGM supplement would be mailed in a separate envelope at the same time as the next issue of "Harnser". Peter Horsefield asked Committee members with special responsibilities to notify him of their achievements during the year so that he could incorporate them in his Annual Report.

There had been some adverse comment regarding the Chairman's letter in the latest edition of "Harnser" which had included letters sent by the Society to Stephen Johnson, Chairman of the Broads Authority, and Lord Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency. Members agreed that it was appropriate to include such correspondence in "Harnser" but that such items should be allocated to a special section.

11 Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

Nick Barne reported that there were now nine Trustees. Good progress had been made with the first project. The outcome of an application for funding to the Sustainable Development Fund was awaited.

An advertisement for an Administrator would be issued in the near future.

12 Broads Forum

Keith Bacon reported on agenda items for the meeting on 16 July:

· Presentation by Simon Hooton (BA) on visions for the future

- Broads Plan Update including the proposed timetable for consultation. It was noted June to October had been identified as the period for engagement with stakeholders. The Broads Society had not received consultation documents and the Administrator was therefore asked to contact the Broads Authority. It was agreed that the Society's response should be an agenda item for the September Committee meeting.
- Yare Barrier. It was agreed to ask Martin George to make the proposal at the Broads Forum to move this project forward and also to ask Martin to follow this up with a report for the website
- Broadland Rivers Catchment Area Flood Management Plan
- Chief Executive's Report including water ski-ing and the proposed tree clearance project
- Progress on the Broads Bill (see Minute 13 below regarding local representation by Parish Councillors)

It was noted that no progress had been made on the Whole Valley Project.

13 CNP

Paul Howes reported that Nick Herbert (Shadow Minister for the Environment) had addressed a meeting of CNP on local responsiveness of National Park bodies

The AGM would take place on 15 July and an extra meeting of CNP would be held to discuss politics and local governance issues. Richard Baguley hoped that the promised reduction in quangoes would be achieved with a change of government.

Richard Starling referred to the House of Lords debate on the Broads Bill and the proposal by Baroness Hollis that Parish Council representation on the Broads Authority could be achieved indirectly through their membership of the Broads Forum. He, and other members of the Committee, considered this a complete misinterpretation of the meaning of local representation.

14 A.O.B

14.1 Museum of the Broads Event – 9th August

The Chairman would contact Gordon Craig to ensure that he would attend the event and mount the display boards. This was an important event as it marked the formal opening of the new building sponsored by the Broads Society. It was noted that some updating of the display material was required. Peter would also advise Gordon that the arrangements for the sound system at the AGM would be as last year.

14.2 Open Air Laboratory Project (OPAL)

Anne Horsefield had completed a survey form on the Society's behalf (full details in the latest edition of "Harnser"). As a result, the Society had been invited to nominate a project to be funded up to a maximum of £2,000. Anne drew attention to the proposal to install a series of interpretive panels at the raptor roost watch point at Stubb Mill, described in "Harnser", for which funding was required and suggested that this would be an ideal project.

It was therefore proposed by Pat Lerner, seconded by Richard Baguley, and unanimously agreed, that the Society should nominate this project.

14.3 Open University iSpot Project

Anne Horsefield had received an invitation for the Society to participate in this project which involved assistance with identification of species. It was agreed that the project was not relevant to the Society's interests.

14.4 BA Research Projects

Andrea Kelly (BA) was seeking new projects for research by students at UEA. Anne Horsefield had in mind to suggest a project to investigate whether decomposition by bacteria might have a role in the loss of peat which had resulted in an increase in reed die back in many areas of the Broads. This was agreed.

14.5 Meeting with Broads Authority

After some discussion as to the way forward, it was agreed that topics for the agenda would be discussed at the next meeting.

14.6 Invoice for Habitat Restoration Project Launch Event

The Treasurer confirmed that he had received a bill for the total amount but a supplementary invoice was still required to reconcile the account. Paul Howes would ensure that this was provided.

14.7 Interreg Sustainable Tourism Project

Richard Baguley drew attention to this European funded scheme presented to the BA on 26 June by Simon Hooton. Richard drew attention to a number of concerns arising from this project, in particular the proposal to the Authority's intention to create new moorings in remote places. Richard undertook to contact Simon Hooton.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 September 2009