

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on 11 March 2008 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

Present: Nick Barne (Chairman), Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman), Derek Rae (Treasurer), Richard Baguley, Gordon Craig, Martin George, Anne Horsefield, Peter Horsefield, Peter Howe, Patrick Larnar, Jill Wickens and Paul Howes (by speaker phone)

Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

Members were pleased to see Jill after her traumatic experience during the recent storm. Jill thanked the Committee for their good wishes and the flowers they had sent.

1 Apologies for absence

All members were present in person except for Paul Howes who took part via a speaker phone.

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 22 January 2008

The minutes, having been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record subject to revision of the penultimate sentence of Minute 9, para 1 (LDF – Flood Protection Scheme and PPS25) to read: “One suggestion under consideration was their proposal to differentiate between ‘functional’ and ‘non-functional’ flood plains, a proposal criticised by several members of the Committee”.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Society Policy on Live Aboard Craft (Minute 11)

It was noted that “unauthorised” was a more accurate term than “illegal” in this context.

4 Finance

4.1 Current financial reports

The Treasurer circulated the following reports:

- Profit and Loss account showing Budget vs Actual expenditure for the period – April 2007 – 11 March 2008
- Balance sheet at 22 January 2008

4.2 Although the accounts showed a deficit of £2,553 against budget, the Treasurer anticipated that the position at the end of the financial year would be break-even or a very small deficit. The loan to the Broads Charity was shown on the balance sheet.

4.3 Go Electric Account

Peter Howe reported that Leader+ would require an audit. Any funds remaining in the Go Electric Account could be used to cover the cost, but the residue, if any, would need to be returned.

4.4 Green Boat Show 2008 – 21 September

Peter Howe expressed concern at the high cost of insurance cover for the 2007 event and requested that competitive quotes be obtained for 2008. Richard Baguley offered to make enquiries and liaise with Peter.

4.5 Society Treasurer

Derek Rae indicated that he would not be seeking re-election at the AGM

4.6 Expenses Claims

The Treasurer asked all members to submit their expenses claims before 31 March.

5 Broads Charitable Trust

A draft loan Agreement had been circulated.

Referring to the recent Lovewell Blake Seminar on Charity Law which he and other Committee members had attended, Patrick Larnier drew attention to the more stringent legal requirements under which Charities would be required to operate. For this reason he believed that it would be prudent to seek legal advice before the Society took any further action on the arrangements for the Charitable Trust.

Patrick Larnier offered to obtain an informal legal opinion on the loan agreement and the Constitution, together with an estimate of the likely cost of more detailed work, and pass this information to the Chairman. This proposal was agreed.

Richard Baguley reminded the Committee that, at the last meeting, he had put forward the idea of a loan instead of a grant/gift and suggested that it should be accompanied by terms of repayment at the end of a specific period (say 5 to 10 years), or earlier if the BCT was sufficiently solvent, subject to (say) three months' notice by either party. He also reminded members that, after Martin George had formally proposed the loan arrangement at the last meeting, he had specifically and deliberately, asked the treasurer (who had been deputed to draw up the loan agreement) to ensure that these terms were included.

The Committee failed to reach agreement on the terms to be included in the loan agreement, members differing in their interpretation of the resolution at the last meeting to transfer the Lady Mayhew bequest as a loan. It was the opinion of some members that the conditions of the loan should include protection of the Society's assets and a clear definition of the circumstances in which repayment would be required.

It was further agreed that a special meeting be arranged to discuss the Broads Charitable Trust once a response from the Charity Commission had been received.

Richard Baguley reiterated his concern that, while the BCT Prospectus contained a clause preventing Trust funds from being used in furtherance of statutory responsibilities of any organisation, this wording was not included in the Constitution. This need for this was once again rejected by Peter Howe but Richard wished to place on record that he remained sceptical as to the approach adopted.

Anne Horsefield expressed fears that the Lady Mayhew money will be dissipated on administration and expenses before any significant external funding became available.

6 Members' Special Responsibilities

The Administrator had, as requested, identified Society members who had offered to assist with publicity/press in their response to the Membership Questionnaire. There were only two, apart from the Chairman, who lived locally. One of these was no longer in a position to help; the Administrator would now write to the other.

Richard Baguley offered to contact Steve Law who might be willing to take on responsibility for membership.

As revision of the Constitution was virtually complete, Paul Howes expressed his willingness to take on any other special responsibility which did not require a local presence.

7 Society Constitution and Rules

The draft revision had been circulated for comment. Paul Howes explained that the philosophy of the Working Group had been to produce a clearer and simpler document but with as few changes as possible.

Members congratulated Paul and the Working Group for an excellent job. The following comments were made:

Para 2 – Aims

Martin George had one major reservation about the first clause – “To advance the education of the public in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads” – which he considered meaningless and somewhat patronising. He suggested that it should be deleted and replaced by 2c – “To stimulate public appreciation and knowledge of the Broads area by promoting informed discussion about all matters related to the Region, thus encouraging maximum enjoyment of its special features”. Members supported this proposal, taking the view that “education” (a key requirement by the Charity Commission) was implicit in this statement.

Gordon Craig pointed out the more stringent requirements being introduced under new legislation, one of these being the need to demonstrate a public benefit.

Para 3

After discussion, it was agreed that, for practical reasons, there should be seven elected members plus the Chairmen of sub-committees as ex officio members with full voting rights. All sub-committee vice chairmen would be permitted to attend meetings of the Main Committee if the relevant chairman was not available.

Para 11

Amendment required to wording of para (d).
Substitute “must” for “may” in the last sentence.

Para 14

Substitute “appointed” for “co-opted in the last sentence

Para 16

Amend first sentence to read “The Committee may, at any time, delegate ...”
Amendment to para (b) to read: “co-opt members of the Society for a period expiring at the next AGM. Such co-option can be renewed at the first meeting after the AGM. The number of co-opted members shall not constitute a majority on any sub-committee”.

It was agreed that Paul Howes would incorporate these changes and circulate a revised document. If no further amendments were required, it would be submitted to the AGM.

8 500 Club

This matter had been deferred from the previous meeting.

It was agreed that the Treasurer should automatically be one of the Trustees. Paul Howes and Gordon Craig volunteered to become Trustees. The Administrator would arrange a meeting at the earliest opportunity to review the rules etc. and to clarify the

relationship of the 500 Club to the Society. In the meantime, it was suggested that enquiries be made about the 250 Club operated by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

9 LDF – Flood Protection and PPS25

Members agreed that Keith Bacon and the Working Group (Martin George, Robin Godber, Patrick Larnier) had done an excellent job in preparing the Society's response.

Keith explained that the response had been constructed in three parts commenting on: (1) Draft Proposal Maps; (2) Preferred Options for Development Control Policies; (3) Development and Flood Risk.

Responding to queries, Keith explained the important distinction between "holiday homes" and "second homes". The Society's concern was to protect "holiday homes" (as defined by the Inland Revenue) from change of use to "second homes"; it was not the intention to target existing "second homes". The Society had supported the concept of "like for like" residential replacement or, in certain cases, rebuilding to a slightly enlarged footprint to improve the quality of accommodation.

Martin George informed members that he had been unable to support the Broads Authority's proposal to differentiate between "functional" and "non-functional" flood plains as it had no scientific validity. He understood that this was an attempt by the Authority to help the local economy by making it possible for some new development to take place, but was unable to accept this as a way forward. For this reason he had submitted an independent personal submission.

Defending the Society's submission, Keith said that the overriding concern of the Working Group had been to support whatever seemed to be in the best interests of the region; in this context, strict application of the science seemed less relevant.

10 Broads Authority Navigation Committee

A paper by Richard Baguley had been circulated which expressed concern at the Broads Authority's failure to consult on changes to the constitution of the Navigation Committee and the process used to appoint members.

It was agreed that the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Authority should be invited to a special Committee meeting in April to discuss the situation. It was agreed that Martin George would assist the Chairman to draft a letter of invitation explaining the Society's concerns in the context of its remit to safeguard navigation.

If such a special meeting could be arranged, the opportunity could be taken, after the BA representatives had left, to discuss the Broads Charity, assuming further information was available.

11 Broads Forum

Martin George had been delayed on his way to the February meeting of the Broads Forum and had consequently missed the opening item on the agenda, which was an explanation by John Packman as to why it had been decided to alter the way members of the Navigation Committee were appointed. He, Keith Bacon and Peter Howe summarised the following points made at the meeting:

- The recommendations of the Sub-Group on Forum Membership had been considered. The overall aim of the Sub-Group had been to achieve a balance of representation without membership becoming too large. The majority of the

recommendations had been agreed including the proposal to restore the Society's membership in its own right. The Chairman, Jonathan Bowman, had decided, in the light of strong representations from water-based recreational groups, that they should be permitted to send four representatives to future meetings of the Forum.

- The Broads Authority had appointed Simon Hooton to the new post of Director of Conservation and Countryside Management; his remit would include the effects of climate change on the Broads. Andrea Kelly had been promoted to Head of Conservation and Lucy Harris appointed to the new post of Head of Valley Management.
- Chris Durdin, RSPB, had mounted a defence of the report on the Future of the Broads.
- The Broads Authority was involved in the Lound Lakes Project in partnership with Essex and Suffolk Water. Some members questioned whether the Authority should be involved in a project outside the Broads Executive Area. However, it was pointed out that the BA staff carrying out the work were being funded by Natural England and ESW.

12 Northern Rivers Committee

12.1 The minutes of the meeting of 25 February had been circulated.

12.2 Windfarms

Three of the five District Councils had confirmed that they invite the Society to comment on any plans for windfarms which might have a visual impact on the Broads. The other two would be chased up for a reply.

12.3 Format of Future Meetings

Peter Horsefield explained his proposal to structure the agenda of meetings to reflect the Society's mission. He believed it important for the sub-committees not to focus solely on planning. The Main Committee endorsed this proposal and looked forward to a progress report in due course.

12.3 Yare Barrier

Martin George reported that Natural England were taking seriously the impact of climate change on the Broads. A document had been released setting out options for action (a) in the Upper Thurne catchment area and (b) in the main Broads area. The recommendations for area (a) accepted the eventual loss of land as far as Potter Heigham, Stalham and Catfield due to the collapse of sea defences from Cart Gap to Winterton. The proposals for area (b) included the creation of large washlands or a barrier at Yarmouth which would protect the lives and livelihood of the populations of Yarmouth and Gorleston and also safeguard the main part of the Broads as a freshwater ecosystem. Martin was urging the Environment Agency to consider the possibility of combining the barrier with a bridge to provide a third crossing at Yarmouth.

Keith Bacon pointed out that the creation of the outer harbour at Yarmouth was a key reason for the resurrection of the Yare barrier proposal.

Peter Horsefield reminded members that from April the Environment Agency would be responsible for strategic management of the coastline.

13 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee

13.1 The minutes of the meeting of 14 February had been circulated.

13.2 Appointment of Chairman

It was proposed by Richard Baguley, seconded by Peter Horsefield and unanimously agreed that Peter Waller should be appointed as Chairman with Robin Godber as the Vice-Chairman. It was also agreed (cf discussion on revision of the Constitution) that either could represent the SRS-C on the Main Committee. The Chairman would write to Peter Waller.

13.3 Natural England – Natural Solutions to Flood Risk

The Main Committee accepted the SRS-C's recommendation that the Society should keep a watching brief on proposals to develop natural solutions to flood risk and, where appropriate, offer its support.

14 Website

14.1 Review of items for transfer to the archive

There were no items to transfer

14.2 Website Forum

It was noted that some Society members had commented on the Forum that they would like to see more contributions from Committee members other than those already posting. It was accepted that not all of the Committee had contributed, but that coercion was not necessarily the most fruitful approach; it was noted that another Committee member had recently started to contribute. Richard Baguley hoped that the number of Committee members posting would continue to grow and thanked those who had already done so.

14.3 New Material

It was agreed to post the response to the LDF consultation with a link to the original consultation document.

15 CNP

Peter Howe had attended a meeting of CNP and prepared a report for "Harnser".

The Committee supported the proposal by CNP to change its name to "Campaign for National Parks".

16 Broadsword

The Administrator reported that John Atkins has decided to stand down as co-ordinator of the Northern Broadsword team. There were two potential candidates willing to take on this role.

17 IWA

A report by Chris Groves had been circulated. The only topic was the policy statement on red diesel issues by HM Revenue and Customs.

Members welcomed the retention of red diesel but feared that the administration of the taxation would be bureaucratic nightmare.

18 A.O.B.

18.1 Yare Barrier

Martin George's offer to write an article on the Yare Barrier for inclusion in a future edition of "Harnser" on the Yare Barrier was considered an excellent proposal.

- 18.2 **Weed Growth**
Patrick Larner drew attention to the weed growth upstream of Wroxham Bridge and suggested that this was an issue for the Northern Rivers Sub-Committee to investigate.
- 18.3 **Format of Meetings**
Richard Baguley wondered whether the Society might consider structuring future agendas to mirror the purposes of the Broads Authority.
- 18.4 **Society Solicitor**
Standley Bushell had, for some time, been urging the Society to seek a new solicitor. Patrick Larner undertook to sound out colleagues.
- 18.5 **Consultation on Stokesby with Herringby Conservation Area**
The Society, through the Northern Rivers Sub-Committee, had been invited to comment. As the issue had given rise to a difference of opinion, it was agreed to ascertain the view of members of the Main Committee. Peter Horsefield would circulate the relevant papers.

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Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 13 May 2008 at 7.00 pm at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 22.00