

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on Thursday 12 March 2009 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

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

In attendance: Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

1 Apologies for absence

Lesley Bonshor (Vice-Chairman of Northern Rivers Sub-Committee) who had been invited to attend meetings of the Main Committee to represent the Sub-Committee until a new Chairman had been appointed.

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 15 January 2009

The minutes, having been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3 Matters Arising

- 3.1 CNP response to consultation on future size and membership of the BA (Minute 4.1)
Peter Horsefield had attended the most recent meeting of CNP on behalf of Paul Howes but had not had the opportunity to raise the Society's concerns. Paul would take up the issue at the next meeting on Tuesday 17 March.
- 3.2 Sound System for AGM (Minute 5.1)
Gordon Craig had brought to the meeting a sound system for the Committee to test. He was confident that it could be borrowed from Gt Yarmouth Rotary Club in return for a small donation. Gordon agreed to take up the Committee's suggestion to trial the equipment at How Hill in the near future to ensure that it would be fit for purpose. If it proved inadequate, the Society would consider purchasing equipment which would cost less than hiring an external system and operator every year.
- 3.3 Broadsword (Minute 5.3)
The Administrator reported that work had finished for the season. David Capp had written to Richard Farley and Trudi Wakelin expressing appreciation of the collaborative working arrangements
- 3.4 Flood Alleviation Group (Minute 9)
It was noted that Robert Paul was no longer a member of this group.

4 Matters arising from the Special Meeting with BA

- 4.1 Draft Minutes
A copy of the first draft of the minutes had been circulated. Copies had been sent to John Packman and Stephen Johnson for comment as to accuracy. As soon as their response had been received the revised draft would be circulated by email to Committee members for comment and amendment in the usual way.
- 4.2 Green Marker Posts (Minute 3.5)

Pat Lerner had attended the Broads Authority Safety Committee on 29 January at which concerns had been expressed about the heavy steel posts now in place on the Ant. Kevin Marsh (BESL) had been asked to look at the alternatives suggested and come up with a more sophisticated solution. The Navigation Committee thought this would be a good idea but were concerned that the cost would devolve upon their budget and were therefore not willing to take any further action. An all day visit to the Chet on Friday 20 March had been arranged involving the Navigation Committee, the Planning Committee, the Environment Agency and BESL. Both BESL and the Broads Authority acknowledged that the situation was unsatisfactory but had not yet identified a way forward.

Committee members pointed out that this was a safety issue and if nothing was done the three rivers race would be in jeopardy. Pat Lerner's analysis of the situation was that politics was getting in the way of practicalities. In his view the posts were an eyesore but the overriding concern was safety and this should be addressed no matter what the cost. Peter Horsefield wondered who would be liable in the event of a serious accident. Paul Howes pointed out that the new Broads Bill empowered the Broads Authority as the Navigation Authority and it was therefore responsible. Patrick undertook to pursue the safety issue at the site meeting.

Responding to Richard Starling's enquiry as to whether the posts had been included in the original planning application, Richard Baguley explained that the posts had been included but not their design. BESL had interpreted what was required and had based the design on that used in the New Cut. Peter Horsefield pointed out that the contract was between BESL and the Environment Agency, neither of which had responsibility for navigation. The design should have been proposed at the application stage, when the Broads Authority should have picked up the matter and, as the Navigation Authority, refused the application on safety grounds. Patrick Lerner reported that Phil Ollier had raised this very issue with Adrian Clark who had merely said that the posts were "implicit in the planning approval". The work had been done before the Safety Committee had looked at the proposals. Colin Dye pointed out the potential for damage to the hulls of large cruisers if the height of the posts was reduced to below deck level.

Patrick Lerner would attend the forthcoming site meeting and would also alert Stephen Johnson to the problems, including the Authority's potential legal liability if failure to act resulted in an accident. He would then report back to the Chairman. If the Society were not satisfied with what Pat had to report, the Committee would revisit the problem and decide on appropriate action.

4.3 General Comments

Nick Barne drew attention to the comment by Stephen Johnson that he hoped the next meeting with the Society would take the form of a discussion rather than a question and answer session. Peter Horsefield agreed, saying that a Q&A session automatically set up an adversarial situation which was not the relationship the Society wished to foster with the BA.

Peter Waller questioned the accuracy of John Packman's statement that Oulton Broad meets navigation specifications and only the entrance needed dredging.

5 **Finance**

5.1 Treasurer's monthly report

The Report and Receipts & Payments account to 28 February had been circulated. There was nothing else to which the Treasurer wished to draw

attention and there were no questions. The Chairman once again complimented Chris Pulley on the clarity of his financial reporting.

5.2 Annual Accounts 2007/08

The Treasurer circulated a copy of the final version of the accounts to all Committee members.

5.3 Green Boat Show

At the last meeting, the Committee had voted unanimously not to continue its involvement with the Green Boat Show. Since then the Chairman had received financial details from Peter Howe and Bryan Read together with a request that the Society should support the event and continue to allow the Society's bank account to be used for financial transactions. Peter Horsefield was strongly of the view that it was not appropriate for the Society to have funds passing through its accounts over which it had no direct control. Members unanimously agreed that this position was correct.

It was agreed that the Finance Committee be charged with the decision as to whether the Society should retain the surplus in the Green Boat funds remaining in its balance sheet (as agreed at the previous meeting) or whether the funds should be made over to the Green Boat organisers; the latter decision would be dependent on them setting up a bank account or using another organisation willing to handle their funds. Nick Barne pointed out that there was a deadline for the money to be transferred.

This suggestion was formally proposed by Richard Baguley, seconded by Nick Barne and unanimously agreed.

It was agreed that further discussion on the Green Boat Show should be deferred until the Main Committee had received and considered the Finance Committee's recommendations.

6 On-line Decision Making

Peter Horsefield had referred this matter to the Charity Commission to ascertain whether decision making by means other than formal meetings was acceptable. The Commission had confirmed that decisions made via a computer forum, conference calls or video conferencing were all acceptable provided a Charity's constitution was amended to include this provision.

Peter therefore proposed that the Constitution Sub-Group be tasked with drafting a procedure and formulating a suitable paragraph for insertion in the Constitution. The wording would need to be approved by the Charity Commission, endorsed by the Main Committee and then circulated to all Society members for approval at the AGM in November. It was therefore essential to deal with this as a matter of urgency. Until such time as the revised Constitution had been approved, any decisions made on-line or via other remote means would need to be ratified at a Committee meeting.

7 Planning

7.1 Report from Sub-Group on Planning

The sub-group had been convened to consider how the Society might improve its process for evaluating planning applications and what action, if any the Society might take to reduce the number of applications approved by the Broads Authority to which the Society had lodged an objection.

Having been made aware of the "Planning Profile" already used by the North and South Rivers Sub-Committees, the sub-group had concluded that the current procedures were sound and only need minor modification. The main

suggestion was that a list of “iconic” sites be drawn up which would attract a more rigorous scrutiny and wider consultation within the Society.

Having considered the recommendations, the following procedure was agreed:

- List of iconic sites to be drawn up by members of the Sub-Committee and the Main Committee and a definitive list agreed.
- The Administrator would alert members of the relevant Sub-Committee when an iconic site was the subject of a planning application.
- The planning sub-group, augmented by John Pitchers, John Wheeley, representing the North Rivers Sub-Committee, Robin Godber, representing the South Rivers Sub-Committee and Chris Groves should reconvene to revise the “Planning Profile” and finalise the procedures for dealing with iconic sites and controversial applications.
- Patrick Lerner would draw to the attention of the new BA Planning Officer the need for Planning Department staff to check that applications were assigned to the correct parishes; the Society’s Sub-Committees had noticed several errors since the Authority had taken over responsibility for planning administration.
- The Administrator would provide information on BA Planning Policy Guidelines to all members of the Planning Sub-Committees.
- The recommendations in Section 2 of the report, dealing with action for achieving greater influence over BA planning decisions, would be addressed in due course following initial contact with the new Planning Officer.
- The Planning Sub-Group, as an ad hoc body set up to review planning procedures, would be disbanded once their task had been completed.
- The practice of applying to the Authority for an extension of the consultation period, if required, would be continued.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking members of the Planning Sub-Group for their work.

7.2 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee
The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March were not yet available. Concerns expressed about the review of planning procedures had been dealt with in minute 7.1 above.

7.3 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee
The meeting scheduled for 12 February had been cancelled due to bad weather.

8 BA Questionnaire on Tolls

The Chairman had published on the Committee Forum a detailed analysis of the faults associated with the questionnaire issued by the Broads Authority with their annual payment request to letter toll payers. In his view the Society was entitled to comment and he believed that it should do so. This should be in the form of a challenge based on facts and legitimate opinion and should be directed at process or policy.

Based on the Chairman’s analysis, Richard Baguley had prepared a brief summary which had been circulated to Committee members.

It was accepted that there was no question of getting the questionnaire withdrawn at this stage and, after discussion, it was agreed that the Society should comment along the lines suggested by the Chairman but recommend to its members that they should make

a personal decision as to whether to respond. Richard Baguley would post a suitable notice on the Forum.

Keith Bacon proposed that the Chairman should send a letter to John Packman, Stephen Johnson and the Chairman of the BA Navigation Committee detailing the Society's concerns and offering help with designing questionnaires in the future.

9 Review of Mission Statement

John Pitchers had suggested use of the word "sustainable" might imply that the Society supported windfarms, as a source of renewable energy, which conflicted with its stated aim of "helping to secure a unique and protected landscape". He had gone on to suggest that, if the mission statement was to be revised, some reference to preserving the history and traditions of the Broads should be included.

It was agreed that a sub-group comprising John Pitchers, Anne Horsefield, Paul Howes and the Administrator should meet to review the mission statement and bring its recommendation to the next meeting.

10 Harnser

Jill Wickens reported that two new advertisers had booked space and there had been a good number of contributions.

Nick Barne, on behalf of the Editorial Committee, commended Jill for her continued good work.

11 Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

Nick Barne reported that there were now eight Trustees who were meeting frequently and discussing in detail potential projects. A sub-committee had been set up to consider projects and investigations for funding from BIFFA, WREN and SDF were ongoing. Peter Horsefield suggested that the Norfolk Wherry Trust would be an ideal recipient of funds as they were currently in serious financial difficulties.

12 Broads Forum

Keith Bacon reported on the most recent meeting. Presentations and reports included the following topics:

- Review of BA Members' Allowances
- River Basis Management Plan
- Lake Restoration Strategy
- Branding the Broads
- Community supported vision for the future
- Whole Valley project
- BA Priorities for 2009-2012.

Richard Starling pointed out that not one agenda item had come from a Forum member. He had asked to raise the issue of wider membership participation but had been informed that this was "an operational matter" and was not suitable for inclusion on the agenda. In his view the Forum was used by the Authority solely as a means to communicate information in a series of lectures and presentations rather than an opportunity for discussion of issues relevant to its members.

It was agreed that best way to deal with these concerns would be for Keith Bacon and Richard Starling to raise them personally with the Chairman of the Forum.

13 CNP

13.1 [Report from CNP Representative](#)

Peter Horsefield had attended a CNP meeting of Chairmen and Chief Executives of participating organisations. Peter had expressed his pleasant surprise at the similarity of the concerns affecting all National Park Societies including the Broads. Paul Howes would be attending the next meeting on Tuesday 17 March on the topic of "Planning in Protected Landscapes" which would include an address by the Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment on "Planning in a Marine Landscape". Paul had included in his report for "News from the National Parks": the Broads Bill and the development at Cantley, both of which had been the subject of the report from the Broads Authority. The Authority had also included their new tourism initiative and waterway maintenance.

13.2 CNP Subscription

The Administrator reported that the annual request for the Society's subscription had been received together with notification that the basis for calculating the charge had been changed. The agreement, negotiated by the Society with CNP some years ago, that joint members would attract a contribution of 1.5 x the annual capitation rate no longer applied. It was agreed that, in view of the change of arrangements, the Administrator should use the current number of paid-up members as the basis for calculation instead of using the statistics as at 1 September 2008 included in her annual membership report. She also undertook to look through the records for documentary evidence concerning the previous agreement for

14 **A.O.B.**

14.2 Social Events

Jill Wickens drew attention to two social events:
The walk in Norwich on 28 March
The Broads Society Service on 17 May at All Saints Church, Catfield at 6.30 pm.

14.2 Heigham Sound

Patrick Larner reported that Trudi Wakelin was expecting to be able to say something positive about the issues the Society had raised about Heigham Sound.

14.3 Flood Alleviation Project

Richard Baguley pointed out that Compartment 7 (Horsey) was coming as the next stage of the Flood Alleviation Project. And wondered why the project extended to cover this section of the Broads which was more likely to be at risk from encroachment by the sea. Keith Bacon explained that the Flood Alleviation Project was aimed at land at risk within the next 20 years, whereas the timescale for flooding from the sea was 50 years. Richard Starling argued strongly for the need to maintain the flood banks at Somerton.

14.4 Recruitment

Richard Starling suggested that publicity for recruitment of new members should be included on the agenda for the next meeting. Paul Howes suggested that the Society might have a Stand in the Forum and would email Gordon Craig with contact details. The Administrator would arrange to take the display boards to Gordon Craig when he visited How Hill to test the PA system.

14.5 Ted Ellis Celebration

The Chairman had received six invitations to the Ted Ellis Celebration on Friday 22 May at 6.30 pm. It was agreed that the Society should have a stand at this event and he would try to obtain two more invitations to cover committee members manning the stand.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.55 pm