

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on 13 May 2008 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

Present: Nick Barne (Chairman), Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman), Richard Baguley, Gordon Craig, Martin George, Anne Horsefield, Peter Horsefield, Paul Howes, Patrick Lerner, Peter Waller and Jill Wickens

Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

The Chairman welcomed Peter Waller, Chairman of the Southern Rivers Sub-Committee, to his first meeting.

1 Apologies for absence

Derek Rae (Treasurer) and Peter Howe.

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 11 March 2008

The minutes, having been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record subject to the amendment of Minute 7, para 3, to read "promoting educated and informed discussion"

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Members' Special Responsibilities (Minute 6)

Richard Baguley reported that he and Paul Howes had spoken to Steve Law, as agreed at the last meeting. Steve's view was that a recruitment drive would be far more effective if the Society could first be shown to be actively involved in a major project. It was agreed that Richard and Paul should give some thought as to how this might be achieved. It was further agreed to take up the Administrator's suggestion of using the Stand at the Royal Norfolk Show as a vehicle for showing the Society in action. (See Minute 5).

3.2 Society Constitution and Rules (Minute 7)

Paul Howes had circulated a revised version incorporating the amendments agreed at the last meeting

Para 9 – Election of Committee

Amend "eight" to "seven."

It was accepted that the rule on length of service might cause some problems if, in a year when there were more than two members who had served for six years, all those members had been elected at the same time. However, the Committee agreed not to make any changes and decide on how to deal with the matter if and when such a situation arose.

Para 16 – Sub-Committees

It was agreed that it was appropriate to retain the word "powers" in this context.

Change "Secretaries" from plural to singular.

Para 19 – Corporate Membership

It was noted that the level of subscription payment was levied in accordance with the size and nature of the organisation applying for corporate membership.

It was agreed that Paul Howes would contact the Charity Commission informally and, depending on any advice received, would then submit the revised Constitution for their approval.

3.3 Broads Authority Navigation Committee (Minute 10)

A special meeting with Kerry Turner and John Packman had been arranged for Tuesday 10 June at 7.00 pm at the Broad House Hotel. Richard Baguley summarised the events leading to the Committee's request for such a meeting. The 1988 Broads Act had set out procedures for appointment to the Authority and its Committees. Changes had been required to take account of the Nolan principles. A side agreement to the Broads Bill, agreed by RYA and BMF, stipulated that the Authority should consult the Navigation Committee when considering changes to its constitution. The issue in question was not the process of introducing changes per se but the means by which the process had been introduced.

It was Richard's view that the debate on this issue would take up comparatively little time at the special meeting and it was therefore agreed that the opportunity be taken to discuss other matters of major concern. This being agreed, Richard offered to set up a sub-group to draw up an agenda. Peter Horsefield, Gordon Craig and Paul Howes volunteered to serve on the sub-group with the aim of having the agenda ready for the Administrator to send to the Broads Authority by 25 May.

3.4 Society Solicitor (Minute 18.4)

The Chairman undertook to seek confirmation from Standley Bushell as to when he wished formally to stand down. Once this information was available, the Chairman would contact a member identified as a potential successor.

4 Finance

The Treasurer had provided a draft Balance Sheet for the financial year ending 31 March 2008 together with a balance sheet as at 13 May 2008.

Paul Howes drew attention to the transfer of funds to the Charitable Trust as a short term loan. He was concerned that the transaction had not been properly authorised, having been made in the absence of a formal loan agreement. See Minute 6 for further discussion on this issue.

It was noted that £13,000 from the 500 Club had been paid into the Society's general fund. See Report on 500 Club (Minute 7).

The Treasurer had sent a reminder to the Committee that the Society needed to identify someone to take over this office. Members were unanimously of the opinion that Derek Rae had done a first class job in putting the Society's accounts in good order and were therefore disappointed that he felt unable to continue.

5 Society's response to the Strategic Options for the Broads prepared by Natural England

The Chairman thanked Martin George for his work in preparing the Society's press release and for dealing with the subsequent media enquiries. The quality of the Society's contribution to the debate had done much to enhance its reputation. Members wholeheartedly endorsed this view and expressed their thanks to Martin.

Keith Bacon informed members that the final [Natural England] report had been delayed until September.

Martin pointed out that the debate was likely to continue for some considerable time. The media continued to take an active interest. The Society had so far responded to Options

1-4 of the Report which related to the Upper Thurne. However, there were four further options affecting the main part of the Broads area. These were:

- Option 5 – Do nothing. Existing flood embankments would be allowed to fall into disrepair and be breached by the rivers.
- Option 6 – Hold the line. Flood embankments would be maintained to their current standard but saline intrusion would continue to worsen as higher tides forced saline water further up the river system.
- Option 7 – Adapt the line giving the rivers more space. Wetland/washlands would be allowed to develop by reconnecting drained floodplain areas to the river system. Priority would be given to areas of lowest environmental value and giving greatest hydrological benefit. Although this would moderate water levels it would be less effective at combating increasing saline intrusion. Embankments in all areas not reconnected to rivers would be maintained.
- Option 8 – A Yare Barrier or water control structure. This option had been proposed 30 years ago. There were two possible schemes: a flood surge barrier at Gt Yarmouth or three smaller structures within the lower reaches of the Bure, Yare and Waveney. Both schemes could be used to moderate extreme tidal levels in the Broads but would not combat increasing salinity. In addition, the latter scheme would not afford benefit to Gt Yarmouth. Both options would require maintenance of all existing embankments as in Option 6.

It was unanimously agreed that, in view of the Society's opposition to the loss of agricultural land, it should support Option 8, scheme 1 – a Yare Barrier at Gt Yarmouth.

Paul Howes suggested that the Society's active promotion of a Yare Barrier would be an ideal vehicle on which to mount a recruitment campaign. It was therefore agreed that a handout should be prepared to give to visitors to the Society's stand at the Norfolk Show.

Keith Bacon agreed that reports in the local press had created a storm of anxiety and panic. He went on to report on the public meetings he had attended in three of the affected villages – Hickling, Potter Heigham and Sea Palling. He had made the point that Natural England should be regarded as an ally because they could help the region score higher in the cost-benefit analysis on the grounds of nature conservation. However, there was a fundamental flaw in Natural England's projections of the number of properties which would be subject to flooding. During the 1938 floods, only those houses sited 2 metres or less above sea level had been affected. Those on land 2-5 metres above sea level had escaped flooding. Natural England had used a modern Ordnance Survey map which showed contour lines at 5 metre intervals and had therefore forecast flooding over the entire area at this height above sea level. Keith was attempting to persuade Natural England to revise their projections using better information on contours.

Martin George wished to support one aspect of the campaign by Coastal Concern and this was the need for social justice.

Peter Horsefield proposed that the Society should concentrate its focus on two areas only: a) the Upper Thurne, on which had already made its views known; and b) the erection of a Yare Barrier at Gt Yarmouth as the preferred option for protecting the main part of the Broads. This was unanimously agreed.

The Administrator proposed that the Broads Authority's help in distributing the press release to all their media contacts should be acknowledged and recorded formally in the minutes. She was asked if she could obtain a list of the publications to which the press release had been sent.

6 Broads Charitable Trust

The Chairman updated members on progress since the last meeting.

On 13 March the Charity Commission had responded to the submission of the Constitution and Prospectus.

They required confirmation that:

- (a) the public benefit of any project on private property would outweigh private benefit and
- (b) the Charity would not support any work included in the statutory duties of authorities.

They had also suggested a change of name to "Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust".

The Trustees had held an extraordinary meeting on 15 April and agreed that public access must be allowed on all private property benefiting from the Charity. The provision concerning statutory duties had already been incorporated. The name change was accepted and an amended document sent to the Charity Commission.

A further response from the Charity Commission had been received on 23 April pointing out that, although the organisation had aims that are charitable in law, the governing document did not meet the legal requirements for a charity to be registered. The Commission proposed the following replacement objectives:

- 1) To advance the education of the public in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads
- 2) To maintain, restore, conserve, improve and develop, objects, features, buildings and sites of historical, social artistic, ecological and scientific interest relating to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads for the public benefit
- 3) To promote, encourage and assist the restoration, protection and maintenance of the navigation of the waterways of the Broads for the benefit of the public
- 4) For such other charitable purposes as the Trustees may from time to time determine.

The Trustees would be meeting on 16 May to discuss these proposals.

It was agreed that to set up a sub-group comprising Patrick Lerner, Gordon Craig and Peter Horsefield with a remit to draw up a list of specific points on which guidance was required, including the terms of the loan agreement. The group would then arrange to meet the solicitor who had offered his help. It was agreed that, if he advised paying for a legal opinion on the points raised, this should be considered.

7 500 Club

A report on the meeting of 500 Club Trustees had been circulated. Paul Howes reported the Trustees' decision to transfer the majority of the funds to the Society's General fund for use in any way deemed appropriate by the Main Committee. Paul had agreed to write an article for the next issue of "Harnser" to encourage more Society members to join the 500 Club.

Keith Bacon made a proposal for grant funding. It was agreed that that full details should be provided for discussion at the next meeting.

8 CNP

Peter Howe had provided a report on a recent meeting of CNP together with a note on a Q and A session with Jonathan Shaw, Under Secretary of State for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs with responsibility for the National Parks.

With reference to the debate on the Broads Bill, it was agreed to ask

Peter Howe to ascertain the views of CNP on the public consultation on elected appointments to the Broads Authority.

On the subject of windfarms, Richard Baguley suggested that the Society should seek advice from CNP who had considerable experience opposing planning applications for windfarms in and adjacent to National Parks.

9 Royal Norfolk Show

The Chairman reported that the Society had been allocated Stand No. 32, which was in the same location as previously, at a cost of £246. The marquee would cost £225. He would check the location etc. Jill Wickens volunteered to assist the Administrator in setting up the Stand which would need to be ready by 18.00 hrs on Tuesday 24 June. A number of free passes would be provided and volunteers would be reimbursed their expenses. The Administrator would circulate the volunteer rota.

10 Broads Forum

Keith Bacon reported on the meeting held on 10 April which had included the following topics:

- Lake restoration
- November flood
- LDF – Responses to Preferred Options
- Anglers and 24hr mooring
- Membership – the Broads Society's membership in its own right had been reinstated.

11 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April had been circulated. There was nothing further to report.

12 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee

- 12.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 April had been circulated.
- 12.2 Marinas and Moorings (Minute 6.3)
It was agreed that moorings should be included on the list of topics for discussion with the BA on 10 June. Members asked for access to the BA Mooring Strategy and report on casual moorings. It was understood that they had also produced a slipways inventory.

13 Website

There was nothing to report. It was agreed that, in future, unless there were specific issues requiring discussion at a meeting, matters connected with the website should be raised via the forum.

14 Broadsword

David Capp was attempting to enable the Southern Team to operate under the same arrangements as the Northern Team. Once a more co-ordinated approach had been agreed, financial support could be considered.

15 IWA

Chris Groves had confirmed that there was nothing to report.

16 A.O.B.

Martin George proposed the addition of Live Aboard Craft to the agenda for 10 June. Keith Bacon suggested that the related issue of overnight parking at Staithes should also be included.

17 Date of Next Meeting

Special Meeting– Tuesday 10 June 2008 at 7.00 pm

Ordinary Meeting – Tuesday 8 July 2008 at 7.00 pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.50