

## BROADS SOCIETY

### Minutes of the Main Committee held on 4 November 2008 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

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

**By invitation:** Bryan Read (President), Chris Pulley (nominee for election as Treasurer)

**In attendance:** Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

#### 1 Apologies for absence

Derek Rae

#### 2 Minutes of the Meeting of 9 September 2008

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

#### 3 Matters Arising

##### 3.1 Indemnity Insurance (preamble to the Minutes)

Pat Lerner had sought advice from an alternative provider who had recommended that the Society should opt for cover of £250,000 and quoted a premium of £275 plus tax. The same level of cover could be provided by IWA for £235 plus tax.

It was therefore proposed by Pat Lerner, seconded by Richard Baguley and unanimously agreed that the Society should take out indemnity insurance cover of £250,000 through IWA. The Administrator would make the necessary arrangements.

##### 3.2 Meeting with Broads Authority (Minute 3.1)

It was proposed by Richard Baguley that the Society should seek another meeting with the Broads Authority to discuss, in particular, the following issues:

- Recommendations for increase to tolls
- Dredging programme – with special reference to Oulton Broad and Heigham Sound
- Planning – including (a) the account taken of Society's comments and (b) internal procedures whereby reports for the Planning Committee were written prior to the closing date for consultation (see Minute 7).

Martin George requested the addition of work by BESL affecting quay headings.

After discussion it was agreed that the most appropriate BA representatives would be the Chairman and Chief Executive plus any officers whom the Authority felt could deal with the issues to be raised, which would be notified in advance.

There was general agreement that a regular formal meeting with Authority representatives was beneficial, supplemented by ongoing informal contact with relevant members and officers.

The Chairman was asked to contact the Broads Authority to suggest a meeting early in the New Year, preferably at the Authority's new offices.

- 3.3 Donation to Museum of the Broads (Minute 4.4)  
It was agreed that the Chairman would make all the presentations at the AGM, including the cheque to the Museum of the Broads.  
Keith Bacon undertook to contact the Chairman of the Museum to ascertain who would represent the Museum.

- 3.4 Integration of "Broads Experience" (Minute 13.2)  
This item was deferred to the next meeting to allow members time to generate ideas. *(Note previous suggestion by Paul Howes at the previous meeting, that this might be an appropriate topic for an informal debate at the forthcoming AGM).*

#### **4 Treasurer's Report**

In the absence of the Treasurer, there was no report

Peter Howe reported that the audit of the Go Electric Project, total value £110,000, was being carried out by Chris Dicker of Lovewell Blake.

#### **5 Nominations for election at AGM**

The following nominations were noted:

Chairman – Peter Horsefield

Vice-Chairman – Keith Bacon

Treasurer – Chris Pulley (cv attached)

Elected Members: Richard Baguley, Gordon Craig, Colin Dye, Anne Horsefield, Paul Howes, Patrick Larnar, Richard Starling, Chris Shallcross

#### **6 Future Size and Membership of the Broads Authority and Response to DEFRA Consultation on Direct Elections and Parish Memberships**

Anne Horsefield had prepared an analysis of the current constitution of the Broads Authority and its committees which, in her view, was undemocratic.

Referring to a discussion at the Broads Forum, Keith Bacon explained that the Chief Executive of the Authority favoured a reduction in the number of members and was opposed to direct elections because of the practical problems this presented. Keith himself supported direct elections and Parish Council representation which he felt would address the current shortage of relevant experience on the planning committee.

Paul Howes pointed out that the issue under consideration was the main Authority and not Committees and he therefore urged members to focus their minds on this for the time being. As far as Parish Council representation was concerned, the Society should concentrate on giving its views on the principle. The practicalities of implementation could be addressed at a later stage and the Society could offer their suggestions at the appropriate time.

Martin George and other members suggested that this consultation was premature bearing in mind the current debate on the Broads Bill and the possible reorganisation of local government into a unitary system.

However, it was accepted that the consultation was a DEFRA initiative and local representations about timing would be considered irrelevant. The Broads Authority was carrying out its own consultation before making a response to DEFRA and it was therefore important for the Society to make its views known via this route.

Members then completed the questionnaire and were unanimous in their responses which were as follows:

#### Main questionnaire

1. Support principle of direct elections
2. Agree with direct elections resulting in larger authorities
3. Consider that if authorities were to remain the same size, then Secretary of State members should be replaced in favour of directly elected members
4. Support the principle of parish members
5. Outstanding issues: It was agreed to make the following points:
  - The Society does not support a reduction in membership but a 20% increase
  - The Society supports direct elections, in particular of Parish Council members, to provide local representation
  - Measures should be implemented to ensure that appointed members have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the Broads.

#### Supplementary questionnaire

1. If the number of local authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk does not change:-

the membership of the Broads Authority should be amended to include directly elected members including parish councillors

- suggested number of directly elected members – 2
- suggested number of parish members – 2

2. If the number of local authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk is significantly reduced:-

- the number of Broads Authority members should not be reduced;
- the revised membership of the BA should be amended to include both directly elected members and parish councillors;
- these additional members should be in the category “other”.

Although members believed that the number of members appointed by the Secretary of State should be reduced, it was nonetheless recognised that certain of these members made a valuable contribution. Bryan Read pointed out the importance of having members who could bring a national perspective to the table. There was general agreement that there needed to be a balance between national and local views.

## **7 Society Handling of Planning Applications**

A paper by Chris Groves had been circulated suggesting changes in the way planning applications should be handled by sub-committees. Chris had been moved to write this paper following recent controversy over the Southern Rivers Sub-Committee’s (SRS-C) response to an application at Burgh Castle. The thrust of the proposals was to ensure that it should not be left to one sub-committee member to decide on a response independently.

While understanding the reasons for Chris’s suggestions, Peter Horsefield, speaking as Chair of the Northern Rivers Sub-Committee (NRS-C), pointed out that his committee had not experienced problems. Many of the applications were trivial and could be dealt with by a nominated individual without any problem. The key to successful operation was for all members to be able to identify those applications which required consultation with colleagues. Members of the NRS-C had developed a skill in this regard and the current system therefore worked well. Peter therefore felt that it was impractical and unnecessary to introduce any more complexity into the system.

Members discussed the overall philosophy of responding to planning applications, Gordon Craig pointing out that comments must be strictly relevant to planning issues. It was agreed that responses should make clear at the outset when an objection was being

made; it was, however, appropriate to modify the response by stating that the objection would be withdrawn if certain conditions were met.

It was agreed that the Chairmen of the two Sub-Committees (Peter Horsefield and Peter Waller) should get together to share ideas.

Peter Howe pointed out that other National Park Societies had developed a good working relationship with Planning Committees and attended their meetings and felt this was an approach worth the Society considering.

The reference in Chris Grove's paper to a more detailed check list was noted. It was agreed to review his original suggestions to see whether they might be incorporated in the checklist currently in use.

It was further agreed to raise at the meeting with the BA Chairman and Chief Executive the issue of BA planning officers writing reports for the Planning Committee prior to the closing date for comments which Chris had highlighted in a follow-up email

## **8 Involving Young People**

Richard Baguley apologised that he had not had time to prepare the promised paper. However, he was able to report recent contact with the Deputy Head of Broadland High School who had suggested a meeting.

Patrick Lerner reported that he would be attending a meeting of some of the Governors at Bignold School on 5 November. Students had been greatly enthused by a recent visit to Whitlingam and he believed this augured well for the development of an initiative to encourage their interest in the Broads as a whole.

Peter Howe drew attention to new SDF funding available to support disadvantaged young people. This might be a source of financial support for Society projects.

## **9 Update on Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust**

Bryan Read, as temporary Chairman of the Trust, reported the following:

Funds had been invested in an interest bearing account

Two new Trustees had been appointed:- Dr Douglas Munroe and Kit Cator, both of whom had substantial relevant experience

The Broads Authority had nominated Stephen Johnson. As Stephen had recently been appointed as Authority Chairman, he had undertaken to serve as a Trustee for a year in the first instance to see how this commitment fitted in with his workload. If he was unable to continue, he had suggested BA representation by a member or someone from the senior staff.

Stephen Johnson had prepared a draft business strategy and an action plan was being prepared by a small sub-committee which would include consideration of ways in which the Trust might work with other charities.

A part-time administrative officer would be appointed in due course, but not until the Trustees had made a clear decision on the direction of travel.

The Trustees had agreed that publicity should be deferred for the same reason.

## **10 Harnser**

Jill Wickens reported that John Wheeley had joined the Editorial Committee and had made a number of very helpful suggestions for improving "Harnser". At a recent meeting the Editorial Committee had agreed to increase the number of pages and improve quality by introducing colour throughout and larger photographs. This would cost £1,096 per issue of 1300 copies. This was a competitive price, bearing in mind that the cost of the old-style "Harnser" (prior to Jill becoming editor) had been over £1,000.

It was proposed to offer potential advertisers, full colour adverts at a higher price.

Patrick Lerner reported that he had been asked by Vic Standley to work with him on certain aspects of the regular report on the Broads Authority.

## **11 Green Boat Show**

A final report by Peter Howe had been circulated, including a financial statement showing a surplus of £352.32. The event had been very successful and the owners of Salhouse Broad were keen to repeat it in 2009. The date suggested was 13 September. Peter therefore hoped that someone would be willing to take over the organisation in 2009 as he now wished to stand down.

Gordon Craig made an impassioned plea to committee members to support such events by volunteering to man the Society Stand. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Stand had not been manned throughout the event and he felt personally ashamed that he had not volunteered.

It was agreed to discuss a 2009 event early in the New Year.

## **12 Broads Forum**

Martin George reported on the meeting held on 9 October.

He expressed concern about a project to reduce sediment run off from the catchment area of the River Wensum. Proposals involved the removal or lowering of sluices. Presentations had been made on (a) improvement of management by farmers and (b) alteration to the way the river was managed.

In Martin's view the proposals would be detrimental to the future of the River Wensum and there would be even more reason for unease if similar strategies were to be applied in the Bure.

Keith Bacon reported on the LDF and the latest DEFRA guidelines on the implementation of PPS25. As a result of pressure from Broads Authority Officers, who had pointed out the implications of PPS25 for the economy of the Broads, DEFRA had relaxed its attitude and its revised guidelines showed that its approach was far less draconian than before.

Patrick Lerner pointed out that the major success of Officers had been in persuading the Environment Agency and DEFRA to adopt a common view which was satisfactory to the Broads Authority.

Paul Howes suggested that, as PPS25 had been raised by members at last year's AGM, it would be appropriate for the Chairman to include this latest development in his annual report.

Martin George reported that the final report by Natural England on the effects of climate change on the Broads was due to be published early the following week. The Society needed to be prepared to comment. A major improvement to the report would be the omission of the map which had given rise to considerable misunderstanding.

## **13 Broadsword**

David Capp, co-ordinator of Broadsword, had submitted a request for funds to pay for training of volunteers. The Broads Authority had agreed to pay two thirds of the cost. Members had no hesitation in supporting a request to fund first aid and manual handling training since the total cost, although not yet known, was likely to be relatively modest. However, some were concerned that the cost of training in chainsaw operation would be significant.

After discussion it was proposed by Paul Howes, seconded by Patrick Lerner, and unanimously agreed, to support in principle the funding of training Broadsword volunteers subject to cost. The Administrator would obtain details of costs to enable the Committee decide the amount of funding to be allocated.

Paul Howes informed members that the Broadsword team would be working on 6 Saturdays/Sundays and 10 Wednesday afternoons during the current season.

It was agreed that it would be helpful if David Capp were asked to provide a report on the proposed programme. Members suggested that scrub clearance along the Ant near Irstead Shoal would be useful.

## **14 CNP**

Peter Howe reported on an excellent National Parks Societies Conference in the New Forest. He had opted for the field trip "Restoration of Ancient Landscapes" Bryan Read had chosen "The Coast". Both Peter and Bryan commented on their surprise at finding that the New Forest National Park experienced problems similar to those of the Broads.

Peter would be stepping down from the Main Committee at the AGM. He expressed willingness to continue as the Society's CNP representative provided the Committee felt that it was not essential for the person to be a member of the Main Committee. Paul Howes volunteered his services if required. It was agreed that this was a matter for the first meeting of the new Committee in January. In the meantime Peter would continue as CNP representative.

The Chairman thanked Peter for all his work as CNP representative, and particularly his robust defence of the Society's membership of at the 2007 AGM which had succeeded in convincing the general membership of its value.

## **15 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee**

Cantley Sugar Factory (Minute 7)

Peter Horsefield reported on the proposals by British Sugar for a major expansion to the site at Cantley. The NRS-C had objected to the proposal unless raw materials were transported to new plant by water. As a result British Sugar had contacted the Society and asked for a meeting. Seven or eight representatives would be attending a meeting at Cantley on Friday 7 November. Peter had prepared a briefing paper and list of questions which had been submitted to British Sugar in advance.

There was uncertainty as to the extent of consultation. The application would affect an area far wider than the BA executive area and wide consultation with all the appropriate authorities was essential.

The Chairman congratulated Peter on the lead he had taken to deal with this major planning issue.

Members wondered whether the Transportation Group led by Denise Carlo had been involved.

Broads Hotel, Hoveton (Minute 3.4)

Peter Howe enquired about the latest situation. The application for the south side (within the BA executive area) had been approved. The application for the north side (North Norfolk District Council) was in abeyance.

Update on Flood Protection Work by BESL (Minute 8)

Patrick Larner reported that he and two other NSBA members were meeting with BESL in the hope of reaching agreement on some contentious issues.

## 16 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee

### River Chet (Minute 3.1)

The committee had requested additional marker posts between existing posts but had been informed by the BA that this would be detrimental to the landscape.

### Pegasus Site (Minute 3.4)

Peter Waller reported on a public meeting organised by the developers. He was concerned to learn that the developers proposed making a presentation to the Planning Committee. He accepted that it was good custom and practice for applicants to consult Planning Officers prior to submitting a scheme but it was entirely inappropriate for them to make representations to the Planning Committee. It was agreed that Peter should ask the Chief Planning Officer to clarify exactly what was happening. If it appeared that inappropriate procedures were taking place, the Society would consider referring the matter to the Ombudsman.

## 17 IWA

The report by Chris Groves had been circulated. In his final paragraph he had suggested that the time was right for a review of the way these reports were produced. Richard Baguley undertook to contact Chris to discuss the way forward.

## 18 A.O.B.

### 18.1 Offer from Nigel Hughes – Birkenhead YMCA

The special offer of holidays on board the cruiser “Mona” would be published in the next “Harnser”

### 18.2 Planning Workshop – “The Future of the Coast”

It was noted that Martin George had been nominated by the Society to attend this workshop organised by North Norfolk District Council on 18 November.

### 18.3 Website

Richard Baguley reported that activity on the Forum had increased and the level of debate was excellent. He wondered whether it was time to move to the next stage of opening up the Forum to public viewing. It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.

### 18.4 Letter from John Wheeley

Referring to the Society’s donation to the Museum of the Broads, John Wheeley had enquired why the Society were not supporting the Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s appeal for funds to purchase land at Upton Fen. Members considered that this was quite different from the Museum’s appeal.

### 18.5 Broads Forum Representative

As Martin George, the Society’s representative, was stepping down from the Main Committee, Keith Bacon proposed the following scheme to ensure the Society had maximum representation.

Main representative: Keith Bacon (attending, speaking and reporting back)

Substitute representative: Martin George (attending and speaking)

Richard Starling, though attending in another capacity, could provide a third voice for the Society and report back to the Committee if Keith were absent.

As Martin was willing to continue his involvement with the Forum, the proposal was agreed.

18.6 BA Planning Committee

Patrick Lerner reported that BESL Compartment 5, Pegasus boatyard site and St Anne's Wharf Bridge were on the agenda for the meeting on Friday 7 November. He would not be present as he was attending the meeting with British Sugar at Cantley.

18.7 Weed above Wroxham Bridge

It was confirmed that the BA had been cutting 4 days a week to create a navigable channel. Martin George pointed out that weed growth was due to ever improving water quality. He was concerned that there might be a repeat of the Hickling situation in Barton Broad.

18.8 BA Working Groups

It was agreed that the Administrator should contact Simon Hooton and ask him to ensure that invitations to all four working groups – Upper Thurne, Middle Thurne, Barton, Valleys – were sent routinely to her. The Committee would then decide on appropriate representation on each.

## **18 Chairman's concluding remarks**

As this would be his last meeting as Chairman, Nick Barne thanked Committee members for their help and support throughout his two years of office. He paid special tribute for their respective contributions to Martin George and Peter Howe who would also be stepping down at the AGM. He was delighted that Martin had accepted an invitation to become a Vice-President in recognition of his long and outstanding service to the Society.

In response, both Martin and Peter confirmed that they would continue to help and support the Society in any way they could.

Speaking on behalf of all Committee members, Patrick Lerner expressed thanks to Nick Barne for his service to the Society during his two years very successful years as Chairman.

## **19 Dates of future meetings**

It was agreed to meet on Thursdays. The Administrator would circulate proposed dates in due course.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.00 pm