

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on Thursday 17 September 2009 at Broad House Hotel, Wroxham

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

By invitation: Bryan Read (President)
In attendance: Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

The Chairman welcomed Bryan Read who had been invited to discuss the AGM Agenda (item 6).

1 Apologies for absence

Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman) and Gordon Craig

2 Minutes of the Meeting of 9 July 2009

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

Minute 7 – Amend spelling to Keir Hounsome
Minutes 5.1(b) and 14.3 – Amend spelling of Ann to Anne.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Natural England Report (Minute 3.1)

The Chairman had received a letter from Lord Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency, confirming that a longer term flood alleviation strategy for the Broads was being developed and would be sent out for consultation to relevant authorities, stakeholders and the local community. He acknowledged the benefits of constructing a Yare barrier, but pointed out the potential problems with navigation. He had also suggested a meeting with Steve Hayman, Area Flood Protection Officer. Peter Horsefield therefore suggested that Mr Hayman be invited to a Committee meeting, which was unanimously agreed.

3.2 Pub Closures Minute (3.2)

The Chairman had received a letter from Stephen Johnson, Chairman of the Broads Authority, confirming that the Broads Authority had strong policies in place to resist any planning applications for change of use which would reduce the number of public moorings at pub sites. He also agreed that the appearance of closed pubs was detrimental and said that the Broads Authority would approach the owners and inform the Society of the results of such intervention. Richard Baguley reported that Ranworth Maltsters and Hickling Pleasure Boat had reopened and that negotiations were under way for the purchase of the Ferry Inn at Horning. Coldham Hall will reopen next spring.

Patrick Lerner reported that “Pub Closures” was now a standing item on the agenda of the Navigation Committee.

Paul Howes had followed up the discussion at the last meeting by visiting the New Inn at Horning to obtain information about the problems experienced over planning regulations. The owner had installed a concrete quay heading and created a patio area without applying for planning permission. It was hoped that the matter would be viewed sympathetically by the BA and any problems resolved.

3.3 Review of dykes and streams (Minute 3.3)

Trudi Wakelin had confirmed that the stretches of water identified by Peter Waller were outside the Broads Authority Executive Area, the only exception being Slutton's Dyke which was recognised as part of the navigation system. However, this was an SSSI and Natural England had refused consent for the area to be made accessible.

3.4 Questionnaire on tolls (Minute 3.4)

The Chairman had received a letter from Stephen Johnson confirming that the Broads Authority was intending to publish the results of the questionnaire on tolls. The letter had been posted on the Main Committee Forum

Patrick Lerner reported that the matter had been raised briefly at the September meeting of the Navigation Committee and would be discussed in detail at the October meeting. It was noted that the IWA had proposed a maximum increase of 4% to their tolls.

It was agreed that no further action by the Society was required.

3.5 Lady Mayhew Trophy (Minute 5.2b)

It was proposed by Patrick Lerner, seconded by Jill Wickens, and unanimously agreed, that the Trophy should be awarded to the

Rev Charles Hall provided that a Cormorants Sailing Holiday had taken place this year. Jill Wickens undertook to contact the Rev Hall.

It was also proposed by Patrick Lerner, seconded by Jill Wickens, and unanimously agreed, that a donation of £250 should accompany the Trophy.

3.6 New Signage (Minute 5.5c)

The Chairman had not yet written to Stephen Johnson concerning the Authority's policy on advertising and undertook to do so.

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

The Chairman had discussed this issue with Keir Hounsoume (BA Solicitor) and Professor Card for the NSBA. John Packman, on behalf of the Broads Authority, had written a letter to DEFRA which Peter Horsefield considered covered all aspects of the problem. Pat Lerner suggested that the tone of the letter had not been sufficiently strong but anticipated that John Packman would be following it up "behind the scenes". Peter Horsefield had subsequently received a letter from DEFRA which appeared to say that they did not intend to apply the new regulations except as a last resort.

It was agreed that the Society should leave the Broads Authority to deal with this issue. Pat Lerner undertook to keep a watching brief on developments.

3.8 Stakeholder Panel on Water Ski-ing (Minute 8)

Peter Horsefield, as the Society's representative, had attended a meeting on 13 August involving presentations and discussion which lasted 4 hours. Fifteen people had been in attendance. The number of boats licensed under the scheme operated by the Eastern Rivers Ski Club was 34 and 10 sites had been allocated, most of which were not used. Peter Horsefield was confident that water-ski-ing and wakeboarding were now satisfactorily controlled under the scheme operated by the Eastern Rivers Ski Club and most of his previous concerns had been allayed. Agreements had previously been informal, but the Broads Bill now gave the Broads Authority quasi-legal powers to enforce regulations. The next meeting of the Panel would be April 2010.

Pat Lerner reported that NSBA had nominated Professor Card to monitor water-ski-ing.

3.9 Interreg Sustainable Tourism Project (Minute 14.6)

Richard Baguley had not yet contacted Simon Hooton, but undertook to do so.

3.10 OPAL Project (Minute 14.2)

Anne Horsefield had contacted Norfolk Wildlife Trust in connection with the Committee's proposal to sponsor notice boards at Stubb Mill using funds from the OPAL Project. However, the NWT intended that the notice boards would concern the history of Stubb Mill, not the natural history of

the raptors at the roost, so that the OPAL funds could not be used. The cost of each noticeboard would be £2,000. Anne suggested that the Society could make a donation on its own account. Although members were, in principle, in favour of sponsoring noticeboards bearing the Society's logo, they considered that £2,000 was excessive. It was therefore proposed by Richard Baguley, seconded by Patrick Lerner, and agreed, that Anne should go back to NWT and offer £500. Pat Lerner offered to lend his support in any negotiations.

[Update – Anne has contacted Helen Kraner (NWT fundraiser) who is delighted to accept the donation. By chance she was in the in the process of completing the application form to the Broads Authority's Sustainable Development Fund for funding for the boards. Our donation could be helpful in getting a positive response.]

3.11 Branding of The Broads (Minute 9a)

It was noted that the tourist industry continued to use the term "National Park" when referring to the Broads. At Peter Horsefield's suggestion, it was agreed that the Society should not get involved.

3.12 500 Club (Minute 4.2)

A meeting of the Trustees had been held in August and a donation to the Society of £2,500 agreed.

4 Finance

4.1 Annual Accounts 2008-2009

The Treasurer had circulated the full accounts together with the summary to be published in the AGM booklet. Richard Baguley congratulated Chris Pulley on the clarity of the documentation.

Speaking as a member of the Finance Committee, Bryan Read raised the following concerns:

a. Page 3 – "Activities, achievements, and performance including public benefit". Bryan suggested that the second sentence was not an accurate reflection of the Society's role: "The Society has no power to do anything directly, we try to influence the actions of those who do, principally the Broads Authority and the Environment Agency." Peter Horsefield explained that he had written this part of the Report and it could therefore be changed if Committee members so wished. After discussion, it was proposed by Paul Howes, seconded by Jill Wickens, and unanimously agreed, that this sentence be deleted.

b. The fact that the totals for income and expenditure stated in summary accounts differed from those in the full version. Bryan believed this to be misleading. The Treasurer explained that, on the summary version of the accounts he had in each case drawn together income and expenditure from Christmas Card Sales, the Green Boat Show and "Harnser" so that each could be understood of itself, whereas the same numbers were shown under different headings in the full Accounts, as was proper. It was agreed to include an explanatory note in the summary accounts before passing them for publication.

Acceptance of the Annual Accounts (as amended) was proposed by Richard Baguley, seconded by Nick Barne and unanimously agreed. The Accounts were then signed by the Chairman and Nick Barne.

Jill Wickens informed the meeting that this would be the last AGM booklet she would prepare.

4.2 Receipts and Payments Account

The Treasurer had circulated a report showing the position at 31 August 2009. He had, as requested, included columns showing movements since the previous report and comparison with the previous financial year which members found useful.

The question of an increase in the subscription rate was raised with the suggestion that this should be reviewed in due course.

5 Planning

5.1 General

Richard Baguley had deferred arranging an informal meeting of the Planning Sub-Group with the two Planning Sub-Committees to discuss the handling of planning applications. He would do this at an appropriate time.

Peter Horsefield reported receipt of a communication from a member of the public requesting detailed information about the geographical spread of the membership on the grounds that the Society claimed to represent local views. Peter had prepared a letter making it clear that the Society made no such claim and that local views were represented by Parish Councils. The Society's role was to promote the views of people who had an interest and a love for the Broads irrespective of their place of residence.

Richard Starling reported that the Broads Authority was reviewing its planning policies. Stakeholders would be consulted.

5.2 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee
There had been no meeting since 15 June.

Referring to planning applications for flood alleviation Pat Lerner said that many of the Society's comments had been taken into account by BESL who now had a better understanding of the of concerns raised. He would be attending a technical meeting with BESL during the next week.

It was noted that the planning application for erection of a replacement dwelling at Bide-a-Wee at Hoveton, to which the Society had lodged strong objections, had been withdrawn.

5.2 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee
There had been no meeting since 4 June.

Peter Waller reported that a consortium had been put together with a view to making an offer to continue using the Pegasus site as a boatyard.

It was noted that an application to extend North Bay House, Lowestoft had been refused after a site visit. The Society (represented by Chris Groves) had attended the site visit and not lodged an objection, provided the screen of trees was maintained, and had supported the additional employment and facilities the extension would provide.

6 AGM Agenda

Bryan Read thanked Committee members for inviting him to the meeting to discuss his concerns at the changes to the constitution to be formally proposed to the membership at the AGM. He explained his position as follows

He understood the Committee's view that there was a need for change to allow modern technology to be used and appreciated that the Society must be prepared to make changes. However, these must be justified and not affect the ethos of the Society.

In Bryan's opinion the definition of a "meeting" is when members are physically present together, enabling eye contact and the opportunity for people to react to body language. He accepted that there might be occasions when a member could not be present and wished to be in audio communication, although he would suggest that this could be distracting for other members. If necessary the Chairman could, as on previous occasions, agree to audio communication, and the practice could continue, but it should not be enshrined in the constitution. A change in the constitution could, in theory, allow several members to ask for audio contact.

Bryan understood that the Charity Commission had made no comment on the suggested change but pointed out that the Commission has a model clause which reads as follows. "One meeting a year must include the physical presence of those Trustees who attend the meeting. Other meetings may take such form, including video conferencing, as the Trustees decide provided that the form chosen enables the Trustees both to see and hear each other." This clause is incorporated in the NSBCT Constitution circulated to the Broads Society's Committee last year.

Turning to the other proposal to allow debate and voting by using the Committee Forum, Bryan pointed out that the proposed change in the constitution did not state that the procedure was to be used only for urgent decisions and, in theory, could permit all decisions to be made in this way. Over the last 12 years that he had been actively involved with the Society, he could not remember any urgent issue that needed a special meeting. However, he believed that if issues of importance for the Society and the Broads arose, then a special physical meeting of the Committee should be called at short notice so that the matter could be properly debated with the personal interactions he had referred to earlier. He did not believe that it is possible to have a proper debate on a forum and suggested that there was some evidence from the Broads Society members' forum that a real debate does not take place. He also pointed out that, even in this age, not every member of the Committee will necessarily be computer literate.

Referring to the point made about Committee members living outside the Broads area needing these 'distance' facilities, Bryan said that, if these people felt strongly about the Broads, then they would accept the responsibility and cost of travelling and making themselves available for meetings. The Broads Society had an important role to play in the protection of the Broads and it should be based on personal contact in the spirit of its origin as a social body of like minded people joining together to look after the Broads and it did not need a complicated constitution as if it were a multinational body having to make urgent decisions at short notice.

In conclusion Bryan reiterated his contention that the Committee needed to have careful considered debates with personal and physical contact between its members and he did not believe that the proposed changes to the Constitution were necessary or in the spirit of the Society.

After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that Peter Horsefield would put forward the case for amending the constitution at the AGM. It would then be up to members attending to voice any concerns. Bryan would be chairing the meeting and therefore, despite his concerns about the proposals, considered it inappropriate to take any part in the debate.

It was agreed to remove the item "Presentation of Society Trophy" from the agenda and to reword the item before the Agenda proper to read "Presentation of Lady Mayhew Trophy"

7 Harnser

Jill Wickens reported that members would receive "Harnser" before 1 October but that there would be a delay in sending out the AGM booklet as the final version had only just been agreed.

Jill expressed disappointment that, of the four items promised at the last meeting, she had only received the article from Peter Waller on the Trinity Broads. Richard Baguley had provided an alternative article and would submit his report on the restoration of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal for the next issue.

Finally, Jill gave the Committee formal notice that she would be resigning as Editor after the October 2010 issue. She hoped this would give the Society sufficient time to find a replacement. *(Update: to the great relief of her colleagues, Jill has decided to continue as Editor for the foreseeable future.)*

In view of the number of people now involved in preparing "Harnser" it was agreed to investigate the cost of using a mailing service. Bryan Read undertook to provide details of the service provider used by the Hunter Fleet for mailing their brochures.

11 Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

Nick Barne reported that the Trust had received a grant from the Sustainable Development Fund to support the first project. It was hoped to obtain matching funding from the Government's Knowledge Scheme. There would be no publicity until the second tranche of funding had been secured.

Trustees would be meeting next month to discuss the appointment of an Administrator. It had become evident that the separate roles of administration and fund raising could not be combined in one post.

12 Broads Forum

Richard Starling reported on the September meeting.

- Yare Barrier. The proposal by Martin George had been accepted and would go to the Broads Authority for comment
- A site visit to the fen on the River Ant had taken place. This involved members of the Authority and the Forum and had provided a very useful opportunity for members of both bodies to get to know one another. Richard was concerned at the Broads Authority's continued use of reed cutting machinery which was different from that used by all other organizations and was not fit for purpose; he also pointed out that cutting had taken place in September to the detriment of reed growth. This raised serious concerns over the Authority's ability to carry proper management of the marshes and fens.
- There had been no follow up to the House of Lords' suggestion that Parish Council input to the Broads Authority could be achieved by their representation on the Broads Forum.

In his role as a Parish Councillor, Richard had met the new Chairman of the BA Planning Committee who had offered to talk to Parish Councils and other organizations. A member of Gt Yarmouth Borough Council had been appointed to the Authority and Richard felt that it would be useful for the Society to meet him.

13 CNP

Paul Howes reported on the very successful August visit to the Broads by the Chairman and Deputy Chief Executive of CNP. This had been greatly enhanced by the presence of Martin George and had proved mutually beneficial. The lack of birds and waterfowl had been noted with concern, possibly due to the increase in population of raptors and other predators. A report on the visit had been posted on the website and included in the October edition of "Harnser". Members thanked Paul for making his boat available for the visit.

The date of the National Park Societies Conference had been changed to 27-29 November, which made it impossible for Paul to attend. It was agreed that he should ask Peter Howe if he would like to go as the Society's official representative (expenses paid). Bryan Read would be attending as usual.

[Update – Peter Howe cannot attend].

14 A.O.B

14.1 Website

Richard Baguley apologized for recent problems with the website caused by the server host moving all the data from one platform to another. The result was that parts of the Society's website no longer worked. Richard had already spent many hours checking through the data, but there was still a significant amount to do before the site was fully restored.

14.2 Habitat Restoration Project

It was noted that the Broads Authority was pursuing leads to obtain funding. There was nothing further to report.

14.3 Anglia Afloat

John Pitchers had given notice of his intention to stand down from his role as author of the Society's column in "Anglia Afloat" after the December issue. Members were sorry to receive this news as John had done an excellent job over the past two years. It was suggested that the possibility of a number of people taking turns to write the column should be explored, initially by an announcement at the AGM. In the meantime, the Committee accepted the offer by Paul Howes to take on the role for one year.

Patrick Lerner understood that proposals were in hand to extend the range of issues covered in "Anglia Afloat" He would speak with the editor, Paul Thomas, to obtain more information.

14.4 Maritime Festival, Gt Yarmouth

Peter Waller had attended this event and been surprised to find that the Broads Authority had not been represented. It was suggested that there was a role for the Society to act as a facilitator to encourage the BA and other Broads related organisations to participate.

14.5 Broads Authority Membership

Patrick Lerner reported that the Broads Authority was advertising for another member, with an emphasis on encouraging individuals with a disability to apply.

14.6 Event at Museum of the Broads

It was noted that one new member had been recruited at this event. In itself the event was a success and there had been much interest in our display.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 5 November 2009