

BROADS SOCIETY

Notes on an informal discussion with John Packman, BA Chief Executive and Lesley Marsden (BA Landscape Officer prior to the meeting of the Main Committee held on 5 February 2013

Present: Robin Godber (Chairman); Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman), Nick Balls, David Capp, Colin Dye, Ian Masters, Richard Reid, Mark Wells, Jill Wickens, Peter Howe and Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

The Chairman welcomed John Packman and Lesley Marsden and thanked them for giving up their time to talk with the Society.

Presentation by Lesley Marsden

1. Undergrounding of Power Lines – Current and Proposed Projects

Lesley reminded members that in 2003 Martin George and Chris Groves had carried out a survey and made recommendations on priorities for undergrounding power lines in the Broads Area.

A total of £2.9m had been allocated to the eastern region by OfGEM for the first 5 year phase of the undergrounding programme (2005-2010). In the Broads, power lines had been removed from Buckenham Marshes in 2006 (£122k) and from St Benets in 2009 (£661k).

The second 5 year phase had started in 2010 with an allocation of £5.6m for the eastern region. During this phase power lines across Barsham Marshes and the Waveney Valley would be removed (est cost of £1.5m).

The third allocation for the eastern region, covering an 8 year period from 2015 has yet to be determined. Work at Horning Hall had been proposed and other lines were being assessed and prioritised including the ones identified in the original study.

Using a series of “before and after” photographs, Lesley demonstrated the major improvements to the landscape achieved by undergrounding power lines.

The above schemes related to the distribution network. A separate allocation had been made available for transmission lines.

2. Proposal for Transmission Power Lines from Lowestoft to Norwich

John Packman stressed the importance of building alliances with District Councils and MPs. This was work which needed to be done immediately in preparation for dealing with the issue once plans for development were proposed. In addition, an evidence gathering phase was required to assess the accuracy of information. To this end, it was essential to become more knowledgeable about the technology and other relevant issues.

It was agreed that it was important to draw up a timetable for action. Lesley Marsden would be exploring the best way to go about consultation. It was suggested that there would be great advantage if the Society, as an independent organisation, could play a role in evidence gathering and consultation. Nick Balls offered to look at the possibility of a survey using a link on the Society’s website. Peter Howe pointed out that CNP had valuable experience to offer in this field and could give support to a campaign. CPRE Norfolk would also be a useful ally. The Broads Authority proposed to convene a meeting and to write to local MPs.

3. Landscape Sensitivity Study

The Study was intended to determine the sensitivity of different landscapes to wind energy and field-scale PV developments. The study uses carefully defined criteria based on the special qualities and landscape character attributes likely to be affected by each type of development. Once completed it would provide an evidence base for planning decisions and development management.

The Broads Authority had carried out a Landscape Character Assessment and identified 31 local character areas. Using the sensitivity character criteria it could be demonstrated that the whole of the Broads area could be designated as highly sensitive. However, it was equally important to include areas outside the Broads where development would have an impact on Broadland. The Broads Plan acknowledged the need for generating renewable energy but not at the expense of the qualities for which the Broads area valued.

Each application for development would be considered on its merits and the data provided by the Landscape Sensitivity Study would provide a baseline for assessment as well as providing the foundation to support a case against those developments which were considered detrimental.

To complement and support the work already carried out the Broads Authority also needed evidence of the value which people place on various aspects of the Broads. It was suggested that a survey could be conducted via the Broads Society, Toll payers and the Eastern Daily Press.