

BROADS SOCIETY

Notes on an informal discussion with Trudi Wakelin, BA Director of Operations Tuesday 9 July prior to the formal meeting of the Main Committee

Trudi had invited John Cressey to accompany her because his knowledge about Hardley Flood.

Trudi reported on the following issues:

1 Breydon Water

1.1 Hydromorphic Survey

Following the transfer of Breydon Water and associated structural assets, a hydromorphic modelling study of the impacts of various management options was commissioned to assess the state of Breydon Water at the time of transfer and to provide data for modelling of the various options for management

Assessment of the sediment dynamics suggested that the site was stable and that there had been little change over the past ten years. There was also a need to evaluate the role played by various structures in managing the navigation channel.

Of particular concern was the extent to which Turntide Jetty and the former Dickey Works had an active function and the impact of removing or replacing them. Turn Tide Jetty had deteriorated badly. It had been shown to have an influence on training the tide and there was a risk of erosion if it were to be removed. Rather than removal and replacement, it had been decided to leave the lower section in situ as this would have sufficient effect and would not require maintenance for the next 5 – 10 years. The Dickey Works had been shown to have no bearing on tidal conditions.

A workshop had been held to report on the initial outputs and the full report (available on the BA website) would go before the Authority at their meeting on Friday 12 July.

1.2 Routine Management

Routine management of Breydon Water will proceed as originally planned. This will include maintenance dredging, navigation marking and new signage. An infestation of gribble worm has been discovered on wooden navigation markers and replacement with steel posts was under consideration. Trudi assured Mark Wells that the right type of post headings would be used but pointed out that the can marks would need to be protected with pigeon mesh.

1.3 Water Space Management Plan

Andrea Long will be responsible for developing the water space management plan in consultation with the Breydon Water User Group and individual organisations via the Broads Forum.

1.4 Water Ski-ing

Trudi had been informed that there had been no ski-ing activity since implementation of the management plan, although nine additional boats had been given permissions following successful completion of a wash test at a workshop held on 29th June.

John Cressey reported that he had seen at least 8 ski-boats as recently as Sunday evening, although this was subsequently amended to 2.

1.5 Mooring Facilities

Layby moorings are to be provided on the Asda bank and dolphins for de-masting would be installed at Bure Mouth and upstream of Breydon Bridge. (Requests have been received for pontoons in preference to dolphins, but this will be monitored.) Dolphins are also required at the commercial jetty site on the opposite bank site which John Cressey believed was owned by an oil rig company.

1.6 Cantley Sugar Factory

A planning application for development has been approved and there is a proposal for equipment to be transported to the site by water which is being considered.

2 Comprehensive Spending Review

The Broads Authority is already budgeting for a 6% cut in its government funding and is aware of the possibility of a further 2% reduction in 2013/2014. DEFRA will be facing a 9.8% cut in its budget for 2015/16. John Packman, in his role as lead Chief Executive for National Parks, will be working with senior Civil Servants in a bid to convince them that the Parks could not sustain further reductions. A report by National Parks England – “Valuing English National Parks” – was well received by Ministers and it is hoped that this will help strengthen the case for protecting the funds. The outcome of the spending review will be known by Christmas. Officers are suggesting that the planned detailed 3 year financial strategy will be deferred until then. Meanwhile Broads Authority Officers are working hard to meet the spending targets for the year ahead.

3 Integrated Access Strategy

The Integrated Access Strategy has been signed off. The Strategy includes (a) the provision of moorings at adequate intervals and (b) land-based access linking moorings to footpaths, as well as other themes relating to access to information and linking people and the environment.

a) Moorings

Priorities for the provision of additional moorings for de-masting are under review. Authority Officers will be asking the September Navigation Committee their views of the relative priority for demasting moorings at St Olaves and Acle Bridge and which should be assigned the highest priority. Other proposals for moorings include:

24 hour moorings at Thurne Mouth – dependant on a planning approval

2 moorings on the lower Bure – awaiting permission from the landowner.

Mooring at Hardley Cross – landowner’s agreement secured.

Moorings at Rockland Short Dyke. Mark Wells reported that boat owners were opposed to the current prohibition of mooring along Rockland Short Dyke by BESL for health and safety reasons. Advice was to be sought from the Navigation Committee regarding the priority for development of each of these sites.

The policy for double alongside mooring guidance has been changed. Those wishing to moor alongside must requirement to seek the agreement from occupants of the adjacent boat.

b) Land-based access

An access workshop involving the Broads Authority, the Norfolk Archaeological Trust and local residents was held to address the improvement of access around Ludham and St Benet's Abbey. Agreement for two permissive paths has been sought: one from Ludham Bridge to St Benet's and the other from Ludham Bridge upstream on the opposite bank to connect with the bridleway. The workshop had proved a good format for other areas.

Peter Horsefield pointed out the need for landing stages to enable access from the water to wildlife sites. Trudi confirmed that discussion is underway regarding possible landing stages at Strumpshaw and Berney Arms. Other access routes include Cantley for Buckenham Marshes and the sluice at Catfield. An independent consultant will be employed to carry out feasibility studies for the Catfield access proposal.

4 Broads Visitor Centre

Some time ago, the Authority approved in principle expenditure of reserves to create a new Visitor Centre for the Broads. In the light of the financial situation, the decision will be reviewed. However, if it is agreed to go ahead, there are two proposals which will compete for funding:

- A new Visitor Centre and Youth Hostel at Whitlingham Park with new toilets and a café
- A visitor centre adjacent to Toad Cottage at How Hill

KB expressed the view that that Whitlingham was not a genuine part of the Broads and that the Broads Authority's expenditure was disproportionate. Trudi defended the Authority's policy by explaining that Whitlingham was the Gateway to the Broads and attracted 500,000 visitors per year compared to 30,000 to How Hill.

5 Upper Thurne Working Group

The Hickling Sub-Group has agreed to develop plans for a future mud pumping scheme. A feasibility study will be carried out over the coming year. Natural England have granted funds to support some of the work and additional external funding will be sought to continue restoration of the Broad. Group membership includes representatives from Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Hickling Sailing Club, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

6 Appointment of Project Officer

An Officer has been appointed to investigate external funding opportunities and feasibility of projects for Visitor Centres and Hickling as mentioned above, but also to look at opportunities to implement the Mill Strategy and the Integrated Access Strategy starting at the end of July. These projects are all subject to external funding.

7 Hire Boat Industry

Staged payments of tolls has been agreed to mitigate the impact of the current financial climate on the industry.

8 Tourism Funding

The option to use income from tolls to fund a proportion of the salary of a Tourism Officer as opposed to the option to fund entirely from National Park Grant is on the agenda of the Authority's meeting on Friday 12 July.

9 Dredging of Heigham Sound

Mud pumping finished in early May. 12,000 cubic metres had been deposited in Candle Dyke Marsh. More work would be carried out in Heigham Sound during the winter. Some slumping at the edge of the marked channel had occurred and the intention was to dredge beyond the marked channel. Silt would be deposited in Duck Broad lagoon and also be removed from the entrances to Catfield Dyke and Pleasure Boat Dyke if possible. It was imperative to complete this work in 2013/14 to enable the PRISMA project to be completed.

10 River Chet

The Loddon District Business Association launched a campaign to get action on dredging. The Authority is awaiting completion of BESL's work on the banks before starting a two season dredging programme. There is no "hidden agenda" – if dredging were to be carried out prematurely, the banks would collapse. BESL is making progress currently but the completion date cannot be guaranteed in case works are impeded by the weather. The restoration of the weir at Hardley Flood has improved the situation and water levels in the basin are now higher. John Cressey had played an important role in getting action to restore the weir.

Landowners at Pyes Mill and Loddon Basin have been contacted for permission to dispose dredged material on their land, and officers will carry out a feasibility study over the summer for dredging the top of the basin. Expenditure in this area will result in lower expenditure elsewhere and so the matter will be referred to the Navigation Committee for guidance.