

BROADS SOCIETY

Minutes of the Main Committee held on Tuesday 11 November 2014 at the Hotel Wroxham, Wroxham

Present: Robin Godber (Chairman); Keith Bacon (Vice-Chairman),
Nick Balls, Colin Dye, Peter Horsefield, Ian Masters, Pat Simpson,
Richard Reid, Paul Savage, Jill Wickens

By invitation: Nick Barne (President)

In attendance: Peter Howe (CNP Representative)
Carol Palfrey (Administrator)

1 Apologies for Absence

Mark Wells

2 Declarations of Interest

Colin Dye declared an interest in Branding the Broads (Item 9).

3 Minutes of the Meeting of 9 September 2014

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

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Hoveton Great Broad (Minute 9)

The Chairman had received a reply to his letter to Natural England which he had copied to Martin George.

Committee members discussed the current proposal to exclude fish by installing a barrier comprising steel gabions packed with flint, a method that had not been tested before. Although it was described as a “temporary measure” members were convinced that physical removal of the barrier would be virtually impossible. The result would be permanent closure of the Broad, preventing the right of navigation across tidal water which some members believed would be illegal.

Keith Bacon reported John Packman’s assertion that he had received legal advice to the effect that right of navigation is not dependent on whether or not a stretch of water is tidal. Martin George had expressed his astonishment and it was agreed that the matter needed to be followed up and clarified with John Packman and English Nature.

Keith Bacon believed it was wrong to accuse the Broads Authority of being against navigation. At their meeting in September, Authority members had made it clear that they would support Natural England's proposals only if their plans included more substantial provision for access by land and water.

Peter Howe reported that, although the Broads Authority had given planning permission for the barrier, Hoveton Parish Council had subsequently made representations to Natural England. As a result a revised application had been submitted which would go out for consultation at the end of November. It was agreed that, when the Administrator received the application, she should send the hard copy to the Chairman and an email alert to all members of the Committee and the North Rivers Sub-Committee.

It was agreed that a planning application for a temporary structure must include a detailed and feasible plan for removal and this was the issue on which the Society should focus.

The Chairman proposed setting up a small working group for this purpose to discuss the matter and agreed a way forward. Paul Savage, and Colin Dye offered to be members. The group would seek advice from Martin George.

The working group was asked to take account of the following suggestions:

- Communicate with Hoveton Parish Council
- Alert the Heritage Lottery Fund to the implications of the proposal for grant funding
- Discuss the matter in more detail with Chris Bielby (English Nature) who might be unaware of the long history of Hoveton Great Broad
- Make contact with the Blofeld family

4.2 Upper Thurne Working Group (Minute 4.2)

Brian Wilkins, Chair of Hickling Sailing Club, had volunteered to lead the Group and had suggested two alternative dates for a meeting in Hickling to which all previous members would be invited.

4.3 BA Moorings and Access Strategy (Minute 16.1)

Paul Savage gave a brief explanation of the BA's financial problems relating to moorings. Every financial year starting in 2005/2006 the Broads Authority had received a qualified report from the District Auditor because no provision had been made for the depreciation of fixed assets, which include moorings. The situation had been rectified for 2014/15. As a result, 5 years' worth of maintenance needs to be carried out in one year leaving the Authority with a major funding gap. The proposed solution was to identify those moorings deemed "essential" and those which could be abandoned. Members suggested that a more sensible approach would be to carry out a survey and identify moorings in need of

maintenance/repair and those which were still in a satisfactory condition.

There was general agreement that tolls should be levied at a rate which would fulfil the needs of the Broads and their users rather than being set an arbitrary level and maintenance restricted by budgetary constraints.

Paul had been in lengthy and detailed correspondence with David Broad (Chair of the BA Navigation Committee) about the disappearance of informal moorings and the legal rights of navigators. It was agreed that a concerted action of all organisations with an interest in informal moorings was required. Colin Dye pointed out that a reduction in informal moorings had increased public use of 24 hour moorings making it difficult for hire boats to find suitable mooring points. Paul undertook to provide Colin with a summary for the next meeting of the Hire Boat Federation and said that he would attend.

5 Finance

5.1 Finance Report to 31 October 2014

The Treasurer circulated a summary of the latest position. The overall financial position remained unchanged. As stated at the previous meeting, the only concern was the ongoing built-in deficit.

5.2 500 Club

The accounts for 2013/14 had been approved by the newly appointed independent examiner and accepted by the Trustees. Some minor changes to the rules were required to remove anomalies but this would be dealt with at the next meeting of Trustees in March when the annual contribution to the Society would be agreed. The Administrator thanked Nick Balls for making wooden discs to replace the raffle tickets currently used for the monthly draw. These would be used for the first time at the AGM.

5.3 Opportunities for savings

It was agreed to cancel the advertisement in the Green Book. Nick Balls was asked to negotiate with NSBA (publisher of the Green Book) to see if he could negotiate a reciprocal arrangement for advertising with no charge on either side. Jill Wickens enquired why some members routinely requested hard copies of meeting papers which incurred postage costs. Members who had internet access agreed to receive papers by email only and request hard copies only if they had difficulty downloading them.

6 Annual General Meeting – 22 November 2014

6.1 Nominations for Election to the Committee

All existing members, except Mark Wells, had accepted nomination for re-election. A new candidate, Anne Filgate, had been nominated for election. This left two vacancies on the Committee.

6.2 Invited Speaker.

Robin Page had accepted an invitation to speak.

6.3 Awards

The Administrator had commissioned and collected an engraved Trophy. It was agreed that Keith McDougall, who had suggested that Vic Standley's long service and especially his invaluable contributions to "Harnser" should be formally recognised, should present the Trophy.

6.4 Bookings

76 bookings for lunch had been made (including the speaker and his wife and the Photography competition judges.)

6.5 Photographic Competition

The organiser, Nigel Hughes, was pleased with the number of entries received.

7 CNP

7.1 Report by CNP Representative

Peter Howe reported on the visit to the Broads by Julian Woolford, interim Chief Executive of CNP. Peter and Robin Godber had used the opportunity to explain the issues affecting the Broads.

7.2 CNP Conference

A copy of Robin Godber's report had been circulated. No Society had yet offered to host the 2015 Conference. Robin had told conference delegates that the Broads Society was not in position to organise the meeting in 2015 but had given an undertaking to explore the possibility of hosting the 2016 event. Robin believed this would be good for the Society but accepted that it would depend on identifying individuals to form a special organising committee before a firm commitment could be made; he did not expect the responsibility to be carried by the existing committee. The Treasurer would need to be consulted about financial aspects.

7.3 Consultation – Landscape for All

Peter Howe explained that CNP were seeking support for this campaign and believed that if the Society was in favour, it should declare its support. It was agreed that Peter should write to support the Campaign on the Society's behalf.

The Chairman reported that he had sent a copy of the CNP Manifesto to all local MPs and candidates and had, so far, received two responses.

7.4 Hoveton Great Broad

Peter Howe offered to alert CNP to the proposals for Hoveton Great Broad and seek their engagement in protecting access rights.

8 Broads Charitable Trust

The Trust was arranging to celebrate its 10th Anniversary at a get-together of business and projects involved. The income target had been set at £15,000. As reported at the last meeting, five grants totalling £8,000 had been made during the past year. The main problem was to secure funding for the Development Worker whose contract would end in 2015.

The Trust had entered the Broads Tourism Awards Scheme and had been included in the first ten in the categories for Best Marketing and Best Newcomer.

Peter Horsefield requested confirmation that the Lady Mayhew Bequest had been spent on administration only. This was confirmed.

9 Branding the Broads

A copy of the Consultation document and the paper submitted by John Packman to the Broads Authority had been circulated.

Before inviting members to comment individually on the proposals, the Chairman reported that he had consulted Richard Card, Chair of NSBA, who would be giving a cautious welcome to the proposal. The NSBA Committee had drafted a response which included the following points:

- Broad support but only if the BA could guarantee that this was the end of any further discussion of the Broads and National Park status.
- No change to legislation and removal of the topic from the BA agenda and future business plans.
- Retain special legal status and give equal weight to the three purposes.
- This must not be the thin end of the wedge towards transition to full National Park status. The BA must explicitly disavow this ambition.
- NSBA would support the concept of “a National Park Plus” and the potential for improved access.

Members commented as follows:

Keith Bacon would like the Broads to be recognised as a National Park. The cost would be minimal. The Broads Forum was in favour of the proposal by a majority of 3 to 1. The main reason for opposition by Forum members was that the aim was to support the tourist industry which was notorious for paying low wages and the fear that the initiative might encourage the “wrong” sort of tourist.

Peter Howe believed that if branding as a National Park helps the local economy the Society should support the proposal.

Jill Wickens was in favour. She was proud of the Broads and believed National Park status would attract visitors.

Richard Reid was in favour but only if appropriate safeguards were put in place to preserve all existing rights.

Colin Dye had already declared an interest as his business was dependent on tourism.

David Capp was concerned to ensure that money ring-fenced for navigation should be safeguarded.

Ian Masters had talked about the Broads all over the world and pointed out that they already had a unique reputation. He believed the Norfolk Broads were more important than just another National Park and was opposed to the re-branding.

Pat Simpson was not comfortable about the proposal to call the Broads something that it is not and asked whether the Tourist industry saw great advantage in re-branding. Speaking as someone involved in the industry, Colin Dye said that it did not.

Paul Savage wished to see the reasons for the differing legal advice as the Broads Society had not been allowed to see legal documents. He pointed out that it was important for the public to know how a public body conducts its business and the Broads Authority has an obligation to provide information on its business process. In his view, the current process was illegal. The Act of Parliament created a body to be known as "The Broads Authority" so how can it be known as something else.

Keith Bacon expressed the view that it was not the Society's business to lodge a legal challenge. If there was a legal reason why it should not be done DEFRA would prevent it going ahead. Paul Savage said it was the responsibility of Natural England to interact with DEFRA and proposed that a copy of the final response should be sent to them.

Peter Horsefield pointed out that the Broads as an entity was much older than the National Parks. The Broads should advertise itself as "more than a National Park".

Robin Godber summed up the discussion by saying that the response should encapsulate all the Society's concerns and present a clear statement of the reasons for its views.

A major concern was that it would be difficult to bind future regimes to conditions stipulated at this point in time.

Robin Godber undertook to put together a draft based on all that had been discussed incorporating all the concerns expressed and invited Trustees to submit further thoughts to him by email. He would send the completed draft to all Trustees for comment.

David Capp said that the response should reflect the feelings expressed and represent the Society's integrity. He suggested that the response should be

shared with the wider membership and the Chairman undertook to include a brief summary at the AGM.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking members for their participation in a considered and thoughtful debate.

10 Broads Authority Statement of Community Involvement

It was agreed that there was no need to submit a response. The Administrator was asked to email the Broads Authority that the Society had no comments.

11 Broads Heritage Boats – Scheme for Exemption from Tolls

A paper by Colin Dye and Robin Godber had been circulated. It was agreed to deal with this issue at the next meeting. David Capp and Colin Dye would prepare a more detailed proposal for a letter to the BA and other organisations.

12 Broads Forum

The main topic had been the consultation on Branding the Broads.

13 Publicity and Promotion

The team was currently planning for 2015.

14 Harnser

Nothing to report.

15 Anglia Afloat

Richard Reid, the Society's correspondent, was uncertain as to whether the November issue had yet been published. In the January issue he proposed to report on the AGM talk by Robin Page and suggested a report on the discussion on Branding at this evening's meeting. Hoveton Great Broad was another topical subject.

If, at the next meeting, the Committee agreed to make representations for the exemption of Heritage Boats from tolls, Anglia Afloat would provide an opportunity to elicit wider support.

16 Website

There was nothing to report.

17 Issues of Concern

17.1 Pylons – Lowestoft to Norwich
Nothing to report.

17.2 Solar Farm Development
The Society continued to maintain a watching brief.

- 17.3 Water – Ski-ing and management issues
Nothing to report
- 17.4 River Chet
Nothing further to report.
- 17.5 Water Quality
Martin George's recent comments had been ignored by the Broads Authority.
- 17.6 Climate Change Adaptation
Nothing to report.

17.7 Acle Straight

Robin Godber had attended a fourth meeting of Stakeholders. The Acle straight appears to be the most expensive element in the dualling the A47 and no firm proposals had yet been developed other than the possibility of introducing double white lines. The Broads Society would continue to ensure that its views were taken into account and Robin would be attending the next Stakeholder meeting to be held in February. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement should give further details and the 2015 General Election (in) were likely to have an impact on any decision to proceed.

17.8 Norfolk Hub and the Norwich Northern Distributor Road

(NDR)
An extract from the Report on the Implications for European Sites had been circulated.

18 Rivers Sub-Committees

- 18.1 Northern Rivers Sub-Committee (NRS-C)
The minutes of the meeting of 13 October had been circulated. Paul Savage drew attention to three items:
- Cess Staithe – application by Martham Boatyard to divert the public footpath which would prevent access to the path from Cess (Minute 3.1)
 - Members' boat trip (Minute 8.1).
 - Correspondence with a member of the public about a planning application (Minute 9.4).

18.2 Southern Rivers Sub-Committee (SRS-C)

The minutes of the meeting of 29 October had been circulated. Robin Godber highlighted the Sub-Committee's deliberations concerning a planning application to install mooring pontoons along River Waveney frontage to St Olaves.

19 A.O.B

David Capp reported that Broadsword had lost another volunteer.

20 Date of Next Meeting

AGM Saturday 22 November 2014
Meetings dates for 2015 to be agreed after the AGM.

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

Signed
Chairman

Date