

NEWS and VIEWS OF THE BROADS AUTHORITY

by Vic Standley

This article covers two meetings of the Authority
on 15th May
and 10th July 2015,
the Agenda papers for which, plus those for the various
Committees and Forums, can be found on
www.broads-authority.gov.uk

A routine-business quarter with the “Local Listing” of Heritage properties the most interesting new item.

**

Appointment of 2 co-opted members from Navigation Committee. (BA May agenda item 3 & BA Min 6/3.) Mr. Michael Whitaker and Mr. James Knight, who had been nominated by the Navigation Committee, were appointed to the full Authority for the forthcoming year.

Items from Minutes of meeting on 20th March, 2015 (BA May agenda item 7,)

- Annual Open Day scheduled for 27th June
- Staff leaving the Authority:
 - Hilary Frantzen, Press Officer after 15 years; Lynda Smith, Planning Dept. after 18 years; Jane Bryant, Human Resources, after 20 years; John Organ, Head of Governance, after 7 years. All were warmly thanked by the Chairman and Members for their efforts.
- This was the last meeting for the following 4 Members whose period of appointment had ended: Julie Broieck-Coulton, John Sharpe, David Broad, Phil Ollier - as well as the Chairman, Dr. Stephen Johnson.
- The appointment of an interim Chairman and Vice-Chairman until July became necessary and was covered in the last issue i.e. Prof. Jackie Burgess and Sir Peter Dixon respectively. Elections to these posts for the

following year would take place at the July 2015 meeting.

- **Disposal of Geldeston Woodland – correction.** (Min 5/14)

I regret that an error occurred in the last issue when I wrongly reported that this piece of woodland had been sold to the landlord of the Geldeston Locks Public House. It wasn't.

The Minutes were not available at the time the piece was written and it turned out that, while the Officers made this recommendation, Members did not support it. By 10 votes to 2 and 5, abstentions they decided to “sell” the land to the River Waveney Trust for £1 so that continued public access to the site could be assured, with the proviso that the BA should have first refusal at the same figure if and when the Trust wished to sell it.

Breydon Water Skiing and Wakeboarding Review. (BA May agenda item 11 and Min. 6/11)

A 12-page report by the Head of Safety Management reviewed the results of a recreational wakeboarding trial on Breydon.

The Authority agreed formally to designate the existing zone for water skiing and wakeboarding without any additional controls subject to a further Public Consultation on this matter as recommended by the Navigation Committee and the Water Ski Panel.

The Navigation Committee had been considered this matter at its April meeting (Nav. Min 5/11) and, when making its recommendation, had commented that the general opinion was that these activities had never in the past been an issue and there was no reason to change the formal arrangements.

Health & Safety (BA May Agenda no 12 and Minute 6/12)

Another report by the Head of Safety Management recommended the adoption of an Integrated Safety Management System to all land owned by the BA; the proposed scheme is based on the principles of the Port Marine Safety Code that already applies to

water areas. The priorities for action were agreed including a Tree Safety Management System.

The annual **Marine Incident Statistics** for 2014-15 were also published. An increased use of lifejackets by holidaymakers was noted. The main area of concern continues to be the injuries sustained by boat users while embarking or disembarking although the number requiring hospital treatment was slightly down on the previous year. Boat fires continued to be at a low level and those that were reported occurred in boats that had a Safety Certificate.

A total of seven deaths were noted – two boat-related and five not boat-related. The main cause, unsurprisingly perhaps, was drowning. Of the two related to boating, one involved a houseboat and the other was noted as being the unfortunate result of a visit to a night-club – presumably as the victim tried to board his moored boat.

The other five involved people who died in remote places or after falling from a quay.

The overall conclusion was that, taking the volume of use into account, the Broads remain a safe place for boating. Nevertheless, the Authority, in association with boating firms and other organisations, is to continue its “Wear it” (lifejacket) campaign.

Navigation Committee 23rd April (BA May agenda item 19)

Mr. Michael Whitaker was elected as interim Chairman until 13th May consequent upon the conclusion of Mr. David Broad's term of office. (Min 5/2)

Strategic Direction. (BA July agenda item 10)

It is timely now to record the progress being made with the current Broads Plan as steps to replace it with a new one in 2017 are under way.

The BA uses a suite of strategic priorities and related projects for each year of the Plan, and Members receive a ‘Strategic Direction’ report at each meeting.

The current Priorities are listed as:

- Broads Plan Review;
- Broads Landscape Partnership;
- Hickling Broad Enhancement;
- Promoting the Broads;
- Stakeholder Action Plan.

Some of the projects associated with them have been commented upon in *News and Views* and it is pleasing to note that, at the April meeting of the Broads Forum, the Chief Executive reported that all had either been achieved or were on-course to do so in the next eighteen months.

Examples of some of the more notable projects pursued under the current Plan are:

- the submission, on 27th May, of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £3m Landscape Partnership Scheme ;
- Rebranding ‘The Broads’ to ‘The Broads National Park’ – whether one approves of that change or not;
- Setting up Parish Forums.

Regarding the Stakeholder Action Plan, presumably the recent Survey came under that heading, and the report states that a meeting with the Broads Hire Boat Federation was scheduled for June 20th – Hire Operators, it will be remembered were found by the Survey to be least satisfied with the Authority.

As far as Hickling is concerned, a “refreshed vision statement” is due in September 2015 and other ‘significant milestones’ will be passed in 2016.

Whitlingham Charitable Trust (BA July agenda item12.)

Because of the formal links between the Trust and the BA, the Trust’s Byelaws – already in force and reported in *News and Views* some time ago - are legally regarded as those of the Broads Authority which is also responsible for their proper enforcement.

The Report sets out in some detail the relationship between the Trust and the BA and both with the Solicitors, “NP Law”. It also sets out the formal Prosecution Policy to be adopted including the recommendation that the Head of Ranger Services should also become the Enforcement Officer for the Byelaws.

Local List Adoption: Waterside Chalets (BA July agenda item 13)

‘Local Lists’ are a relatively new idea instituted under the Localism Act. They are based on the National Lists of protected buildings with which we are more familiar, but will not confer statutory protection as does national listing.

Instead, buildings on the Local List will be linked to the Local Development Plan and thus acknowledge that they are of special importance to local people.

Listing does not require the consent of the owner although they were informed of the proposals and invited to comment prior to formal proceedings.

The first list of 58 Waterside Chalets was considered by the Planning Committee which used the following criteria to select the properties that should be protected:

Age, Integrity; Historic Association; Architectural/Aesthetic value; Evidential value; Social value; Landscape status, and Group Value.

This allowed a “cherry picking” approach to the many extant Chalets on the Broads with a few examples in many Parishes rather than an iconic range of buildings such as those lining the banks of the R. Thurne on the down-river side of Potter Heigham bridge.

Of the owners contacted by the BA, 17 Positive responses were received, 3 were Negative, and 1 Neutral; 37, did not respond at all.

The locations and numbers of properties are:

Acle 1; Belaugh 1; Brundall 2; Coltishall 2 (Boatshed and Kiosk); Horning 15; Hoveton 3; Hickling 8 (including an Eel Set); Irstead 1 (Ice House); Martham 1; Oulton Broad 1; South Walsham 3; Thurne Dyke 2; Thurne/Potter 9; Wroxham 9.

The Financial Implications of this project include £50 per property to produce a plaque for attachment to each property and Officer Time in compiling the list and subsequent administration.

It will be interesting to see if any other properties in this class will be considered at some future date – particularly as the first Broads Authority took such a different view of the Potter Heigham chalets 33 years ago when, under a village restoration plan, it would happily have seen them demolished.

Other classes of property can, of course, be considered under this scheme.

Annual Report of Broads Local Access Forum (BA July agenda item 16.)

This attractively designed Annual report for 2015 can be viewed on the BA website.

The report summarises the Forum's legal background as a statutory adviser to the Authority, its Vision, the topics on which it gave advice to the BA - each assigned a one-line statement such as "Coastal Access" - as well as outline details Consultations and the names of other organisations with which it was involved over the past year.

There is also a potted biography of each of Forum members including their contact details – a useful feature for anyone who wishes to raise an access issue.

Broads Forum - April meeting (BA July agenda item 19.)

Dr. Keith Bacon was appointed as Chairman for the forthcoming year, and Mr. Michael Flett, Vice-Chairman.

-Broadsbeat (Minute 4/7)."

This is the specialist unit of the Norfolk Police Authority responsible for the Broads waterways and Members received a Presentation on its activities entitled "Theft in the Broads and the role of Broadsbeat".

In answer to subsequent questions, the Minute records:

- their day to day activities were sponsored although salaries were paid from the Police budget; they had not, therefore, suffered so much from budget cuts as would otherwise have been the case;
- the team has, *intrrt alia*, a close working relationship with Suffolk Police;
- they were generally on top of crimes committed locally but, surprisingly, were struggling with that organised abroad as intelligence sharing with Interpol and other Police Forces had been difficult. No details were given in the Minures and one wonders just what organised international criminal acts are being perpetrated on the quiet waterways of the Broads!

-Broads Heritage Boats (Minute 4/8)

The Society's Chairman, Mr. Robin Godber, presented a discussion paper which, *inter alia*, proposed reduced tolls or toll exemption for classic and heritage wooden boats built locally before the beginning of the second World War. The idea was to support the owners of such vessels in order to preserve them for as long as possible. He also suggested a levy on large, twin-engined boats – which, he believed, damaged riverbanks - as a way of offsetting the resultant funding loss to the BA.

Although, after discussion, Forum members were sympathetic to the notion of preserving such boats for as long as possible, they did not believe that the proposals were the right way forward.

-A47 dualling Acle Straight– (Chief Executive's report, item 3, April Forum agenda item 10.)

Dualling the A47 has been included in the National Road Improvement Strategy of Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) which includes both the Acle Straight, the section of the A47 between Brundall and North Burlingham and the Vauxhall roundabout at Gt. Yarmouth.

Norfolk County Council has indicated that improving the Acle Straight is one of their top priorities in the next five-year period.

While work is expected to be completed at some point soon after 2021, developmental planning should begin fairly quickly.

However, since the Broads Forum met the Eastern Daily Press (11/7/2015\0 published a report which speculated that progress may be delayed yet again because a rare colony of tiny snails have taken up residence alongside the Acle Straight.

It is not known whether they are an invasive specises, illegal immigrants that have evaded the watchful eyes of Broadsbeat and Interpol, or just an unexpected consequence of rebranding to attract more visitors to the Broads National Plark.

Abbreviations used:

BA = Broads Authority.