

Broads Authority

29 November 2024

Agenda item number 23

Member report on outside bodies- Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

Report by Paul Hayden

Purpose

Members appointed by the Authority to outside bodies are required to submit a written report on the organisation's work and activities.

Broads Plan context

The work of the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust supports the following Broads Authority Themes:

- A – responding to climate change and flood risk;
- B – improving landscapes for biodiversity and agriculture;
- D – protecting landscape character and the historic environment; and
- F – promoting understanding and enjoyment.

Recommended decision

Members to note the current fundraising operations and projects, and consider ways in which they might support the Broads Trust in its ongoing development

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1. Function and purpose of the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust

- 1.1. The Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust – more commonly known simply as ‘The Broads Trust’ was established in 2008 to support Broads-based bodies, including the Broads Authority, Broads Society, and other Broads Based stakeholders. As a registered charity the primary role of the Broads Trust is to act as an enabling body to access charitable fund-raising and grant aided support to promote the conservation of the Broads and the well-being of the people who live in, work in, or visit this unique area.
- 1.2. In accordance with its charitable objectives, projects supported by the Broads Trust will be expected to contribute to one or more of the following aims:
 - protect biodiversity
 - conserve and enhance the natural environment, including its wildlife
 - provide appropriate facilities for residents and visitors
 - maintain and improve the navigable waterways of the Broads
 - promote the responsible use of land and water resources
 - interpret the unique ecosystem that is the Broads
 - create educational resources to promote better understanding
 - inform and engage the interest of young people
 - sustain community life in the Broads area
 - maintain the cultural heritage of the Broads area
 - address the local consequences of climate change.
- 1.3. The Broads Trust raises funds to distribute to appropriate projects within the area, including projects brought forward by the Broads Society, and other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Funding for public bodies or private entities, including the Broads Authority, is only provided for added value projects that assist in delivery of our charitable aims, and not for work towards delivery of their own statutory duties. All projects, including those carried out on private land, will be required to demonstrate public benefit.

2. Current fundraising operations and projects

Local partnerships

- 2.1. Since COVID, the Trust has experienced a decline in both visitor giving income and sponsorship received from local businesses. The Trust is also mindful of the guidance set out in the Glover Landscapes Review of 2019, pp 143-4, where the observation is made that there should be “an ambitious commercial and philanthropic programme of

fundraising within National Parks, but this has been hampered by a failure of coordination, ambition and expertise". In response to both of these challenges, the Broads Trust Business Plan set out an ambition to operate more strategically, working in partnership with similar organisations in the delivery of shared charitable objectives and to enhance administrative and operational efficiencies, where appropriate.

2.2. Discussions with the Broads Society highlighted that the objectives of the Broads Trust and Broads Society are highly aligned and provide the basis for a long-term strategic partnership that can help to coordinate philanthropic activities across the Broads and to share and build up capacity and expertise. That partnership is based on acknowledgement of the existing structure, resources, strengths, and expertise, of each partner, in that:

- **The Broads Trust** is focused on raising funds that can be allocated to delivery of its charitable objectives. It is not an operational or membership organisation and has a limited number of volunteers. It primarily uses funds from its visitor giving scheme and other fund-raising activities to provide grants to external bodies that deliver action on the ground. Its Trustees form a Board responsible for day-to-day management and operation of the Trust. It has a wide supporter base and issues regular newsletters and arranges promotional events to inform supporters and others of its activities and the grants it awards.
- **The Broads Society** is a membership and campaigning organisation with a wide membership, volunteer, and supporter base. In addition to its campaigning role as "the voice of the Broads", it delivers projects on the ground, organises events, and regularly publishes information related to the Broads. It is currently transitioning into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and has delegated responsibility for various projects to sub-committees. It funds its activities through membership fees and other means but is not primarily a fund-raising organisation.

2.3. A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been developed by the Broads Trust and Society to guide future partnership arrangements. The MoU was agreed by the Broads Society on 11 November 2024, and it is anticipated that it will be agreed by the Broads Trust on 25 November 2024. One of the first partnership activities under the new MoU will be to identify opportunities to link a revised Visitor Giving Scheme operated by the Broads Trust to the volunteer program, Broads Guardians, being launched by the Broads Society.

Visitor Giving Scheme – Love the Broads

2.4. The Broads Trust recognises that our unique Broads wetlands, their wonderful wildlife, and around 125 miles of waterways draw millions of visitors every year and in addition to providing recreation for local people, support a diverse tourism economy. However, those visitors also impact on the environment and facilities upon which local people and tourism businesses rely. In an effort to mitigate the impact of tourism on the local

environment, and to improve access for visitors, the Broads Trust established a visitor giving scheme under the branding of "[Love the Broads](#)".

- 2.5. A recent review of the visitor giving scheme has identified a need to refocus fundraising and provide greater line of sight between monies donated and impacts delivered. Review of the approaches taken in other National Parts has identified some good examples on which to build, including from the Lakes National Park where visitors can donate toward delivery of specific projects and activities, many of which are delivered on the ground by local volunteers.
- 2.6. Strategic partnership with the Broads Society provides an opportunity for the Trust to support the Society in establishment of the new "Broads Guardians" Program to coordinate the wide range of volunteer activities within the Broads, including those undertaken by Society Members and volunteers. The Trust will also work with the Society to identify and then financially support specific projects in the Broads that will be delivered by volunteers under the Broads Guardians Program.
- 2.7. A separate business partnership program is also being developed, with work looking at ways in which specific projects of direct benefit to local businesses might be funded and delivered; for example in terms of improved access and facilities, or helping businesses to offset the environmental impact of their operation.

Discovery Hubs

- 2.8. The idea of establishing a network of Discovery Hubs around the whole Broads area was conceived early in 2019. The concept of these Hubs was described as:

"A Discovery Hub could be a destination in itself, a starting point for exploration and a point on the network of boating, walking and cycling routes. It would be a physical structure in keeping with the landscape with sensitive branding which would provide views of the surrounding landscape, information about the locality, historical and cultural information and space for relaxation. It might or might not have road or vehicular access. Wherever possible it would have wi-fi or data connections."
- 2.9. Hubs in operation include the Beccles Discovery Hub at Beccles Staithe, the Great Yarmouth Seafront Discovery Hub adjacent to the Sea Life centre, and the Salhouse Hub. Work is ongoing to evaluate options and secure funding for additional hubs in various locations across the Broads area, with discussions and negotiations at various stages of maturity. Potential sites under evaluation include Great Yarmouth Railway Station, Potter Heigham, Stalham, Whitlingham Broad, and Pyes Mill Loddon.

Large scale projects

- 2.10. Responsibility for protecting and enhancing the unique and special environment of the Suffolk and Norfolk Broads rests with multiple public authorities, organisations, communities and businesses. Both public authorities and private businesses have their own funding streams that can be used to assist in delivery of projects that benefit the environment of the broads and to enhance visitor access and experiences. However, it

can be challenging for those organisations to access other forms of external funding such as sponsorship, grants, and charitable donations.

- 2.11. One of the original drivers for establishment of the Broads Trust in 2008 was to address this challenge by creating an independent charitable trust to act as a partner in grant applications, or to provide a vehicle through which external funding could be attracted to the Broads area. The Glover Landscapes Review of 2019 reiterated the value of such a body.
- 2.12. The Trust's medium term business plan sets out a target for the Trust to return to its original founding principles and to actively seek out opportunities to partner with statutory authorities such as the Broads Authority (and indeed, any other local authority) and others to draw down government or charitable grants. The Trust stands ready to act as a charitable partner in any projects that draw down external funding to deliver benefits aligned to our charitable objectives, which were themselves designed to align with the Broads Authority objectives.
- 2.13. To deliver the Trust's change program and develop large-scale projects, the Trust is actively seeking additional Trustees that can bring the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to grow the charity's income and help to renew and strengthen relationships with our founding partners and other local stakeholders.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Broads Authority Members are asked to consider ways in which they might support the Broads Trust in its ongoing development, either in a voluntary capacity, or by assisting the Trust to attract high calibre Trustees and volunteers that can help us take the organisation forward.
- 3.2. Broads Trust would also welcome the opportunity to work with partners to identify and draw down external funding for delivery of projects that deliver mutual benefits and align with our charitable objectives. Broads Authority Members can assist the Broads Trust by communicating this message and offer of support to any partner organisations with which they are associated.

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[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: A, B, D, F