

Broads Local Access Forum

05 June 2024

Agenda item number 6

Broads Local Access Forum Annual Report 2023-2024 (BLAF consultation draft)

Report by Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary

This report is an initial consultation of the Broads Local Access Forum annual report content for the year April 2023 to March 2024. This report is to be reviewed and any comments are invited from BLAF members, prior to final pdf production and reporting to the Broads Authority at its AGM in July.

Recommendation

To review the content of the draft annual report of the Broads Local Access Forum for the year April 2023 – March 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1. The statutory purpose of the Broads Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established by the Broads Authority in 2003, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Act states that the purpose of the Forum is to be a statutory advisory body to provide guidance and advice to the Broads Authority and other organisations on the improvement of public access within the Broads, and to contribute to opportunities for open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. In providing advice, the Forum will have regard to:

- The needs of land management

- The conservation of the natural beauty of the area
 - The management and maintenance of recreational access whilst balancing this against the needs of nature conservation, agriculture, the interests of landowners and managers, navigation and countryside management projects within the Broads.
- 1.2. The Forum’s Vision - The Broads is an unrivalled wetland of natural diversity, heritage and special character. It is a place where people come to explore, enjoy, and find spiritual refreshment. Access to the Broads should be clear and easy to use, respectful of wildlife and land management, meet users’ needs and promote responsible and harmonious behaviour. The Broads Local Access Forum will champion access improvements and management, represent a wide range of interests and contribute to sustainability for the environment, communities and the economy.

2. What has happened during the year 2023-24

- 2.1. The forum delivered its purpose in several ways between April 2023 and March 2024:
- i. The Forum met four times between April 2023 and March 2024. Three online and one in person at Hoveton Village Hall.
 - ii. The Forum reviewed and commented on the Integrated Access Strategy.
 - iii. The Forum has worked with Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council to identify “Paths Lost to the River.”
 - iv. The Forum placed continued pressure on The Broads Authority to not lose sight of the importance of water quality monitoring on the Broads, particularly around bacteriological risks to human health. They also had a presentation, and question and answer session with Richard Cooper from University of East Anglia on “Water Quality Monitoring in the Broads.”
 - v. The Forum supported parishes in the quest for pedestrianisation of bridges and reinstatement of footpaths.
 - vi. The Forum provided representation and guidance at the Norfolk Local Access Forum.
 - vii. Received reports from Broads Authority Officers relating to projects in the Broads executive area.

3. Advising The Broads Authority and other bodies

- 3.1. A representative from Norfolk County Council regularly provided relevant project updates including the County Wide Local Walking Cycling Infrastructure Plan.
- 3.2. Campaign for National Parks presented their campaign for more public access in National Parks.

- 3.3. Andrew Farrell, Programme Manager for the Broads Authority updated the forum on Water Mills and Marshes Access and Accessibility.
- 3.4. The Broads Society presented their Broads Countryside Code.

4. Working in Partnership

- 4.1. The forum worked in partnership with:
 - Norfolk County Council
 - Norfolk Local Access Forum
 - University of East Anglia
 - Environment Agency

5. Who makes up the Broads Local Access Forum?

- 5.1. At the August 2023 meeting the Chair was reappointed unanimously.

- 5.2. **Chair: Keith Bacon** – Catfield
Representing archaeology and landscape heritage

Richard Atkins – Surlingham
Representing paddle sports and walking

Harry Blathwayt – Ludham
Representing the Broads Authority

Christine Cane – Wymondham
Representing equestrian riding and driving

Peter Dixon – Hickling
Representing the Broads Authority

Geoff Doggett – Harleston
Representing waterborne recreation and nature conservation

Tony Gibbons – Sprowston
Representing angling

Tim Harris – Catfield
Representing nature conservation, archaeology, and landscape heritage

Alison Holden-Standley – Sea Palling
Representing people with disabilities and access for all

Duncan Holmes – Salhouse
Representing waterborne recreation and angling

Kate Leonard – Norwich

Representing walking and waterborne recreation

David Lilley – Oulton Broad

Representing angling and walking

Peter Mason – Catfield

Representing Walking, tourism and local business

Joe Mitchell – Catfield

Representing Landowners and Managers, and nature conservation

Steve Read – Oulton Broad

Representing walking and waterborne recreational users

Deborah Wicks – Norwich

Representing people with disabilities, access for all and educational establishments

Christopher Yardley – Ingworth

Representing waterborne recreational users and nature conservation

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