

**Review of Consultative Arrangements and
Community and Stakeholder Engagement**
Report by Director of Planning and Strategy

Summary: This report advises Forum members of the progress made to date on the Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community and Stakeholder Engagement. It seeks members' views on a range of options that have emerged through the work undertaken to date, including the Workshop held on 3 October and the subsequent deliberations of the Member Working Group on 15 October.

The output from this meeting will be fed into the deliberations of the Member Working Group and ultimately the Broads Authority in January 2013. The views of Forum members are invited on the suggestions set out in Sections 3 and 4 of this report.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Broads Forum members may recall that, at their last meeting on 19 July, they considered the effectiveness of the Broads Authority's consultative arrangements and ideas for how these could be improved. Members concentrated largely on the Forum itself, and the write-up of the session is attached for information at Appendix A. A number of Forum members also took part in a telephone survey with independent consultants, commissioned by the Broads Authority, looking into the issues of consultation, decision making, stakeholder engagement and community engagement.
- 1.2 Following this, all members of the Broads Forum were invited to a workshop on 3 October where the results of the telephone survey, together with other work carried out with parishes and staff, and research from other public bodies, was discussed. The output from this workshop, which was facilitated by independent consultants, is attached at Appendix B. Following the workshop, the Member Working Group established to consider these issues arising from this review process met on 15 October to consider the findings to date.

2 Key Issues Emerging

- 2.1 There are three common areas of focus emerging through the review process. These are:
 - The effectiveness of the consultative committees e.g Broads Forum, Broads Local Access Forum, Navigation Committee.

- Role of Members – this includes Broads Authority members as well as members of the consultative committees.
- Engagement with local communities.

2.2 These areas are addressed in turn in this report and a number of key issues listed for Broads Forum members to consider at today's meeting.

3 Consultative Committees

3.1 The Broads Forum has been the key focus for comment to date. No strong views have been expressed about the Navigation Committee or the Broads Local Access Forum.

3.2 The role and membership of the Broads Forum has generated considerable interest, not just from its own members but more widely amongst parishes. The views of Forum members on the following options are invited:

(1) **Chair:**

To be elected annually from within the Broads Forum Membership. Consideration will need to be given to the electorate – i.e all represented groups or just Forum members?

(2) **Broads Forum Members:**

(a) Raise profile of Forum members to Broads Forum groups and the wider community:

- (i) Member profiles - e.g leaflet/webpage – “Who’s who” of Broads Forum Members.
- (ii) Broad Forum Webpage - Publish meeting timetables, how to know what’s on the agenda, how to get feedback, how to attend meetings, how to put items on the agenda.
- (iii) Standing item to raise general parish issues by parish council reps.

(b) Improve system of two-way communication between Forum Members and their constituent groups:

- (i) Attendance – “3 strikes and out” rule for members.
- (ii) All groups to be asked to nominate a correspondent with whom the Forum member will liaise on a regular basis.

(c) Encourage Forum members to take more ownership of agenda:

- (i) Timetable of meetings sent to all groups (via leaflet/weblink).
- (ii) Agenda deadlines set to allow members time to inform and consult with their constituent groups.
- (iii) Forum members to determine the appropriate balance of discussion items and “for information” items.
- (iv) Forum members to be canvassed on concept of attending/hosting site visits (linked to agenda items).

- (v) Meeting formats, timings and venues to be varied according to issues under discussion, e.g, use of workshops, site visits, evening meetings.
- (vi) More equitable split of agenda items between those generated by Broads Forum members and those from the Broads Authority, e.g 50:50.

4 Community Engagement

4.1 A vast range of ideas is emerging on how the Broads Authority can improve its community engagement. These are still being worked into more formal options that the Broads Authority will consider in January 2013. However, some popular ideas include the following:

- (a) Parish/Community forums on a geographical basis, grouping parishes together, e.g. by river valleys; at least two per year in each area, held in local venues.
- (b) Residents publication/newsletter - email or print.
- (c) Potential for an “online discussion forum” for Broads Forum and wider community.
- (d) Parish/Community pages on Broads Authority website.
- (e) Focus/consultation group similar to Citizen’s Panel, e.g, “Your Voice” run by Norfolk County Council.

The views of Broads Forum members on these ideas are also welcomed.

Author: Andrea Long
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Appendices: APPENDIX A – Workshop Notes from Broads Forum meeting
19 July 2012
APPENDIX B- Notes from Workshop held 3 October 2012

**Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community Engagement
Broads Forum Workshop (July 2012)**

As part of its review of consultative arrangements, the Broads Authority held a workshop with the Broads Forum on 19 July 2012. Working in four groups, members were asked to consider the effectiveness of the Authority's regular consultative committees – Navigation Committee, Broads Local Access Forum, and in particular the Broads Forum. Discussion was based around the following questions, with each group feeding back key points:

- Does the current structure of consultative committees give appropriate weight and voice to all interests and do you have ideas about how it can be improved?
- How effectively do members of the Forum represent the interests and concerns of all of the Forum's stakeholder interest groups?
- What could be done to encourage Forum members to take a more active role?
- Is the fixed timetable, round table committee format the most effective consultation mechanism?

Group A

The Forum does try to be comprehensive, but some groups (e.g. Upper Thurne, Barton Broad, Yare Users and skiers) are not represented as well as they could be.

It is difficult to get everyone's views, so should some groups focus specifically on particular items of business?

At the Forum, not everyone engages, so perhaps better engagement could be secured by splitting into smaller groups – this style has worked particularly well in this context today.

The interests represented at the Forum do get their voices heard, but are the issues raised really dealt with? We need a more robust way of following up on the issues.

There should be more consultation with BA volunteers, who are an interest group in their own right. It has been muted that the volunteers have a representative on the Forum – is this still possible?

The Forum agenda tends to be 75% Authority, 25% members – can the balance shift to become more in favour of members, and if so how?

Group B

Interest groups on the Forum are appropriately identified – there are a few concerns that the right groups are not represented at the right time.

There could be a better flow and links for information to travel between different sectors of interest. We need to look at how information is cascaded to the groups we represent

The wider the group of people involved in the Forum, the better informed it will be – how can this be achieved?

Attendance at the Forum is patchy – we need to find out why this is and try to improve coverage of interest groups; re-launch the Forum? It's a possible way forward to replicate the BA system where if members fail to attend for a certain number of meetings they lose their place.

Members need to take responsibility and ownership of the agenda – could different interest groups give presentations? Take more ownership of the Forum back to the groups it represents.

The Forum could gather more summaries of views from other groups' websites, minutes and agendas.

It is dominated by strong voices, but does that make it effective?

Members need to be clear why they are at the Forum, and get actively engaged. Perhaps an induction would be a suitable way to ensure members are more readily prepared and engaged?

Group C

The balance of interests on the Forum is good – there is no need for other specialist groups (e.g. Environment Committee).

Representation is good – if people turn up. This needs more active management.

More needs to be given to a cascading structure, with a flow of information out from the Forum to Parish Councils and other groups; some formalising of this structure might improve matters – e.g. a nominated correspondent for each group. All groups should get Forum agendas.

There is weighting of business from the BA, but where the Forum wants something discussed they can get it on the agenda and this needs to be highlighted.

An online Forum is not favoured - it is not a user friendly way to engage, and could encourage negativity.

Group D

We need to get a mix of views at the Forum to prevent the feeling that others are better represented.

Interaction and the flow of information have to come from bottom up.

If members of the public come to the Forum, they should get the chance to speak; the public should be made more welcome.

To whom and how do the representative groups report?

The Chair of the Forum needs to stimulate grass roots to encourage the emergence of key issues and take ownership of directing the flow of information. The Chair ought to be neutral, independent and from outside

It's worth varying the format of the meeting according to need, as it was today.

Is the BA website user-friendly enough?

Broads Authority Governance:
Review of Consultative Arrangements and Community Engagement
Report of workshop held on 3 October 2012

Note:

This report is a transcript of the live flipchart recording undertaken during the meeting in full view of all participants, by the independent facilitators 3KQ. Whilst during the transcription of the flipcharts we have added occasional words to make it more readable and accessible, we have not changed the meaning of any of the comments. It is meant as an aide-memoire for participants rather than a definitive record of every detail of the meeting.

Attendees:**Broads Authority Members** (*denotes member of Navigation Committee)

Sholeh Blane*	Michael Jeal
David Broad *	J Stephen Johnson
Jackie Burgess	Alan S Mallett*
Colin Gould	Guy McGregor
Murray Gray	Phil Ollier*

Broads Forum

Keith Bacon	Bryan Read
Brian Barker	Richard Starling
Simon Daniels	Hugh Tusting
Mike Evans	Richard Card
Michael Flett	Martin George (apologies)
Philip Pearson	

Broads Local Access Forum

Stephen Read
Ray Walpole

Broads Authority Staff

John Packman	John Organ
Andrea Long	Maria Conti
Trudi Wakelin	Julie Lawrence
Rob Holman	

Independent Facilitators

Jenny Willis (3KQ)
Rowena Harris (3KQ)

Introduction

Andrea Long explained the review process so far, which has included:

- Telephone interviews carried out by 3KQ
- Parish council questionnaire
- BA staff interviews
- Broads Forum workshop discussions
- Research among National Park Authorities and Port Authorities

Information from these activities was collated in a 'feedback summary report' and sent to participants for their consideration before the workshop. It was explained that the review process is ongoing, with this workshop being another opportunity to feed information to the Member Working Group that will meet to consider recommendations for action. The first meeting of the Member Working Group will be on 15 October 2012.

Summary of key findings

Jenny Willis introduced the main points from the research outlined above, which included:

- Missed opportunities for early consultation
- Inadequate feedback about how responses have been considered
- Suggestion that challenges as well as good news should be shared
- Some respondents felt that there was a rather top down approach to decision making
- Some respondents identified particular groups whose expertise they felt was under-utilised, e.g. BA members and volunteers
- There was very positive feedback about operational staff from all stakeholder groups
- People were generally complimentary about the clarity of written communication
- Statutory consultations were felt to be particularly effective
- There was a perception that the Authority has been listening more in recent years, for example the integrated access strategy where stakeholders were consulted at an early stage about the scope of the study itself

There were a number of points made in relation to the findings so far:

- The possibility of tracking whether particular concerns related to specific stakeholder groups
- Concern was expressed about the low response rate of the Parish Council questionnaire (around 10%). Some people felt it was a reasonable response rate given the method and time constraints of parish clerks. Others thought the response rate should have been far higher.
- Participants questioned the reasons that people don't respond - is it because they are happy with things as they are? Is it apathy? How can we test this?
- In response to discussion about trying to find out more about what the general public think, some people questioned whether it would reveal 'anything new' and were concerned about the expense. Others did feel it was important.
- It was pointed out that a lot of informal engagement and consultation already goes on, e.g. BA members talking to people hiring boats on holiday, rangers, volunteers etc.

Current BA engagement methods were outlined as follows:

- Statutory and consultative committees
- One off/time limited events, e.g. workshops, displays, exhibitions
- Direct contact with members of staff
- Topic/area based working groups and panels
- Written communications
- Public meetings e.g. AGM
- Parish pop-ins – usually planning related
- Community events – schools weeks, road shows, super safety days, events
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Regular publications – printed and electronic
- Other electronic communications – websites, twitter, newsletters

The following points were made during a discussion about the various communication and engagement methods mentioned above:

- Methods need to be matched to the type/subject of consultation – form follows function
- Planning – the structure of planning hearings has been changed so that the case officer speaks first, then listens to views from members of the public. Members of the Planning Committee can, and do, overturn Case Officer recommendations from time to time.
- Importance of clear process
- Communication is part of good decision making. Consideration needs to be given to the extent to which different stakeholders can set the agenda.
- There is a need to be clear about any communication exercise
- Need to demonstrate if/how it has made a difference
- A concentric circle model was discussed:
 - Inside circle: decision making process based on deliberation
 - Next layer: 2-way communication – different methods
 - Outer layer: how the Authority communicates with the wider public
 - There is a need to define which people fit into which 'layer'
- Need to be clear about what is expected of people and what will come from the engagement
- It is good to follow up feedback from consultations (though there was a recognition that some issues could be resolved by early consultation).
- There is a need to get the balance right – there is a need for leadership. You can't consult everyone about everything. Recognition that there is professionalism and leadership amongst the BA staff and members, who should be allowed to make judgements and take decisions.
- A concern was expressed about the public perception of who the Authority is accountable to, in order to help people understand what areas the Authority can take action independently or otherwise.
- Parish Councils – suffer from consultation overload – it is difficult for Parish Clerks to respond to everything.
- There are three web forums which regularly discuss the work of the Broads Authority and have largely been 'taken over' by people who are very critical of the Authority. One participant asked if the Authority could consider setting up a public forum to explain its

position and correct misinformation – allow people to post comments and questions – moderate posts only for abuse

This discussion was summarised with the following points:

- There is a need for clear process, with easily explained rationale. There needs to be transparency and clarity about whether the Authority is consulting or not on any given area of work, if so:
 - Who should the Authority make contact with?
 - How should contact be made?
 - Over what time frame should the consultation take place? (consider starting as early as possible)

Participants were asked to envisage a ‘miracle day’ and to think about how they might know that things had changed.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Are there *too many* ways of communicating with people? Maybe there could be one newsletter with all the relevant information (electronic with option for printing some)
- People need to know to whom the BA is accountable – how could this happen?
- If everything was working well, less money would need to be spent on communication
- Would be useful to have a weekly email briefing to go to everyone, covering current activities and challenges
- Officers would receive calls which were constructively critical, not just critical
- A more diverse range of voices and resources to facilitate that (people/money/partnerships)
- Knowledge about how BA members spend their time/what their focus is
- Personal communications – one to one contact very welcome, e.g. phone calls/email
- All enforcement issues would be sorted!
- No need for more dredging!
- Lead members for various issues/areas would be publicised so people know which member to ‘nobble’
- Decisions being made without ‘drawing of teeth’
- Early notification of issues being considered
- BA to send more people on outreach visits to talk to people
- BA taking the best decisions for the Broads, harnessing the experience and knowledge of a wide range of interested stakeholders
- BA awarded a prize for being the best authority
- Letters from individuals/organisations offering support and help for the work of the BA

Participants placed post it notes on a scale to indicate how they saw the current situation regarding communication and engagement.

1 indicated that they thought it was poor, 10 = miracle day!



The photograph shows that most people placed post-its around 6-7.

- One participant felt that concern was expressed about the fact that members of the public were not represented at the workshop and was concerned that the working group which would consider the issues raised in this review will not meet in public.
- Some people don't have computers or may not be literate and need face to face support to be involved
- Another participant made the point that local councillors, such as those at the workshop, are elected to represent local communities and are involved as members of the Broads Authority
- Sometimes people are represented but direct contact is still important
- There is more scope for communication between Members and the public
- The intention is that all the information from the review will be in the public domain
- The timing of that should be considered – should be at the earliest opportunity if possible
- There is a danger of over-communicating. There is a need to think carefully about what type of communication is required
- Aspects of the BA's work are underpinned by other Government agencies, e.g. Defra and the Environment Agency. There is a need for a clearer picture to be communicated about who is responsible for what
- Examples were given from the National Farmers Union and Inland Waterways Association, who produce information sheets each week to say what's happening. There are links to more information on particular topics if required so people can select the level

of detail they want, with an 'opt in/out'. It was acknowledged that this would need someone to take responsibility for compiling the information and an idea was to ask NFU and the Inland Waterways Association how they organised this function.

- There was a confusion/lack of clarity amongst Parish Clerks about who is the appointed Authority Member for their area, and some confusion about the lead member areas of responsibility.
- BA to circulate to all Parishes the correct contact person for different topics, e.g. planning
- Broadcaster could include a questionnaire to offer a general chance for feedback
- 'Dales 500' citizens panel mentioned in the research from National Park Authorities – should BA consider a type of citizens panel to represent the general public and provide an opportunity to get involved?
- There is a need to 'take soundings' from time to time – option for a 'Friends of Broads' group?
- Could be virtual/digital or could be smaller but face to face
- Would be good to include people that don't usually come to meetings – maybe an idea to offer tokens or vouchers for taking part
- Representatives from such a group could become ambassadors for the Broads
- It would encourage involvement in civil society
- Important to have the involvement of people who have nothing to do with the Broads although they might live locally
- Meetings need to be held in different areas and should be more than once a year
- Current perception is that there is not much opportunity for the public to be involved
- If different things are tried they need to be advertised well
- Broads Local Access Forum had a successful 'rivers approach' based on river catchment areas – covered a range of issues from boating issues to shore opportunities. It is an example of a holistic approach based on any issue which may affect a certain area (regionalisation)
- Importance of feedback from any local engagement
- Different groups need to work out what is best for them – need to develop empowerment not just a talking shop
- Press articles are important for raising public awareness about what discussions are taking place
- There are a number of ways of reaching people who are already interested: Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association, Broads Society (1000 members). Some people live locally and some are further away
- Another communication avenue is the Harnser – a quarterly publication – possibility of survey opportunities?
- Would be good if there could be a cascading effect of information from the Authority out through communities, user groups

The Broads Forum was specifically discussed:

- 'organic' vs 'directed'
- How can BA be sure that representatives on the Broads Forum are sharing information with their stakeholders? – Could have a job description making it clear what is expected of Broads Forum members.

- The issue of an independent Chair was discussed
- The BA needs to look at the accountability of members of the Broads Forum
- Broads Local Access Forum: BA staff have welcomed input from members of the group. This has encouraged members to be proactive and offer assistance and support.
- The BLAF elects its own Chair, it is supported and facilitated by Officers, but the agenda is led by members.
- There was a general consensus that the quality of the person Chairing is more important than if they are elected/or not formally opposed
- Broads Forum – intended to have representatives from lots of different groups (20+); it was felt important to have an independent Chair.
- Could it be difficult to Chair and represent an interest when the Chair's role is to facilitate debate?
- BLAF shows that it can be done; it is possible to 'wear two hats'
- It is important for the Broads Forum to hear things in advance. Early communication allows suitable phasing of meetings for representative organisations
- Meetings during the working day – is this the best time? Could be alternated with early evening meetings?
- Agendas can be crowded – it needs to be made very clear about which items are for information as opposed to for discussion, and time during the meeting should concentrate on providing opportunities for discussion.
- It is important for BF members to work to keep their stakeholders engaged – cascading information up and down

A bigger question was asked: Does the Broads Forum need to exist in its current form?

- It needs thought on how to structure it
- How effective is the BA at understanding and acting on the viewpoints expressed by Broad Forum members? How can the Authority communicate this?
- Broads Forum is cited in other committees as agreeing or not agreeing with proposals – this is to give guidance about future action. Maybe there needs to be more sophisticated ways of 'taking the political temperature' for members.
- The Broads Forum shouldn't just be a 'hoop to jump through' – if there is more flexibility it could become more creative in the way that it works – more 'organic'
- Balance of how agenda items are decided for Broads Forum – sometimes it is difficult to get an item on the agenda
- BF has a consensus way of working – the success of this has been a good achievement, especially with the involvement of so many different groups
- Should there be a time limit on membership? Maybe, but it is good for people to carry on if they are effective members

Summary of issues raised during the discussion about the Broads Forum: there was a consensus in agreement for it to continue, but a need to examine the issues raised to seek ways of improving the way that the Forum works.

Discussion about the Annual Public Meeting

- 'General public' don't come – it tends to be mainly people representing boating interests. This is probably because they are paying tolls to the Authority and therefore have a strong interest. They are also well organised.
- How best to advertise the Annual Meeting so it is not 'hijacked'?
- Annual Meeting is a good opportunity to communicate about BA activities, an opportunity for people to get points across and a 'safety valve' for those who wish to use it for concerns.
- Issue of where to hold it – different venues and times have been tried, but so far with no dramatic effect on turn out and little evidence of more interest in the place where it's being held
- Should the Annual Meeting continue? View that it would be 'disastrous' not to hold it, but there could be changes to the structure and maybe other open public events.
- Time could be allocated to different topics and interests
- Chance for Members to show what they are accountable for – it shouldn't just be staff. Need to look for a balance of input from Members and staff
- There is a perception that BA is officer run, so Members need to demonstrate their decision making role, supported by staff with professional and technical input – show the way decisions are made so public are clearer about this
- Over time more junior and middle ranking officers to be more involved in decision making - importance of internal communication and democratising the decision making process to ensure the quality of decision making
- Are there new interests/areas that BA should be looking to for input?
- Planning Committee – went on a trip to look at sites where previous planning decisions had been made. It was an opportunity to learn and inform future decisions.
- Need to look to 'general public ' - people that don't necessarily belong to a specific interest group

Finally the workshop was offered some ideas from a member of staff previously working for the North York Moors National Park Authority:

- Use of quarterly Parish Forums – broad ranging discussions with agenda items from different people and groups
- Use of a regular residents' newsletter that included feedback on consultation decisions/outcomes
- A community forum being developed to represent a more diverse range of stakeholders

The meeting ended at 1pm.