

**Stakeholder Surveys**  
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

**Summary:** This report provides members with an update on the progress made on the proposed survey of private boat owners and the other stakeholder surveys the Authority is proposing to carry out this year. This exercise is one of the Authority's strategic priorities for 2014/15. The report considers the scope and costs of the proposed surveys and also provides members with the recommendations of the Private Boat Owners Survey Steering Group and the Navigation Committee on the proposals for the survey of private boat owners. Members' views are sought on the approach outlined in this report and the scope and costs of the proposed surveys.

**Recommendations:**

- (i) That members note the contents of the report and support the proposed stakeholder surveys proceeding using the commercial market research company identified in the report.
- (ii) That members approve an increased budget of £47,355 for the proposed surveys with the costs being apportioned £26,970 to the Navigation account and £20,385 to National Park Grant.

**1 Background**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Broads Authority on 12 July 2013 members considered a suggestion put forward by the Vice Chairman that the Authority should carry out a survey of its customers, initially focusing on toll payers, in order to find out more about their attitudes, opinions and behaviours. Members supported this proposal and considered that the cost of the project should be split approximately 50/50 between navigation income and National Park Grant.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that the Authority has previously sought the views of boat owners on priorities for expenditure and other matters in surveys carried out in parallel with the circulation of toll reminders. Visitor surveys have also been carried out in the past but no work has previously been undertaken to seek the views of the residents of the Broads Authority's executive area. While the previous surveys carried out by the Authority have provided valuable information, in reality the Authority still knows relatively little about the characteristics, opinions and behaviours of its customers and this project will provide the Authority with, for the first time, the opportunity to obtain statistically representative quantitative and qualitative evidence about the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of boaters, hire boat operators, visitors and residents of the Broads.

- 1.3 Since then, in order to carry out meaningful consultation on the scope and approach that should be taken with regard to the private boat owners survey, a steering group was convened whose members were drawn from a range of organisations and users of the Broads. Additionally the Authority sought quotations and suggested methodologies for the research from private market research companies.
- 1.4 Officers have evaluated the proposals submitted in response to the research brief that was sent out to private market research companies. Six companies were invited to submit proposals and four companies provided proposals, of which three were substantive and addressed the research brief fully. One was a schematic response via email. The proposals were evaluated against the following criteria: overall cost, cost per respondent, the quality of the submission and statistical validity of the outputs from the survey.
- 1.5 *Insight Track* a Norwich-based company, scored highest against these criteria providing the best value for money at a cost of £22,957. The proposal offers a sample of size of 1,100, the highest; and at the lowest overall cost.

## **2 Recommendations of the Steering Group and Navigation Committee**

- 2.1 The Steering Group met to consider the proposals put forward by the four companies who responded to the research brief on 19 May 2014. The Group also received a presentation by *Insight Track* on its recommended approach to the survey and the costs and merits of the various options in its submission.
- 2.2 The Steering Group considered that *Insight Track* had provided the most cost effective and comprehensive submission to the research brief and felt that its proposal would provide a robust evidence base for future policy setting and decision making. The Group therefore recommended that *Insight Track* should be appointed to carry out a survey of private boat owners focusing on the costs and benefits of keeping a boat on the Broads and the provision of services.
- 2.3 Consultation has also taken place with the Broads Authority's Navigation Committee. At its meeting on 5 June 2014 the Committee considered a report on the proposal and, taking account of the views of the Steering Group, recommended that the Authority should proceed with the project and appoint *Insight Track* to carry out the necessary research. At the meeting reference was also made to the fact that the Authority is also proposing to carry out further research work involving hire boat operators, visitors and local residents.

## **3 A Comprehensive Stakeholder Research Project**

- 3.1 In light of the recommendations of the Steering Group and the Navigation Committee and the fact that the survey of private boat owners is only the first phase of the research the Authority would like to carry out, officers met with *Insight Track* to discuss how a combined research project might be

undertaken. It was also felt that by working closely with one market research Company it may be possible to deliver efficiencies and cost savings across the whole research project.

- 3.2 *Insight Track* has now submitted a comprehensive proposal covering the methodology and costings for the four surveys (private boat owners, hire boat operators, visitors and residents) that the Authority is proposing to commission.

#### **4 Summary of *Insight Track's* integrated research proposal**

- 4.1 The *Insight Track* proposal is for four discrete interrelated phases of research using an integrated approach in order to maximise engagement with the respective stakeholder groups with an interest in the Broads. The respective surveys can be run simultaneously or sequentially depending on time restrictions. The proposal is summarised below.

##### **4.2 Private Boat Owners**

As mentioned at paragraph 1.5 the private boat owner research would cover approximately 1,100 individuals by adopting a combination of telephone interviews and an online self-completion survey. This would cost £22,957 and provides the highest audience sample size of the methodologies suggested by the companies who responded to the research brief.

##### **4.3 Hire Boat Operators**

*Insight Track* is recommending one-to-one telephone interviews with the senior management of the 25 hire boat operators in the Broads aiming for at least 20 interviews at a cost of £3995.

##### **4.4 Visitors**

As regards visitors, *Insight Track* is recommending a multi-method approach to ensure the largest practical sample size is achieved. This would be undertaken by a combination of an online self-completion survey via a consumer panel, an online self-completion survey recruited via e-mail invitation from available visitor databases, face to face interviews at various locations in the Broads and desk research. The aim would be to achieve a minimum sample frame in the order of 400 at a cost of £10,820.

##### **4.5 Residents**

*Insight Track* is again advocating a multi-method approach to surveying the residents of the Broads. This would be conducted by a combination of door knock face to face interviews, call back telephone interviews, a combined postal self-completion survey and online self-completion survey recruited through door and telephone contact and an online self-completion Survey promoted through Broads Authority channels – e.g. parish councils. This would aim for a target response of 250 at a cost of £9,745.

4.6 The breakdown of the costs for commissioning *Insight Track* to carry out the comprehensive survey project is therefore:

|                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| • Private Boat Owners | £22,975     |
| • Hire Boat Operators | £ 3,995     |
| • Visitors            | £10,820     |
| • Residents           | £ 9,565     |
| <br>TOTAL             | <br>£47,355 |

4.7 In order to ensure objectivity *Insight Track* has recommended that it drafts the individual survey questions using information on the key areas and subject matter for questions provided by the Broads Authority, this will be following consultation with the Private Boat Owners Steering Group and the Broads Hire Boat Federation for the Private Boat Owners survey and Hire Boat Operations survey respectively. Officers are currently carrying out an internal research project to obtain information from the Authority's tolls database and this information will also be provided to *Insight Track*.

4.8 *Insight Track* has indicated that the full research project could be carried out over the period July to November with preparation work being carried out in July and August, surveys conducted in August and September and final reporting by early November.

4.7 Officers have carried out research with the other National Park Authorities in the UK who have carried out similar surveys and the costs of the *Insight Track* proposal compare favourably with the typical costs of such survey work.

## 5 Financial Implications

5.1 A budget of £10,000 was initially allocated by the Authority to the private boat owner survey but it has become apparent that professional survey work of the scale and nature required to obtain the sort of objective and statistically robust information the Authority needs cannot be obtained for this price.

5.2 A tendering process has effectively been carried out for the private boat owner research element of this project but the combined stakeholder research project has not been through Authority's procurement procedures. Consequently if *Insight Track* is to be commissioned to carry out the combined stakeholder research project it will be necessary to waive standing orders.

5.3 As the initial budget allocation does not cover the full cost of the combined survey an additional £37,355 will need to be allocated if the project is to proceed. Should members be minded to approve an additional budget allocation it is suggested that this could be apportioned so that the first two surveys, which specifically relate to boating, are funded from Navigation income i.e. £22,975 + £3,995 = £26,970 and the visitors and residents surveys are funded from National Park Grant i.e. £10,820 + £9,565 = £20,385.

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 Officers consider that commissioning professionally designed and executed surveys of the Broads Authority's stakeholder groups is the most appropriate way of proceeding with this project. If the full research project is commissioned, the data obtained will provide the Authority with evidence about the attitudes and opinions of its customers which can be trusted to be objective. Currently the information we have about what our customers think tends to be anecdotal and without a reliable evidence base
- 6.2 Further, the *Insight Track* proposal has defined appropriate research objectives and recognises the importance of the Authority being able to use the evidence gathered through the proposed surveys to inform policy making, determine strategic priorities and decide on future spending priorities for work programmes. The proposal also demonstrates a clear understanding of the key research areas and questions that the Authority is looking for answers to. Using the methodology suggested by *Insight Track* will also allow for the Authority to expand its evidence base by carrying out further research on the attitudes and opinions of hire boat users working with the Broads Hire boat Federation.
- 6.3 It is therefore recommended that *Insight Track* be commissioned to carry out the stakeholder research project with the costs apportioned as suggested in paragraph 5.3 of this report.

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| Background papers:      | Nil           |
| Author:                 | Adrian Clarke |
| Date of report:         | 29 June 2014  |
| Broads Plan Objectives: | None          |
| Appendices:             | None          |