



Broads & Rivers LEADER+ Programme

Minutes of the Local Action Group (LAG) meeting **9th November 6:30 pm at Runham Village Hall**

Present

David Teager	Broadland District Council
Hamish Melville	Broadland District Council (Officer)
Holger Schiller	The Broads Authority (Officer)
Simon Partridge	North Norfolk District Council
Jason Middleton	Norfolk County Council (Officer)
John Halliday	South Norfolk Council
Mark Bishop	South Norfolk Council (Officer)
Geoffrey Leigh	Norfolk Rural Community Council
Pat Holtom	Independent
Sue Richmond	Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes
Michael Mack	Norfolk Rural Business Advice Service
Peter Howe	Camelot Craft
Cyril Durrant	Broads Authority
Mark Wells	Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association
Ralph Barnett	Diocese of Norwich
Cyril Durrant	Broads Authority
Roy Northcott	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
George Debbage	Fairhaven Garden Trust
Cheryl Moore	South Norfolk Council

Patrick Goss LEADER+ Monitoring & Support Officer

Guests and observers:

Richard Rampton	Norfolk Rural Business Advice Service (Norbas)
Huw Jones	LEADER+ Programme Officer (incoming)

1. Apologies for Absence

Stuart Snell	East of England Development Agency
Tully Wakeman	East Anglia Food Link
Matthew Thwaites	Broads Hire Boat Federation
Julie Burrows	Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services
Jose Socao	North Norfolk District Council
Nicky Stainton	Creative Arts East
Barry Stone	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Henry Cator	Building Partnerships Ltd
Ian Bliss	Environment Agency

Geoffrey Leigh opened the meeting and welcomed Huw Jones who is the new Programme Officer, and who provided a brief background of his past experience and said he was looking forward to getting into post. All present introduced themselves. Richard Rampton explained that although he had recently replaced Nicholas Hunt he would not be the Norbas LAG representative because this role

was considered more suitable for Michael Mack, who has recently joined Norbas. Richard requested to attend this meeting as an observer.

Geoffrey also welcomed Cheryl Moore, Cyril Durrant, Ralph Barnett and Michael Mack.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

ACTIONS

These were approved.

3. Matters arising

Programme Officer

Huw Jones is due to start work on 21 November.

Changes in LAG membership

Geoffrey indicated that he had drafted a letter to Mel Burrige thanking her for her contribution and Patrick confirmed that this had been posted.

Patrick said that as a result of the changes to the LAG membership the public/private ratio was 14/14.

Tourism Conference

John Halliday gave a brief update saying there had not been much progress and that Mark Wells had suggested the conference be held at the Whitlingham Visitor Centre. Geoffrey indicated that this issue would be discussed as an emergency item. Mark said that he wished for the conference to be combined with a Wherryman's Way promotional event.

In response to Peter Howe's query about who was organising it, John said there was a small sub group of about five, which included himself and Mark Wells, with the work principally being organised by Broads Tourism Forum. Pat Holtom wondered if a date had been fixed and John replied Spring 2006 although the actual day had not yet been firmed up.

4. Project Presentations

Geoffrey informed the group that Louise Reynolds from the Broads Authority was unable to make the Sustainable Tourism presentation and that this item would be postponed to the next meeting.

Open Churches

Ralph Barnett gave a presentation about the Open Churches project. The LEADER+ area included 156 churches which was a higher density than anywhere else in the world. He went through the aims of the project and gave an overview of progress to date.

He has been collecting baseline data, and, of the responses received to date, only about 30% of churches were currently open, despite being the only community building in some villages.

He indicated that he had been surprised by the range of activities and events, and that this provided a start towards achieving a more coordinated approach.

After the presentation Geoffrey invited questions and John asked what links were made with existing tourism focused websites. Ralph indicated that the necessary

links would be there. Pat Holtom was reassured that all the work was focused on churches in the Programme area although they would draw on best practice from elsewhere.

4a) Emergency item added to the Agenda: Whitlingham Visitor Centre

Geoffrey introduced the item and hoped that people had read the papers that were sent out yesterday. Geoffrey gave a brief overview of the poor progress to date and the decisions taken by the LAG. He said that several members of the LAG had attended a meeting with the Broads Authority and Whitlingham Trust board members last Friday, to discuss the situation. At the meeting the Whitlingham Trust member said the trust was in financial difficulties and they wished to make alterations to the budget, which would enable much of the money to be spent by the end of December with the remainder by the end of March 2006. He said the group, which comprised himself, John Halliday, and Stuart Snell, felt that in light of the changes to the budget, the decision needed to go before the full LAG. He briefly summarised the paper that the Broads Authority had prepared noting that the group considered the reasons for the delays to be understandable.

John Halliday added that it was hoped to get the directors of the Broads Authority and the Whitlingham Trust to the meeting but they were not available. He said that the project management had changed and was now professional, that the changes to the budget were minor, and that he was confident there was a way forward for the project to proceed.

David Teager requested whether it was within the constitution for this topic to be put back on the agenda, considering the LAG decision at the meeting in June. John replied that within council situations such changes in decisions were possible and quite frequent. Geoffrey indicated that there had been examples of projects that had made substantial changes and considered that the LAG was able to authorise such changes.

Peter Howe noted that the project had been under NPS management since the spring and yet still suffered serious problems, and said if the decision were to be changed, we would need to have good monitoring to ensure we are not placed in the same situation again. Many members reflected on the poor management of the project to date.

Mark Wells said that it is a landmark project and we should be looking at ways to support it. He thought the group could unmake the decision made in June. John read out a letter of support from Henry Cator.

Geoffrey said that there had been a lamentable failure of communication. Jason Middleton noted that Patrick had had to chase them for progress updates throughout the implementation phase. The applicant had not been forthcoming in providing information about the delays and other problems, and that they were more often discovered by Patrick.

Holger Schiller said that he couldn't see the damage in not supporting the project and thought it might reflect badly on the programme if funding were withdrawn. Pat said it was a keynote project and we should try to support it but that the attitude of the Broads Authority had been deplorable and implementation totally unsatisfactory and that in order to ensure effective monitoring we should put Patrick to sit on the board, and their reports should be distributed to the LAG.

**George Debbage proposed that the project should continue to be supported
Seconded by Pat Holtom. The vote was carried 9 to 0.**

A number of points were then noted:

It was agreed that the support should be conditional upon Patrick attending

project management meetings. It was recommended a letter be drafted to John Packman outlining the poor project performance. Patrick/Geoffrey

Jason said that it had been brought to his attention that there had been other EU funding for the centre. Geoffrey said that we would need to follow this up to ensure the project is eligible. Patrick

There was a discussion about the end dates and Geoffrey said that the Broads Authority had provided a schedule and that we would be monitoring it closely, and that by the next LAG meeting we should have received their claim and we would reflect on their progress.

5. Progress Update

Patrick asked if everyone had the papers, and about six or seven members indicated they had only received the outputs table. Patrick explained that the information was all within the excel document, and it seemed that some people had only printed one sheet. Peter Howe requested that the report be resent. Patrick

Geoffrey requested Patrick to highlight any projects he thought appropriate. Patrick noted that in total we had approved about 40 initiatives; a few had been completed and several others were completed but had not submitted Completion/final audit reports.

Patrick mentioned that the Estate feasibility study which was to have researched the possibility of a renewable energies training centre at Salhouse would not be proceeding. The partnership had broken up and they had not been able to meet the pre-conditions to starting, including securing matching funding and outline planning consents.

Both the projects that were approved at the September meeting had signed their Agreements, provided evidence of matched funding and had started activities.

The report for the Windmills feasibility study has been completed, and the trust was finalising their last progress report before auditing. Patrick to check whether the report is available on their website and report back to members. Pat suggested that they be invited to the next meeting to present the findings from the research. Patrick

Peter Howe wished to know the status of the Filby Broadshore initiative and Patrick said that the actual boardwalk had been completed many months ago but that the bank improvements works were delayed, and that the Broads Authority had indicated that they would be carried out this autumn/winter. He added that not one of the five Broads Authority linked initiatives was running to plan and that there were problems with all of them. Cyril Durrant said that this was his first LAG meeting and that he would be feeding back the comments he had heard tonight to the Broads Authority management.

Patrick went through the financial tables, indicating that we were on schedule for achieving the targets this year. He stated that we were not in the same position as in the previous years primarily because this was the first year that we had been able to set our targets.

Patrick provided an overview of the outputs table and said that we were making good progress on achieving our targets. Matthew Thwaites asked for clarification on the bednights target and said he might be able to assist converting the commitments into actual achievements, if requested. Patrick said the commitments emanated from the two projects that were approved at the September LAG meeting, and that it would be many months before their achievement. George Debbage indicated that meetings had already been organised with b&b providers in the area, which was well attended and they were

looking forward to working together.

6. Programme Legacy

Patrick stated that he had not prepared anything but had included in the agenda because, considering there were relatively few funds uncommitted, it might provide pointers in programme development for Huw. It was decided to postpone this to the next meeting when Huw would have settled in. Huw

7. Elections for Chair/Vice chair

Geoffrey indicated that this was his last meeting as chair and wanted to know whether there were any nominations or suggestions to take over. Patrick indicated that Julie Burrows had volunteered to stand as vice chair. Mark Wells considered the appointment and there was a brief discussion about the roles. Pat Holtom nominated Mark and was seconded by David Teager. All agreed. Julie Burrows was nominated as vice chair by George and Seconded by Pat. All agreed.

Geoffrey confirmed that the appointments were for one year, commencing 1st January 2006.

8. Community Chest Representative

Geoffrey said that as a result of the resignation of Mel we need another person to sit on the group. Geoffrey and Pat outlined the responsibilities involved. Hamish

Hamish said that a representative (Cheryl) from the Economic Development Department at Broadland District Council would be willing to take up the post

9. AOB

Pat requested an update on the future of the Leader+ programme and Patrick indicated that Defra were working on the issue and that no definite decisions could be taken until the EU budget had been approved.

David Teager indicated that the Fairhaven Trust had won the award as the Best Norfolk Attraction

Jason indicated that Whitlingham Country Park had won the Winalot award for best place for taking dogs for a walk!

10. Next meeting

This will be on 11th January at a venue to be confirmed, which would not be so remote.