



Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association

# SPRING NEWSLETTER

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## *Guarding the future of Broads boating*



## BROADS BILL ROYAL ASSENT BY APRIL

**After a string of delays the Broads Bill finally cleared the House of Lords Committee and is now expected to be enacted sometime in April.**

The Bill gives the Broads Authority (BA) increased powers, including full implementation of the boat safety scheme, licensing of hire boats and making third party insurance for all boats compulsory.

In a brief statement NSBA chairman Mark Wells said: "There is considerable relief that this long drawn out process is almost at an end. Now it's time to move on. We have some continuing points of difference with the Broads Authority – and some issues on which we are willing to continue working with them. We also intend to keep a close watch on how they use their new powers under what will soon be, we expect, the Broads Authority Act. We want to get back to concentrating on the substantive issues."

The NSBA worked closely with the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) and the British Marine Federation (BMF), and negotiated significant modifications to the earlier drafts of the Bill, culminating in the agreements reached between the boating organisations and the BA in January 2007.

"Their advice was invaluable to our case," commented Mark Wells. "We remain convinced that the line we took was both effective – in terms of the amendments achieved – and financially prudent."

He added that NSBA now looked to the future and was concentrating its efforts on supporting the BA members' scrutiny panel examining the Authority's stewardship of the toll income, encouraging efforts to redeem the backlog of dredging in key Broads' areas and, continuing to represent the interests of all private boaters who use the Broads Navigation.

*Level headed negotiation won the day. Page 4*



NSBA President Mike Evans with the picture of a Broads' scene, presented to him by the Association, when he retired as Chairman at the AGM. He accepted the post of President following the retirement of Standley Bushell.

## TOLLS QUESTIONNAIRE WARNING

**Members will** have started receiving their 2009 Toll demands from the Broads Authority. With them is a new questionnaire. NSBA has made it clear that it considers that BA has broken its agreement not to hold another major review of the tolls for the agreed five years. Take care answering the questions, they may seem simple and straightforward but they are not – for example water quality is not what comes out of a tap; it's the stuff your boat floats in. Get the answer wrong and you could find funds being sidelined into conservation projects away from navigation.

*See page three for an evaluation by NSBA Chairman, Mark Wells.*

# BA UNVEILS NEW MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR RIVER VALLEYS – ANT PILOT



**Recent bank** re-alignment work on the Ant is causing consternation in some quarters, not least through the use of painted steel tubes driven into the edge of the river as navigation marks. Although temporary until the reeds grow up and define the river's edge, they are nevertheless a major hazard particularly for sailing craft, which could get their mainsheets caught on them when close tacking. NSBA is campaigning to have them replaced with appropriately coloured buoys.



A further problem is the height of the new river bank, which is low in places and is allowing water to seep through into the ditch between the two banks.



**In January the newly formed Ant Valley Group held its first meeting. The group has been formed as a pilot for rolling out a new Broads Authority (BA) management strategy across the Broads, called the Whole Valley Approach, a concept developed in Holland.**

NSBA is one of several organisations involved.

BA says the Whole Valley Approach will enable it to deliver the Broads Plan (under review this year) in a more focused way, and balance the specific needs within each valley. It would ensure projects were sustainable by looking at factors including the effects of climate change.

BA also says that its direct involvement in the Ant Valley and the relatively small size of the area, made it an ideal pilot for the valley approach which, if successful, could be rolled out across the other river valleys.

An integrated visitor experience, improved water quality, holistic landscapes and a strong partnership approach were identified as measures of success. It says the work builds on the experience gained from the site-based management plan for Barton Broad.

The Ant Valley Group's main focus will be the BA Executive Area but as part of the approach the Group will look at factors that are outside it better understand these interactions.

It is envisaged that the development of the Ant Pilot Study initial phase will take one year to complete during which time the Ant Valley Group will meet three times. At the end of this phase the Group will be asked to decide on its future role.

At a subsequent workshop at BA headquarters, representative organisations from all over the Broads, were introduced to the scheme. NSBA was represented by Phil Ollier and communicator Garth Cooper.

Both agreed that any scheme to improve communications between grass roots users and communities on the Broads and the BA was a good thing.

"There are a number of groups already doing excellent work in the Broads, so we do question the need for any more. We also don't see how they can use the title 'Whole Valley Approach', as they cannot legally cover the vast bulk of each valley that lies outside the executive area.

We're glad to say there was considerable healthy scepticism expressed on most sides," they added.

NSBA is concerned that the approach is being introduced throughout the Broads before the Ant "pilot scheme" has been evaluated and any lessons learned.

It also notes that similar co-operation already exists in many places on the Broads and would be keen to avoid duplication of effort or confusion over roles.

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## KEEPING TABS ON NAVIGATIONAL SPENDING

**When the Broads** Authority accepted the Navigation Committee recommendation that the 2009 tolls increase should be reduced from the BA Officers' recommendation of 9 per cent to 6 per cent, the Chief Executive said that this still above-inflation rise would result in the Authority having to cut operational expenditure. Overheads and administrative costs had, he said, already been cut to the bone. There was some scepticism about this, resulting in the establishment of a BA Members' Working Group to examine the accounts.

This group held its first meeting on 12th February. The group consists of Stephen Johnson (BA Chairman), Alan Mallett (BA Vice Chairman), Martin Broom (Navigation Committee Chairman), David Broad and Phil Durrant. At that meeting the group elected Martin Broom and Alan Mallett as its Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively.

NSBA welcomes this exercise and looks forward to an explanation of why, among other concerns, during the last ten years inflation measured by RPI has increased by 30 per cent while salaries costs charged to the Navigation Account have risen by 148 per cent. At the same time, dredging volumes have remained at or below 45,000 m3 per year and patrolling resources have remained static.

## TOLLS QUESTIONNAIRE

# BE CAREFUL HOW YOU ANSWER, SAYS CHAIRMAN

**In 2005, Broadland navigators underwent prolonged 'trial by questionnaire' to assess their views on the level of river tolls and priorities for the spending of the money raised. As a sweetener for participating in this exercise, navigators were promised there would be no repeat process for at least five years.**

It's a surprise therefore that, after just three years, the process is going round again. The new questionnaire is very similar to the last one, with just a few changes. That would be, one assumes, because the authors of the survey, want to encourage a rather different set of answers.

Last time, 92 per cent of river users said they supported the views of a tolls working party, which had said there should be a clear and transparent linkage between the rates paid by hire boat owners and those paid by private owners (hire fleets currently pay 2.7 times as much as the rest of us for the equivalent boat).

The working party recommended there should be no further major revision of tolls for at least five years and those recommendations were accepted "in their entirety" by the Authority. The recommendation had also said that toll levels should be set by the Navigation Committee, that idea doesn't appear to have lasted five years either.

When the previous questionnaire's findings were

analysed, well over half the toll payers rated the Broads Authority's 'value for money' as no better than "fair" (that is, 43 per cent said fair and 15 per cent said poor.) The BA, however, chose to add the "fairs" to the "goods" (33 per cent) and the "excellents" (a stunning 3 per cent), claiming that over 80 per cent thought the Authority's performance "fair or better."

This time round private boat owners are being asked to agree that the owners of big boats should pay more and the owners of little boats should pay less. There's a danger of thinking you need to say yes to this question to get a reduction in tolls for smaller dinghies and other boats used mostly by youngsters.

This decision has already been made, in November 2008 when the Authority set the 2009 tolls. Knocking small boat fees back to a sensible level cost them £20,000 out of a £2m+ budget; so small, the rest of us would hardly feel the pain. Could such a question more likely be about significantly raising the tolls for bigger private boats while avoiding equivalent toll hikes for hire craft?

Be careful how you answer.

Last time around, the Authority was keen to point out that more than half of boat users thought improving water quality was at least, their second highest priority. A lot of people assumed they meant the water out of the quayside taps.

But this is a navigation

survey and the ecological health of the rivers and broads is something one would expect other budgets to fund. Critics of the boating sector sneeringly suggest we are quite happy boating about in muck, as opposed to mucking about in boats. Hardly, most of us want to see clean, healthy rivers and Broads and dragging our keels through the mud is no fun.

We believe the single, highest, all-round priority is dredging; it is to everyone's best advantage.

There is a suspicion that the introduction of another survey only after three years of the agreed policy is due in part to the Navigation Committee not only recommending a reduction in the proposed 9 per cent toll increase to 6 per cent, but also stating it was broadly happy with the tolls regime currently in place.

Both the Navigation Committee, and the full Authority itself, is happy with a clear and transparent link between commercial and private tolls. Breaking the linkage between private and hire craft tolls could be a route to significantly beefing-up tolls for privately owned motorboats.

If you were one of the 92 per cent who supported the survey findings last time round, including a five-year moratorium, why would you vote in favour of significant changes now?

Perhaps the best policy is to say nothing and ignore the survey.

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## The History of the Royal Norfolk & Suffolk Yacht Club

Jamie Campbell, writer, local author and longstanding member of the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC has taken eleven years to assemble this material, which must now represent one of the most detailed histories of any yacht club.

The book runs to nearly five hundred pages and is profusely illustrated with a thousand often historic photographs both black and white and colour. The reader is taken through a hundred and fifty years of yachting from the inaugural meeting in the Maid's Head hotel in Norwich, to the present day.

Chapters range from research

and coverage of early Broads yachting, with their origins firmly in Victorian high-stakes gambling, to Lowestoft's special place in our maritime heritage. Between 1918 and 1939 the RN&SYC was one of the most influential in the country. The club was largely responsible for starting the International 14 class and sent the first dinghy team abroad to compete in an international event. Members travelled First Class by ocean liner while their paid hands were in steerage.

There are tales of Uffa Fox, Morgan Giles, Olympic campaigns and the America's Cup, Broads regat-



**GJ Skipper's design for the new clubhouse**

tas and the Broads One Design Class. The club boasts two Olympic gold medalists among former members.

The book costs £25 excl. P&P.

# LEVEL-HEADED NEGOTIATION WON THE DAY

When the BA Private Bill was first published as a draft in April 2006, NSBA expressed a number of concerns. These were listed in a position paper and a questionnaire which was sent out to members and affiliated organisations and was also available for on-line completion.

The response was sizable and overwhelmingly in support of the NSBA line. We then worked with the RYA to deliver the changes we sought. Our legal advisers recommended obtaining agreement to our required changes before the Bill was laid before Parliament.

They said that petitioning should be avoided because once a Commons or Lords committee

became involved, the petitioners would lose control of the agenda and there was a risk of petitioners with other priorities managing to insert provisions that could run counter to the interests of navigation.

Had that happened we would have had limited opportunity to renegotiate. It was thought possible for example, that faced with a petition from boating organisations, conservation interests might petition to seek to have the Sandford Principle included in the Bill.

NSBA supported the negotiations leading to the legal agreements obtained by the RYA, BMF and IWA and was content with the outcome at that stage. In addition, to the removal of a number of objectionable items and

mitigation of others, the agreements strengthened and clarified the role of the Navigation Committee.

The petitioners in the Commons achieved a recommendation that, where possible, the provisions of these agreements should be incorporated in the Bill.

NSBA engaged willingly in the ensuing negotiations.

The petitioners in the Lords achieved further changes to seven clauses of the Bill. Some of these were by prior negotiation with the Broads Authority, resulting in withdrawal of all or part of some petitions.

At the time of writing, we wait for the Bill to return to the floor of the Lords and to proceed to Royal Assent.

## WHAT'S THE RYA EVER DONE FOR ME?

To find the answer sign up for the RYA East Forum entitled 'Boating into the Future' being held at Haven Ports YC, Levington, near Ipswich on Saturday, March 21st. It's your chance to question RYA top brass, including chief executive Rod Carr and chairman Richard Langford.

Also coming is the RYA's legal eagle Gus Lewis. Specialist speakers in the fields of club development, racing and cruising will update you latest thinking and developments.

Cost is £25 and includes lunch and refreshments. Details on the RYA East website at [www.ryaeast.org](http://www.ryaeast.org).

**Here's an interesting statistic:** British Waterways originally proposed an 11.2 per cent rise in license (Toll) fees on inland waterways for 2009. After having regard for the deteriorating economic climate and among fears of a drop in license applications, it reduced its increase in charges to 7.5 per cent for leisure business licenses; 8.2 per cent for gold licenses (5.9 per cent after taking into account the VAT reduction), and 8.5 per cent for all other licenses (6.2 per cent after taking into account the VAT reduction).



**Guarding the future of  
Broads boating**

- The NSBA has a voice on the Broads Authority but needs more information and support from representative boat-owners.
- The NSBA supports the Broadland joint interests of recreation and conservation with navigation but urges balance and fairness by all.
- The NSBA is lobbying for improvements on issues including: dredging; moorings; river work and funding for navigation priorities.
- The NSBA stands firm against threats to close any part of the Broads navigation.
- The NSBA represents 45 affiliated organisations and more than 1200 individual members.

Newsletter Editor: Garth Cooper, 01362 699195 [garthword@btinternet.com](mailto:garthword@btinternet.com)

Green Book Organiser: Rachel Card, 01502 713369 [rachelcard@btinternet.com](mailto:rachelcard@btinternet.com)

Administrator: Sara Lock, 01603 457643 [Sara.lock@ntlworld.com](mailto:Sara.lock@ntlworld.com)