

Draft Minutes Hickling Parish Staithe Meeting
21st March 2016
7.30 pm Hickling Barn

Attended by approximately 50 people including parishioners, berth holders and stake holder organisations.

7.30pm

Jo Belsten, Chair of Hickling Parish Council, welcomed all of those attending the meeting and introduced the speakers.

7.35

Brian Wilkins, Chair of the Upper Thurne Working Party gave an interesting and informative account of the history of Parish Staithe in Norfolk with particular reference to Hickling Parish Staithe

7.50

An update from the Broads Authority was read out and is appended to these minutes

7.55

Steve Lane from the Environment Agency gave an informative update on this year's work. There have been significant difficulties with Prymnesium bloom, which resulted in one of the largest rescue operations for fish known to the Agency.

8.00

John Currie General Secretary of the Pike Anglers club told the meeting that the numbers of Pike in Hickling Broad had declined significantly. He described the problems that dredging can cause and the significant danger to fish it can cause. He made a plea for understanding on both sides of the debate which was well received by the audience.

8.05

Hickling Parish Staithe Working Party (SWP) presented their report, which is appended to these minutes. A slide show was used to demonstrate the issues with the slipway drop-off and bench maintenance as well as of the dredging and reed bed restoration programme that has taken place this year.

8.20

Jo Belsten led the question and discussion session.

The prospect of putting a combination lock on the winch with open access was discussed. The meeting accepted that this was probably the most sensible way of dealing with its misuse. A bicycle combination lock will be purchased and all berth holders will be given the code. New users will be given the code after training.

The problem of feral geese was discussed, with no obvious practical solution found.

The SWP suggested berth holders might like to make a bulk order for boat covers to get them at a cheaper price as tarpaulins blow away and do not look very tidy. This was discussed but no action taken.

The amount of money in the Staithe bank account was queried. The figure was explained as being £12,500 less than overall income/expenditure because £12,500 had been withdrawn in April to pay for legal fees.

The ground at the staithe has become rutted - the SWP will ensure this is addressed.

The condition and maintenance of the winch was raised - the SWP had already covered this in their report.

Darren Boden's work grass cutting at the staithe was complimented - the SWP will ask him to try not to spray grass cuttings onto moored boats if at all possible.

The mooring agreement is on the back of the form berth holders had to return - suggestion to have it on the reverse of the letter that the berth holder keeps next year.

What was the cause of the Prynnesium bloom last year? This is not really known, but it is thought to have been low water and a calm hot period of weather.

The dry berths are looking poorly aligned - SWP to attend to this.

9.00

Mrs Belsten closed the meeting by thanking all those who had attended and inviting everyone to stay for coffee and biscuits.

Appended reports follow

Hickling Parish Council Staithe Working Party Report Spring 2016

1. Income

The Staithe account started this financial year with an opening balance of £160. We anticipate that the closing balance at 31st March this year will be slightly in excess of £5,000.

2. Expenditure

Spending has been kept to a minimum this year, just replacement winches and strops (annual/6 month requirement), a post box and new signs to reflect different contact details.

Predicted expenditure for the coming year is £600 to include cutting back the willow tree, buying new winches (x2) and strops (X 4), proposed purchase of 2 combination locks, and purchase of materials to raise the benches, as well as postage, stationary and Forum meeting room hire and refreshments.

3. **Slipways**

We continue to have issues with the drop-off at the end of the slips where the hard engineering of the slipway meets the soft muddy bottom of the dyke. This is a long-standing problem which has not been resolved by installing concrete slipways. This means that at low water trailers are virtually impossible to winch back up once loaded. The pictures shown in a couple of minutes will demonstrate the problem.

Launching is free for Parishioners. Launch fees for visitors are currently £6 for boats and £4 for canoes. A season ticket for visitor launching is available for £50.

4. **Winches**

These have to be replaced annually for health and safety reasons. Strops every 6 months. Boats over 17ft in length are not allowed to use the winches. Issues include misuse, but most importantly the drop-off problem, which causes excessive strain on the winches if users try to winch a boat back after trailer wheels have dropped over the edge. This is particularly an issue for occasional visitors who do not appreciate this difficulty. Regular users seem to be using the winches responsibly.

Because of this, the staithe working party propose installing combination locks to the winches with numbers given to all **current** berth holders. We will then arrange training for all **new** berth holders before they are given the code, as well as for any parishioners wishing to use the winches.

Visitors will be given the code by discretion - regular users who can demonstrate competence will be given the code, but generally one-off visitors will have car or hand launching only in future. Please make sure you put the lock on when finished.

5. **Value for money.**

A short survey of local boatyards shows that commercial wet mooring rates are in the region of £35 per foot. Parish moorings in Ludham are £19 per foot, Sutton £25 per foot and Catfield £22.

Hickling's wet moorings for parishioners are £18.10 per foot.

Dry berths commercially are in the region of £600 per year for a 16 ft boat. Hickling Sailing club charges £208 per year including membership (£130 + £78).

Hickling Parish staithe charges parishioners £96.90 and non-parishioners £193.80

6. **Staithe Maintenance.**

This years maintenance issues have been winch maintenance and replacement and repair of the public benches. We do not have any further planned maintenance as the quay heading and slips are in good order. Please can all users of the staithe use the site with care and try not to churn up the grass as they bring their boats on site.

7. **Fishing**

Has always allowed for Parishioners. Historically visitors were welcome, but this stopped in recent years. The Parish Council now allow visiting fishermen to use the staithe under strict

rules and on purchase of a local permit £5 per day or £25 per season. At the moment this seems to be working.

8. Wet Berths

There are currently 20 people on the wet berth waiting list and no vacancies. We will be writing to everyone on the list to clarify if they wish to remain on it on the next week or so.

9. Dry Berths

There are currently 9 people on the waiting list and up to 4 vacancies so far from people who have given up their places this season. We will be contacting those on the waiting list to offer them places in the next week or so.

10. The Beach Update

The Mills Estate has kindly replaced the sand at the Beach over the winter. This has now settled and we plan to make this a family friendly place for everyone to enjoy the spectacular views of Hickling Broad. Parish Councillors raised the money at a cake sale last year to fund this event. Please can everyone remember that access to the beach is by kind permission of the Pleasure Boat Inn, so please clear up after your dog and do not leave litter there. Barbecues are not allowed on the beach under any circumstances.

11. Geese

We are currently awaiting the annual return of the feral geese. There have been suggestions about how to deter them from the staithe and beach, but these are not necessarily acceptable to our working partners. Any suggestions for managing this problem will be very welcome.

11. Boat Covers

At the moment a variety of covers and tarpaulins are used by berth holders. Covers which are not fitted have blown off or leaked during the winter. The Staithe Working Party would like to suggest berth holders using fitted covers to prevent these problems. What do people think?

Broads Authority Update

The Broads Authority is working with its partners to create and enhance wetland habitats around Hickling Broad.

The partnership includes the Environment Agency, Natural England, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Broads Internal Drainage Board and Broadland Environmental Services Limited, working together to enhance flood protection and provide wildlife habitats for rare and threatened wildlife.

Locally, two separate schemes are currently being developed:

- Creating reed bed, constructing setback banks and raising water levels on the south side of Hickling Broad
- Creating reed bed, constructing setback banks, raising water levels and improving access within [Norfolk Wildlife Trust's nature reserve](#) on the north side of Hickling Broad

The planned dredging has taken place this winter with the channel from the Pleasure Boat inn being much improved. Spoil from the dredging has been used to reinstate the eroded reed beds along Hill Common.

The Broads authority Long Term Objectives are

- improved waterway depths
- improved aquatic environment in sheltered bays providing more reed bed areas, better water quality, water plants and higher numbers of water birds
- beneficial reuse of dredged material in island construction and bank restoration
- improved understanding by local communities, visitors and partners of the importance of undertaking integrated waterway management projects to enhance the special qualities of the Broads

Pictures will be show at end of Staithe Working Party report.