

# Broads Nature Recovery Strategy 2024-29

## Summary Document

DRAFT



**Broads**  
National Park



How Hill National Nature Reserve Tom Barrett

## Introduction

The Broads National Park is a powerhouse for nature however our species-rich wetland faces significant challenges.

The **Broads National Park** ('the Broads') is an internationally important wetland on the east coast of England. Its unique landscape, shaped by centuries of human intervention, is a rich mosaic of interconnected habitats comprising, among other things, shallow lakes (or 'broads'), fens, saltmarshes, intertidal mudflats, drained marshland, wet woodland, relict estuary, and coastal dunes.

Within an area that is only 0.12% of the UK, the Broads is home to 19% of all UK designated species<sup>1</sup> and 26% of the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan species<sup>2</sup>.

It is a unique member of the UK National Parks family.

However, some species face extinction with the threat of climate change, flooding and increasing pressures from the growing population. Our rivers, lakes and wetlands remain impacted by sewage and pollution. We need investment in the environmental life support systems of the Broads.

The **Local Nature Recovery Strategies**, for Norfolk and Suffolk, are one of the mechanisms to achieve the [Nature Recovery Network](#), as well as a commitment to

Biodiversity Net Gain, and a focus on the strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Nature underpins everything – the local economy, food, health and society – but we need to begin to chart a new course. Working with farmers, communities and partners to develop an ambitious integrated programme for Nature Recovery and Water Management in and around the Broads.

Front cover: Bitterns are thriving across the UK due to reedbed and wetland restoration. However, they are vulnerable to climate change, as hotter, drier summers may lower water levels, affecting their aquatic habitats and prey availability. Gary K.Smith/naturepl.com

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee

<sup>2</sup> Broads Biodiversity Audit 2011

## Why we need a Nature Recovery Strategy

Britain is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. The world faces a climate and biodiversity emergency which are inseparable in the Broads. We know that:

**The changing climate impacts on wildlife and their habitats in the Broads, with wetter winters, rising temperatures, longer and more intense droughts, higher sea level and more frequent tidal surges.**

**14%**

of species in the Broads are threatened with extinction.

**19%**

of terrestrial and freshwater species and...

Since 1970

**54%**

of flowering plant species in Great Britain are in decline.

Figures come from 'Broads Biodiversity Audit', 'State of Nature 2023' and 'State of our Waters 2020'

Our vision for enhancing nature in the Broads includes a plan that describes what partners are working on and what could be done by 2040.

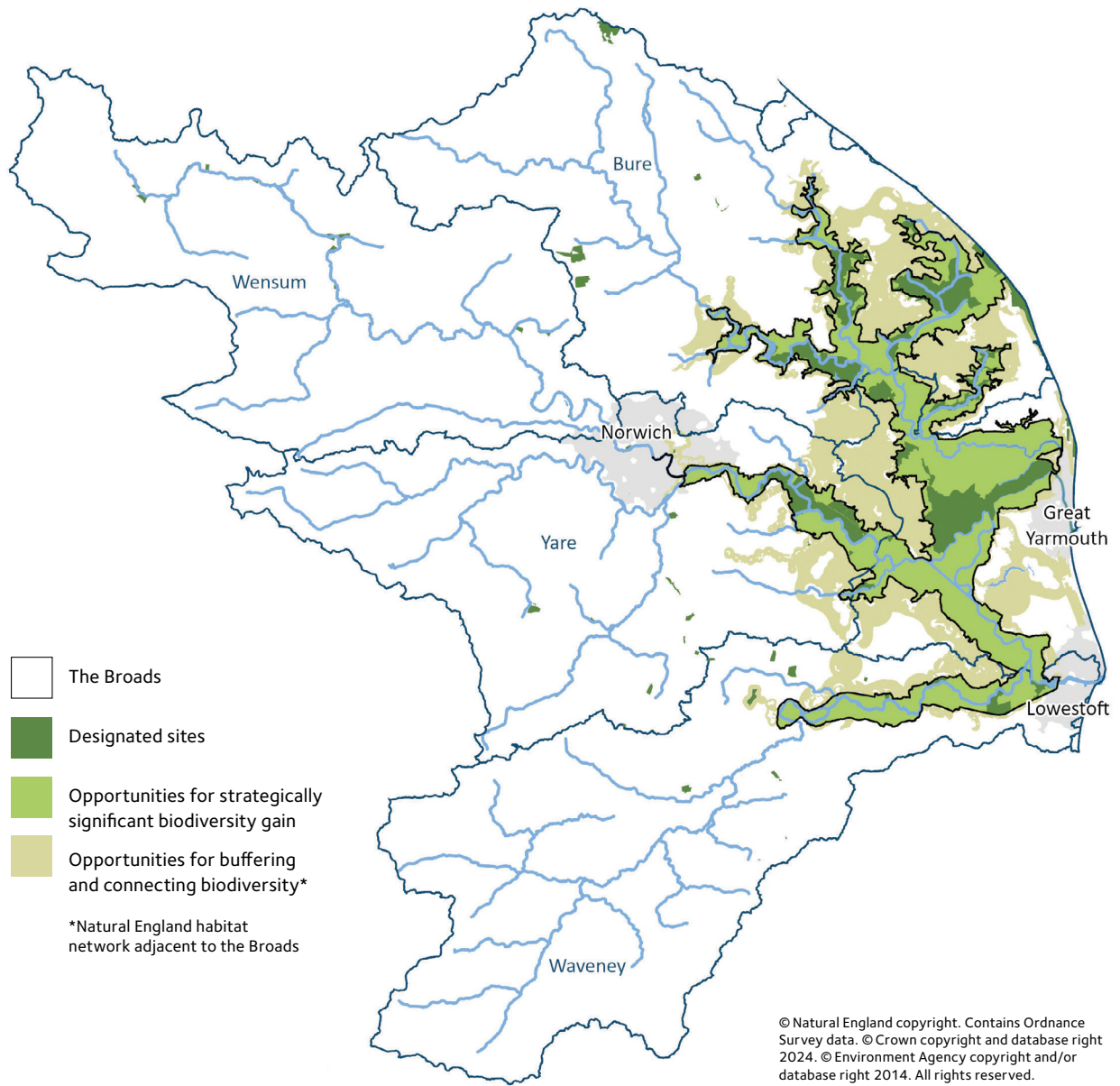
The Broads Nature Recovery Strategy (BNRS) is produced with the members of the Broads Biodiversity Partnership (BBP) and it is endorsed and published by the Broads Authority. The BNRS acts as the Broads Authority's Biodiversity Duty Report.

To see the full BNRS, go to [Biodiversity and nature recovery \(broads-authority.gov.uk\)](https://broads-authority.gov.uk)

The lesser whirlpool ramshorn snail is one of 79% of the Broads' speciality invertebrates reliant on freshwater environments, unable to tolerate increasing saltwater intrusions. Toby Abrehart



## Illustrative Opportunities Map, Broads National Park



## Key Principles

### More, bigger, better and more joined-up wildlife habitat

Nature cannot thrive or adapt to the changing climate in isolated pockets. Nature requires us to take opportunities to establish more, bigger, better and more joined-up ecological networks, ensuring priority species and their habitat needs are well understood and well managed, helping increase resilience and adaptive ability, and pursue environmental improvement.

### Opportunity for greater habitat mosaics and structural complexity

Species-rich sites in the Broads have mosaics of high-quality wetland features such as ditches, ponds, scattered scrub and varying vegetation communities. As open water grades into wetland, grass or arable land beyond, often unique environmental conditions occur that support scarce species. These wetland edge transitions are critical, as are large, well-managed and high nature value farmed areas.

### Opportunity for connections along the valleys and outside the Broads

The Broads' boundary is drawn tightly around the wetland edge. Nature recovery can only be achieved by working positively for nature with farmers beyond the boundary, especially where land is functionally linked and providing important supporting habitats for species.

For example, while some beetle larvae use decaying wood, their adult stage requires flowering plants which are mainly outside of woodlands, enabling animals to complete their life cycle each year. The intimate mixture of different habitats and microhabitats are likely to be of high value for nature and future farming.

### Long-term vision

By 2040 our Broads nature ambition is to provide a home to thriving wildlife that can adapt to the changing climate.

### Our targets

To help meet the potential for nature, climate, people and place, the Government is establishing 10 ambitious targets for Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes). Seven of these are relevant to the BNRS and measure 'Thriving plants and wildlife' and 'Mitigating and adapting to climate change'. These targets are not yet finalised for the Broads. The BNRS targets include the seven relevant targets for Protected Landscapes, and an additional target for species (see page 10). The BNRS will be updated once the Protected Landscapes targets are finalised.



Halvergate Marshes are vital for freshwater-dependent bird species. Farmers, who own much of the Broads, practise nature-friendly farming that supports these ecosystems.

James Bass/Bill Smith

## Delivery Plan

The BNRS will be delivered through a series of key actions under four focuses:

- **Focus: Water quality and quantity**
- **Focus: Habitats (wet grassland, fen, fen meadow, reedbed, woodland)**
- **Focus: Species**
- **Focus: Monitoring and research (across all three focuses above)**

### Focus: Water quality and quantity

**Principles:** Habitat recovery principles (more, bigger, better, joined-up)

**Protected Landscape targets:** 1, 2, 3, 4

**Broads Plan objective B1:** Restore, maintain and enhance lakes and use monitoring evidence to trial and implement further innovative lake restoration techniques.

#### How we can achieve our vision

Nutrient inputs can be lowered through Catchment Sensitive Farming schemes, further investment in improving wastewater treatment and expansion of regenerative farming practices lowering chemical inputs. Improvements to soils will enhance water quality and help capture and slow release of water. We can use nature-based solutions through the Norfolk Water Strategy Programme, and attract investment for specific benefits such as nutrient neutrality.

To improve some broads and rivers, we need to continue waterway management, monitoring, research and review programmes, linking with UEA and other academic organisations, citizen science and community monitoring to help build knowledge.

The 28 Water Level Management Plans in the Broads need reviewing to direct the functional water control requirements of the replacement pumps which are economically critical to the future of the Broads.



A new drainage pump at Norton's on the Yare helps manage both flood protection and water retention, supporting the carbon-rich floodplain and nature conservation. *Andrea Kelly*



Improvements in water quality are seen in species like water lilies. *Bill Smith*



It is crucial to balance the specific needs of species while adapting Broads' entire water management system to the challenges of a changing climate. *Tom Barrett*

### Focus: Habitats (wet grassland, fen, fen meadow, reedbed, woodland)

**Principles:** Habitat recovery principles (more, bigger, better, joined-up)

**Protected Landscape targets:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

**Broads Plan objective B3:** Seek biodiversity net gain and enhance areas of fen, reedbed, grazing marsh and wet woodland, to protect peatlands as carbon sinks.

#### How the vision could be achieved

Collaborating across landscape or sub-catchment scale programmes, such as farm cluster groups working on deer assessment and soil carbon, and Landscape Recovery programmes. Creating evidence-based water plans and projects for holding, storing, cleaning and reusing water for nature and other benefits.

Advising land managers to create and restore grazing marshes, fen, and reedbed and heathland for birds and other priority species through effective use of Environmental Land Management. Coordinating and sharing scientific evidence and monitoring data.

Restoring the 2,000ha of drained peat, such as at Worlingham and Buttle Marsh. Creating and testing viable wetland farming opportunities for future floodplain landscapes.



Wet woodland is one of the least common wooded habitats in the UK, much of which remains unprotected in the Broads. Gary K. Smith/naturepl.com



Restoring wetlands and raising watertables in peat soils provide benefits for wildlife and people. Mike Page



Lapwing populations depend on damp marshes with short, tussocky grass swards, maintained through careful livestock management. However, they are vulnerable to extreme dry, wet, and saline conditions. David Kjaer/naturepl.com

### Focus: Species

**Principles:** Species recovery principles (recover, reintroduce, control)

**Species Target:**

- Carry out projects to ensure 90% species listed in Table (see [Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Strategy at broads-authority.gov.uk](https://www.biodiversity.gov.uk/biodiversity/nature-recovery-strategy-at-broads-authority.gov.uk)) are in stable or increasing populations within or beyond the Broads. (Target 8)

**Broads Plan objective B4:** Define, implement and monitor management regimes for priority species and invasive non-native species.

#### How the vision could be achieved

Working with experts to create species recovery projects (such as fen plant and invertebrate reintroduction projects).

Creating a BBP plan for species sensitive to landscape-scale changes in habitat and keeping the list of species under review. Updating species as status changes within the Broads.

Systematic and coordinated monitoring and control of the top priority invasive non-native species (INNS) that are impacting on habitats and species.



Tom Barrett

### Focus: Monitoring, research and collaboration

Improve partnership coordination and communication of Broads biodiversity monitoring and research effort.

### Broads Priority Species

The Broads species list focuses on the ‘rarest species that depend almost entirely on the Broads’, for which we need to confirm actions. Once these actions are deemed feasible and underway, the list will be revised to include lower-priority species - those that are less rare or more widely distributed. If any conservation projects prove unfeasible, the list will be adjusted accordingly.

The Broads hosts over 1,500 conservation priority species. While species like the crane, bittern, and fen raft spider are recovering, others such as the fen orchid and natterjack toad need dedicated conservation efforts. Research is required to understand the needs of many rare invertebrates and plants.



Fen raft spider Helen Smith



Fen orchid Robin Chittenden/naturepl.com



Holly-leaved naiad Robin Chittenden





Marsh harrier Robin Chittenden/naturepl.com



Swallowtail butterfly Tom Barrett



Greater water parsnip Linda Pitkin



Natterjack toad Ingo Arndt



Redshank Roger Powell/naturepl.com



Nathusius' pipistrelle bat Terry Whittaker/naturepl.com



Crane Jose B. Ruiz/naturepl.com

## Farming and Management

High value nature farming is widely adopted in the Broads (13,800ha are in agri-environment schemes, with an annual value of £313,400<sup>3</sup>). It includes sensitive ditch management, no fertiliser application on most grassland, fen and reedbed management – including harvesting thatching reed, deer management and appropriate predator control. Water management creates our unique landscape and requires fundamental investment planning and capital programmes to secure the future of the Broads farming economy.

<sup>3</sup> The area of agri-environment scheme agreements in the Broads in 2022 – Countryside and Environmental Stewardship and the Sustainable Farming Incentive.



Tom Barrett

Traditional reed and sedge cutting for thatching supports the unique habitats of the Broads, but 97% of the UK's thatching reed is now imported. Managing water levels in the Broads' floodplain poses ongoing challenges for both farming and wildlife conservation.

## Targets

**Seven Protected Landscape targets:** for Thriving plants and wildlife and Mitigating and adapting to climate change

*Thriving plants and wildlife targets \**

1. Restore or create more than 2,384ha of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within the Broads, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline). Equivalent to 119ha/yr
2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
3. 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

*Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets \**

6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
7. Restore approximately 2,000ha of peat in the Broads Protected Landscapes by 2050. Equivalent to 80ha/yr (2022–2050)

**Species target:**

8. Carry out projects to ensure 90% species listed in Table (see [Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Strategy at broads-authority.gov.uk](https://www.biodiversity.gov.uk)) are in stable or increasing populations within or beyond the Broads by 2029. (Target 8).

\* To achieve these targets several issues may need to be addressed on a site-by-site basis, potentially limiting the overall ambition. These include:

- Securing permissions
- Ensuring farm viability
- Managing costs related to water storage and management
- Addressing conflicts with other land uses and infrastructure

Some Protected Landscapes targets are set at national level and not yet finalised for the Broads. The BNRS will be updated once they are finalised.

## About the Broads Nature Recovery Strategy

To support the new national and regional provisions, the Broads Authority is working with key partners to prepare and deliver this Broads Nature Recovery Strategy (BNRS). The adopted BNRS has replaced the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy 2019-24.

The BNRS sits under the [Broads Plan](#), the integrated statutory management plan for the Broads, and sets priority actions for the next five years and describes what could be achieved by 2040. It will cross-relate to other

guiding strategies produced by the Broads Authority and to a wide range of partnership and site-based plans for the area, such as the Broads Landscape Character Assessment and Natural England’s Natural Character Area profile for the Broads. Many actions in these strategies and plans (while not being repeated in this BNRS) will also benefit nature recovery, as well as enhancing public awareness, education and enjoyment of the Broads’ natural environment.



The Broads National Park is a vital powerhouse, regulating climate, storing floodwaters, filtering pollution, and providing clean air and water. It serves as the nation's breathing space, offering a chance to explore our changing world and its diverse wildlife.

James Bass, Julian Claxton, Prof Holman, Mike Page, Bill Smith

### Acknowledgements

Anglian Water, British Dragonfly Society, Broads Authority, Broads Society, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Environment Agency, Essex & Suffolk Water, Freshwater Habitats Trust, National Farmers Union, National Trust, Natural England, Non-Native Species Initiative, Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Flora Group, Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists’ Society, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Plantlife, RSPB, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, University of East Anglia, Water Management Alliance and all individuals who input during the consultation on the drafts of the Strategy.

To find out more:

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Visit [Biodiversity and nature recovery \(broads-authority.gov.uk\)](https://broads-authority.gov.uk/biodiversity-and-nature-recovery)

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