

Broads Authority

29 November 2024

Agenda item number 9

Strategic priorities- update on 2024/25 and draft strategic priorities for 2025/26

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2024/25 and starts the process for considering next year's priorities.

Broads Plan context

The Broads Plan is a key part of the Authority's strategic framework.

Recommended decision

- i. To note the progress in implementing this year's strategic priorities; and
 - ii. To agree the strategic priorities for 2025/26.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Each year the Broads Authority identifies a small set of strategic priorities, which focus on projects that have high resource needs or a very large impact on the Broads, or that are politically sensitive. Setting these priorities helps target the Authority's resources and make the most of partnership working and external funding opportunities. Priorities are set each financial year, although some large-scale projects carry across several years.
- 1.2. In addition, Defra has a requirement for National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority to provide quarterly updates on deliverables against the Business Plan, as part of its grant funding agreement. These update reports on our strategic priorities are used by officers to comply with that requirement.
- 1.3. The latest update on the agreed strategic priorities for 2024/25 is in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Strategic priorities 2024/25 – progress update

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>1. Responding to climate change (Broadland Futures Initiative)</p> <p>Aim: To implement the next steps of the Broadland Futures Initiative.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative BFI newsletter, by March 2025. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2025. (iii) Various technical deliverables from BFI consultant including the new hydraulic model expected mid-2024. (iv) Engagement activities, including consultation as required. 	<p>Status: On track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) BFI Newsletter (Autumn 2024) has been sent out to the subscriber list, with information about the outcome of the consultation on the ‘toolkit’ of potential flood risk management actions, an update on the modelling, and the maintenance work carried out this year. (ii) The Elected Members Forum met on 14 October. The new Chair is Cllr Jan Davis from Broadland District Council. The EMF agreed the process to combine individual flood risk management (FRM) actions, agreed early engagement with landowners, and to include possible future scenarios for the Eccles-Winterton coastal frontage. (iii) All on track. The hydraulic model continues to get tested. (iv) The report about capital dredging scenarios was published early October (outside the scope of BFI). A workshop with BA members is scheduled for 14 January 2025. 	<p>Director of Strategic Services</p>
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including</p>	<p>Status: on track</p>	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>the three Nature for Climate projects.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Endorsement of Norfolk & Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) – timings to be confirmed by responsible authorities. (ii) To complete the “Broads Authority consideration” of biodiversity actions by 1 January 2024. This is the first requirement of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty introduced in the 2021 Environment Act for local authorities and will consider action to take by the Broads Authority to comply with the duty. (iii) To review and refresh the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy with partners by March 2025. (iv) To implement Nature for Climate Peat restoration project at Buttle Marsh within agreed budget ~£300k and timeline by March 2025. (v) To implement Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund ‘FibreBroads’ project within agreed budget ~£500k and timeline by March 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Attended steering group and themed working groups. Timing for the pre-consultation on the draft LNRS is likely to be January 2025. A briefing session is scheduled on 9 December with members. (ii) Completed. (iii) Draft Broads Nature Recovery Strategy (new name for the Biodiversity and Water Strategy) and declaration of a biodiversity emergency is scheduled to be discussed at the November Authority meeting. (iv) The detailed engineering design for the reservoir will start in December and is due to conclude in February 2025. Created a sponsorship document to help secure co-finance for Buttle Marsh. (v) All FibreBroads work packages on track. With the two ‘Lowland Agricultural Peat Projects’, held workshops and webinars for 130 local and national peat policy officers, practitioners and farmers. Presented to Broads Society annual keynote presentation. <p>Successful growing season at Horsey Paludiculture plot. Planning continues in anticipation of the upcoming harvest in January.</p> <p>No response yet about the two Water Restoration Fund bids related to water management.</p>	

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>3. Local Plan for the Broads</p> <p>Aim: To produce an updated Local Plan for the Broads.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Preferred Options consultation: March 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Publication consultation: December 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Submission: By end of June 2025.</p> <p>(iv) Adoption: By end of 2026.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>On the November Authority agenda to endorse consultation on the Publication version of the Local Plan. It should be noted that the timeline for consultation and submission all depend on what the new NPPF says when that is released.</p>	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>
<p>4. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p> <p>Aim: To run the FiPL programme and allocate Broads grants to farmers and landowners, and support the Broads and Norfolk Coast Land Management Board to allocate their funding.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2025.</p> <p>(ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Engagement activities to promote and showcase FiPL, by March 2025.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>(i) There have been four FiPL Board meetings – the last was held on 23 September.</p> <p>(ii) £335,581.38 grant funds for 24/25 have been allocated to projects already out of a total grant budget of £380,785.</p> <p>(iii) The FiPL Officer attended the Norfolk Landscapes Conference on 2 October.</p>	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>5. Navigation IT Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Develop timetable and tender document by June 2024 for amendments to core system and a replacement web interface.</p> <p>(ii) Publish and then review tender responses by end of September 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Award contract (depending on affordability) and agree timescales with contractor.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>(i) The upgrade of the internal tolls system to the latest software version has been completed. Testing is ongoing.</p> <p>(ii) The replacement online payment system is being tested. Existing user accounts will be migrated to the new platform and work is underway to improve the sign-up process for owners wanting to pay online. The initial application will provide the key functionality required to renew a toll online. It will utilise the latest security technologies such as one-time passcodes for logon thereby simplifying the current process.</p> <p>(iii) We are currently working on report generation and email integration.</p> <p>(iv) We plan for the above works to be completed in time for the 2025/26 tolls season.</p>	<p>Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls</p>

2. Setting strategic priorities for 2025/26

- 2.1. The role of strategic priorities in our strategic “golden thread” is set out in appendix 1. The strategic priorities for 2025/26 will feed into the 2025/26 budget setting process.
- 2.2. Due to the recent change in Government and the uncertainty over its priorities and future spending plans, it has been difficult this year to predict likely funding sources and opportunities for partnership working. This means drafting possible strategic priorities for the Broads Authority has been even more challenging than usual.

2.3. The Management Team’s initial draft ideas for next year’s strategic priorities were presented at the meeting in September for members’ consideration (listed below). However, agreement could not be reached and it was decided that officers should present a revised list at this meeting, taking on board the comments made.

- Responding to climate change (continued involvement with the development of the Broadland Futures Initiative)
- Implement the five Ps¹ of the Race to Zero Programme – by progressing from Pledging in 2024 to having a refreshed Climate Action Plan in 2025.
- Biodiversity crisis response by implementing the Broads Nature Recovery Action Plan
- Developing partnership arrangements for external funding bids
- Tolls system – phase 2
- Working with Natural England on the apportionment of Protected Landscapes targets for the Broads
- Submitting the Local Plan for the Broads to the Planning Inspectorate

2.4. It is important to remember that much of the Authority’s resources is already committed into the future: in providing statutory services such as navigation safety and tolls, planning, and undertaking essential works such as maintenance of the waterways.

Table 2

Strategic priorities 2025/26

DEFRA / Government priority	Strategic priority	Expected milestones
Protect communities from the dangers of flooding	Respond to future flood risk in the Broads that better copes with changing climate and sea level rise.	(i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) newsletter, by March 2026. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2026. (iii) Develop plan to adapt moorings to higher water levels in the Broads.
Ensure Nature’s recovery & Clean up Britain’s rivers, lakes and seas	Continue to provide home to thriving wildlife that can adapt to the changing climate.	(i) Implement Year 1 of the Broads Nature Recovery Action Plan (ii) Conclude the work with Natural England on the apportionment of Protected Landscapes targets for the Broads (iii) Timely response to the consultations to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in

¹ Pledge; Plan; Proceed; Publish and Persuade

DEFRA / Government priority	Strategic priority	Expected milestones
		<p>Norfolk and Suffolk, as a Supporting Authority, expected in February and May 2025</p> <p>(iv) Completions and lessons learnt from the restoration projects at Buttle Marsh and Horsey</p>
Net Zero by 2050	Implement the five Ps² of the Race to Zero Programme to halve emissions by 2030.	<p>(i) Refresh Climate Action Plan, by summer 2025</p> <p>(ii) Develop BA response to DEFRA’s request to move to electric vehicles by 2027</p> <p>(iii) Develop plan towards more zero-emission boating</p> <p>(iv) Find funding to implement the plan for zero-emission boating</p>
<i>Potentially all</i>	Bring significant external funding to deliver Broads Plan objectives	<p>(i) Develop partnership arrangements for new project by summer 2025</p> <p>(ii) Submit bid to the Lottery by end of 2025</p>
Access for All	More people enjoying more activities in the Broads safely	<p>(i) Ensure that the 2025 edition of Broadcaster (and all website and social media content produced in 2025) highlight the breadth of activities available in the Broads, including information regarding accessibility, with relevant and appropriate safety messaging.</p> <p>(ii) Continue to use communications channels during 2025 that reach the widest possible audiences, in particular those that may not traditionally access the Broads.</p> <p>(iii) Deliver Year 2 of the Integrated Access Strategy action plan</p> <p>(iv) That all officers responsible for writing or commissioning reports and published</p>

² Pledge; Plan; Proceed; Publish and Persuade

DEFRA / Government priority	Strategic priority	Expected milestones
		materials complete the Accessibility training by the end of 2025.
Support our farmers to boost Britain's food security	Supports farmers and land managers in carrying out projects which benefit the Broads.	(i) Review of the outcomes of Farming in Protected Landscapes (July 2021 to March 2025) (ii) Publish case studies showing example projects completed in the Broads.

2.5. Members are asked to agree the strategic priorities for 2025/26 together with the expected milestones with effect from 1 April 2025 as identified in table 2 above.

3. Financial Risks

- 3.1. If the Authority fails to comply with any of its obligations in the Grant Funding Agreement, DEFRA may, at its discretion, reduce, suspend or terminate payments of grant, or require any part or all of the grant to be repaid.
- 3.2. Over-committing to additional work or priorities will have an adverse impact on the budget (see para. 2.4 above).

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Background papers: none

[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: all

Appendix 1 – “Golden thread” strategic framework

Appendix 1 – ‘Golden thread’ strategic framework

Fig. 1

‘Golden thread’ strategic framework

