

BFI Elected Members Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2024

Contents

1. Apologies for absence and welcome	2
2. Update on communications and community engagement	2
3. Update on technical work	3
FRM Action Concepts	3
4. Any other business	7
5. Date of next meeting	7
Summary of progress	7

Present

Harry Blathwayt - in the Chair, Jan Davis-Broadland District Council, Richard Price- Norfolk County Council, Matthew Shardlow- Broads Authority, Melanie Vigo Di Gallidoro – Suffolk County Council, Paul Wells - Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

In attendance

Mareth Bassett- Environment Agency, Libby Bush- Jacobs, David Cobby- Jacobs, Peter Doktor - Environment Agency, Kellie Fisher- Environment Agency, Catherine Harries- Environment Agency, Dan Hoare - Broads Authority, Yvonne Smith- Coastal Partnership East, Kylie Moos - Broads Authority (minutes).

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the online meeting.

Apologies: Richard Elliot (South Norfolk Council) and Eric Vardy (Norfolk County Council).

2. Update on communications and community engagement

Mareth Bassett (MB) provided an update on Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) communications and community engagement.

Current actions

- MB and Tom Say (TS) will be sharing the engagement role going forward.
- Producing BFI newsletter 14 and including a QR code for people to join the mailing list.
- Moving from reactive to proactive engagement following winter floods.
- Revamp of the BFI website to make it more interactive and easier for people to digest information.

Next Steps

- Updating the BFI engagement plan to align with the upcoming milestones.
- Attending the Potter Heigham Parish Council meeting and the Upper Thurne Working Group.
- Exploring Hello Lamp Post, a two way communication platform which provides an opportunity to increase community engagement and reach. QR codes would be placed in the community and users can scan the code which allows them to ask questions and find out more about BFI.
- Attending the Royal Norfolk Show in June. Working with the Broads Authority, the stand will be positioned next to the Broads Village.

Comments and answers to questions

MB will be attending the Suffolk Show and has recommended that BFI is represented.

A member recommended that BFI reaches out to parishes instead of waiting to be contacted, particularly those have been impacted by the recent flooding such as Repps with Bastwick, Martham and Thurne Parish Council. Cllr Paul Wells offered to share parish council clerk contact details with MB. Another member suggested that Repps with Bastwick were invited to the upcoming Potter Heigham Parish Council meeting. The Chair agreed to contact the clerk at Potter Heigham Parish Council today to extend the invite to Repps with Bastwick.

MB agreed to send a letter to all parish councils to provide information on BFI and offer attendance at a future meeting.

The Broads Authority have been engaging with a group of landowners and farmers in the Upper Thurne. Dan Hoare (DH) will be attending their next meeting and representing BFI.

Broadland District Council run the Town and Parish Council Forum on a monthly basis. A member recommended that BFI attends a future meeting.

The Chair concluded, BFI is moving up on parish council agendas following the widespread experience of high water events this winter. Now is the time to be proactive and engage with parishes.

3. Update on technical work

Peter Doktor (PD) updated the forum on the stages of the strategy development process and David Cobby (DC) provided a short presentation on the activity that has been taking place over the last few months. PD added, ideally the Initiative Project Team (IPT) would present items which require an EMF decision at every meeting, but unfortunately the cycle of meetings and the work programme have not aligned for today's meeting. The update is an opportunity for EMF members to ask any questions and consider the direction of travel for BFI as the project begins to consider emerging concepts and the wide range of possible flood risk management actions that could be undertaken.

FRM Action Concepts

Two strands of work are being carried out together to inform the shortlist of action combinations across the plan area: the development of the flood model and the definition of flood risk management (FRM) actions.

The starting point for the FRM action concepts included:

- Past studies in Broadland
- A review of other studies which are taking place national and internationally.
- Suggested schemes such as a direct connection between the Lower Bure and Breydon Water.

The three pieces of information were used to develop four workshops for the BFI project team. The workshops all contained a different theme which have come from the Environment Agency National Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Workshop scenarios

Workshop theme	Baseline scenarios	'Do something' scenario
1. Baseline and respond and recover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do nothing* • Legal obligations • Do minimum • Sustain current SOS 	Focus on people and resilience
2. Place making		Focus on the natural, social, and historic environment
3. Protect		Focus on water engineering through FRM structures
4. Inland and coastal adaption		Focus on the long-term sustainability of actions

*Do nothing to manage flood/erosion risks. Do nothing represents an alternative to investment which must be included in Government FCERM economic appraisal. It acts as a counterfactual reference against which the benefits and impacts of future investment can be measured.

During the workshops, a case study from the Netherlands was shared to illustrate how the four themes could play out in the future. For the BFI area, the 16 FRM actions were grouped by the themes that they are most likely to achieve. Often an FRM action would be suitable for more than one theme. FRM action concepts were then placed around the BFI area, and consideration was given as to how they might sequence through time as well as over the 100 years of BFI.

Applying themes through the 100 year BFI plan horizon

Three pathways were presented:

- Default pathway- adapting place naturally and social empowerment
- Preferred pathway- medium term protection for a smoother adaption
- Alternative pathway- offering longer term protection

Comments and answers to questions

A member suggested that there is an alternative to the high cost of protection and that is the cost of compensation. DC agreed that compensation could be part of a flood management response, but it would not be equated with protection. Protection suggests that water damage has been avoided, where compensation would be part of a resilience plan and accepting that flooding has taken place. Kellie Fisher (KF) added, in England, there is no compensation when it comes to flood and coastal risk management except from when farmers and landowners take part in schemes where their land is used for flood risk management benefits. On the erodible coast, people can be moved away from risk and money has been used to facilitate active

movement through the planning process. The same method could, in theory, be applied to help people move away from flood risk.

A member commented that BFI is for the next 100 years, but change is happening now, and questioned if 'futures' should be removed from the BFI title.

The case study diagram for the Netherlands shows retreat as the largest solution by the end of the strategy, a member asked if this also applies to the BFI area. DC confirmed that it is too early to make comparisons for BFI and there is no suggestion that the text on diagram shown today will apply to the BFI. A member cautioned the use of retreat in BFI communications which could evoke an emotional response. KF agreed, and reassured the forum that BFI is very careful about the language that is used. Another member request that phrases from the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) which have been hyper politicised in an inaccurate way are also avoided in the BFI communications. Often the SMP phrases mean something to communities which is very different to what their legal definitions are.

A member asked what level of detail the modelling can achieve with the themes discussed today and is it possible to have a variety of different approaches and different localities. DC responded, the model is detailed and includes a lot of local detail however, it is unlikely that the results will be presented at the full level of detail. Another part of the BFI study is using reporting units to roll up the key findings ready to present. The BFI area is likely to be divided into ten reporting units based on river catchments and key political boundaries. Catherine Harries (CH) added, the size of the management units has been selected to make sure that communities are unable to identify their homes and bring about property blight.

A member commented on the pause of the tidal barrier project at Lowestoft and asked the impact it will have on the Broads. KF confirmed that the project has a funding gap of £124million and has currently been put on pause. The barrier is not part of the BFI but is still relevant to the area. From a flood risk perspective, because of the presence of Mutford Lock at Lowestoft, the bigger risk to the Broad is through Great Yarmouth. BFI will be looking at the feasibility of a barrier at Great Yarmouth however, barriers are extremely expensive and technically difficult. KF added, when working up options BFI will need to consider what is economically viable, what are the current funding rules and what is achievable now.

A member requested that although the FRM actions have been divided into four themes, that the communication reflects the holistic plan that is being developed to avoid categorisation. A lesson from the SMP is that people see their categorisation and feel that it defines, even though in practise it is more complicated than this. DC responded, the reporting units will not have a single policy associated with them. The themes are used as a framework to break down the problem into something more manageable and each reporting until will have a mix of the themes and supporting actions.

Regarding the management of water levels in the Broads, a member commented that not only does the amount of water entering the system need to reduce, for example through the use of reservoirs, but the speed in which the water can leave the Broads needs to be considered. DC

responded, storage of water and later reuse was a strong message that has come out through consultation to date.

A member commented that a similar language and collaboration is needed with other forums such as the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance and Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to be able to discuss the issues at a population level. For example, the Innovate UK funded project Norfolk Net Zero Communities is aimed at testing how barriers can be overcome in order to make a step change in reducing emission, raising awareness, and using language that can be shared with the wider population.

A member questioned if the hardening of defences at Great Yarmouth is suitable when ground water flooding is already happening, and some residents already have a pumps running 24/7 under their home. DC agreed that all aspects of climate change need to be considered including ground water, changes to temperature and biodiversity.

The lack of public awareness for BFI was raised at a recent public meeting. A member commented, if the implications for individuals is too vague and people are not aware of BFI, they are unlikely to engage and adapt. KF agreed that the BFI needs to be clear so that people understand, but this is a strategy, and it is a government requirement that projects come from flood risk strategies. It is not going to be possible to describe the individual projects that come out of BFI. The plan should be technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, economically desirable and provide an adaptive pathway through the next 100 years. A member responded, it is not possible to predict how much money is going to be available in 50 years' time, or to commit that the actions will happen, the plan will always be the preferred recommendation. KF agreed, the strategy should not be a fully costed plan for the next 100 years as funding rules and priorities are likely to change but, the plan does need to be realistic.

A member commented, asking people to adapt by moving roads, footpaths and homes can take place relatively quickly. Adapting for nature and wildlife will take a lot longer, species will require at least 30-40 years to adapt. If adaptation is focused on protection in the short term than BFI may fail to achieve long term environmental benefits. KF responded, Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts are key partners to the BFI along with the NFU, Water Management Alliance, RSPB, and National Trust to the BFI IPT. The IPT partners ensure that all aspects attached to flood risk and environment are considered.

DH commented, planning is another tool for adapting to changes in the future. The Local Plan for the Broads is now open for consultation and has been reviewed with BFI in mind and explains why developing in certain areas does not contribute to resilience to climate change. Details of the consultation can be found at the following link. [Consultations \(broads-authority.gov.uk\)](https://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/consultations). A role for the elected members is to be the champions of resilience in local plans and strategies and to make sure that climate elements are included at district and county level.

A member recommended looking at the work North Norfolk District Council and Rob Goodliffe carried out for the Pathfinder project in Happisburgh between 2009-2010. The project successfully engaged with businesses and the local population and erosion was accepted at

face value. The community realised that the project was there to help them, and they were guided into options that they could take. A similar situation is currently happening at Ferry Road in Horning which has been underwater for most of the last four months. Authorities are being honest with businesses and property owners, advising that the road cannot be protected without significant investment, which is not feasible given its proximity to the river and unstable ground. KF confirmed that BFI is linked in with Rob Goodliffe and the team at North Norfolk District Council. The BFI project team meet quarterly with Coastwise and the Fens 2100+ project team to discuss similar problems and share good practises however the decision makers are the elected members. A member added, Coastwise successfully held drop in sessions in cafes with communities to create real connections, a similar approach was recommended for the Broads.

A member asked why recovery is not mentioned under the FRM actions. Recovery is an opportunity for raising debate and discussions.

A member asked how aquifer recharge could be managed. DC responded, the management does not happen frequently in this country but there are examples in Australia and the USA where they face more severe water shortages. Water is collected in surface storage areas and is injected into aquifers by pumping downwards instead of into rivers and out to sea. The process speeds up the time it would ordinarily take for surface water to reach the aquifer, however the quality of the water being pumped into the aquifer is a key concern.

4. Any other business

The BFI project team recently held an online induction session for new members and substitutes to the EMF. DH suggesting running the session again for EMF substitutes and any current members who would like a refresher. Paul Wells noted that a substitute for Great Yarmouth Borough Council will be appointed at the next AGM on 12 May. Jan Davis added, the appointment for Broadland District Council will take place on the 23 May. Kylie Moos (KM) agreed to find a suitable date for the next BFI EMF induction.

5. Date of next meeting

10.00am-1.00pm Tuesday 2 July 2024, to be held at Dragonfly House, Norwich.

Summary of progress

Outstanding actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Contact all parish councils to offer a briefing from BFI.	22.04.2024	MB
Find a suitable date for the next BFI EMF induction	22.04.2024	KM