

Broads Authority

24 January 2025

Agenda item number 8

Strategic priorities- update

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2024/25.

Broads Plan context

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

Recommended decision

To note the progress in implementing this year's strategic priorities.

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.

2. Updates

- 2.1. 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
1. Responding to climate change (Broadland Futures Initiative)	Status: On track	Director of Strategic Services

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) BFI Newsletter (Autumn 2024) was published 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 in 2024. (ii) The Elected Members Forum met on 14 October. 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. Next EMF meeting scheduled on 27 February 2025. (iii) All on track. (iv) A workshop with BA members is scheduled for 14 January 2025. 	
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including 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. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provided feedback at steering group and themed working groups and members briefing session. LNRS pre-consultation draft on the 25 January 2025 BA meeting. 	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>(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.</p> <p>(iii) To review and refresh the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy with partners by March 2025.</p> <p>(iv) To implement Nature for Climate Peat restoration project at Buttle Marsh within agreed budget ~£300k and timeline by March 2025.</p> <p>(v) To implement Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund ‘FibreBroads’ project within agreed budget ~£500k and timeline by March 2025.</p>	<p>(ii) Completed.</p> <p>(iii) Broads Nature Recovery Strategy and declaration of a biodiversity emergency approved. Completed ahead of schedule.</p> <p>(iv) Water permissions for Buttle Marsh nearing completion. Discussions on the detailed engineering design and flood risk assessment for the reservoir are ongoing.</p> <p>(v) Submitted a costed proposal for a 12-month extension of the FibreBroads project. All work packages are on track, including the two "Lowland Agricultural Peat Projects." A site visit for the Natural England Head of Agriculture is scheduled for February, ahead of the Norfolk Farming Conference. Three films are in production: 1. A farmer raising the water table in the Yare, 2. Peat level cameras, and 3. Horsey paludiculture. The Broads Peat work will also be presented at an upcoming national peat conference in Ely and featured on a national webinar.</p> <p>No response yet about the two Water Restoration Fund bids related to water management.</p>	
<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>Status: On track</p> <p>The transition arrangements for the new NPPF allow more time to proceed to Publication consultation. This is</p>	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
(ii) Publication consultation: December 2024. (iii) Submission: By end of June 2025. (iv) Adoption: By end of 2026.	anticipated to start in March 2025. Submission would hopefully be by around July time.	
4. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) 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. Milestones: (i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2025. (ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2024. (iii) Engagement activities to promote and showcase FiPL, by March 2025.	Status: On track (i) There have been six FiPL Board meetings – the last was held on 16 December. (ii) £393,452.87 grant funds for 24/25 have been allocated to projects already out of a total original grant budget of £380,785, as the grant pot has been increased with underspend from the admin and advice budgets to £398,785 (iii) The FiPL Officer will attend the Norfolk Farming Conference on 11 February.	Catchment & Farming Officer
5. Navigation IT Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality. Milestones: (i) Develop timetable and tender document by June 2024 for amendments to core system	Status: On track (i) The upgrade of the internal tolls system to the latest software version has been completed. Testing is ongoing.	Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>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>(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>We are at a critical point of this project and very close to completion of the first phase. Every effort is being made to enable a go live date in January, however, there remains a risk that the go live date might have to be delayed.</p>	

3. Financial implications

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.

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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

