

Broads Authority

24 January 2025

Agenda item number 12

Norfolk RAMS endorsement- updated tariff and governance arrangements

Report by Planning Policy Officer

Purpose

This paper introduces a reviewed Norfolk RAMS Action Plan, a reviewed tariff and the governance arrangements for administering the collected tariff associated with the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GI RAMS).

At the October 2024 Norfolk Member Forum, the Action Plan and tariff and the Memorandum of Understanding were considered and endorsed. It is now for each Norfolk Local Planning Authority to endorse the Action Plan, tariff and governance arrangements.

Recommended decision

- i. To endorse the new Norfolk Recreational impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Action Plan plus tariff and governance arrangements (as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding).
 - ii. To endorse the nomination of the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee to the Norfolk GI RAMS overseeing Board.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) are a legal requirement for Local Plans, are a soundness and legal consideration at examination, and a legal consideration at planning application stage. These assessments are undertaken to ensure that the Plans' policies and proposals will not result in any likely significant effects on internationally recognised wildlife sites (habitat sites) and, where the potential for such impacts arises, implement an agreed process of mitigation.
- 1.2. All Norfolk authorities' Local Plans have been subject to an HRA and conclude that the in-combination growth that is planned has the potential to have significant adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites.
- 1.3. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) are the designated competent bodies and are responsible for ensuring that policies and proposals contained in their Local Plans do not have an adverse effect on the integrity of habitat sites.

- 1.4. Recreational pressures from growth and their impact on designated Habitats Sites is a cross-boundary issue which affects all Local Plans in Norfolk. Individual authorities can only address the effects of growth within their own boundaries. The best available evidence categorically and irrevocably identifies likely significant effects from in combination growth because of cross boundary growth. With the best available evidence now clearly showing that the levels of growth proposed trigger in combination effects across the LPAs from growth that originates outside each LPA, the issue is better addressed at a more strategic level like the approach taken in many other parts of the country.
- 1.5. Working through Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum, the member authorities have developed a single shared approach to first understand the pressures and impacts of residential growth on European protected sites and then how to address potential impacts.
- 1.6. The Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy was endorsed in 2021, and all local authorities have now introduced the tariff for relevant development.
- 1.7. This paper introduces a reviewed Action Plan, a reviewed tariff as well as the proposed governance arrangements for administering the collected tariff. At the October 2024 Member Forum, the Action Plan and tariff and the Memorandum of Understanding were considered and endorsed. It is now for each Norfolk Local Planning Authority to endorse the Action Plan, tariff and governance arrangements.

2. Review of the mitigation package

- 2.1. Alongside the implementation of the tariff, members requested the review of the mitigation package. The key principle of the review was to provide a more detailed action plan of mitigation through:
 - A detailed review of all individual Natura 2000 sites looking at site improvement plans, existing access and visitor management measures and identify other proposed measures within the protected sites
 - The identification of the degree of intervention needed to avoid likely significant effects based on visitor increases expected
 - Working with site managers/landowners to identify and prioritise the key projects and priorities
 - Maximising use of existing resources at sites
 - Ensuring the Action Plan covers the period to 2046 to align with any forthcoming local plans
- 2.2. The consultant Footprint Ecology was commissioned in early 2023 to complete this work and an update on progress was given to members of the Norfolk Member Forum in January 2024. This work is now complete, and the Action Plan accompanies this report. The report has identified a large range of projects to be delivered across the county in the next 22 years costing £22 million.

- 2.3. The Action Plan will lead to an increase in the tariff cost per dwelling from £221.17 to £293.53.
- 2.4. The Action Plan is now ready for endorsement by each Norfolk LPA.

3. Governance and management of the fund

- 3.1. In December 2021, the Norfolk Member Forum agreed to the principle of exploring the option of Norfolk County Council being the accountable body and hosting organisation for the Mitigation Fund. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach agreement with Norfolk County Council in managing the Mitigation Fund, so officers have been developing a governance process with the delivery manager role being hosted by a district instead.
- 3.2. Norwich City Council has offered to host the delivery manager and will hold a central pool of funds for projects. However, it will not be accountable for the operation of the scheme which will remain with the Norfolk LPAs and the Board that will be set up to oversee the spend and implementation of the RAMS projects.
- 3.3. It is still proposed that a Board:
 - is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the mitigation identified as being required to support the planned growth for the county;
 - is granted the power, by each LPA, to make decisions regarding the Norfolk RAMS fund and the projects it is used to deliver;
 - agrees an annual programme of projects to be delivered by the Norfolk RAMS Mitigation Programme which will be funded wholly from the Norfolk RAMS Fund and
 - will meet every six months to review progress.
- 3.4. The Board will be made up of Members from all LPAs supported by Ecologists and/or planning officers from all LPAs. The most appropriate member for the Broads Authority would be either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. There may be other groups that support the Board in an advisory role or provide advice; this may include Natural England, the Environment Agency and ecologists from other interested groups.
- 3.5. A steering group created terms of reference for the overarching board and a job description for the Delivery Manager Role.
- 3.6. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted which sets out the operation of the scheme alongside the terms of reference with Norwich City Council acting as host authority.
- 3.7. The Action Plan, Tariff and Memorandum of Understanding are now ready for endorsement by each LPA.

4. December Planning Committee

- 4.1. At the December meeting of the Planning Committee, Members endorsed the Action Plan, Memorandum of Understanding, new Tariff and the Chair or Vice Chair representing the Authority on the Board.

Author: Natalie Beal

Date of report: 06 December 2024

Appendix 1 – [Norfolk RAMS Action Plan](#)

Appendix 2 – [Memorandum of Understanding: Norfolk RAMS Programme Fund Governance and Management](#)