

Broads Authority

14 March 2025

Agenda item number 8

Strategic priorities update for 2024/25

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the final update on 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 final update on 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 final 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) Last BFI Newsletter was published in Autumn 2024. Preparing article for the April edition of the “Harnser”. (ii) The Elected Members Forum met on 14 October. Next EMF meeting scheduled for 8 May 2025. (iii) All on track. (iv) A BFI workshop was held with BA members on 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. (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 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Members approved the public consultation of the draft Norfolk LNRS and Suffolk LNRS at the 25 January 2025 BA meeting. (ii) Completed (as part of iii). (iii) Completed. Broads Nature Recovery Strategy and declaration of a biodiversity emergency approved in November 2024. (iv) Water abstraction licence granted for Buttle Marsh. Discussions on the detailed engineering design and 	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>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>flood risk assessment for the reservoir are ongoing.</p> <p>(v) Submitted a bid for a 12-month extension of both the FibreBroads and Lowland Agricultural Peat Water Discovery Pilot projects. All work packages are on track. Feasibility studies ongoing for peat restoration at Beccles and Langley Abbey. Natural England Head of Agriculture visited the Broads and discussed Defra investment in water management infrastructure.</p> <p>Three films under way: 1. A farmer raising the water table in the Yare, 2. Peat science, and 3. Horsey paludiculture.</p> <p>The Broads Peat work was presented at a national peat conference in Ely in January.</p> <p>In February, Paludiculture Symposium: Fibrebroads: Cultivating sustainable futures, at Norwich University of the Arts.</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 (published in December 2024) allow more time to proceed to publication consultation. This is anticipated to start in summer 2025.</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.	Submission would hopefully be by around autumn time.	
<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> (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.	<p>Status: On track</p> (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 attended the Norfolk Farming Conference on 11 February.	Catchment & Farming Officer
<p>5. Navigation IT</p> <p>Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> (i) Develop timetable and tender document by June 2024 for amendments to core system and a replacement web interface.	<p>Status: Delivered</p> <p>The upgrade of the internal tolls system to the latest software version has been completed.</p> <p>The replacement online payment system is complete. Existing user accounts have been migrated to the</p>	Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
(ii) Publish and then review tender responses by end of September 2024. (iii) Award contract (depending on affordability) and agree timescales with contractor.	new platform. Printed toll account, posted on 3 March, contain a unique Personal Identification Number that enable quick and easy signup to online payment. The online application uses one-time passcode security for logon thereby simplifying the current process.	

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

