

**Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan Progress and Process Review and  
Challenges and Choices Consultation**

Report by Broadland Catchment Partnership Officer and Senior Ecologist

<b>Summary:</b>	The Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan, focussed on shared interest and multiple benefits, will be the first stakeholder plan for this catchment. A summary of progress to date is reported below. In addition this report includes the Broads Authority's response to the Environment Agency's formal consultation on the second River Basin Management Plan 'Challenges and Choices' prior to ministerial agreement and decisions on affordability.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Members are asked to note progress to date and invited to comment and focus on the evidence and activity summary and conclusions and recommended section of this report.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The production of a Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan is a strategic priority for the Broads Authority in 2013/14 under objective CC4.2 of the Broads Plan *Promote sustainable planning and management of water resources at catchment and regional scale.*
- 1.2 The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) is being rolled out nationally by Defra with the aim of delivering improvements to the water environment through targeted stakeholder engagement.
- 1.3 Engagement activities will lead to a catchment plan being produced. It will feed in to the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for 2015-2021 which includes the actions that the Government via the Environment Agency will take to achieve the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).
- 1.4 The Environment Agency's (EA) formal consultation on the RBMP 'Challenges and Choices' closed on 22 December 2013. It gives communities and partners the opportunity to tell the EA what they think are the most significant issues for the water environment, the best ways to tackle these issues, and what the priorities should be.
- 1.5 The Broads Authority submitted a response to this consultation which included the summary information in section 4 of this report, along with additional evidence on the issues and more detail on the ways to tackle these.

- 1.6 The second RBMP will be drafted during 2014 and Ministers will consider a programme of measures in which benefits exceed costs, and is affordable in 2015.

## **2 Objectives of partnership and Broadland catchment plan**

- 2.1 The objectives of the partnership are to ensure local knowledge is used to drive local change through:

- agreeing and understanding issues within the catchment
- involving local groups in decision making
- sharing evidence and identifying priorities for action
- seeking to deliver local integrated actions in cost-effective ways

- 2.2 The catchment plan aims to encourage ownership of issues and inspire behavioural change. It will focus on shared interest ('win-wins') and voluntary sustainable solutions with societal and economic gains and facilitate action to deliver improvement to the water environment.

- 2.3 The catchment plan will present information on:

- the partnership and its agreed vision
- background on the catchment and the pressures it faces
- agreed issues
- the evidence and uncertainties around these

It will reference existing activity and its effectiveness, sign-post organisations and groups and best practice and include actions to facilitate delivery of improvements to waterbodies and make recommendations on policy, funding and allocation of resources.

- 2.4 In order to achieve the objectives the following attributes of the documents have been agreed:

- a) Jointly owned, living documents that set out a 'road map' for achieving future aspirations including a 'reference document' and 'summary document'

### **Reference document**

- b) Sign-posting to more detailed information
- c) Around 50 pages in length, colourful and structured around 4 themes (see Appendix 1)
- d) Use of photographs, maps and imagery where possible in favour of text
- e) Text broken up into boxes and a range of font sizes used
- f) Use of short case studies for current activity (who, what, where, why?)

### **Summary document**

- g) Structured around four key audiences (communities; farmers; investor organisations/funders; planners/policy makers) along the lines of: 'what's in it for me?'
- h) Using an economic angle incentivises change and attracts wider interest than an environmental angle

Both documents will be circulated on line to wide partnership audience. The summary document will have extensive circulation with co-ordinated press releases by partner organisations and will be printed for local dissemination to inspire behavioural change.

Some technical terms, abbreviations and acronyms may be required but will be kept to a minimum and a glossary provided to explain these. This meets the need of key stakeholders at the 'representative' level who are working together for efficiency savings, joint funding bids and establishing new payment mechanisms and is essential for accountability and achieving buy-in to the process.

### **3 Summary of catchment partnership progress and process**

- 3.1 The Broadland Catchment Partnership was established in 2012 and is hosted by the Broads Authority. A partner funded officer was appointed in March 2013 to co-ordinate the stakeholder engagement and the production of the plan. The work timetable is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 A Steering Group has been established that meets every two months and guides the work of the partnership officer who reports to the Broads Authority's Senior Ecologist. Stakeholder analysis has been undertaken and an engagement plan produced with three well attended stakeholder workshops held and regular newsletters sent out to over 100 individuals from a range of relevant interest groups along with face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders.
- 3.3 Information and data gathering and presentation has been central to the evidence based approach to raise awareness and encourage ownership of issues and provide confidence in decision making.
- 3.4 The first workshop presented a vision, discussed issue and action areas and collaborative working principles and desire. All this information was considered in detail and four key themes emerged of water quality, water quantity, habitat quality and recreational access with knowledge and understanding central to all (Appendix 1).
- 3.5 The second workshop focused on evidence around catchment wide issues including uncertainties and problems with sharing information. Monitored and modelled scientific data and other relevant information was collated by or provided to the partnership. Participants were surveyed on their thoughts on simple and accurate statements to do with the water environment, such as 'phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment levels are all reasons for failure of condition assessments for sites protected by nature conservation'. Their responses have helped determine where there was consensus, disagreement or lack of information and knowledge.
- 3.6 The third workshop sought to (i) determine priority areas for future actions based on existing activity and modelled risk (ii) gain support for key catchment wide measures to address multiple issues that require multi-partner delivery.

A comprehensive local evaluation of key activity areas was undertaken by the partnership officer that was sent to participants before the event.

- 3.7 Activity mapping by the GIS officer was used to demonstrate where farmer and community engagement was occurring and areas that farming grants and funding were available. Diffuse pollution risk modelling had been commissioned using additional catchment funds gained and these outputs were also presented on the maps to show potential high risk areas and how this aligned to current activity/grants.
- 3.8 Modelling and mapping of Ecosystem Services (such as carbon storage and sustainable food production) are also being commissioned using catchment funds. The aim is for future engagement with stakeholders to focus on building on these maps. With the aim of aid future prioritisation of where action needs to be planned by community groups, trusts and statutory conservation organisations in order to achieve greatest effect and provide multiple benefits.

#### **4 Evidence and activity summary that formed the basis of response to the Environment Agency's challenges and choices consultation**

- 4.1 Issue headings set out by Environment Agency in Challenges and Choices consultation <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/140076.aspx>

**Physical modifications** – changes made by people to rivers, lakes and estuaries, for example flood defences and weirs, and changes to the natural river channels for land drainage and navigation. These modifications alter natural flow levels, may cause excessive build up of sediment, and the loss of habitats.

**Pollution from waste water** – waste water can contain large amounts of nutrients (such as phosphorus and nitrates), ammonia and other damaging substances.

**Pollution from towns, cities and transport** – rainwater running over hard surfaces and carrying pollutants into waters, chemicals from contaminated land, and sewage from houses 'misconnected' to surface water drains rather than sewers.

**Changes to the natural flow and level of water** – taking too much water from rivers, canals, lakes and groundwater, means less water flowing.

**Invasive non-native species** – the effect on the health of the natural environment of plants and animals from outside the UK introduced to UK waters.

**Pollution from rural areas** – the effects of poor agricultural practice and rural land management on the water environment (also known as 'diffuse rural pollution').

- 4.2 *River modification and diffuse rural pollution* are listed as the main contributors to failures of the Water Framework Directive and SSSI condition throughout the catchment. Highways are contributors and pathways for pollutants and evidence has been gathered that support this. In addition, continuing Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and integrating farm advice within river valleys along with mechanisms to achieve multiple benefits along with local targeting of actions, such as the Catchment Restoration Fund, are all seen as important.
- 4.3 Sewage treatment works are the main contributors of phosphate but have been the subject of some the greatest investment in the country with nearly an 80% reduction in load from pre-1990. Significant future reductions are currently not sustainable or affordable to water company customers.
- 4.4 Exceedance of drinking water supply standards occurs intermittently in raw water for nitrate and pesticides. Agriculture is the main source and removal at public water treatment works, where possible, is expensive to install and operate. This only treats the symptoms so reducing losses from agricultural land is essential.
- 4.5 River restoration has occurred at sites along on the Wensum but is still required on the upper Yare, Bure, Waveney and tributaries. The Wensum work is reported not to have taken sufficient account of recreational needs such as canoeing, which should be incorporated where applicable in future schemes. Significant opportunities exist to deliver floodplain re-connection to improved grazing land in the upper catchment with lack of funding to reward farmers the main barrier.
- 4.6 Public access to rivers is reasonable and has been improved in the Broads Area as part of the Integrated Access Strategy. New moorings and slipways and canoe portages have been provided.
- 4.7 Eradication of floating pennywort on the River Waveney is a notable success story in the control of invasive species but a more co-ordinated strategic approach from the top of catchment with landowner support is required to deal with species where water aids dispersal such as Himalayan balsam.
- 4.8 Over 150 barriers to fish movement exist throughout the catchment. These have been subject to assessment and prioritisation and will be by-passed or removed by the Environment Agency and partners when funding becomes available.
- 4.9 The Broadland Flood Alleviation Project has been delivered to schedule with provision for wildlife, dredging and access where applicable. Significant challenges continue to face the Broads in terms of flood risk management. Given recent tidal flooding and climate change predictions options for adaptation and protection of important wildlife and farm land are being discussed via a Broads Community stakeholder engagement project. Fluvial (river) and surface water (run-off) flooding are localised problems but are proving to be significant for communities.

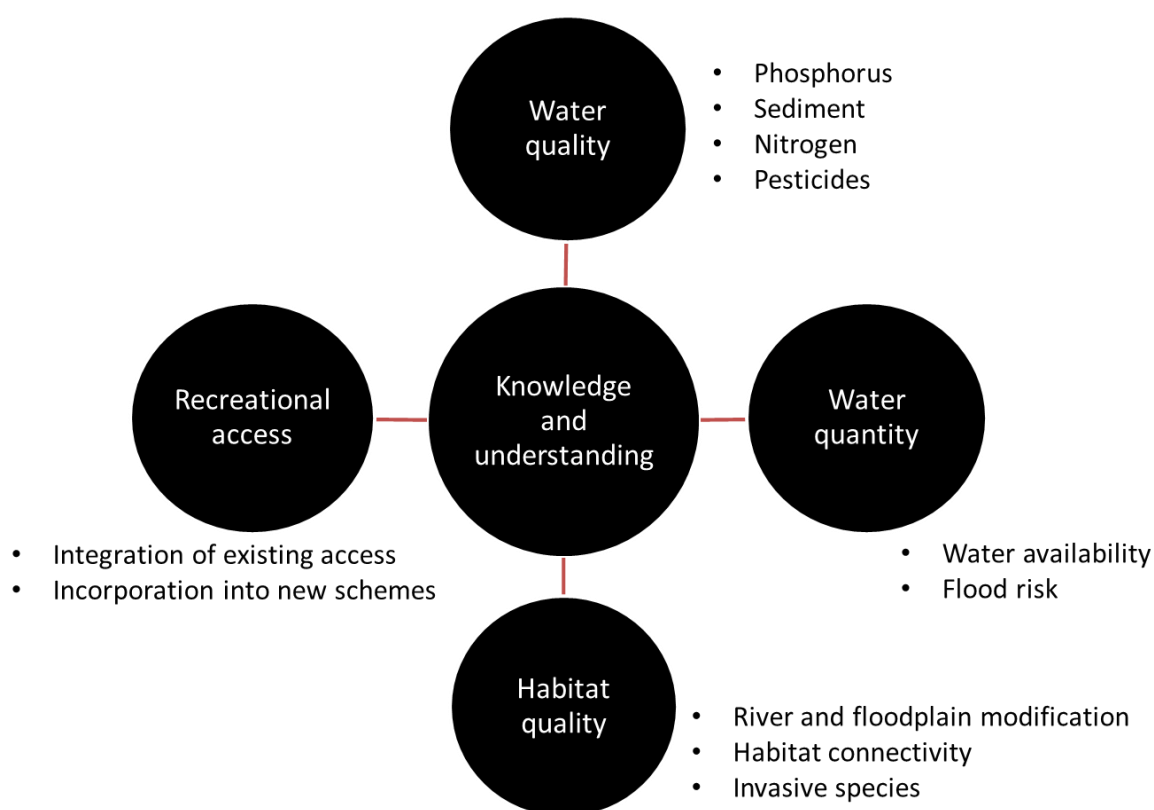
- 4.10 The catchment has no water available for abstraction at times of low flows. Water abstraction licencing reforms are underway as the system has not changed substantially since the 1960s. Mechanisms for data review (e.g. water supply models and local hydrological assessments) and systematic data sharing across relevant Government agencies are considered as important. Water efficiency measures and metering by water companies is helping to reduce peak demand but an allocation of 40,000 new homes in the catchment by 2021 could increase pressure further. The role of education and awareness raising, in schools and business in particular, along with monitoring progress in changes to flow of these and other possible action areas for water efficiency.
- 4.11 Integrated approaches, such as the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy, have pulled together biodiversity, economic and social approaches and along with the ongoing review of lake management will set out the requirement for continued sediment removal, particularly in the larger river connected lakes. The Water Framework Directive does not assess floodplain wetlands (fen, reedbed, marsh, wet woodland), this gap needs addressing. Targets for the Broadland rivers are not yet aligned fully to the downstream wetland habitat requirements.
- 4.12 Moving ahead with 'no regret actions', where we already know enough to target existing and new resource. Examples might be ploughing and soil management to retain soils and nutrient on land along with drainage systems to slow flow of sediment polluted waters and targeted woodland planting.

## **5 Main conclusions and recommended actions coming from the Broadland Catchment Plan**

- 5.1 The Plan is due to be completed in Spring 2014. In addition to the contents of the plan set out in section 2 of this report, the plan will contain recommendations for action, some examples of these are:
- (a) Provide supporting information for achieving targeted, integrated and multiple benefit national statutory activity within Broadland such as mapping of ecosystem services to guide future agri-environment target areas.
  - (b) Provide incentives to address diffuse pollution – including soil and drainage management.
  - (c) Increase land manager engagement for targeted multi-benefit projects in river valleys (e.g. invasive species, river restoration, pesticide and soil management).
  - (d) Report options to Defra for the next agri-environment scheme that achieve the integrated aims for protecting Broadland using evidence from the catchment plan.
  - (e) Encourage local ways to tackle local issues. Provide material to community groups or projects through the plan to further promote water efficiency and phosphorus reduction measures (septic tank and misconnection awareness) and obtain local knowledge on issues and potential solutions through community engagement.

Background papers:	None
Authors:	Neil Punchard, Andrea Kelly
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Broads Plan Objectives:	CC4.2 (cross ref against BD3.1-3.3, BD4.1, AL2.1)
Appendix:	APPENDIX 1 - Four themes of the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan APPENDIX 2 - Timetable of the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan

## Appendix 1. Four themes of the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan



## Appendix 2. Timetable of the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan

	Sep	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Stakeholder workshop 1</b> <b>Visioning and issue framing</b>	X													
Activity mapping and data collation		X	X	X	X									
Engagement plan		X	X											
1:1's, meetings, local events Steering group meetings			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Stakeholder workshop 2</b> <b>'Evidence and uncertainty'</b>						X								
Risk modelling and mapping and ecosystem services					X	X	X	X	X	X				
<b>Stakeholder workshop 3</b> <b>'Activity and Action'</b>											X			
Draft catchment plan							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Final catchment plan</b> Biodiversity & Water conference														X