

Broads Plan Review:
Revised Draft for Consultation – Navigation and Recreation Sections
Report by Director of Planning and Resources and Strategy and Projects Officer

Summary: The Broads Plan is the key strategic management plan for the Broads. The current Plan was adopted in May 2011 and its review is identified as a Strategic Priority for 2015/16. It is anticipated that the revised Plan will be adopted in March 2017.

A first draft of the revised plan was subject to public consultation between February and April 2016. All responses received from this consultation were considered and a second revised draft Plan is now being prepared.

This report introduces the Navigation and Recreation sections of the proposed revised draft Broads Plan. The full revised draft Plan will be considered by the Broads Authority on 30 September 2016 and will be subject to public consultation between October and December 2016

Members' views on the revised sections are invited.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out progress on the current review of the Broads Plan. It is anticipated a revised Plan will be adopted in March 2017.
- 1.2 Members are aware that the Broads Plan is for the Broads, not just for the Broads Authority. As such, while the Broads Authority is responsible for its production, the successful delivery of the Plan depends on a shared vision, a commitment to partnership working, and the best use of shared resources. The involvement of partners, key stakeholders and local communities is also a key element of the Plan review process.
- 1.3 The Broads Plan review began in 2015, and included a Broads Authority and Navigation Committee Member Workshop on 7 October. This was followed by workshops with the Broads Forum on 5 November and the Broads Local Access Forum on 9 December. In addition, focused sessions on the Broads Plan were held with the Broadland Catchment Partnership, the Broads Conservation Partnership and the Broads Climate Partnership. A first draft Plan was approved by the Broads Authority in January 2016 and was the subject of consultation during February – April 2016. All responses received during that period were considered and a revised draft plan is currently in production.

2 Strategy Production

- 2.1 Members may recall from the Broads Plan workshop that an ‘Open Strategies’ approach to producing this plan has been adopted. This approach is intended to create a clear plan of action with a rationale, with high level guiding actions to steer more detailed operational delivery. In producing the first draft Plan, we used a ‘Projects, Results, Uses and Benefits’ structure to identify compelling User needs (what people want or need to do), the Benefits to be gained, the Results to enable the user needs to be met, and the actions (Projects) needed to create or maintain the results. The revised draft Plan has simplified the information gained from this stage of the process, and sets out proposed priority actions with intended outputs, resources and indicators/targets.
- 2.2 The Broads Plan is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all the work that may be undertaken in the Broads. It is a high level strategy to address the priority, evidence-based issues that have been identified by the Broads Authority and its partners and on which they will commit time and resources over the lifetime of the next Plan (2017-22).
- 2.3 The revised Navigation and Recreation sections are attached (Appendix A) and Members’ views are sought.

3 Timetable

The Broads Plan is a statutory plan and its review is therefore subject to public consultation. It will also undergo Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The milestones for the production of the revised Plan are identified in the Strategic Priorities reported to Broads Authority Members at each meeting.

Background papers:	None
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Date of report:	18 August 2016
Broads Plan Objectives:	All
Appendix:	APPENDIX A – Navigation and Recreation sections of revised draft Broads Plan

C. Maintaining and enhancing the navigation

Context

- * The Broads is an extensive and varied inland waterway system offering 200km of boating on lock-free tidal rivers. The Broads Authority executive area (Map 1) comprises approximately 1974ha of water space and 63 open water bodies, covering 841 ha. The navigation reaches from the quiet headwaters of the rivers Bure, Ant and Waveney to the bustling urban centre of Norwich and the coastal resorts of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.
- * As the harbour and navigation authority, the Broads Authority is responsible for maintaining the navigation area. Its powers include health and safety provisions, dredging, management of vegetation, clearance of wrecks and other hazards, maintaining the network of free 24-hour moorings and providing a ranger service. It also has a duty to sign and mark the waterways. Sediment management guidelines, agreed cutting prescriptions, water space management plans and environmental standard operating procedures are all used to help maintain the navigation while also conserving the unique and important water plant communities and providing refuge and food for fish and birds.
- * Dredging is carried out to provide reasonable depths for safe navigation and to help restore degraded or shallowing water bodies. It can also help improve water quality by removing excess nutrients in the mud, by reducing turbidity which creates depth for aquatic plants to flourish and stabilise the bed, and by providing greater capacity for water storage. Dredging the waterways and disposing of dredged material is the largest navigation maintenance cost to the Authority. The current budgeted target to remove 50,000m³ of material per year, twice the estimated sediment input, is making a positive but limited impact on the estimated backlog in the system (1.04million m³ in 2016).
- * A whole catchment approach to sediment management is being used to help reduce the amount of sediment entering the system from higher up the Broadland rivers catchment, as well as removing it from the Broads waterways. River bank erosion is a key sediment source, caused by wind, tidal action and boat induced waves and feral geese. Land use and soil and vegetation type on riverbanks and uplands are also contributory factors, with headwaters contributing around 50% of sediment inputs. Finding ways to dispose of dredged material is also an ongoing challenge. Many historically available sediment disposal sites are currently protected under European legislation and opportunities for using adjacent land have been very limited. This means that more sustainable and innovative approaches are needed for managing dredged material, taking account of its value for agriculture, habitat creation and flood protection, and reusing it beneficially wherever possible. Considerable advances were made in the last Broads Plan period through the EU-funded PRISMA project (2011-14), which supported the trialling of sustainable dredging techniques, pioneering methods for the reuse of dredged material in island and habitat recreation schemes, and investment in new dredging plant and equipment.
- * Managing aquatic plants and riverside tree and scrub also needs to take account of multiple benefits for navigation, biodiversity and landscape character. Thriving aquatic plants are part of a healthy ecosystem, and certain species are protected under the EU Habitats Directive and the Wildlife and Countryside Act. With improving water quality and rising temperatures as a result of climate change, native aquatic plants are likely to become more prolific and have an increasing impact on navigation and recreation. Infestation of certain aquatic invasive non-native plants such as floating pennywort can also have a devastating impact on navigational and recreational waterways use.

- * Opening up new areas of navigable water space may help to reduce potential conflicts between different user groups, improve safety and ease pressure on busy areas. However, opportunities to do this have been very limited in recent years, tempered by voluntary restrictions to certain areas of the water space that provide key refuges for wildlife, by other environmental or land ownership issues, and by a lack of resources.
- * Safe, responsible use of the waterways and the technical safety of boats are managed through a Ranger Service supported by byelaws, codes of conduct and good practice campaigns. The Broads Authority, emergency services and Coastguard work closely together to respond to incidents, and local policing partnerships are promoting a proactive approach to reducing marine crime, such as the theft of outboard motors.

Long-term aim for the navigation

The historic and present importance of the Broads' waterways for navigation, biodiversity and recreation is recognised and valued. The navigation and associated riverside facilities and infrastructure are maintained and enhanced, offering opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to access and enjoy the water space. The variety and intensity of waterborne activities across the system are carefully managed to maximise safe enjoyment, minimise conflict between different users, and ease pressure on busy or vulnerable areas. Opportunities to expand and extend the navigable water space are pursued, consistent with nature conservation interests and water resource management. Sediment is managed to provide necessary depths for boating, with dredged material beneficially reused or disposed of in environmentally and economically sustainable ways. Sediment loss from agricultural land and bank erosion is minimal, with sustainable natural and constructed solutions used to protect the more vulnerable stretches of waterways. Bank vegetation and water plants are managed in ways that keep waterways open to navigation, do not impact on the ecological or archaeological integrity of sites, and provide for appropriate recreation. Restrictions on navigation due to bridges is minimised and mitigated wherever possible.

Aspiration 3 Apply a catchment-scale approach to reduce sediment input and the sediment backlog, and sustainably reuse or dispose of dredged material

Focus: Removing sediment from the Broads system and accelerating sediment removal

Ref	Strategic actions	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
3.2	Implement sediment dredging regimes in accordance with defined waterways specifications and seek resources /legislation to accelerate removal of sediment in the Broads system	· Annual dredging programme implemented in line with agreed targets [BA]	BA existing resources	Sediment removed (min 50,000m ³ pa)
		· Additional resources and/or inland waterways legislation and good practice to improve dredging and disposal processes developed, in place and shared [BA, AINA, MMO]	Partnership funding required to accelerate dredging	Level secured additional funding Updated legislation and guidance

Focus: Disposing of sediment and reducing sediment input through catchment-wide erosion reduction measures				
Ref	Strategic action	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
3.1	Implement plans and good practice guidance to reduce soil erosion into the waterways, manage areas lost or vulnerable to erosion, and dispose of dredged material in sustainable and beneficial ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erosion reduction agricultural land management measures promoted and in place, e.g. increased cover crops, buffers and sustainable drainage, riparian fencing, soil organic improvements, soil compaction reduction [NE, Broadland Catchment Partnership, Norfolk Rivers Trust, NFWAG]; Up-to-date environmental good practice guidance promoted to recreational users [BC, AINA, NSBA, BA] 	CS, CSF, WSF	SSSI condition assessments WFD EC status CFE records
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretches of lost or eroded river bank/island identified and prioritised; land protection, creation and restoration strategies in place, using innovative sediment reuse techniques where possible [BA lead/facilitator with partners] Key project: Formal partnership agreement and feasibility study/work plan in place for long-term management of River Chet (true left bank) to maintain access to navigation and Wherryman's Way [BA, NCC, SNDC, EA, NE] 	Funding required	Measures of land lost or new areas created? Condition status of Chet true left bank
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities identified to secure additional dredging disposal sites as part of Broads-wide network, and permissions and resources pursued [BA] 	Funding required	# available disposal sites in network
Aspiration 4 Maintain a safe, open navigation and reduce pressures on busy or vulnerable areas				
Focus: Maintaining, extending and expanding navigable water space for recreation, consistent with conservation interests and flood risk management				
Ref	Strategic action	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
4.1	Maintain existing navigation water space, and develop appropriate opportunities to expand or extend access for various types of craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of existing and potential new navigation water space completed; schemes and agreements developed to enhance water space access, consistent with nature conservation interests and flood risk management [BA] Access to closed Broads dealt with on the basis of current legal advice and opportunities taken to negotiate increased access with individual landowners [BA] 		Broads Integrated Access Strategy targets met
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach promoted to increase use of River Yare for commercial transport, with Waterways Specifications adopted and delivered as required [BA, Norwich City Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council] 		

		· Delivery Plan for refurbishment/replacement of Somerleyton and Reedham swing bridges developed, incl. secured funding and agreed design and mitigation measures [Network Rail, BA]	Network Rail CP6 Delivery Plan	NR CP6 Delivery Plan schedule met
Focus: Maintaining and improving management of aquatic plants and riverside trees and scrub				
Ref	Strategic action	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
4.2	Carry out aquatic plant cutting and tree and scrub clearance maintenance programmes and seek resources to increase operational targets	· Annual tree and scrub clearance regimes carried out in accordance with agreed criteria, using priority mapping; improved level of operations in place through BA Area Ranger Team strategies for partnership working [BA, community groups, landowners]	BA funding	BA Area Plan delivered Length of riverbank managed
		· Regimes for aquatic plant cutting in navigation channels carried out in accordance with agreed management criteria [BA]	BA funding	BA annual cutting programme delivered
Focus: Maintaining, improving and promoting safe behaviour on the waterways				
Ref	Strategic action	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
4.3	Implement, promote and monitor measures to maintain and improve safety and security for the navigation and boats	· Boat safety systems and measures in operation, incl. up-to-date Safety Management System and Boat Safety Scheme; Hire Boat Code part 2 transferred to local licence conditions [BA]	BA funding	Tolls/ BSS compliance/ PMSC external audit (safety levels within ALARP region) HBL issued
		· Navigation patrolling maintained; recreational user safety and security promotional events and guidance made available; navigation infrastructure inspection and maintenance regimes in place and completed to agreed annual schedule [BA, Norfolk Constabulary, Suffolk Constabulary, Norfolk Water Safety Forum]	Partner funding	Best value indicators
		· Temporal or spatial zoning agreements/ protocols and pilot schemes in effect as required for water sport activities and events, incl. water skiing, wakeboarding, power boat racing and competitive rowing [BA]	BA staff resources	Hazard Log (Safety levels within ALARP region) # zones agreed/ delivered

F. Offering distinctive recreational experiences

Context

- * The Broads is part of the UK National Parks family and attracts more than seven million visitors a year. Popular recreational pastimes include boating, angling, walking, bird watching, and visiting historic and cultural assets such as mills and churches. The area has more than 200km of inland navigable, lock-free waterways and 303km of public rights of way, including three county long distance trails and the new national England Coast Path trail. The surrounding coast and urban centres, including Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, also provide open access and recreational opportunities.
- * There are more than 11,000 licensed boats using the Broads, ranging from canoes and rowing boats to large hire craft and commercial passenger vessels. The hire boat industry remains a significant part of the Broads economy, with diversification and improvements in environmental and quality standards in response to changes in traditional holiday patterns and visitor needs being crucial to its ongoing survival. Sailing for pleasure, including competitive racing, has been part of the way of life in the Broads since the 19th century and remains integral to the landscape. Canoeing and rowing are becoming increasingly popular, with the BA boat movement census recording an increase in boat movements of around 60% since 2010. All these activities are in keeping with the philosophy of quiet recreation, and they rely on suitable provision of access to and onto the water, shore side facilities and user support and guidance, and an emphasis on attracting and supporting young and new users to waterways activities. Angling is a major contributor to the local and regional economy, and the Broads offers some of the best coarse fishing in England. Key areas of strategic focus identified in the current Broads Angling Strategy (2013) relate to managing and enhancing fisheries management and ecology, access to the water's edge, information and environmental education, and urban fishery development. However, following significant cuts to the Environment Agency's resources in recent years, it is likely that new sources of support will be needed to take the strategy forward.
- * Land-based recreation ranges from the passive, such as sitting at a riverside viewing point, to more active pursuits such as walking and cycling, and visiting local amenities and sites of interest. Walking is a particularly popular activity, but is threatened by significant reductions in local authority rights of way and footpath maintenance budgets. The appeal of the local wildlife, notably birds, is seen as highly relevant to boosting visitor demand throughout the year and access to core areas is provided by a range of organisations and individuals. There is a need to balance the potential conflict between visitor activity that could damage fragile habitats or disturb wildlife with the provision of opportunities to access these special places and appreciate their intrinsic value. The lack of visibility of the water and wetland to land-based visitors means some visitors do not experience the true essence of the Broads, and the rivers and extensive drainage channels can mean long diversions to reach crossing points such as bridges and ferries.
- * Proposals for creating and improving physical access to and around the Broads and between land and water, linked to destination points, facilities, services and sustainable transport options, have been identified following an audit of existing resources that helped to identify gaps in provision. However, implementing many of these projects, both for moorings and for land access, depends significantly on gaining realistic landowner agreements, as well as having sufficient resources both to complete the projects and to maintain the overall network in the longer term.

Long-term aim for recreation

The value of the Broads as a place for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection for people of all ages and abilities is recognised and treasured. The area continues to offer a wide range of high quality, distinctive and memorable activities and events on water and on land, in suitable locations and in harmony with the special status and qualities of the Broads National Park and its communities. The long-standing tradition of boating remains integral to the Broads recreational offer, alongside other popular pursuits of angling, walking, cycling and experiencing the rich natural and cultural assets of this wetland landscape. Year-round tourism is managed at environmentally and socially sustainable levels, contributing to a thriving local economy and secure employment base and meeting green tourism business standards. Physical access on land and between land and water is managed sensitively to maximise the social, educational and health benefits of open space to all, while ensuring the resource itself is not degraded. Where possible, improvements have been made to the network, connectivity and use of access routes, linked to visitor destination points and sustainable transport.

Aspiration 7 Provide opportunities for distinctive recreational experiences in harmony with the special qualities of the area

Focus: Maintaining and enhancing the integrated physical access network to and around the Broads and between land and water, linked to visitor facilities

Ref	Strategic actions	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
7.1	Develop and implement schemes to upgrade and improve the network of physical access points and routes, linked to visitor facilities, including access opportunities for people with mobility and sensory needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of land access to Broads viewpoints (from moorings to facilities, services and public transport links, and across rivers and to/alongside water), and audit of physical access for people with mobility and sensory needs completed; new/upgrade schemes developed [BA, NCC, SCC, River Wensum Strategy Partnership] 	Partner funding	BA IAS targets NCC ROWIP targets
		Improved and new small craft launch facilities in place, linked to craft hire points and published trails [BA, boat hire operators]; existing BA 24-hour free mooring network maintained and new moorings/ stopping points (incl. wild/quiet moorings and commercial moorings) in place at priority locations [BA]	BA funding	BA mooring targets: Maintenance and Repair Programme /10-yr Repiling Action Plan / IAS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Cycling and Walking Action Plans and initiatives implemented and new /upgraded priority cycle routes and cycle hire provision developed, including Three Rivers Way cycle route and Norfolk Trails [NCC, SCC, BA, RSPB/Sport England]; Improved, safe circular horse riding routes identified, implemented and promoted through County ROWIPs and Broads IAS [NCC, BA] 	County & District Council funding Partner	NCC ROWIP targets Coastal path

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Wensum Strategy initiative implemented to improve access and facilities to and alongside river (incl. new moorings, small craft launch facilities and footpath improvements linking Norfolk Trails through Norwich to the Broads) [Norwich City Council, BA, EA] 	funding RSPB Active in Nature Project	completed 2020 BA IAS targets RWS targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical access projects implemented under Broads Landscape Partnership Scheme Programme 2: Exploring the Landscape, incl. landscape/mills trail and access improvements to Weavers Way and Wherryman's Way [Broads LPS Board and LPS delivery partners] 	BA NCC HLF funding in place	LPS targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better resourced and promoted visitor 'hubs' in place offering high quality visitor access to the Broads landscape and wildlife attractions, and 'gateway' opportunities developed [RSPB (Wild Heart of the Broads), NWT (Hickling Reserve), Broads LPS Board and LPS delivery partners, BA] 	Partner project funding	Projects completed to schedule
7.2	Improve the network provision of riverside facilities, incl. refuse and recycling services, electric power points, water and pump out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working agreements established and strategic network of refuse and recycling facilities in place across the Broads [BA, Local Authorities, local industry]; network of solar and electric boat charging points maintained and extended [BA] 	Partner resources	tbc
Focus: Coordinating and implementing a year-round programme of activities and events relating to Broads themes, products and places				
Ref	Strategic actions	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators/(targets)
7.3	Maintain, develop and promote coordinated year-round events and activities programmes to engage visitors and to support local business and community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broads presence promoted through year-round calendar of events, incl. Broads Outdoor Festival, Outdoors in the Broads, Walkability, Royal Norfolk Show and community festivals [BT, BA, DMOs, NGOs] Water-based opportunities promoted to land-based recreational users (incl. boat trips and day boat hire) and vice versa (incl. walking and cycling offer); high profile wildlife experience itineraries and packages created and promoted [BT, BA, HBOs, TBs, WCOs, LAs, NGOs] 	Partner resources New Anglia LEP	# and spread of events Visitor attendance at targeted events Boat trip numbers and boat usage # new wildlife itineraries/ packages, wildlife site visitor numbers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational activities implemented under Broads Landscape Partnership Scheme Programmes 1-6, in particular 'Gateways to the Broads' and 'Going the Extra Mile' [Broads LPS Board and LPS delivery partners] 	LPS funding secured	LPS targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured resources/partnership agreements in place and Broads Angling Strategy Action Plan 2017-18 implemented; action plan in place 2018 onwards [EA, Broads Angling Trust, Broads Angling Strategy Group] 	EA funding / additional resources required	Broads Angling Strategy targets