

**Integrated Access Strategy for the Broads**  
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

<b>Summary:</b>	This report provides members with an update on the development of the Integrated Access Strategy for the Broads. The report sets out the final scope of the Strategy, its strategic objectives, and guiding principles for the assessment of potential access projects. Members' comments are welcomed on the content of the report.
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## 1 Background

- 1.1 Historically the strategic management of access in the Broads has been based on standalone strategies which focus on a particular type of access such as moorings, slipways and rights of way. While such plans have delivered considerable access improvements they did not necessarily consider how individual access points fitted into the overall access network in the Broads, or to other strategies and initiatives covering interrelated themes such as sustainable tourism, angling, water space management and public transportation. The development and adoption of an integrated access strategy by 2013 is a priority for the Authority as identified in the adopted Broads Plan 2011. The long term aim for tourism, recreation and access set out in the Broads Plan states: *“Access on land and between land and water is sensitively managed to maximise the social, educational and health benefits of open space to all, while ensuring the resource itself is not degraded. Where possible, improvements are made to the connectivity and use of access routes linked to visitor destination points and sustainable transport.”*
- 1.2 Following the adoption of the Broads Plan, the authority carried out a scoping exercise to inform an integrated access approach. This process involved consultation with a wide range of user groups and bodies, including the Broads Local Access Forum, Broads Forum, Broads Angling Strategy Group, Broads Tourism, Broads Hire Boat Federation and the authority's Navigation Committee. Further discussions regarding project prioritisation are taking place with the NSBA and the Broads Society.

## 2 Scope of the Integrated Access Strategy

- 2.1 The scope of the strategy is:
- The collation and mapping on GIS of all available baseline data on access provision in the Broads covering:
    - Moorings
    - Footpaths and bridleways

- Slipways
  - Staithes
  - Ferries
  - Angling access
  - Public transport links
  - Land designated as open access land under the CROW 2000 Act
  - National Nature Reserves and Local Nature Reserves
  - Land protected by conservation designations.
- A review of the Broads Mooring Strategy, Slipway Strategy and the Broads Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).
  - A gap analysis to identify priority sites for new or improved access provision.
  - Identification of Access Hubs (locations where a range of recreational facilities and local amenities are linked together and easily accessible from the public transport network).
  - GIS mapping of agreed priority sites for access development.
  - Development of action plan and strategy implementation based on defined objectives and principles.

### **3 Strategic Objectives**

3.1 The key objectives for meeting the long term aim of integrated access in the Broads are:

- To improve links between land and water and to the water's edge.
- To improve links to local facilities, settlements and visitor destination points.
- To encourage sustainable travel choices such as public transport, walking, cycling and non-powered boating, and improve links between public transport provision and visitor destination points and access routes.
- To provide appropriate information and interpretation on recreational opportunities.

### **3.2 Linking Land and Water**

3.2.1 In some areas there are gaps in mooring provision, or limited opportunities for boaters to access the wider countryside from mooring locations. In other cases, people are unable to see or get to the water's edge or onto the water because of a lack of land access routes and/or facilities such as slipways and canoe portages.

3.2.2 This objective will seek to:

- map the provision of access points and links between land and water and to the water's edge;
- improve access points between land and water, including moorings and slipways;

- improve links from moorings to land-based facilities and visitor destinations;
- improve pedestrian access to the water's edge for walking, angling and bird watching;
- extend access to navigable water space where appropriate;
- protect, and where possible reinstate, ferries and staithes; and
- identify appropriate locations where improved car parking would benefit users (e.g. at slipways).

### **3.2 To Improve Access Links to Local Facilities, Settlements and Visitor Destination Points**

3.2.1 There are areas where improved access links to destination sites such as designated open access land, nature reserves and sites of historic or cultural interest would be beneficial, enabling people to experience and appreciate the special qualities of the Broads.

3.2.2 This objective will seek to:

- determine where access improvements to land designated as open access land under the CROW Act 2000 would be appropriate;
- identify and promote the development of new access routes to improve the connectivity of the existing public access network, including rights of way, permissive paths and long distance routes; and
- identify opportunities for improving access to designated sites and visitor attractions.

### **3.3 To Encourage Sustainable Travel Choices**

3.3.1 The strategy places emphasis on sustainable travel choices such as public transport, walking and cycling. With the vast majority of visitors to the Broads currently using private cars, it is vital to consider how recreational access can be linked to public transport or car use can be minimised if it is to be more sustainable. Improving links to visitor facilities and services also boosts local economic development and tourism generally.

3.3.2 This objective will seek to:

- map and identify opportunities to improve key visitor hubs and existing access links between facilities and public transport provision;
- encourage and support the development of cycle hire facilities and routes in new locations for the benefit of boaters and land-based visitors;
- encourage and support the development of canoe trails with appropriate facilities in suitable areas; and
- Encourage local transport authorities and others to maintain, improve and promote public transport provision in and to the Broads.

### **3.4 Linking People and Information**

3.4.1 Easily available, up-to-date information on public access to land and water and to natural, historic and cultural assets and other attractions helps people to learn about, and get the most from their visit to, the Broads. Good information and interpretation also encourages responsible tourism, safeguarding the environment that people have come to enjoy.

3.4.2 This objective will seek to:

- provide information on how to access recreational opportunities, using sustainable travel options wherever possible;
- improve information and interpretation available at moorings, on nearby facilities and at visitor destination points;
- provide public access to the Broads Authority's Integrated Access Strategy GIS system (map information);
- coordinate and promote information on walking, cycling, horse riding and canoeing routes and trails in the Broads; and
- Develop codes of conduct for various recreational activities and locations in the Broads to promote environmentally responsible behaviour.

## **4 Progress**

4.1 Work on the GIS mapping of access is almost complete and a gap analysis on mooring provision has been carried out. The Broads RoWIP has also been reviewed and its action plan reprioritised in accordance with the objectives of the integrated Access Strategy.

4.2 Mapping of priority path routes and gaps in mooring provision has also been carried out. Additionally consultation has taken place with the Broads Hire Boat Federation, Broads Forum, Broads Local Access forum and the NSBA on priority mooring areas. Currently the priority sites have been identified as the lower Bure, middle and lower Yare and the Waveney. This information also accords with the results of the recent NSBA survey.

## **5 Implementing the Strategy**

5.1 The Broads Authority aims to work in collaboration with partner organisations and local communities to deliver the long term aims and objectives of the Strategy. Project proposals will be assessed against the overarching strategy objectives and a number of guiding principles regarding project design that the Authority intends to adopt. These are:

- Environmental impact – project proposals will need to demonstrate that negative impacts on the environment and designated sites can be minimised.
- Climate Change – project proposals should take account of climate change adaptation e.g. height of mooring surfaces above MHWS or use of alternative mooring provision.

- Partnership working – project proposals will need to demonstrate partnership working and community involvement in planning and delivery and that ongoing maintenance responsibilities for projects have been agreed.
- Quality and sustainability standards – projects should be designed in accordance with current best practice guidance and aim to use sustainable material sources.
- Delivery of multiple benefits – projects should consider whether multiple benefits can be delivered for users with differing interests, needs and abilities.

5.2 The aim of the Strategy is to provide leadership and guidance on the principles that all those working towards improving access in the Broads should take into consideration when developing access projects. Project proposals will be recorded on a database and assessed against the agreed strategic objectives set out in this report.

5.3 It should be recognised that the Broads Authority is not in a position to deliver all the potential projects that will arise from the Strategy due to funding and capacity constraints. Government guidance to the Broads Authority in its Vision and Circular 2010 on English National Parks and the Broads recognises this and emphasises the need for partnership working to achieve strategic objectives, maximise benefits and minimise costs. A key factor in determining which projects the Authority is able to support or facilitate will therefore be whether there is support for projects from partner organisations, community groups, parish councils or local businesses.

## **6 Conclusions**

6.1 The Strategy and its action plan should be viewed as a living document which will evolve over time to take account of changing priorities, circumstances and opportunities. The intention is for the Strategy to have a three year Action plan with detailed annual priorities. The following priority actions have been identified for 2013/14:

- Complete gap analysis for all types of access.
- Develop project database.
- Complete consultation on slipway and angling access.
- Identify potential mooring sites prioritising the /lower Bure, Yare and Waveney.
- Assess feasibility of RoWIP Priority 1 routes.

6.2 It is important that the strategy should encompass all the relevant access topics in the Broads and officers are keen that the views of the members of the Navigation Committee on the proposed objectives and principles of the strategy and the actions outlined in this report are taken into account. Members' views on the content of this report are therefore welcomed.

Background papers: Nil

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Broads Plan Objectives: TR1.1, TR2.2, TR2.3, TR3.1  
Appendices: None