

**River Wensum Strategy Consultation**  
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

**Summary:** This report provides members with details of the draft River Wensum Strategy that is currently being consulted on and highlights the main aspects of the strategy that relate to navigation and access to the River Wensum. Members' comments on the draft strategy, particularly with regard to the policies and proposals that seek to enhance river access, are welcomed.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The River Wensum Strategy Partnership (RWSP) has recently published a draft strategy for the future management of River Wensum in Norwich with the aim of repurposing and revitalising the river to make it a tourism asset for the City. The RWSP led by Norwich City Council working in partnership with the Broads Authority, Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency and the Norwich Society consulted with stakeholders and local residents to scope the strategy and the draft strategy is now being consulted on. The strategy area covers the River Wensum from Hellesdon Mill in the west to Whitlingham Country Park in the East. The draft strategy can be viewed at [www.norwich.gov.uk/riverwensum](http://www.norwich.gov.uk/riverwensum) and comments about the strategy can be submitted by completing a questionnaire about the strategy at this link.

## **2 Vision and objectives**

- 2.1 The strategy vision is to: "breathe new life into the river by enhancing it for the benefit of all and increasing access to, and greater use of, this important asset. The river will once again play an important part in the growth and vitality of the city, strengthening the visitor economy and helping to give the city a competitive advantage in attracting inward investment".
- 2.2 The objectives set out in the strategy for delivering this vision are:
- improving the management of the river corridor and its surroundings for the benefit of the city, residents of the wider Norwich area, and visitors;
  - increasing access to, and use of, the area by all, including enhanced connectivity with the Norfolk Trails network;
  - enhancing the natural environment and green infrastructure;
  - enhancing the city's environmental, cultural and historic offer in a manner which maximises the attractiveness of the area as a location to do business;
  - enhancing heritage, making the most of the unique historic environment within the river corridor;

- addressing social deprivation and inequalities;
- maximising the efficiency of public expenditure in the river corridor, where possible reducing the pressure on stretched public sector budgets; and
- identifying and exploiting external funding opportunities including private sector investment.

### **3 The draft strategy proposals**

3.1 The strategy seeks to deliver the objectives through a number of themed sections which focus on things like the general management of the river and its surroundings, navigation and leisure access and the environment.

#### **3.2 Management**

A well-managed river corridor, with effective joint working between partners, is a pre-requisite for the regeneration of the river corridor and to maximise benefits to the city and wider area. Management proposals in the strategy include:

- clarification of Partners' roles and responsibilities to make it easier for stakeholders and the public to know who to contact;
- establishment of delivery arrangements including a delivery board to oversee day-to-day management of the river, and a strategic board to oversee implementation and monitoring, involving joint working with key delivery partner;
- working with local stakeholder groups and those who live and work in the vicinity of the river to help deliver the strategy;
- ensuring that ongoing maintenance is addressed fully for all projects and proposals to make sure that they do not add to ongoing public maintenance expenditure.

#### **3.3 Navigation access and leisure**

A key strategy theme is increasing access to the river corridor, including enhancing the connectivity of the riverside walk with the Norfolk Trails network and encouraging greater leisure and commercial use of the river itself. The proposed access measures in the strategy seek to encourage increased use of the river corridor by commuters and leisure users, and help to create the conditions for local businesses to thrive through increased footfall and activity including events and festivals, whilst supporting health initiatives which encourage activity. Proposals include:

- completion of the riverside walk between New Mills and Trowse Swing Bridge, including construction of key 'missing links' of the Riverside Walk between Duke's Palace Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge and between Fye Bridge and Whitefriars Bridge;
- improvements to the accessibility of the Riverside Walk downstream of New Mills making it accessible for people of all ages and abilities, and enhanced signage between the river and key tourist and visitor locations;

- an improved cycle crossing of the Barn Road roundabout to encourage greater commuting and leisure usage of the Marriotts Way and the Riverside Walk;
- enhanced links with the Broads footpath and cycle network at Whitlingham Country Park in the longer term;
- enhancement of existing, and creation of new, river infrastructure - this includes an improved slipway at Friar's Quay and enhanced moorings at the Yacht station;
- new short-stay visitor moorings and demasting moorings are proposed in a number of locations including Quayside between Carrow Bridge and Lady Julian Bridge and Trowse Swing Bridge;
- improved canoeing infrastructure including new canoe access points at New Mills;
- enhancement of angling access and fish habitat
- promotion of river events and trails including a proposed river festival.

### 3.4 Environment

The strategy aims to improve the natural environment, the public realm and open spaces near to the river. The river is a wildlife corridor and its sensitive enhancement has the potential to improve ecology and biodiversity in the heart of the city. Proposals include:

- improvements to water quality in specific stretches of the river including a proposal to reduce the levels of oils and fats entering the river from food related businesses in the Magdalen Street/Fye Bridge Street area;
- protection and enhancement of biodiversity of the river and riverbanks including proposals for floating vegetation platforms; a biodiversity enhancement and non-invasive species management plan and an eel pass at New Mills to assist with migration of this protected species (which has now been installed);
- improvements to open spaces adjacent to the river to maximise their use for leisure and recreation as well as enhancing biodiversity and heritage features where appropriate.

## 4 **Funding**

- 4.1 The strategy aims to deliver improvements to the river corridor over a ten year period. The action plan will identify projects that are likely to be deliverable in the short to medium term. Other projects will require external funding and this is currently being looked at in detail by the RWSP. Potential sources of project funding include Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Anglian Water and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## 5 **Conclusions**

- 5.1 The objectives, policies and projects outlined in the draft strategy document propose an integrated approach to managing the Wensum in order to maximise its potential for tourism, navigation, green infrastructure, biodiversity

and business development. This approach is to be welcomed as the strategy presents a real opportunity to deliver a wide range of social, environmental and recreational benefits for the city through partnership working particularly through enhancements to land and water access.

5.2 Members' comments on the draft strategy and specifically the projects that aim to deliver improvements for the navigation are welcomed.

Background paper:	None
Report author:	Adrian Clarke
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Broads Plan Objectives:	TR1/ TR3/ NA4
Appendices:	None