

Broads Plan Review:
Final draft for comment – 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 the Broads Authority in 2015/16. It is anticipated that the final Broads Plan 2017-22 will be adopted at the Broads Authority meeting in March 2017.

The Authority consulted on a first draft Plan in Spring 2016, and a revised draft Plan in Autumn 2016. This report introduces the Navigation and Recreation sections of the final draft Plan.

Recommendations:

Members' views are invited on the Navigation and Recreation sections of the final draft Plan.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out progress on the Broads Plan review, being carried out during 2015-17. 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 and commitment to partnership working and on the best use of shared resources. The involvement of partners, key stakeholders and local communities is also a key part of the plan review process.
- 1.3 The Broads Plan review began in 2015. It included a Broads Authority and Navigation Committee Member Workshop on 7 October, followed by workshops with the Broads Forum on 5 November and the Broads Local Access Forum on 9 December. Focused sessions on the Plan were held with the Broadland Catchment Partnership, the Broads Conservation Partnership and the Broads Climate Partnership.
- 1.4 A first draft Broads Plan 2017-22 was approved for public consultation by the Authority in January 2016 and was consulted on from February–April 2016. All responses received during that period were considered and a revised draft plan was published for consultation during October-December 2016. The final Plan is now being prepared for submission to the Authority in March 2017.

2 Strategy Production

- 2.1 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 priority issues that have been identified by the Authority and its partners and on which they will commit time and resources over the lifetime of the next Plan (2017-22). The aims and actions in the Plan will guide a range of lower level strategies, plans and programmes to be carried out by Plan partners.
- 2.3 The Navigation and Recreation sections of the final draft Plan are attached (Appendix A), and Members' views are invited.

3 Timetable

- 3.1 As a statutory plan, the Broads Plan review is subject to public consultation, 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.
- 3.2 The final draft Plan will be submitted to the Broads Authority on 24 March 2017, with a recommendation that it be adopted, and implemented from April 2017.

Background papers: None

Authors: Andrea Long
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Broads Plan Objectives: All

Appendix: APPENDIX A – Final draft Broads Plan 2017 - Navigation and Recreation sections

Extracts from revised draft Broads Plan 2017: Navigation and recreation sections

C. Maintaining and enhancing the navigation

Context

The Broads is an extensive and varied inland waterway system, offering 200km of boating on lock-free, meandering tidal rivers. The Broads Authority's executive area (Map 1) comprises approximately 1974ha of water space and 63 open water bodies, covering 843 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 all help to maintain the navigation, while also protecting and 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 also helps improve water quality by removing excess nutrients in the mud, reducing turbidity and creating depth for aquatic plants to flourish and stabilise the bed, and 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 backlog in the system (calculated at 1.04million m³ in 2016).

A whole catchment approach to sediment management is being used to 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 a constant challenge. Many historically available sediment disposal sites are protected under European legislation, and opportunities for using adjacent land have been very limited in recent years. We will continue to seek sustainable and innovative approaches to 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 through the recent EU-funded PRISMA¹ project. This 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. Building on this success, the Authority and its partners are pursuing external funding to carry out more projects with multiple benefits for navigation, conservation and recreation.

¹ PRISMA: Promoting Integrated Sediment Management project, 2011-14

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 1981 (as amended). Recent years have seen increasing plant abundance in the Broadland rivers, particularly in the upper reaches, in smaller isolated broads and in sites away from the navigable system, while plants in the larger broads connected to the river system are typically slower to respond to improving water quality. In a connected waterways network like the Broads, the cost and effort of tackling the spread of certain aquatic invasive non-native species, such as floating pennywort and the 'killer shrimp' (*Dikergammarus villosus*), is a huge and ongoing challenge. Practical work tends to be focused on preventing the arrival of new species, and controlling established species that have significant impacts on either the use of navigational and recreational waterways, or the conservation interest of key sites.

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. 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. However, an audit of existing and potential new navigation water space is planned, and schemes and agreements will be developed where opportunities arise.

Safe, responsible behaviour on the waterways, and the technical safety of boats, are managed day-to-day through the Authority's Ranger Service. The Rangers are supported by byelaws, codes of conduct and good practice campaigns, such as Super Safety Days and the 'Wear It' lifejacket campaign. Safety standards on the waterways are high, although speeding, and people falling while getting on and off boats, are commonly reported problems. The Authority, emergency services and Coastguard work closely together to respond to incidents. Local policing partnerships also promote 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 managed carefully 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 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. Bankside 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
3.1	Implement 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 in accordance with defined waterways specifications and agreed targets [BA]	BA	Vol. sediment removed (min 50,000m³ pa); % compliance with waterways specifications
		· Additional resources supporting sustainable sediment management; appropriate inland waterways legislation and good practice for dredging and disposal processes developed, in place and shared [BA, AINA, MMO]	Additional resources required	Secured additional funding; Up-to-date 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
3.2	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	· Best practice land management techniques to reduce erosion promoted and in place, e.g. increased cover crops, buffers and sustainable drainage, riparian fencing, soil organic improvements, soil compaction reduction [NE, EA, BCP, NRT, county FWAGs]; Up-to-date environmental good practice guidance promoted to recreational users [AINA, BA, BC, NSBA]	Funded schemes (CS, CSF, CFE, WSF), partners	SSSI condition assessments, WFD EC status, CFE records
		· 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 as lead/facilitator, 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, SNC, EA, NE]	Partners; additional resources required	TBC - Measures of land lost or new areas created Condition status of Chet true left bank
		· Strategic approach taken to identify sustainable options for additional dredging disposal sites/capacity as part of Broads-wide network, also seeking environmental gains, and appropriate permissions and resources secured [BA]	BA; additional resources required	

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
4.1	Maintain existing navigation water space and develop appropriate opportunities to expand or extend access for various types of craft	· 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; access to closed broads dealt with on basis of current legal advice, and opportunities created to negotiate increased access [BA, landowners]	Partners	Broads IAS action plan targets
		· Increased use of River Yare for commercial transport promoted, with waterways specifications adopted and delivered as required [BA, Norwich CC, GYBC]	Partners	
		· Delivery Plan developed for refurbishment/replacement of Somerleyton and Reedham swing bridges, including secured funding and agreed design and mitigation measures [NR, 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
4.2	Carry out appropriate aquatic plant cutting and tree and scrub management programmes and seek resources to increase operational targets	· Annual tree and scrub management regimes carried out in accordance with agreed navigation and other criteria, using priority mapping; improved level of operations in place through BA Area Ranger Team strategies for partnership working [BA, community groups, landowners]; Annual regimes for aquatic plant cutting in navigation channels carried out in accordance with agreed criteria [BA]	BA; additional resources required	Length of riverbank and navigation channels meeting agreed criteria Annual plant monitoring data
Focus: Maintaining, improving and promoting safe behaviour on the waterways				
Ref	Strategic action	Key outputs by 2022 / [lead delivery and reporting partners]	Resources	Indicators
4.3	Implement, promote and monitor measures to maintain and improve safety and security for the navigation and boats	· Boat safety measures in operation, incl. up-to-date Safety Management System and Boat Safety Scheme; Hire Boat Code part 2 transferred to local licence conditions; 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	BSS compliance/ PMSC external audit (safety levels within ALARP region)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigation patrolling maintained; recreational user safety and security promotional events and guidance made available; up-to-date navigation infrastructure inspection and maintenance regimes in place and completed to agreed annual schedules [BA, NC, SC, NWSF] 	BA, NC, SC	NPA (BA) indicators and targets
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F. Offering distinctive recreational experiences

Context

The Broads is part of the family of UK National Parks and attracts more than seven million visitors a year. Popular recreational pastimes include boating, walking, angling, cycling, wildlife watching, photography, 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 part of the national England Coast Path trail. The surrounding Norfolk and Suffolk coast, and urban centres that include Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, also provide a variety of opportunities for open access and recreation.

There are more than 11,000 licensed boats using the Broads, most privately owned, in all sizes and types from small canoes and rowing boats to large motor cruisers and commercial passenger vessels. The hire boat industry, while experiencing a gradual decline in boat numbers since 2010, remains a significant part of the Broads economy. Diversification and improvements in environmental and quality standards, largely in response to changes in traditional holiday patterns and visitor needs, have been crucial to its ongoing survival. Over the past five years, there has been an increasing trend within both hire and private fleets towards bigger boats, particularly motor boats. Conversely, canoeing and rowing are increasingly popular, with the BA boat census recording a rise in small boat movements of around 60% since 2010. 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. These activities are in keeping with the philosophy of quiet recreation, and they rely on good access to and onto the water, shore side facilities, and an emphasis on attracting young and new users to waterways activities.

Angling is another major contributor to the local and regional economy, and the Broads offers some of the best coarse fishing in England. Key areas of focus in the Broads Angling Strategy (2013) are fisheries management and ecology, access to the water's edge, information and environmental education, and urban fishery development. Taking the strategy forward will require new sources of funding and strong partnership working between the Environment Agency, Broads Angling Strategy Group and other interests. Wildfowling and other field sports also make a contribution to recreation, conservation and land management in the Broads.

Land-based recreation ranges from the passive, such as sitting at a riverside viewing point, to more active pursuits such as cycling or horse riding, and visiting local amenities and sites of interest. Recent visitor surveys confirm that walking is an extremely popular activity, and the area benefits from circular walks and from long distance trails including the Angles Way, Weavers Way and Wherryman's Way. Recent additions to the Norfolk/England Coast Path have brought a National Trail to the Broads for the first time. However, significant reductions in local authority budgets in recent years are having an impact on rights of way

and footpath maintenance programmes.

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 resolve the potential conflict between visitor activity that could damage fragile habitats or disturb wildlife, and opportunities to access and appreciate these special places. The lack of visibility of the water and wetland to land-based visitors sometimes means that 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, linked to destination points, services and sustainable transport, have been identified following an audit of existing resources. Implementing many of these projects, both for moorings and for land access, depends significantly on gaining realistic landowner agreements, and on having sufficient resources to complete the projects and 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
7.1	Develop and implement schemes to upgrade and improve the network of physical access points and routes, where adverse	· Audit of land access to Broads viewpoints completed (access from moorings to facilities, services and public transport links, and across rivers and to/alongside water, access for people with mobility and sensory needs); projects for improved/new access developed [BA, NCC, SCC, RWSP]	Partners; additional resources required	Broads IAS targets NCC ROWIP targets

	effects can be prevented, linked to visitor facilities and including access for people with mobility and sensory needs	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; additional resources required	BA maintenance & repair /10-yr repiling targets / Broads IAS targets
		<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, incl. Three Rivers Way cycle route and Norfolk Trails [NCC, SCC, BA, RSPB/SE]; Improved, safe circular horse riding routes identified, implemented and promoted through County Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) and Broads Integrated Access Strategy (IAS) [NCC, BA] 	LAs, partners; Partnership schemes, incl. RSPB Active in Nature Project	NCC ROWIP targets Coastal path sections completed by 2020 Broads IAS targets, RWS action plan targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Wensum Strategy implemented to improve access and facilities to and along-side river (incl. new moorings, small craft launch facilities and footpath improvements linking Norfolk Trails through Norwich to the Broads) [Norwich CC, BA, EA] 		
		<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] 	LPS partners; HLF funding secured	Broads LPS target data for HLF
7.2	Implement measures to 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, LAs, local industry]; network of solar and electric boat charging points maintained and extended [BA] 		
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
7.3	Maintain, develop and promote a coordinated and year-round programme of activities to engage the public, and to support local community needs, taking measures to prevent any adverse effects from such	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broads presence promoted through annual and year-round programme of events, incl. Broads Outdoor Festival, Outdoors in the Broads, Walkability, Royal Norfolk Show, community festivals and seasonal events [BT, BA, DMOs, NGOs] 	Partners; additional resources required	Number and spread of events; visitor attendance at targeted events
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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/ cultural heritage/dark skies itineraries, events and packages created and promoted, linking into nearby coastal, city 	Partners, New Anglia LEP	Boat trip numbers; boat movements (BA census) Number of new

	activities	and town visitor offers [BT, BA, HBOs, TBs, WCOs, LAs, NGOs]		itineraries / packages, Number of visitors to target sites
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational activities implemented under (a) 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] and (b) Hoveton Wetland Restoration Project [NE] 	(a) HLF funding secured (b) funding secured	Broads LPS target data for HLF Hoveton project targets
7.4	Implement Broads Angling Strategy action plan through partnership working and securing of additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured additional resources and partnership agreements in place and Broads Angling Strategy Action Plan 2017/18 onward implemented [EA, BAT, BASG, community groups] 	EA; additional resources required	Broads Angling Strategy targets