

Broadland Futures Initiative

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2025

Contents

1. Apologies for absence and welcome	2
2. Update on technical work	2
3. Update on communications and community engagement	6
4. Update on Elected Members Forum	6
5. AOB	7
6. Date of next meeting	7
Summary of progress	7

Attendees

Marie-Pierre Tighe (Chair)- Broads Authority, Wendy Brooks- Norfolk County Council, Rebecca Bromley- National Trust, David Cobby- Jacobs, Peter Doktor- Environment Agency, Kellie Fisher- Environment Agency, Catherine Harris- Environment Agency, Fiona Hinds- Natural England, Andrea Kelly- Broads Authority, Phil Pearson- RSPB, Matthew Philpot - IDB, Yvonne Smith- Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Kylie Moos – Broads Authority (minutes).

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Marie-Pierre Tighe (MPT) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received from Victoria Egan, Vanessa Gouldsmith, Hannah Gray, Kevin Hart, Dan Hoare, Charlotte Rivett, Tom Say, Rob Wise.

2. Update on technical work

Product 21 Flood risk management actions and pathways

Peter Doktor (PD) introduced product 21 which has been a significant piece of work that will determine which actions and combinations are taken forward for appraisal and modelling. The technical report has been shared with the IPT and the deadline for comment is the 30 April. The deadline is ahead of the next Elected Members Forum (EMF) on the 8 May where members will be presented with a suite of pathways for endorsement.

Background

The toolkit of 16 possible flood risk management action types was subject to public consultation in July 2023. Since then, the actions have been grouped into combinations that could operate at the same time or at different stages over the next 100 years, also known as 'pathways.' The grouping is based on initial results from the modelling outputs and professional judgement. The geographical distribution of actions has also been considered. The pathways will be subject to modelling and appraisal to test their performance and optimise them. Pathways should not be taken as final but as input to the next stage of plan development.

The Dutch perspective on pathways

The Dutch have produced four broad policy options which the BFI can take inspiration from. The four options are:

- Protect open- managing water levels in the catchment with embankments and other structures.
- Protect closed- closing off the mouths of rivers and preventing water entering the catchment, this option relies on more engineering structures and pumping solutions.
- Advance- pushing back the shoreline to create space, this option also relies on heavy engineering.
- Accommodate- accepting that there will be more water in the environment and managing the process.

Proposed BFI pathways

The BFI pathways were presented as a series of Gantt style charts showing possible pathway actions vs time. The different options are:

- Do nothing (the baseline for economics)
- Sustain standard of service
- Accommodate (storage and management reassignment)
- Protect (embankments and open channels)
- Protect (individual channel structures)
- Protect (tidal barrier/barrage)

It is important to note that it is possible to transition between pathways over the 100-year period and selecting a pathway is only the starting point in the process.

Comments

Matthew Philpot (MP) agreed to send PD their detailed comments and provided their initial observations below:

- There is not enough detail in the summary report, and the report should include more tables which will prevent additional questions being asked. A lot of people will only read the summary.
- It would be better to replace the years axis on the pathways chart to a climate change increase axis.
- The recognition of the future changes requires continuous monitoring and assessment, but the report does not mention how sea level rise will be monitored, and this will be fundamental to decision points.
- The report is light on the environmental impacts and changes for example if a barrier was installed. PD responded, during the next stage, which is the appraisal against the objectives, the natural environment will be included. Currently the focus is on what will be tested and not the testing itself. PD added, the strategy will set out what the BFI agrees is a sensible approach for the short term, but there will be future decision points.
- The pathway charts refer to 'maximised Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)' which is a worthy ambition, but it is not mentioned in the report. PD responded some of the non-structural approaches such as NFM, SuDS, and use the planning process to reduce risk and should be taken as a given.
- The language is not consistent across the chart. For example, both 'raising' and 'maintenance' of embankments for offline fluvial and tidal flood storage is used. PD responded, there is a difference between the two pathways which are being referred to, but there needs to be more thought on how the pathways are described. Some of

the titles that have been used in the diagrams will not be accessible to a wider audience.

The current modelling is based on a worst-case scenario with 1.6m sea level rise but going forward each pathway will be tested against a range of different sea level rises and degrees of climate change.

Kellie Fisher (KF) commented, this is a strategy for partners and stakeholders and comments are welcomed, everyone needs to be satisfied as the strategy moves forward. KF added, it is a complicated task and there is not going to be one adaptation option for the Broads.

Yvonne Smith (YS) commented that once you are on the accommodate pathway, there is not an option to transition to another pathway. They asked if there is an option to reassess to provide more flexibility so that people might feel less like they are restricting their options in the future. PD responded, there may be different pathways for different parts of the Broads that could be more flexible and allow for a transition to another pathway.

Phil Pearson (PP) noted that some of the proposals will have a direct impact on the coastal frontage and offshore environment, partially if the barrier option was considered. Currently the messaging in the report is not strong enough.

The condition of some of the assets may need to be revisited, for example the stretch along Sandy Wall at Strumphaw Fen. If the asset condition is not right, it may have an impact on the modelling.

PP commented, in the report, modelling has been carried out in the Yare Valley to look for potential sites or compartments to use as flood storage. There is an emphasis on compartments that cover Buckenham and Canley which are good for nature and already delivering various benefits for recreation, but there is no focus on compartments to the south of the area where there could be additional benefits that link into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. PD responded, the diagram in the report is to illustrate flood storage at a point in the river system to test its effectiveness rather than be a specific proposal for that location. As such they should not be taken literally at this stage. MP agreed that the narrative in the report needs to be considered, and they would like to see the equation for the prioritisation of sites.

Andrea Kelly (AK) agreed that the rationale for the selection of areas in the report needs to be clear. Through the last set of BSEL modelling there were some compartments, particularly for protected sites, which came out as better than others at protecting adjacent sites. This provided clear prioritisation against the objectives and should be revisited. A considerable amount of money was also spent on modelling from the previous Broads Flood Alleviation Project which provided some useful information on which sites would be suitable.

AK added, whilst this is a strategy, the reality of delivery also needs to be considered, landowners will view the information and ask how the prioritisation affects them and how does it tie into the features that they have on their sites. PD agreed that the practicality of delivery needs to be considered, but currently the BFI is working at a strategic level and looking at the bigger picture. In time there will be a focus on how the pathways could be achieved. Catherine

Harries (CH) added, it is important to keep landowners informed, and whilst current landowners may not be interested in change on their land, as the pressure of climate change increase and change of ownership, new areas may become available. CH added, there will also be an element of practicality for identifying sites, for example compartments will need to be an appropriate size to be considered for water storage. PP responded, scale can be advantageous, large compartments can provide opportunities on a landscape level and provide multiple functions in the long term.

MP asked for more information on the weighting of the formula for Table 4.1 in the report. David Cobby (DC) responded, a qualitative analysis was used on the selection for Table 4.1 based on the modelling, consideration of land ownership and the objectives. DC emphasized that method is for the initial approach only.

Regarding Table 4.1, the supporting text refers to designated sites relying on freshwater and cannot be subject to saline incursion. PP commented, if this is for the long term, then there may be practical reasons why this is not possible. The RSPB are already thinking about some sites having to change to accommodate for an increase in saline water and what that may mean. Instead of keeping sites as they are in perpetuity, there need to be consideration on how the change will be managed and managing people's expectations.

AK asked if a sensitivity analysis has been carried out looking at the number of landowners in each compartment. A similar task was carried out when looking at peatland restoration opportunities and the results can be shared with BFI. AK added, the willingness to change is an important consideration, and there has been little change in ownership in the last 25 years of working in the Broads. PD responded that he has been in contact with Tom Hunter and the Water Management Alliance to get a feel for the number of ratepayers within particular compartments.

Regarding land ownership, Wendy Brooks (WB) questioned if understanding current landowner attitudes is needed at this point when the strategy is looking at long-term options. The fundamental issue will be around funding. KF responded, it is a balance and it is challenging when looking at a long-term strategy knowing that land ownership could change, but supporting conversations to align priorities with some landowners early on can also be really helpful.

PD thanked everyone for their feedback and emphasised that this is the first stage, there will still be a lot of discussion around the pathways, actions, and practical implications. The product will be shared with the EMF on the 8 May. PD requested that any partners let him know if they require more time to provide their feedback. All feedback will be taken on board, even if it is submitted after the 30 April deadline.

Product 22 Indicators for objectives

Indicators are needed to make FRM actions/pathways measurable against the 13 BFI objectives. The more that objectives are fulfilled, the more resilience is increase and combined they give an overall measure of resilience. When indicators are considered separately, they

highlight possible trade-offs between objectives. They are also used also for monitoring during implementation of the BFI strategy.

1-3 indicators have been identified for each objective. Some of the indicators are quantitative and will be applied used the appraisal tools developed over the last year such as the Natural Capital methodology and Landscape methodology. Other indicators will be qualitative, and their application and measurement will be based on expert judgment.

The project team have proposed establishing topic groups to review and potentially modify the results of the qualitative assessments that are produced by the project team. PD asked if IPT members would be happy to participate in topic groups relevant to their expertise and shared examples of how it would work in practise.

IPT members agreed with the suggestion and PD agree to send an email outlining the different topic groups and what would be required of the IPT.

AK suggested using existing groups such as the Upper Thurne Working Group and Northern Broads Farm Cluster.

3. Update on communications and community engagement

When the BFI strategy was first set up there was a dedicated communication engagement lead, since they have left, CH and PD have picking up tasks but recognise that a strategy of this size requires a dedicated engagement lead. IPT and EMF members have also commented on how important engagement and communications is to BFI. Recruitment in the Environment Agency has changed since the strategy started, but the team are looking at different ways to find funding for the post before submitting the request through the workforce planning team.

The team are working on the next newsletter and engagement at the Norfolk Show. IPT members are welcome to share a relevant update in the BFI newsletter which will be sent out to over 300 contacts.

- WB suggested promoting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy consolation which is now live.
- MP suggested a link to the IDB pumping programme in the Broads.
- AK suggested a joint update on peatland restoration projects with PPs suggestion of the Breeding Waders in Wet Meadows survey where the Broads where water management in the Broads was a key component.

PD requested that the updates are sent by 9 May.

4. Update on Elected Members Forum

The next meeting is taking place on the 8 May and the main item will be on Product 21. EMF members will receive a high-level report ahead of the meeting and will be introduced into pathways and what they mean in the context of BFI.

5. AOB

KF thanked everyone for reading, sending comments and engaging with the products today, the feedback provided is appreciated.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Broadland Future Initiative is 9.30am-11.00am 23 June 2025.

Summary of progress

Outstanding actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Send an email to the IPT outlining the different topic groups and time required regarding product 22.	28.04.2025	PD