

Broads Authority

26 January 2024

Agenda item number 8

Strategic priorities- update

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2023/24.

Broads Plan context

The Broads Plan is a key part of the Authority's strategic framework.

Recommended decision

To note the progress in implementing the 2023/24 priorities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Each year the Broads Authority identifies a small set of strategic priorities, which focus on projects that have high resource needs or a very large impact on the Broads, or that are politically sensitive. Setting these priorities helps target the Authority's resources and make the most of partnership working and external funding opportunities. Priorities are set each financial year, although some large-scale projects carry across several years.
- 1.2. In addition, Defra has introduced a new requirement for National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority to provide quarterly updates on deliverables against the Business Plan, as part of its grant funding agreement. These update reports on our strategic priorities will assist officers in compiling the information necessary to comply with that requirement.
- 1.3. The latest update on our agreed strategic priorities for 2023/24 is in Table 1.

Table 1

Strategic priorities 2023/24– progress update

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
1. Climate Change crisis response Aim: To implement the next steps of the various projects tackling climate change related issues, including the	Status: on track	Director of Strategic Services

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>actions in the Authority’s Climate Change Action Plan.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative BFI newsletter, by March 2024. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2024. (iii) Various technical deliverables from BFI consultant including the new hydraulic model, throughout 2023/24. (iv) Work with partners to secure funding and implement Phase II of the “Electrifying the Broads” project, by March 2024. (v) Deliver the actions set out in the Authority’s Climate Change Action Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 12th edition of the newsletter published in June 2023. Next edition under preparation for end 2023/ early 2024. (ii) Elected Members Forum (EMF) workshop on 9 October 2023, where the list of prioritisation for the BFI objectives were agreed. Next meeting on 15 January 2023. (iii) On track. Some deliverables which were planned as sequential activities will be combined to bring forward the most beneficial options for specific locations. The combination will not change the overall timeline of the project. (iv) Round 4 of the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition was announced in July 2023. Unfortunately, the funding excluded capital spend, so we will seek other sources of funding. Some additional funding for electric pillars has been received through a partnership with Norfolk County Council, which will support new installations at Great Yarmouth and Potter Heigham. (v) The tender for solar panels on the Dockyard closed on 15 September, with the intention of awarding a contract for installation to be carried out by March 2024. Following consultation with Visit The Broads members, we are continuing to work on a potential bid to the 	

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	<p>Norfolk Investment Fund. The shape of this will depend on the implementation of the Norfolk Devolution deal. To support the development of these bids, we are working with the wider National Parks on building on the carbon baseline work done with Small World Consulting.</p>	
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including the legacy of the peat project.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Endorsement of Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Strategies – timings to be confirmed subject to further details expected from government. (ii) To implement the next steps of the Nature for Climate Peat restoration project within agreed budget and timeline, and review lessons learnt by June 2023. (iii) Complete site selection for potential restoration, and support the submission of Restoration Grant Application, if appropriate, by 26 May 2023. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) LNRS expected to be adopted in Summer 2025 with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils as “Responsible Authorities” and the Broads Authority as “Supporting Authority”. The Partnership met in December and Broads Authority officers will contribute to different working groups. (ii) The Nature for Climate Peatland Discovery project closed on 31 August 2023 and reporting is complete. (iii) A Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme Restoration Grant has been awarded for Buttle Marsh in August 2023 for ~£300k, with co-funding secured from Anglian Water Get River Positive scheme. Peatlands set to be restored to help tackle climate change. It aims to restore peat building conditions at Buttle 	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>Marsh by holding and transferring water across the site. Discussion with the regulators, Environment Agency and Natural England, is ongoing to address the water and eel transfer issues.</p> <p>A further ~£500k was awarded for a Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund – FibreBroads a partnership led by the Broads Authority to grow wetland crops, engage with farmers, regulators, and fibre product developers. The project was presented to a Lowland Agricultural Peatland Workshop. Officers visited peatland projects in Somerset.</p> <p>In addition, two further Nature for Climate partnership bids totalling ~£260k have been applied for focusing on water management and farmer collaboration. In November a ‘Paludiculture Building Materials for Net-Zero’ project within the UKRI Land use for net zero Programme was submitted for ~£40k with the University of East London.</p>	
<p>3. Navigation IT</p> <p>Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Develop timetable and specification by May 2023</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Further to meeting with Management Team on 2 May to report on discussions with other waterways, the Navigation Committee was consulted re specific functionality on 8 June.</p> <p>An anonymised version of the</p>	<p>Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>(ii) Progress workplan for 2023/24 as per agreed timeline.</p>	<p>current internal system was sent to a software company for analysis as to the feasibility of updating it to run on the latest, cloud hosted, software platform.</p> <p>This work has been undertaken and a quotation received for upgrading the software. This is being reviewed with a view to the work being done in Q4 of 2023/24.</p> <p>Further work has confirmed that the present internal system can be upgraded and hosted in the cloud where it will be supported and maintained going forward.</p> <p>A further meeting was scheduled for December 2023 with a view to obtaining indicative costs for replacing the online payment portal used by toll payers, using the same cloud based software as the internal system.</p> <p>The full specification and tender preparation are scheduled for completion by June 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Ongoing</p>	
<p>4. Water Mills and Marshes</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the WMM programme to latest agreed schedule and budget.</p> <p>Milestones:</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) All projects progressing well to adjusted plans. Scheme will close in June 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Preparing for the final claim from NLHF to release remaining grant.</p>	<p>Broads Landscape Partnership Programme Manager</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>(i) Monitor and report progress (July & Dec 2023).</p> <p>(ii) Submit quarterly claims to National Lottery Heritage Fund (April/Jul/Oct/Jan).</p> <p>(iii) Complete individual project plans with project partners (June)</p> <p>(iv) Complete final project evaluations with external scheme evaluators (September)</p> <p>(v) Hold project legacy partner conference (November)</p> <p>(vi) Prepare final project report</p>	<p>(iii) Most external partner projects now completed.</p> <p>(iv) External scheme evaluators have completed and delivered their report.</p> <p>(v) Planning for the Landscape Partnership legacy conference is ongoing. Conference will highlight the works accomplished since 2018 and look at planned legacy works and opportunities derived from the scheme. Will now hold in the spring to match with NLHF availability.</p> <p>(vi) Evidence for the final scheme report is being gathered and collated. Website is being redeveloped into its legacy, archival form. We have a new student placement starting in January to help complete this work.</p> <p>Major works at Mutton’s Mill are now complete. All four sails are now back on at the mill with all 56 backstays installed. The millwright has recently delivered some of the final parts for the brake and we will be testing the mill in the spring when conditions are more favourable.</p> <p>Repair work to the drainage lane at Strumpshaw Fen is complete apart from some rendering which needs to be applied to the walls next to the sluice gate. This will require lower water levels in the spring.</p> <p>We are anticipating the delivery of Tom Williamson’s new book on history of the Broads, which is the final output</p>	

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	<p>from our work on the Broads Hidden Heritage Project. We still expect this to be delivered in the spring from the publisher.</p> <p>The second Tactile Map is now installed at Beccles Quay. The repairs to the map in Whitlingham have proven effective.</p>	
<p>5. Local Plan for the Broads</p> <p>Aim: To review the Local Plan for the Broads for adoption in 2024 (estimated).</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Preparation of the Preferred Options version of Local Plan (with HRA and SA) consultation – towards consultation in autumn 2023.</p> <p>(ii) Preparation of the Publication version of the Local Plan throughout 2024.</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Policies are being drafted and taken to Planning Committee each month. Sites put forward for consideration are being assessed. Consultation on Preferred Options likely to be March/April 2024.</p> <p>(ii) On track.</p>	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>
<p>6. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p> <p>Aim: To run the FiPL programme and allocate Broads grants to farmers and landowners and support the Broads and Norfolk Coast Land Management Board to allocate their funding.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2023.</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Held Land Management Board meeting on 11 December 2023. In total there are 26 projects that have been approved so far for 23/24.</p>	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>(iii) Engagement activities to showcase case studies funded through FiPL, by March 2024.</p>	<p>(ii) Defra has confirmed an increase in the programme budget, meaning that the grant pot for the programme is now £275,986.64 for 23/24. So far £247,884.28 has been allocated to grants.</p> <p>(iii) The FiPL Officer has written case studies for the FiPL webpage and has attended outreach events including the Bure Farm Cluster event and the County Farms AGM.</p>	
<p>7. Budget pressures</p> <p>Aim: To operate at a level in line with expected income.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Use January budget report for 2023/24 and the three-year horizon to continue discussions with Defra officials on future funding levels.</p> <p>(ii) Further savings and additional income (including from external funding) for 2024/25 Budget (January 2024)</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Work to start over the summer period on the 2023/24 budget. Establishment (salary) budgeting completed.</p> <p>Annual review meeting with DEFRA scheduled for 20/11/23.</p> <p>Initial conversations held 23 August 2023 with DEFRA around potential new funding model.</p> <p>Balanced budget on this agenda for 2024/25, although further work required from 2025/26 onwards.</p> <p>(ii) The Philanthropy Company has been appointed on behalf of the English National Parks and DEFRA to look at income generation opportunities.</p>	<p>Chief Executive & Director of Finance</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>Draft second phase report received 10 July 2023, meeting to discuss scheduled for 14 July 2023.</p> <p>Legal advice sought on the Authority's ability to engage in commercial activity.</p> <p>Options on level of tolls included in proposed navigation charges for 2024/25 committee reports. Considered by Navigation Committee on 2/11/23 and Broads Authority 24/11/23.</p> <p>Expression of interest submitted to DEFRA 21/12/23 for additional capital funding for water in protected landscapes. A decision is expected shortly as it will be a requirement to procure in 2023/24.</p>	

2. Financial risks

- 2.1. If the Authority fails to comply with any of its obligations in the Grant Funding Agreement, DEFRA may, at its discretion, reduce, suspend, or terminate payments of grant, or require any part or all of the grant to be repaid.

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Background papers: None

[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: all