

# BFI Elected Members Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 04 April 2023

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## **Present**

Eric Vardy - in the Chair - Norfolk County Council, Harry Blathwayt – North Norfolk District Council, Melanie Vigo Di Gallidoro – Suffolk County Council, Fran Whymark - Broadland District Council.

## **In attendance**

Marie Pierre Tighe - Broads Authority, Michelle Glover - Broads Authority (minutes), David Cobby - Jacobs, Nathan Harris - South Norfolk District Council/Broadland District Council, Charlotte Rivett - Norwich City Council, Catherine Harries- Environment Agency, Peter Doktor - Environment Agency, Mark Johnson - Environment Agency, Charles Krolik-Root - East Suffolk Council/ Great Yarmouth Borough Council/North Norfolk District Council, Gavin Rumsey - Environment Agency, Sarah Luff - Norfolk County Council, Rob Wise- NFU, Ian Robinson- RSPB.

## **1. Apologies for absence and welcome**

Apologies received from Matthew Bradbury (Broads Authority), James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council) and Mike Stonard (Norwich CC).

## **2. Review of EMF Terms of Reference**

The EMF Terms of Reference were agreed.

## **3. Update on overall technical work and look forward**

Peter Doktor (PD) gave a presentation and update on this topic which included a look forward in terms of work that would be undertaken over the next year or so. The presentation covered an overview of the plan creation process, proposed actions and activity and timescale to completion. A series of computer based hydraulic models will be used to understand how flood risk may change in the future. Four existing coastal models are being updated as well as a new Broads model that covers the majority of the BFI area.

The agreed BFI objectives are currently fairly general in nature but the aim is to produce a more specific (i.e. SMART) list of objective indicators that can be used to appraise the possible flood risk management actions. Work on the current suite of project activities is starting later than anticipated due to having to update the project business case but it has now been approved by the Environment Agency. Comments were welcomed on the long list of possible management actions, which would be discussed further at item 5. There will be a public consultation on the long list of possible actions. A timeline of future EMF meetings and the purpose of members input to each was included in the presentation slides.

A question was raised as to whether there had been any work undertaken about the impact of drought in this area. PD responded that it was recognised that there were periods of too much water and periods of too little water, and that it would be beneficial for organisations to come together to explore opportunities to capture water for later use. Mark Johnson added that his colleagues within the East Anglian area were very focused on water availability both currently and for the future, and were working to ensure that water resources were managed extremely carefully.

## 4. Update of engagement activity

Gavin Rumsey (GR) gave a presentation and update on communications and engagement activity. Over the last six months connections had been strengthened with the Great Yarmouth Borough Council Environment Committee, closely working with them to share information and to identify efficiencies between the BFI and the flooding and coastal programmes.

There had been several engagements with stakeholder groups such as the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association, the NBA, the East Norfolk NFU branch, Stalham Farmers Club and the Upper Thurne Working Group. Information was also on the website including flood modelling videos and newsletters.

There had been a meeting with Norfolk County Council to discuss social capital and well-being. If management actions were proven to benefit well-being then that could give access to further funding. The Broadland Catchment Partnership forum was also regularly attended, and there was close work being undertaken with the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance to share information and data.

The next main engagement activity will be about the long list of possible flood risk management actions. That will then move on to consulting on appraisal findings. The Chair commented that these communications offered reassurance to residential and business communities.

A member asked how much work had there been with parishes in the high flood risk areas. GR confirmed that parish councils within the BFI plan area received copies of progress newsletters, and were invited to partake in stakeholder engagements and consulted on what they valued most about the Broadland area. Through links with the Norfolk Strategic Flooding alliance, work was underway to help parishes develop their own flood risk plans and to raise awareness of the BFI's overarching strategy.

The Chair asked if individual district and county councillors were also being included in communications. GR confirmed that the stakeholder list included parish councils, organisations, businesses, district and county councils and a comprehensive list of different people and organisations. There were also engagements with young people through colleges, and at upcoming events such as the Royal Norfolk Show.

## 5. Focus on long list of possible flood risk management actions

Peter Doktor (PD) gave a presentation and update on the long list of possible flood risk management actions that could be undertaken in the future. The list currently identified actions in a generic way.

The presentation covered different types and sources of flooding in the area and possible actions including structural or non-structural solutions. Lessons were being adopted from previous strategies and from international examples of flood risk management such as from the Netherlands. The range of the current long list includes what could be done to individual properties to make them less vulnerable in the event of a flood; capturing and storing flood

water rather than just releasing it back into the river; ways in which the coastline and dunes could be protected; and the moving of flood defences and assets to areas which were more sustainable.

Introductory information was being drafted to provide background information for stakeholders and for the consultation scheduled to take place this summer, and the results of that consultation would enable a more detailed report and final long list that would then be produced before the end of the year.

A question was raised as to whether there was any study into the psychological impact on those affected by floods or flood risk. PD responded that it was certainly something for the team to consider.

A member asked if stakeholders included those who were developing homes. Gavin Rumsey responded that it was an objective to strengthen communications with developers.

GR added that anyone was welcome to provide comments on whether they felt this list of actions was sufficient, and that he was hoping to hear from a range of interested parties including navigational, angling, farming, business and tourism perspectives. Interviews would be arranged with representatives of those sectors to complement the engagement. An online survey would be available for four weeks through the BFI website.

Mark Johnson commented that his recent experience through the Bacton sandscaping project demonstrated that there was work around the positive benefits for well-being from the delivery of such schemes. Catherine Harries added that the Environment Agency was progressing in terms of valuing the impacts of flooding on people's mental health and that some amount of grant aid was available for flood defence schemes that gave value to improving people's mental health.

## 6. Any other business

MPT advised that the next meeting would be a face-to face meeting. Lunch would be provided and so it was important to know numbers and asked everyone to send their responses to the invite, along with any dietary requirements. The Chair asked for reminders to be sent out about the next meeting as with elections coming up there could be changes in representations.

## 7. Date of next meeting

12.30-3.30pm 10 July 2023, Dragonfly House