

External Funding Strategy
Report by Head of Strategy and Projects

Summary:	This report updates Members on the recent progress made in developing an approach to securing more funding and support from external sources.
Recommendation:	Members are invited to consider the recommendations in paragraph 3.2.

1 Background

- 1.1 Following discussion at the Broads Authority about a strategic approach to seeking external funding to support the implementation of the Broads Plan objectives, it was agreed to use the skills of three Members to consider possible ways forward. An initial assessment of the situation was led by the Head of Strategy and Projects to identify the relevant funding sources, pathways and barriers to get an overview of options. This information was shared with the Management Team and then with the three Members who reflected on the information gathered and provided some clear thoughts on the way forward. This report presents their thinking and gives some recommendations for the next steps.

2 Ten strategic elements

- 2.1 The following points were agreed as a foundation for the strategic approach:
1. There has been a significant drop in funding for management of the Broads. The Broads Authority's National Park grant has reduced by about £1million per annum since 2011. A similar proportional drop is reflected in the expenditure of public agencies and local authorities in the area. The proposed policy move to increase contributions from private sources has not kept up with this decline due to a lack of effective methods to attract and invest such contributions. New mechanisms such as Community Infrastructure Levy and carbon off-setting are coming on stream along with sponsorship opportunities but the levels of investment achieved are significantly lower. A new approach to attracting external funds is therefore well over-due.
 2. There are a multitude of ideas on where to spend finance within any geographic area and the Broads is no exception. To help determine current priorities, the Broads Plan should be used as the guiding assessment of need. This partnership document, with its latest iteration recently published, draws together the considered priorities for the coming 5 years. As it has been subject to public consultation to gauge a range of views there is general acceptance that the objectives set in the Plan

provide an appropriate framework for current priorities. The Broads plan has been constructed with an emphasis on identifying the needs of users and linking this to the benefits that will be generated. Users may well realise benefits that cross-over between the themes within the document. Therefore packages for funding bids could be pulled together in a variety of ways.

3. There are many organisations actively seeking to progress the Broads Plan objectives and working in partnership is likely to be a vital part of accessing new resources. In simple terms a grant giver may be a new partner. However there will be many routes to additional funds and often the implementation of the change may be best done by other organisations or be done together. Some organisations could see the Broads Authority seeking external funds as competition. Developing an open approach to partnership working where the best relevant bodies utilise external funds to meet Broads Plan objectives is likely to gain the largest investment in desired change.
4. Even with a clear set of priorities, it is not always easy to keep continual momentum towards desired outcomes. Therefore it is likely to be important that a variety of ideas and projects are worked on. At times this may mean semi-worked up funding ideas will have to be put on hold awaiting the right set of conditions to progress. [For example, as the Broads Authority owns very little land, there may well be times when a project will rely on a third party decision before it can progress. The timing constraints of others may therefore become key.] This is best tackled by the concept of a 'pipeline of projects' – working on a number of ideas for projects and external funding opportunities at the same time progressing those where the necessary planning steps are falling into place.
5. Any one good idea to meet a priority outcome may have a number of routes to fulfilment. Funding bodies may prefer seeing large ideas being progressed under one umbrella [e.g. the Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Scheme, or EU Interreg funding] allowing significant funds to be committed. However, other funding sources dealing with relatively small amounts may also allow great progress with a range of small or medium grants also providing great outcomes. The Authority should be ready to explore many suitable sources of funding and consider pursuing single and multiple project outcomes. It is recognised that this should avoid the activities better suited to the National Parks Partnership with the Authority supporting their approaches wherever it can.
6. The Authority has already made use of many successful funding routes – from Interreg projects to submitting schemes to underground low level electric power-lines [where around £4m has been invested or allocated since the start in 2005]. There is already a level of knowledge and expertise, in staff and Members, to tap into and this is not therefore new territory but more an explanation of priorities to help give a clear message to potential funding bodies where common action can make a difference. Further specialist skills maybe needed at some point.

7. The development of clear programmes and projects that can be submitted for external funding requires a level of resource. At present the level of staff [and Member] resources directed at this is very small. For a successful programme of external funding there needs to be a clear vision backed up with sufficient initial resources. Often this will be best drawn together under a clear vision or statement of intent. To provide this level of resourcing may require a change in staffing levels or allocated resources to expertise with knock-on choices about other priorities. An investment early on in seeking further funds may allow even greater investment in work areas in due course as finance is obtained.
8. Some people and organisations may not feel contributing to ‘an authority’ is acceptable but would be happier to contribute to a charitable body. Therefore having a charitable body that is committed to the implementation of Broads Plan objectives is likely to be an essential parallel mechanism to a re-prioritising of effort. Expansion of the current closer working with the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Charitable Trust may be one route to establish this goal.
9. Direct finance is not the only way to support projects. A funding strategy should also be able to consider attracting help in kind – materials or labour – as it may be easier for some supporters to release such alternative help.
10. A move to seek significant additional funds should be seen as a strategic priority for the Broads Authority. As such, reporting on progress – successes and the inevitable failures – should be retained as a strategic objective for at least the near future. The current governance review should not act as a brake to progress and may be able to contribute structural change that will be beneficial.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 These 10 core elements are recommended as the under-lying principles for a new emphasis on bringing in further resources to improve investment in the Broads. Their fundamental nature can also feed into the coming discussions on governance to ensure any changes identified can support improving the levels of investment in Broads Plan objectives.
- 3.2 To develop the fine details of a strategic approach to external funding it is recommended that a working group made up of Members and Staff is established. This working group would:
 - (i) Define a set of terms of reference, to be approved by the Authority, that sets them a task of creating an ambitious approach that would lie at the heart of a way of working;
 - (ii) Create a framework for the approach to advise the Chief Executive on how to support the external funding aspirations;
 - (iii) Identify a series of models on effective ways to obtain external resources;

- (iv) Identify Broads Plan priority objectives that could/should be pursued with the help of external funding [e.g. an education outreach programme/project]

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