

Submission of Expression of Interest to the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership seeking funding for the Broads Cycling Country Dutch Cycling Signage Scheme

Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Summary: | This report informs members of a partnership project officers are developing with Sustrans and Norfolk County Council in order to seek funding from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership for the installation of Dutch style cycling signage in the Broads in order to be able to better promote the Broads National Park to visitors from the near continent. |
| Recommendation: | That the Authority supports the proposal for a pilot project to install Dutch style cycling signage in the Broads and the allocation of £20,000 from the projects budget to the project costs. |

1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of a project being developed by officers in partnership with Sustrans and Norfolk County Council to trial Dutch style cycling signage in the Broads.
- 1.2. Sustrans approached the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council to suggest that the Norfolk countryside and the Broads in particular was the ideal location to trial a Dutch style cycling signage scheme in the UK for the first time. The Dutch knooppunten (node point) way-marking system is already a successful signage scheme on the continent which allows visitors to plan recreational cycling trips for themselves. Essentially cyclists design their own routes by listing the relevant numbered signs that link the landscape areas and things they want to visit e.g. nature reserves, historic environment sites, pubs and visitor attractions <https://www.hollandcyclingroutes.com/>
- 1.3. Sustrans had previously discussed the idea with colleagues in the Netherlands who felt that provision of cycling infrastructure familiar to cyclists from Europe would be beneficial for the promotion of Norfolk as a visitor destination to cyclists on the near continent. County Council and Broads Authority officers discussed this proposal and felt that if the scheme proceeded it should be closely identified with the Broads National Park brand. A partnership was formed to develop the scheme (now called Broads Cycling Country) with a view to seeking significant funding from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to deliver it. The LEP's Economic Strategy

recognises tourism as a key component of the regional economy and it identifies the Broads National Park as a key asset for tourism in the region. The proposal detailed in this report is the first phase of the scheme and the partners intend to develop a second phase covering the northern Broads and Norfolk Coast if the phase one scheme is successful.

2. Strategic justification for the project

- 2.1. The Norfolk Cycling and Walking Action Plan has identified that there are very limited signed routes for cyclists in the county apart from the Sustrans promoted National Cycle Routes. These routes are arterial in nature and do not allow cyclists to explore the wider countryside on signed routes limiting the offer of the county and the ability of destination management organisations to promote cycling in Norfolk and Suffolk in Europe, particularly to potential visitors from the Netherlands and Germany.
- 2.2. This lack of cycling infrastructure is also recognised in the Broads Integrated Access Strategy (IAS). The IAS already identifies a need to improve cycling infrastructure through creating shared use routes and improving signage and this area of work will be prioritised when the strategy is reviewed this year.
- 2.3. The Broads Sustainable Tourism Strategy (BSTS) also identifies developing the walking and cycling offer as a key priority for tourism in the Broads. In the strategy tourism businesses have identified provision for cycling and walking as a top-ten issue of high importance but also of poor performance. Compared with other National Parks the Broads walking and cycling offer is relatively under developed and underexposed but the stakeholder surveys commissioned by the Broads Authority in 2014 indicate that there is significant potential amongst visitors for increasing participation in cycling and walking.
- 2.4. The SWOT analysis for the BSTS went on to identify the underdeveloped walking and cycling offer as a primary weakness. This SWOT analysis informed the strategy action plan which set out a range of key activities to improve the performance of Broads' tourism. Under objective 2: **Captivating products to strengthen the variety, distinctiveness and quality of the Broads tourism offer, capable of generating visits throughout the year** the strategy identified the top priority as *“Extend and diversify the walking and cycling offer. Strengthening the walking and cycling product and its promotion will underpin this important dimension of the visitor expectations of a National Park, provide more environmentally friendly access, contribute to the health agenda and help to spread visitor spending. Opportunities should be provided and promoted to different users at all levels.”* Under this heading the need to strengthen information on, and promotion of, walking and cycling opportunities, including links to public transport is identified as one of the key actions.
- 2.5. The Broads Plan also recognises the importance of land based recreation such as walking and cycling and the link between active recreation and public transport. The plan identifies that a continuing problem is the majority of visitors to the Broads still arrive by car, which can increase seasonal traffic

congestion and demand for parking, and create the wrong impression to visitors who expect the Broads to be tranquil. The plan also points out that other access, transport and local plans identify the need to promote investment in improvements, including walking and cycling facilities.

- 2.6. Aspiration 6 in the Broads Plan is to: *“Provide opportunities for distinctive recreational experiences in harmony with the special qualities of the area with a focus on maintaining and enhancing the physical access network to and around the Broads and between land and water linked to visitor facilities.”* The strategic action under this heading is:
“Develop and implement schemes to improve the network of access points and routes (where adverse effects can be prevented), linked to visitor facilities and including easier access for people with mobility and sensory needs.” The key output by the end of the plan as regards walking and cycling is identified as *“County Cycling and Walking Action Plans and initiatives implemented; new/ upgraded priority cycle routes and cycle hire provision schemes developed including 3RW cycle route and Norfolk Trails.”* The Broads Plan identifies that the resources for delivering this output will be from partnership schemes and the objective will be reviewed through the Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan - now being reviewed and renamed the Norfolk Access Improvement plan (NAIP) and the Broads IAS.
- 2.7. This assessment of relevant strategies clearly demonstrates that there is a strong strategic lead for the development and delivery of cycling and walking projects that will help boost tourism income in the Broads and allow the Broads to be promoted as a visitor destination on the near continent. Moreover, the strategic steer for the delivery of such projects is through partnership schemes like the one outlined in this report.

3. Submission of an Expression of Interest for funding to the LEP

- 3.1. Having agreed to support the project officers had an initial meeting with the Head of Programmes for the LEP in late 2017 to explain the Broads Cycling Country proposal and ask if the LEP would consider funding the project. The LEP indicated that it was interested in the project and would be prepared to formally consider an Expression of Interest (EOI) for funding for up to £200,000.
- 3.2. Since then the partners have developed the pilot project proposal further so that it meets the LEP’s funding requirements and written an expression of interest for funding that was submitted to the LEP in early July.
- 3.3. The EOI details a project with a total cost of £271,250 that would result in the installation of Dutch Style Knooppunten at 470 junctions (approximately 1620 individual signs) on routes in the Yare and Waveney valleys and out to Acle Bridge. The draft route map for the project is at Appendix 1 to this report, examples of the types of signs used in the Netherlands are shown at Appendix 2 and a draft Broads Cycling Country way-mark at Appendix 3.

- 3.4. The EOI asks for £197,750.00 in funding from the LEP and would require match funding contributions from the partners totalling £73,500 to achieve this. Confirmed match funding contributions to date total £53,500. Aside from the main partners Suffolk County Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council have confirmed contributions.
- 3.5. The EOI will be formally considered by the LEP before the end of July and if it is supported the LEP will ask the project partners to prepare a detailed business case for the project prior to confirming funding. At this stage the allocation of match funding is therefore only indicative of the project partners' commitment to the delivery of the project if the application for funding from the LEP is successful. Further project development work would be led by Sustrans with support from the County Council and Broads Authority. If funding is secured the installation of the signage would be carried out by the County Council.

4. Broads Authority match funding contribution

- 4.1. As the project needed a further £20,000 contribution to the match funding to come within the LEP funding ceiling for projects of this nature a report was taken to the Broads Authority's internal Project Development Group in early July seeking an allocation of £20,000 from the projects budget.
- 4.2. The Project Development Group assesses projects against a number of criteria including whether projects will help to meet objectives and priorities from the Broads Plan, linked strategies and the Broads Authority's strategic priorities. In this case the PDG agreed to allocate the £20,000 requested and fully supported the submission of the EOI to the LEP recognising that it would deliver against multiple objectives and, if successful, draw down significant external funding.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. If the funding application to the LEP is successful this project will deliver improved cycling infrastructure and routes to meet the headline aims of the Broads Plan and other strategies. It is also anticipated that the scheme will have positive impacts on the local economy through:
 - marketing and packaging ways of accessing the countryside both domestically and on the near continent with potential for an extended visitor season.
 - working with the LEP Chambers of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses to develop business opportunities for SME's.
 - potential increased visitor spend (cyclist spend per head £36 per day [Dutch projection]).
- 5.2. The Cambridge Economic Impact Model indicates there is potential for increased tourism income of £420,000 per annum from the scheme. The data currently available to Sustrans and the Department for Transport's Business

Case Return (BCR) reports on previous cycling investment schemes indicate that the project has a likely BCR of 16:1.

- 5.3. The Broads Cycling Country scheme will also promote the Broads National Park brand over a wide area and signage at key gateway sites will also be used to give information on things like the Water, Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Scheme. Additionally the scheme presents an opportunity for engaging with infrequent users of the Broads National Park particularly in the urban areas of Great Yarmouth, Norwich and Lowestoft.
- 5.4. Members are invited to support the project and the allocation of £20,000 to the match funding element of the scheme from the projects budget.

Background papers:

Author: Adrian Clarke
Date of Report: 13 July 2018

Broads Plan Objectives: 6.1, 6.2

Appendices: APPENDIX 1 Map of Broads Cycling Country Phase 1
APPENDIX 2 Example Dutch signage
APPENDIX 3 Broads Cycling Country Way-mark

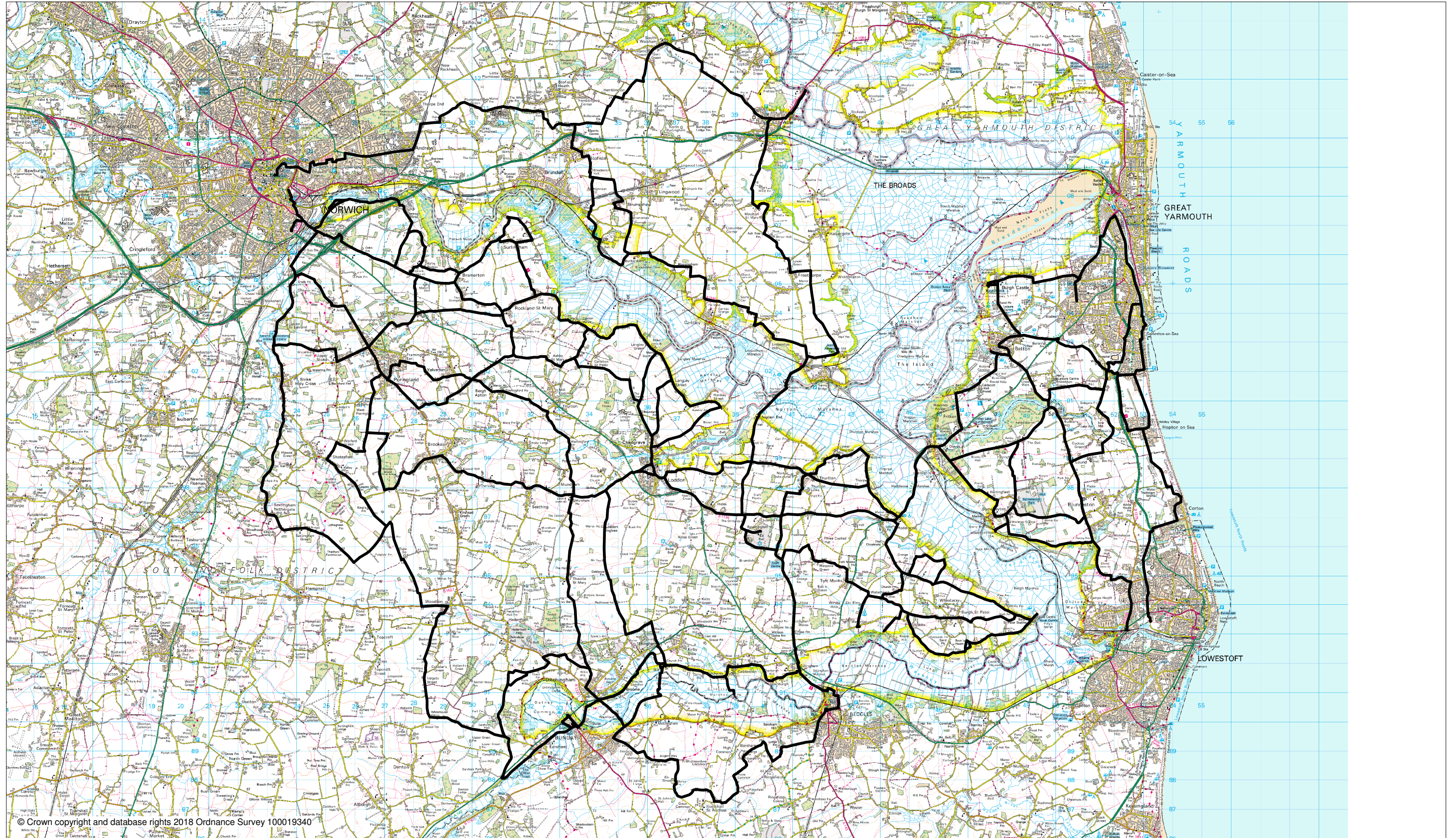
The Broads Cycling Country

Phase 1

Scale 1:124734

Compiled by Chris Brough

Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2SG
Tel: 01603 222143
Fax: 01603 223219



© Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100019340



Figure 1: Example of Dutch way-marking sign



Figure2: Example of a way-marking post with long distance route above



Figure 3: Example of Interpretation Panel for the main Broads Gateways at Norwich, Acle, Gt. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Beccles and Loddon

