

BFI Elected Members Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2021

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Present

Andy Grant – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Kay Mason Billig, Matthew Bradbury, Penny Carpenter, Lana Hempzell.

In attendance

Charlotte Hounsell – Norwich City Council, John Jones – Norfolk County Council, Marie-Pierre Tighe - Broads Authority, Shirley Bishop – Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council, Simon Curl – Suffolk County Council, Gavin Rumsey - Environment Agency, Kellie Fisher - Environment Agency, Mark Johnson - Environment Agency, Peter Doktor- Environment Agency, David Cobby – Jacobs, Kylie Moos – Broads Authority (minute taker).

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Broadland Futures Initiative Elected Members Forum, a short introduction was provided by all.

Apologies received from James Mallinder, Mike Stonard and Rob Goodliffe.

2. Introduction to the Broadland Futures Initiative

Kellie Fisher, Flood and Coastal Risk Management Senior Advisor and Peter Doktor, Project Manager for the Environment Agency presented to the Forum an introduction to Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI). BFI is a partnership for future flood risk management in the Broadland area, the main goal is to agree a framework for future flood risk management which better copes with the changing climate and rising sea levels.

Partnership

The Initiative has been set up by organisations responsible for managing coastal and inland flood risk. The organisations involved include:

- The Environment Agency (technical lead)
- Broads Authority (governance, support and engagement lead)
- Natural England
- County and District Councils
- Internal Drainage Boards
- National Farmers Union
- Water Resources East
- RSPB and Wildlife Trusts

Governance

The BFI will work in partnership with local communities and other stakeholders to identify the way forward. Democracy is at the heart of decision making & engagement central to BFI. The

decisions made must be acceptable for local communities, for the environment, and be technically possible and affordable.

Study Reports

Over the last year the Initiative Project Team (IPT) have completed a range of studies which have been presented as public facing and technical reports. Technical reports are available upon request. The following reports can be found on the BFI webpage:

- Origins of the Plan Area – sets out a brief history of the Broadland area and how it has changed and adapted over time.
- Sources and Nature of Flood Risk within the Plan Area- summarises the sources of flood risk in the Broadland area including key flood events that occurred in the past.
- Coastal processes within the Plan Area- describing the evolution and processes of the coast between Cromer and Great Yarmouth, with a focus on the low lying Eccles to Winterton frontage. BFI cannot change Shoreline Management Plan policy but can make recommendations.
- Current Approaches to Flood Risk Management - describes current approaches to managing flood risk within the Broadland area including an overview of how flood risk management is funded.
- The Influence of Flood Risk Management - overview of how the local economy, as well as the social and natural environments, are influence by current flood risk management. Previous strategies have often left funding until the last stage, this strategy aims to form funding partnerships early on.
- The Future Impacts of Climate Change- summary of the likely changes in the climate, potential impacts and potential approaches to adapt these changes.

3. Engagement activities update

Gavin Rumsey, Engagement Specialist for the Environment Agency presented past and present engagement activities.

2019-2020

In mid-2019 a re-engagement survey was released, followed by a series of awareness raising events around the BFI Plan area. Face to face events were cancelled in 2020 due to Covid -19 and a virtual exhibition was planned and promoted ready for 2021. An online digital newsletter has continued and is now on the 6th edition.

Online Survey & Virtual Exhibition

The online survey was launched on 18th January and is currently open until 11th April. As well as online, stakeholders can also participate via postal submissions or telephone with a member of the IPT. The virtual exhibition includes 2 videos about flood modelling and dredging in the Broads. StoryMaps also allow visitors to explore different topics specific to their location.

The virtual exhibition space has been visited by circa 750 people and 125 responses to the survey have been received. Insights from the survey so far indicate:

- Key themes of the Broadland area focus on the landscape and getting back to nature.
- Damage to wildlife habitats and damage to property are the largest area of concern when considering the impacts of flooding. Concern for wildlife habitats since the 2019 survey has increased considerably.
- There is a general acceptance that change is required within the Broadland area to manage the risk of flooding.
- The survey is largely being completed by people who work and/or live in the Broadland area.
- The age of participants highlights that young people are not engaging with the survey.

Covid-19 restrictions and school closures have made it difficult to present BFI in an education setting over the last year. The IPT have been working with Norfolk Youth Parliament and colleges, and plan to develop focus groups to engage with young people in the future.

Engagement Promotion

BFI has been promoted using multiple platforms including newsletters, social media, IPT minutes, press releases and a dedicated BFI webpage.

Virtual Village Hall Events

Three virtual village hall events took place in February and March. 15-20 members joined virtually for each event asking questions and interacting with the IPT.

4. Next Steps

Peter Doktor presented an overview of the strategy development process which is made up of the following five stages:

- What is happening?
- What matters most?
- What can we do about it?
- How can we implement this strategy?
- How is it working?

The Elected Members Forum will be involved at each stage of the process and will make decisions on the following:

- Agree values and objectives
- Identify options and pathways
- Option and pathway evaluation

- Adaptative planning strategy
- Oversee implementation plan, including funding

Similar to the recent National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management strategy, a long-term adaptive approach will be used over the next 100 years. An adaptive pathway will respond to the situation as it changes, for example, an asset coming to the end of its life or an environmental trigger.

Comments and answers to questions

A member welcomed the initiative and noted that there is merit in taking a scientific approach on how flooding and climate change is going to affect us going forward. They commented that the acceptance for change demonstrated in the survey often reduces when the change is required and will affect their lifestyles. Another member referred to the example of Hemsby and the lack of interest outside of the village as it does not affect them.

Kellie Fisher responded, for people to be prepared to change they must understand the baseline, the options available and the benefits. These three steps are part of future BFI engagement.

Members supported further engagement with young people, as the generation that will be affected most by flood risk and climate change. Long term engagement has been difficult in the past and recommended Youth Parliament and contacting all senior schools in the Broadland area.

A member noted that flooding in December 2020 has brought flood risk to the forefront of people's mind and what practical support can be provided. Often dams across doors and sandbags do not work, instead more education is needed and local parishes need to be on standby when flood alerts are received. Preventative measures are also important such as ensuring landlords are looking after their ditches.

A member questioned what interactions were the BFI having with other agencies, and if we are looking at wider practical solutions. Mark Johnson responded that all parish councils are included as part of the 300-member mailing list and listed all the agencies that are engaged through the IPT. The BFI will also report into the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance.

A member commented that the Forum can be realistic with how public perception is likely to change, however change is being forced upon us rapidly. Now is the time for imaginative ideas to ensure low lying parishes are protected and resilient to change.

5. Terms of Reference

Members were asked to review the draft Terms of Reference ready to agree at the next meeting.

6. AOB

Mark Johnson noted that there is a significant amount of information to consider in today's presentations and welcomes any further questions through the BFI email address.

7. Date of next meeting

TBC