

Developing Flood Risk Management actions and adaptive pathways for the Broadland Futures Initiative Plan area

What is the Broadland Futures Initiative?

The Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) is a partnership working to improve the resilience of people, homes, businesses, nature, and heritage to flooding across Broadland. As our climate changes and sea levels rise, we need new approaches to keep communities safe whilst looking after the natural environment that makes Broadland special.

Why do we need to act?

Climate change is increasing flood risks across the BFI Plan area through:

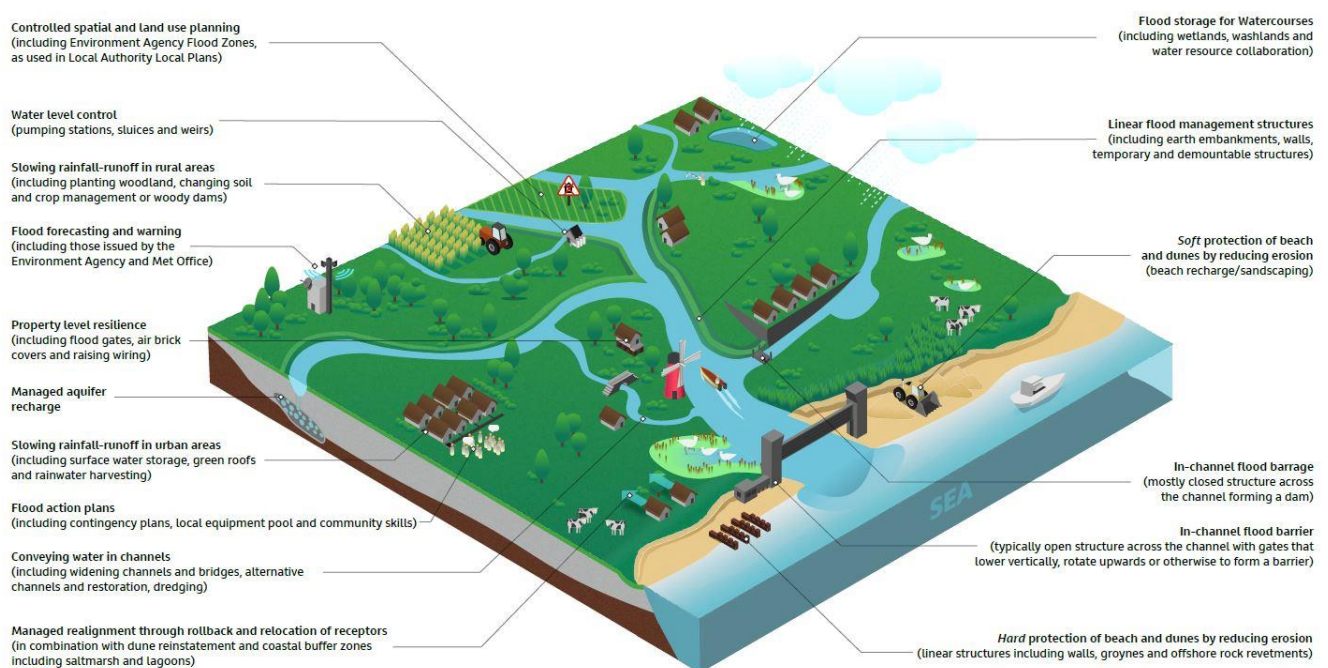
- Rising sea levels: up to 1.24 metres or possibly more by 2125
- Increased river flows: up to 11% or possibly more higher peak flows
- Ageing flood defences: existing walls and embankments will become less effective over time

Without action, flood risks will significantly increase over the next 100 years, threatening homes, businesses, wildlife habitats, heritage, and the unique landscape of Broadland.

The toolkit of flood management actions

Following extensive research of flood management practices across the UK and internationally, BFI developed a comprehensive toolkit of 16 different flood risk management actions.

This toolkit was shaped by public consultation and provides a framework for considering how to manage flood risk.



What the toolkit includes

Each of the 16 flood management actions has been assessed for:

- General description and application – what the action does and where it could be used
- Implementation considerations – practical aspects of putting the action in place
- Costs and resources – high-level costs based on previous projects and identifying which partners need to be involved
- Lead times and design life – how long actions take to implement and how long they will remain effective
- Risks and opportunities – potential benefits and challenges specific to each action
- Case studies – real examples of where similar actions have been used successfully elsewhere in the UK and internationally

Focus areas for flood management

The toolkit actions were developed around four key themes:

- Respond and Recover – focusing on people and resilience, helping communities prepare for and recover from flooding when it occurs.
- Place Making – focusing on the natural, social and historic environment, ensuring flood management protects what makes the Broads special.
- Protect – focusing on water engineering through flood risk management structures like barriers, walls and pumping systems.
- Climate Adaptation – focusing on the long-term sustainability of actions, particularly ensuring defences can adapt to future changes.

Our approach: Four possible pathways

Building on this toolkit and the fact that flood risk management actions are likely to operate in combination, four overarching approaches that each comprise a range of actions are being explored – known as Adaptive Pathways. The following pathways describe four diverse but plausible directions for flood risk management in the BFI Plan Area.

These pathways will be compared with the baseline scenarios, including our current approach to managing flood risk, to demonstrate the benefits of adapting to climate change.

- Accommodate (Storage and Managed Realignment) Creating more space for water through flood storage areas and allowing some low-lying land to flood naturally, whilst moving development to higher ground.
- Protect (Embankments and Open Channels) Raising and strengthening existing flood walls and embankments, combined with improved drainage systems to pump water away from protected areas.
- Protect (Individual Channel Structures) Installing flood barriers (sluices) across major rivers to prevent tidal surges from moving upstream, with the potential for a major tidal barrier at Great Yarmouth in the future.
- Protect (Tidal Barrier/Barrage) Building a tidal barrier at Great Yarmouth sooner to provide comprehensive protection from coastal and tidal flooding across the entire area.

How we developed these possible pathways

The BFI has undertaken comprehensive planning including:

- Review of past projects – building on successful initiatives like the Broadland Flood Alleviation Project and Great Yarmouth Flood Defences Strategy Review

- International research – studying flood management approaches from across the UK and around the world
- Public consultation on the initial toolkit of flood management options
- Technical studies examining costs, feasibility and environmental impacts for each of the sixteen actions
- Detailed analysis to identify the best locations and timing for different flood management actions

What happens next?

These four pathways, together with the ‘Do Nothing’ and ‘Sustain Standard of Service’ baseline scenarios (required for any flood risk management strategy for comparison purposes), will undergo detailed modelling and assessment in 2025-2026 to understand:

- How effective each approach would be at reducing flood risk
- Technical feasibility

The composition of the pathways and outputs from this detailed modelling and assessment will form the basis of our next phase of engagement, later in 2026.

The final BFI Plan (expected in 2028) will set out the preferred approach for managing flood risk over the next 100 years, ensuring Broadland remains a thriving place for people, wildlife and the economy.

Involving you

The BFI is committed to working with local communities and stakeholders throughout this process. There will be further opportunities for engagement as the project develops. If you have any questions about the BFI, please get in touch with us.