

Broads Authority

20 November 2020

Agenda item number 9

Water Resources East – board membership

Report by Director of Strategic Services

Purpose

This report reviews the Broads Authority's membership of Water Resources East (WRE), since joining in October 2019.

Broads Plan context

Strategic actions to improve water resources in the Broads include promoting and implementing best practice water capture and water use at a community level and catchment measures to manage water resources. WRE is a means to respond to water related matters, alongside other work areas such as Broads Local Plan policy on water efficiency and the Broadland rivers catchment approach.

Recommended for decision

The Authority continue its membership on the Water Resources East Board and that officers negotiate a discounted single payment.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At its meeting in September 2019, the Broads Authority agreed to become a Water Resources East board member, and to review the position after a year.
- 1.2. Water Resources East (WRE) is a 'Company Limited by Guarantee' pioneering a collaborative approach to water resources planning. It was established in June 2019. Instead of the traditional approach, in which water companies look at water resources planning for their respective areas in isolation, WRE brings together regulators, companies, retailers and individuals in the water, agriculture, power and environmental sectors. It looks at the needs and potential trade-offs across all these organisations and balances considerations of customers, agriculture, the economy and the environment. Information about the company can be found at <https://wre.org.uk/>
- 1.3. The Board of WRE comprises representatives from the water companies (including Anglian Water), County Councils (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Lincolnshire), the National Farmers Union and the Country Land & Business Association, the RSPB, the Rivers Trust, and others.

- 1.4. There is also a Strategic Advisory Group whose role is to “support and enable the Board of Directors to make informed decisions”. They vote formally on matters deemed by the Board of Directors.

2. Progress update

- 2.1. The WRE Managing Director will give a short presentation at today’s meeting and be available to answer questions.
- 2.2. Since the Authority became a WRE member, the Director of Strategic Services has attended the board meetings in October 2019 and in January, March, June and October this year. The Environment Policy Adviser and the Broadland Catchment Partnership Officer have also attended WRE Strategic Advisory Group events and workshops during this time.
- 2.3. The key outcome in 2020 is the agreed [WRE’s 3-year business plan 2020-23](#). The plan states that: “WRE’s vision is for Eastern England to have sufficient water resources to support a flourishing economy, a thriving environment and the needs of its population, and for the region to be seen as an international exemplar for collaborative integrated water resource management.”
- 2.4. The benefits in the Authority being a WRE member are:
 - To influence the development of strategic documents to align the objectives of WRE, the Broads Plan and the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan. For example, the Authority provided feedback on the draft WRE 3-year business plan which were included in the published version;
 - Direct funding of WRE staff time to enable work to be undertaken which directly benefits the Broads, for example the creation of partnerships and the development of grant applications as a means to enable delivery of the Broads Authority’s strategic objectives around water management. The WRE team have recently been awarded almost £5m of grant money from a diverse range of funding sources, with a significant proportion due to be spent in the Broads, including the Interreg project ‘Water for Tomorrow’.
 - To create links with other initiatives and increase the fundability of projects. For example: the WRE Managing Director presented their work to the Broadland Futures Initiative group and has had many conversations with New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership for the development of water related projects in Norfolk and Suffolk;
 - To be better placed to take part in future WRE activities that will influence the Broads. For example, the new project ‘Norfolk Water Management Strategy’ funded by Norfolk County Council and Anglian Water in October 2020 for the development of a county-wide integrated water management strategy and plan, focussed on the

development of innovative governance and funding strategies for nature-based solutions, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy;

- To be part of a well-connected network to share information relevant to the Broads and to demonstrate leadership among the National Parks in having such detailed engagement in future water management approaches;
- WRE have gained a huge amount of credibility and support from regulators and policy-makers for their forward-thinking approach and are now starting to become involved in policy discussions. Membership of the WRE Board provides a direct opportunity to influence new and emerging water policy; and
- To be part of an exciting initiative to encourage water users to develop their water management plans in a more inclusive way and be ambitious in creating exemplar projects.

2.5. The Management Team is of the view that the value of membership of WRE has been demonstrated. The membership is directly funding WRE officer time which help deliver the Authority's priorities related to water, in particular the strategic actions 1.1 and 1.2 of the Broads Plan.

3. Financial implications

3.1. It is recommended that the Authority continues with full WRE membership as a Principal Funding Member (PFM). PFMs are asked to contribute a minimum of 3% of the operating cost for WRE, which for 2020/21 is £15,000. Assuming the same operating costs through to the publication of the Regional Plan in September 2023, the cost for full membership would be £37,500 for the remaining 2.5 years. There may be an opportunity to negotiate with WRE over a discount should the Authority effectively 'guarantee' its membership through a single one-off payment.

Author: Marie-Pierre Tighe

Date of report: 01 November 2020

Background papers: [Water Resources East report \(Sept 2020\)](#)