

Role of flood risk management in the Broadland Futures Initiative area: Cross-sector assets and their benefits

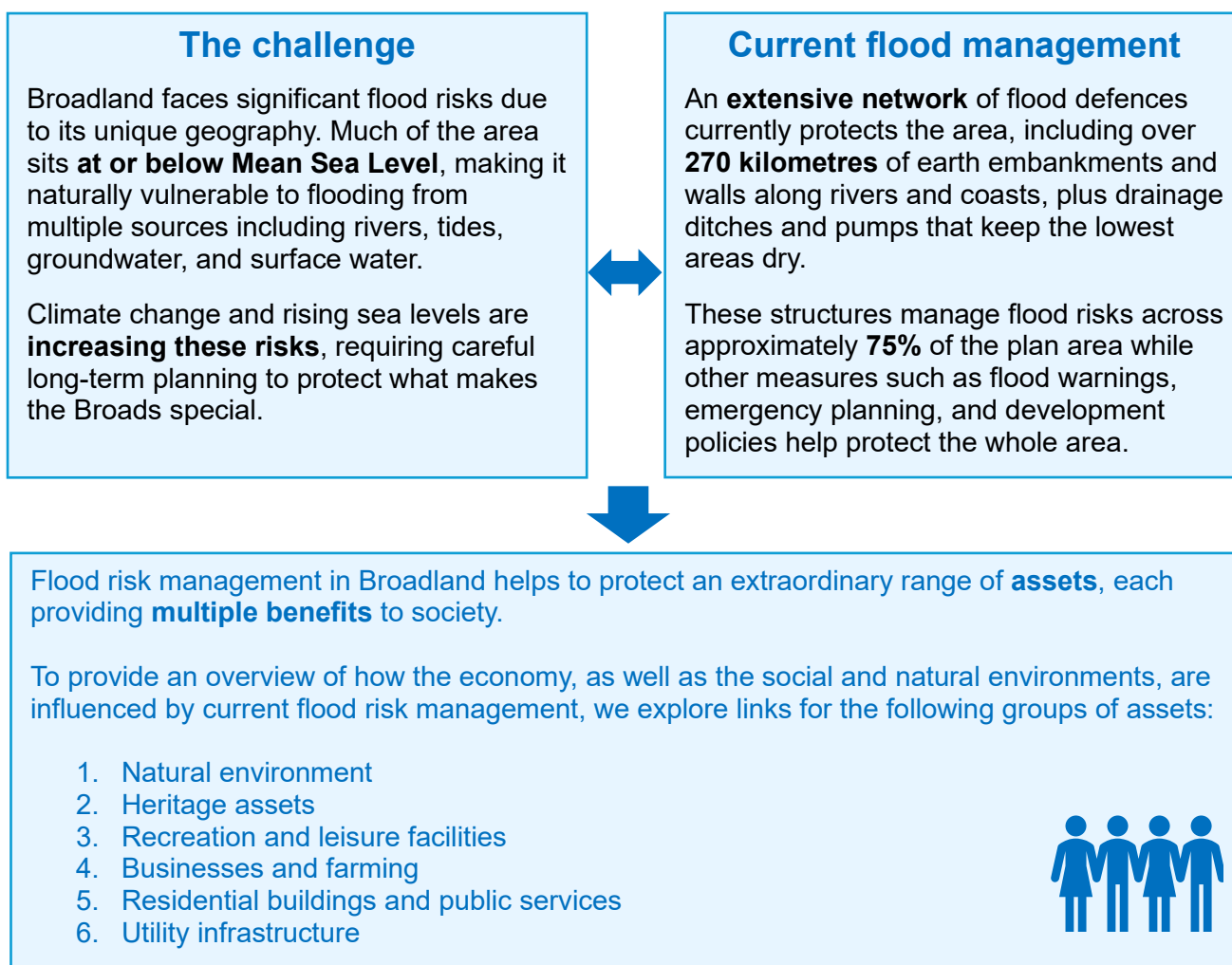
What is the Broadland Futures Initiative?

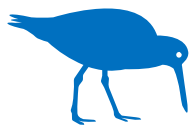
The Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) is a partnership working to improve the resilience of people, homes, businesses, nature, and heritage to flooding across Broadland. As our climate changes and sea levels rise, we need new approaches to keep communities safe whilst looking after the natural environment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

Using this document

Broadland is one of the UK's most distinctive wetland landscapes, where flood risk management plays a crucial role in protecting communities, wildlife, and the economy. This document summarises: how flooding affects this unique area; its assets; and the benefits and values of those assets.

The more strongly assets and their benefits are linked to flood risk management, the stronger the influence is as we develop the BFI Plan. Understanding these links will guide the plan for future flood risk management, help us understand the impact of its actions and identify which partners could benefit from being involved in its delivery.





Natural Environment Assets



Rivers and Broads

The area contains 275 kilometres of larger rivers and over 60 broads and permanent water bodies, forming the UK's largest lowland wetland system and the UK's only water-based National Park.

Protected sites

Internationally important sites include Breydon Water's intertidal flats and the Broadland freshwater complex. There are over 30 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 130 Local Wildlife Sites.

Soils

The area contains nationally recognised fen peat soils.

Open green spaces

More than 200 parks, playing fields, and allotments.

Navigation for over 11,000 licensed boats, angling that contributes more than £100 million annually to the local economy, and wildlife habitats supporting a quarter of the UK's rarest plants and animals.

Benefits

Biodiversity conservation with legal protection under international and national law, scientific research opportunities, and outdoor recreation including wildlife watching and nature reserve visits.

Carbon storage that helps mitigate climate change, agricultural productivity enabling crop and livestock farming, and supporting the unique wetland ecosystem.

Individual health and wellbeing, community participation, recreational opportunities, and biodiversity support.



Heritage Assets

Listed buildings

Over 400 listed structures including historic houses, farms, mills, churches, memorials and bridges, plus over 20 scheduled monuments.

Conservation areas

23 conservation areas protect architectural and historic interest, including the Venetian Waterways in Great Yarmouth.

Archaeological features

The waterlogged conditions preserve exceptional archaeological remains, with many landscape features like dykes being archaeological sites themselves.

Benefits

Cultural heritage that defines the area's special character, educational value, and tourism attraction contributing to the area's 10 million annual visits.

Stewardship and preservation for future generations, maintaining landscape character, and supporting cultural identity.

Historical knowledge, research opportunities, and cultural significance.



Recreation and Leisure Assets



Waterways

200 kilometres of navigable lakes and rivers with over 80 mooring sites.

Footpaths and Rights of Way

Approximately 340 kilometres of footpaths, many along flood bank crests.

Beaches

High-quality sandy beaches at locations like Eccles, Sea Palling, and Winterton.

Built facilities

Over 80 leisure facilities including sports centres, golf courses, and equestrian facilities, plus 60 entertainment venues.

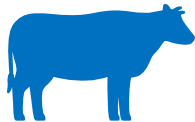
Benefits

Boating recreation, tourism revenue of £164 million annually spent on recreation and food, and employment supporting over 7,000 full-time jobs.

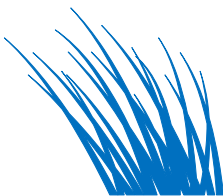
Walking, cycling, and horse-riding opportunities, health and fitness benefits, and access to the countryside.

Tourism, recreation, coastal protection, and habitat for wildlife.

Community participation, happiness and motivation, social cohesion, and economic activity.



Business and Farming Assets



Agriculture

Over three-quarters of the plan area is moderate to excellent quality agricultural land, including one-third of East Anglia's cattle grazing land.

Reed and Sedge industry

Traditional harvesting continues from Broads fens.

Manufacturing and commerce

Over 1,000 manufacturing, office and warehouse buildings, particularly clustered in Great Yarmouth.

Tourism infrastructure

Hundreds of holiday accommodation assets.

Benefits

Food production, economic contribution of over £150 million to the regional economy, landscape management, and biodiversity support through traditional farming practices

Sustainable local industry, biodiversity support, cultural heritage preservation, and building materials for thatching.

Employment and productivity, economic growth contributing to the £36 billion Norfolk and Suffolk economy, and support for port and marine industries including offshore energy.

Employment, economic growth, and supporting the tourism industry that generates significant revenue for the region.



Residential and Public Service Assets



Housing

Approximately 13,000 residential properties in the BFI Plan area (many within Great Yarmouth).

Public services

Over 90 public service buildings including schools, banks, post offices, and community halls, plus 20 hospitals and healthcare facilities.

Transport infrastructure

Major road links and rail connections between Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

Waste management

Two active waste disposal sites and over 20 historic landfill sites requiring ongoing management.

Benefits

Health, safety and security for residents, community cohesion and development, and economic growth through a skilled workforce.

Health and wellbeing promotion, educational opportunities, essential services access, and employment for local communities.

Economic connectivity, access to employment and services, and tourism facilitation.

Public health protection, environmental safety, and regulatory compliance.



Utility Infrastructure Assets

Energy infrastructure

Bacton Gas Terminal provides one-third of UK gas supply, with distribution pipelines crossing floodplains within the plan area. Two major electricity substations and nearly 800 smaller substations serve the area.

Water infrastructure

Nearly 100 water supply and wastewater assets including pump stations and treatment works.

Telecommunications

Multiple telecommunications buildings ensuring connectivity.

Drainage infrastructure

Over 100 pump stations and sluices operated by Internal Drainage Boards.

Benefits

Energy security, economic growth support, and powering homes and businesses.

Clean water supply, public health protection, and environmental management.

Communication and relationships, business operations, and emergency services coordination.

Flood risk management, agricultural land protection, and habitat management.

Interconnectivity of benefits

These assets provide overlapping benefits that highlight the interconnectivity within the BFI Plan area. For example, agricultural land provides food production, supports biodiversity, maintains traditional landscapes that attract tourists, and contributes to the rural economy. Similarly, the waterways support navigation, provide wildlife habitat, offer recreational opportunities, and contribute to the area's distinctive character.

The flood risk management system helps to protect all of these assets and their multiple benefits simultaneously. Without effective flood defences, the consequences would cascade through the entire system – from direct damage to buildings and infrastructure, to indirect impacts on community wellbeing, economic productivity, and environmental quality.

Looking to the future

The BFI is developing a 100-year plan for flood risk management that can adapt to climate change and rising sea levels. This partnership recognises that future approaches may need to be different from today's methods, potentially including more natural solutions and adaptive strategies that can provide multiple benefits whilst building resilience to changing conditions.

The challenge now is ensuring these diverse assets, and their many benefits can be maintained and enhanced as the climate changes, requiring innovative approaches that balance protection with adaptation for future generations.