

# Broads Authority

23 July 2021

Agenda item number 10

## Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

Report by Chief Executive

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### Purpose

This report provides an update to the Broads Authority on the new Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, and seeks the necessary delegations to administer the funding.

### Broads Plan context

Aspiration 2 is to 'Protect, conserve and enhance water quality and land and habitat condition to benefit priority species, recognising natural environmental change and retaining a thriving and sustainable agricultural industry.' Other aspirations in the Broads Plan will be of relevance depending on the projects to be funded.

### Recommended decision

- (i) To note the progress in the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, and in particular the agreement to work in collaboration with the Norfolk Coast AONB.
  - (ii) To approve the delegations to officers and establishment of a Local Assessment Panel; namely, that the Chief Executive will be responsible for making decisions on grant applications below £5,000, and the Local Assessment Panel will make recommendations on grant applications above £5,000 for implementation by the Authority.
  - (iii) To approve the appointment of Norfolk FWAG, the RSPB and Norfolk Rivers Trust as deliverers of advice on FiPL to farmers and land managers.
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme was first announced by the Government in November 2020. It is designed to provide additional investment to assist farmers to work in partnership with the 10 National Parks and 34 AONBs in England, to deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment for people and for places. There have been significant delays in launching the programme, and the detailed guidance was received on 17 June for a start date of 1 July.
- 1.2. FiPL is announced as a three-year programme, with commitment only for year 1 (2021/22) at this stage. The total commitment throughout England is £22.5 million in

2021/22, which has been divided across the 44 Protected Landscapes. The Broads Authority has a provisional overall allocation for the financial year 2021/22 of £280,661.

- 1.3. Protected landscapes have received considerable advice and guidance from Defra (the National Framework) on how to administer the programme. It includes the application form (17 pages) and the scoring system, which have to be used to bring a level of consistency across the country.
- 1.4. The objectives of the grant aid to farmers and landowners are to deliver more for:
  - **Climate** – supporting the delivery of net zero through nature and nature-based solutions to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change
  - **Nature** – supporting their leading role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and achieving the Government’s commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030
  - **People** – providing a natural health service that will improve the nation’s public health and wellbeing through increased access to nature across all parts of society, as part of our green recovery
  - **Place** – supporting these landscapes as centres of excellence and green innovation that are flourishing places to live and work, each with a strong identity and cultural heritage, and high recognition as attractive visitor destinations
- 1.5. To qualify for this year’s expenditure, the grant applications have to be processed (using a Local Assessment Panel for grants over £5,000), the funding awarded, the work carried out, invoiced and the grant paid, all by 31 March 2022.

## 2. Progress to date

- 2.1. Against the tight timescale, the following operational decisions have been made, following consultation with the Broads Land Management Board, which was formed as part of the Test & Trial on Environment Land Management.
- 2.2. **Collaboration with the AONBs:** The programme has provided a real opportunity to work more closely with the three AONBs in Norfolk and Suffolk – Norfolk Coast, Suffolk Coast and Heaths/Dedham Vale. We have all agreed to work together at a strategic level on the programme, exchanging ideas, intelligence and experience. A deeper form of collaboration has been agreed with the Norfolk Coast AONB: we will share a single Local Assessment Panel and the Broads Authority will provide administrative support related to the receipt of applications and administration of the joint Local Assessment Panel.
- 2.3. **Assessment Panel:** The Broads Authority will be the Accountable Body for FiPL and will be audited on its expenditure. According to Defra’s National Framework, grants under £5,000 will be dealt with by a senior member of the Protected Landscape team (the

Broads Authority's Chief Executive). Grants over £5,000 have to be considered by a Local Assessment Panel which includes farmers and land managers, Natural England and the Broads Authority. The current composition of the Broads Land Management Board includes such representatives, and they have the experience to process grants. At their meeting in June, the Board agreed to act as the Local Assessment Panel for FiPL, making recommendations to the Broads Authority and Norfolk Coast AONB on the applications above £5,000, with some modification to its membership to include representatives from the Norfolk Coast.

- 2.4. **Area for eligibility:** Applications will be accepted from the whole catchment area. This is because some activities in the catchment area may have a direct benefit in the Broads, such as reducing sediment and nutrient load, reducing flood risk and improving water resources. Other projects, such as heritage and access improvements, would be more likely to be successful if they were located in the Broads Authority executive area. All applications will be assessed against a set of criteria, which includes an assessment of whether the project outcomes “deliver under the four themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place and also fit with the Protected Landscape Management Plan”.
- 2.5. **Engagement model:** The Authority has a history of working in partnership with a number of providers of advice to farmers and landowners, in addition to providing directly itself. With the support of the farming community, we have agreed with the principle to continue with this approach and engage with farmers and landowners through existing farming advice networks, using resources within Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Norfolk Rivers Trust, and the RSPB. Broads Authority officers will also continue to provide advice on this agenda. Collectively they have the necessary contacts to engage with farmers, and the networks exist, which is a key factor given the constrained timescale for spend.
- 2.6. **Maximum and minimum size of grant:** Following consultation with the Land Management Board and the Norfolk Coast AONB, a maximum level for grants has been set at £75,000 and a minimum level of £2,000.
- 2.7. The website [Farming in Protected Landscapes \(broads-authority.gov.uk\)](https://broads-authority.gov.uk) was live from 1 July and includes the application form and the guidance for applicants.

### 3. Financial arrangements

- 3.1. The Broads Authority has a provisional overall allocation for the financial year 2021/22 of £280,661, of which a maximum of £22,281 may be spent on administration, and a maximum of £37,877 may be spent on advice and guidance. The minimum grant spend is £220,504.
- 3.2. The money will be received in three parts throughout the year, with the first amount due to be received in July 2021.
- 3.3. The Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council (for the AONB Partnership) will be the Accountable Bodies for the expenditure. As mentioned above, the Defra guidance

states that a senior member of the Protected Landscapes team will be responsible for determining applications for grant below £5,000: The Chief Executive of the National Park Authority for the Broads Authority. A Local Assessment Panel will determine grants for applications above £5,000.

- 3.4. It is the intention that part of the advice funding of £37,877 will be used to support the Authority in providing advice to farmers and land managers. It is also proposed to use the advice funding to support our partners (RSPB, Norfolk FWAG and the Norfolk Rivers Trust) in their delivery of advice to farmers and land managers.
- 3.5. Given the urgency of getting the programme up and running, we are proposing to appoint these three agencies, and to set up contractual arrangements to provide the necessary services (for example completion of application form, monitoring). The recommendation to the Authority is to approve the appointment of Norfolk FWAG, the RSPB and Norfolk Rivers Trust as deliverers of FiPL advice to farmers and land managers, using FiPL advice funding. This would be classified as a waiver under our Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

## 4. Risk implications

- 4.1. The FiPL programme will be added to the Strategic Services Risk Register. While there are risks associated with its delivery, it is unlikely that FiPL will need to be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register, given the relatively modest amount of money involved (£280,000 compared to CANAPE and Water, Mills and Marshes budgets in excess of £5 million). This will be kept under review.
- 4.2. We have minimised the financial and reputational risks through working with our existing partners and the Broads Land Management Board. The collaboration with the AONBs should assist this through learning from each other and sharing best practice.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Delivering the FiPL programme of grants against the timetable prescribed will be a challenge, but we have got off to a good start with the help of our partners and the Land Management Board. The programme also provides us with opportunities to deepen our engagement with the farming and land-owning community, and pump prime projects in the Broads and wider catchment area.

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Background papers: Defra's National Framework for the FiPL programme

[Broads Plan](#) strategic actions: Multiple