

Broads Authority

10 May 2024

Agenda item number 10

Strategic priorities- update

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2024/25.

Broads Plan context

The Broads Plan is a key part of the Authority's strategic framework.

Recommended decision

To note the progress in implementing the 2024/25 priorities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Each year the Broads Authority identifies a small set of strategic priorities, which focus on projects that have high resource needs or a very large impact on the Broads, or that are politically sensitive. Setting these priorities helps target the Authority's resources and make the most of partnership working and external funding opportunities. Priorities are set each financial year, although some large-scale projects carry across several years.
- 1.2. In addition, Defra has introduced a new requirement for National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority to provide quarterly updates on deliverables against the Business Plan, as part of its grant funding agreement. These update reports on our strategic priorities will assist officers in compiling the information necessary to comply with that requirement.
- 1.3. The first update on our agreed strategic priorities for 2024/25 is in Table 1.

Table 1

Strategic priorities 2024/25 – progress update

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
1. Responding to climate change (Broadland Futures Initiative)	Status: On track	Director of Strategic Services

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>Aim: To implement the next steps of the Broadland Futures Initiative.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative BFI newsletter, by March 2025. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2025. (iii) Various technical deliverables from BFI consultant including the new hydraulic model expected mid-2024. (iv) Engagement activities, including consultation as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) BFI Newsletter (April 2024) has been sent out to the subscriber list, which has been updated to include all Parish Councils in the Broads area (ii) April 2024 Elected Members Forum meeting was held (iii) Updates on Product delivery from the EA/Jacobs team have been presented at steering group meetings and Elected Member Forum. All on track (iv) BFI core team are presenting a workshop activity at April 2024 Upper Thurne Working Group meeting. Focus is on community engagement on options if the current coastal line of flood protection is retired. 	
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including the three Nature for Climate projects.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Endorsement of Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Strategies – timings to be confirmed by responsible authorities. (ii) To complete the “Broads Authority consideration” of 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Attended steering group and one of the 6 themed working groups being held in April/May. Timing for draft LNRS is likely to be December 2024. (ii) Completed 	<p>Environment Policy Advisor</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>biodiversity actions by 1 January 2024. This is the first requirement of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty introduced in the 2021 Environment Act for local authorities and will consider action to take by the Broads Authority to comply with the duty.</p> <p>(iii) To review and refresh the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy with partners by March 2025.</p> <p>(iv) To implement Nature for Climate Peat restoration project at Buttle Marsh within agreed budget ~£300k and timeline by March 2025.</p> <p>(v) To implement Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund 'FibreBroads' project within agreed budget ~£500k and timeline by March 2025.</p>	<p>(iii) Held a series of three meetings with the Broads Biodiversity Partners to feed into the Broads Nature Recovery Strategy.</p> <p>(iv) Awaiting additional funding award decision from NE, expected 9th May. Board meeting set on 20th May to review workplan.</p> <p>(v) All FibreBroads work packages on track, including running a successful training event for farm advisers guiding them on water permissions and private and public finance, engagement visits and gaining a place in the Innovation Hub again at the Norfolk Show with our partners NUA and Hudson Architects. The wetland farming and water filtration demonstrator is preparing for a final stage of planting in May with volunteer helpers.</p> <p>The BA is partner to two new Lowland Agricultural Peatland Grants for 2024, assessing water table management and forecasting the water storage needs to deliver land-based carbon targets in the Broads peatland.</p>	

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>3. Local Plan for the Broads</p> <p>Aim: To produce an updated Local Plan for the Broads.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Preferred Options consultation: March 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Publication consultation: December 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Submission: By end of June 2025.</p> <p>(iv) Adoption: By end of 2026.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>Consultation ongoing with deadline for comments being 4pm 17 May 2024. Publication version of the Local Plan in production.</p>	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>
<p>4. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p> <p>Aim: To run the FiPL programme and allocate Broads grants to farmers and landowners, and support the Broads and Norfolk Coast Land Management Board to allocate their funding.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2025.</p> <p>(ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Engagement activities to promote and showcase FiPL, by March 2025.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>(i) All meetings for 24/25 have been set up. The first FiPL Board meeting of this financial year will be held on 29 April.</p> <p>(ii) £68,924.59 of grant funds for 24/25 have been allocated to projects already out of a total grant budget of £380,785</p> <p>(iii) The FiPL Officer has produced leaflets to advertise the programme and is planning event attendance for the year.</p>	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>5. Navigation IT Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Develop timetable and tender document by June 2024 for amendments to core system and a replacement web interface.</p> <p>(ii) Publish and then review tender responses by end of September 2024.</p> <p>(iii) Award contract (depending on affordability) and agree timescales with contractor.</p>	<p>Status: On track</p> <p>(i) Work has commenced on upgrading the internal tolls system to the latest software version.</p> <p>Once that is complete a further piece of work will be undertaken to upgrade the application to Universal Theme (a responsive, versatile, and customizable user interface) to accommodate a new look and navigation.</p> <p>(ii) The online application will be totally rewritten. The initial application will provide the key functionality required to renew a toll online. It will utilise the latest security technologies such as one-time passcodes for logon thereby simplifying the current process.</p> <p>(iii) We are planning for the above works to be completed in time for the 2025/26 tolls season.</p>	<p>Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls</p>

2. Financial risks

- 2.1. If the Authority fails to comply with any of its obligations in the Grant Funding Agreement, DEFRA may, at its discretion, reduce, suspend, or terminate payments of grant, or require any part or all of the grant to be repaid.

Author: Sara Utting

Date of report: 29 April 2024

[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: all