

# Broads Authority

27 February 2026

Agenda item number 13

## Strategic Planning: Broads Plan timetable and NSIP process

Report by Chief Executive and Head of Planning

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### Purpose

This report sets out a draft timetable and process for the review and development of a new Broads Plan. It also considers how the Authority responds to the major water infrastructure projects on the Norfolk Suffolk border.

### Broads Plan context

The Broads Plan provides the overall strategic document for the management of the Broads and the collaboration with partners.

### Recommended decision

(i) Adoption of the outline timetable and process for the development, consultation and publication of Broads Plan 2028.

(ii) Support the process for the feedback on the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The development of the new Broads Plan and responding to consultations on Nationally Significant Projects require knowledge of the Broads and the Broads Authority, project management skills and ideally a town planning background. This report suggests that the Authority can deliver both of these important projects by bringing the two work packages together and using a former member of staff to manage them for us.

## 2. Draft Timetable Broads Plan 2028

- 2.1. This report sets out a draft timetable for the development of the next Broads Plan. The current Plan is operational for the period 2022-2027. Section 3 (The Broads Plan) of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 (Broads Act) requires the Authority to:

*(2) The Authority shall review the Broads Plan at least once in every five years.*

*(3) If, as a result of any such review, the Authority is of the opinion that it is appropriate to vary the Broads Plan, it shall do so in such manner as it thinks fit.*

*(4) The Authority shall publish a report on the result of any review carried out under this section and the report shall set out the variations (if any) which the Authority has made following the review.*

*(5) Before preparing or varying the Broads Plan the Authority shall—*

*(a) publish a draft of its proposals; and*

*(b) consult each of the appointing authorities, the internal drainage board for each internal drainage district which is wholly or partly within the Broads and such other bodies as appear to it to represent interests likely to be concerned.*

- 2.2. The process for reviewing management plans is set out in the guidance “Management plans for Protected Landscapes in England” published by Natural England on 12 June 2025. This has been built into the draft timetable set out in Appendix 1 and is designed to have an approved new Broads Plan in place for November 2027, approximately five years after the last plan was adopted by the Authority and when the current plan period ends.
- 2.3. The first task is to review the effectiveness of the current plan and what needs to be done. This was initiated in a workshop with members on December 19. The main points from that discussion were that:
- (i) the long-term vision to 2042, and fundamental principles of the current plan are fit for purpose.
  - (ii) the structure of the current plan built around six themes needs to be reviewed but recognise that it may also work for the new plan. The themes being:

Theme A: Responding to climate change and flood risk  
Theme B: Improving landscapes for biodiversity and agriculture  
Theme C: Maintaining and enhancing the navigation  
Theme D: Protecting landscape character and the historic environment  
Theme E: Promoting understanding and enjoyment  
Theme F: Connecting and inspiring communities

- (iii) the new Plan needs to be aligned with Government objectives, recent reviews and revised policy. This will include, for example the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025, the Independent Water Commission: review of the water sector (Cunliffe Review), the independent review of Defra's regulatory landscape (Corry Review), Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, the new National Planning Policy Framework and on-going ELM reviews;
- (iv) the Plan takes account of the latest information on climate change and flood risk and the particularly important will be the emerging output from the Broadland Futures Initiative on options for the future adaptation of the landscape to sea-level rise and flooding.
- (v) the Plan needs to examine the pressures and current condition and use of the waterways;
- (vi) the actions identified for the five years of the Plan could set out a step-by-step approach to delivering the outcomes.
- (vii) consideration of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Norfolk and Suffolk and prioritising species re-introductions, management of invasive species alongside habitat and ecosystems enhancement and adaptation;
- (viii) the future of tourism in the Broads with a changing landscape needs to be considered;
- (ix) the Defra guidance highlights the opportunity the revision of the Plan provides to involve a wide and diverse range of groups and individuals. It suggests the need for positive action to involve underrepresented groups, encouraging genuine inclusion, and increasing the diversity of people engaging with National Parks. During the development of the Local Plan, members of the Planning Team went to all the Youth Advisory Boards and engaged with New Routes Integration whose mission is to support migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Our current Heritage Fund project [Broads Heritage Partnership] is currently working to take proactive measures to be inclusive, remove barriers to access and reach new and diverse partners and audiences which will inform our Landscape Connections development work.

These actions provide a valuable baseline for engagement on the development of the new Broads Plan.

- 2.4. My conclusion from the workshop was that while we need to review the effectiveness of the existing Plan and update the actions there is much in the framework of the document to be commended and retained/updated. The big issues of climate change and sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, the maintenance of the waterways and the challenge of engaging a wider community remain central to our focus.
- 2.5. Appendix A of the current plan contains a list of partners involved in the development and implementation of the Plan. An early action is to inform Defra, Natural England and our partners of the Authority's intention to review the Plan, setting out the timetable and the opportunities to be involved in the developing the new document.

### 3. Nationally Significant Projects

- 3.1. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are large scale projects such as airport expansion, major road improvements, energy projects such as power stations, wind farms, solar farms, tidal power schemes and power lines, harbour and port terminals and water transfer projects, water recycling and reservoirs. They are treated separately from normal local authority planning because of their size and importance to wider communities.
- 3.2. Essex & Suffolk Water is progressing two NSIP projects on the Suffolk-Norfolk border which if they go ahead will have a significant impact on the Broads. The Broads Authority is a statutory consultee and will need to engage with the project teams for the company over the next three years. The draft timetable is for the submission of development consent orders to the Planning Inspectorate in 2028/29.

The **North Suffolk Reservoir** project is for the construction of a winter storage reservoir. East Anglia is one of the driest parts of the country and has been confirmed by the Environment Agency as being a Serious Water Stressed Area. In Suffolk, Essex and Suffolk Water supply water to 300,000 people.

Essex and Suffolk Water are forecasting in their Water Resource Management Plan that there will not be enough water supply to meet forecasted demand over the next 25 years and beyond without additional investment.

The **Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project** consists of:

- An Advanced Water Recycling Plant (AWRP) with a maximum daily deployable output of 11 MI/d [million litres per day]. The site for the AWRP is likely to require approximately 9 hectares (ha). The AWRP will receive up to 16 MI/d of treated wastewater from the existing Lowestoft Water Recycling Centre (WRC) which is owned and operated by Anglian Water Services.
- Construction of a new pumping station and potential minor modifications to the existing works at the Lowestoft WRC, to divert treated wastewater to the AWRP.

- Two proposed Service Reservoirs (SRs) for storage of drinking water, located at strategic locations for onward supply and storage. The two SRs are to be sized to provide 36 hours of storage. The central SR will have a capacity of approximately 17ML and the western SR will be approximately 13ML. It is likely the SRs will require a construction site size of approximately 4ha each.

While some local authorities have a team of people to coordinate the response to these major developments this is not the case for the Broads Authority and it will need extra resource to coordinate expert response from across the organisation. Fortunately, this can be funded by the company.

## 4. Project Management and Resources

- 4.1. We need to acquire additional capacity to coordinate the development of the Broads Plan and respond to the NSIP projects. The project management requirements are similar: an understanding and knowledge of the Broads and the Broads Authority, experience of engaging with our stakeholders, a town planning background and project management/coordination skills and experience. There are a limited number of people who could fulfil this role and officers are investigating the options.
- 4.2. In addition, specialist consultants will need to be recruited to undertake the environmental and equality impact assessments, the preparation of the State of the Park report and support the engagement with specific audiences.

## 5. Financial implications

- 5.1. A schedule of costs has been submitted to Essex & Suffolk Water to cover officers' and consultant's time including provision for a project manager. We are awaiting a response. The Authority will need to sign a Planning Performance Agreement<sup>1</sup> which is a standard requirement for NSIPs.
- 5.2. It is difficult to estimate the amount of time needed for either process, because in part it will depend on the level and complexity of the responses received. Consultants will be engaged to support the development of the Broads Plan and the consultation process. This will be funded from National Park reserves and a provision of £50,000 has been made in the budget.

## 6. Risk implications

- 6.1. The Authority is required to review the Broads Plan at least once in every five years. If we are to have a Plan in place for January 2028, we need to make a start in accordance

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<sup>1</sup> A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is a voluntary, project-managed framework between a local planning authority and an applicant for handling complex or major planning applications. It establishes agreed-upon timescales, resources, and actions, aiming to improve communication, efficiency, and certainty, though it does not guarantee approval.

with Appendix 1. The Authority is an important statutory consultee for the Essex & Suffolk Water developments and needs to be able to respond in a timely manner.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The initial assessment is that, subject to further discussion with the Broads Plan Partnership, the long-term vision to 2042, and fundamental principles of the current plan are fit for purpose as are the six current themes. The main task is to update the strategic objectives and actions. On top of this the Authority will need to carry out various assessments, and it is recommended that we commission a State of the Park report<sup>2</sup>. In the past the Authority has monitored condition and progress using its key strategies, such as the Sediment Management Strategy. It is proposed to bring indicators from across a range of activities together in one report to examine trends.
- 7.2. There is an opportunity to run these two projects, Broads Plan and NSIP process in tandem, recruiting external expertise to project manage the processes and consultants to support the Authority's officers.

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Background papers: [Management plans for Protected Landscapes in England and Wales](#) - Defra June 2025

North Suffolk Reservoir Project - [Home - North Suffolk Winter Storage Reservoir Project](#)

Suffolk Water recycling and Transfer Project - [Home - Suffolk Water Recycling Transfer & Storage Project](#)

Appendix 1 – Draft Broads Plan Timetable

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of State of the Park Reports can be found at:  
[Your Dartmoor - State of the Park Report](#)  
[State of the Park Report : Lake District National Park](#)  
[State of the Park Report: Peak District National Park](#)

## Appendix 1 – Draft Broads Plan Timetable

Note: The Steps in the table below relate to the Natural England Guidance. Sustainability Assessment (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Dates	BP stage	Actions
December 2025 to February 2026	<p><b>Step 1: Planning the Project</b></p> <p>Commence Review</p> <p>Timetable, process and budget.</p>	<p><b>19 December 2025</b> Workshop with Members on the scope for the review and the effectiveness of the 2022-2027 Broads Plan</p> <p><b>27 February 2026</b> Authority report setting out the proposed timetable, process and budget. Consider the existing Plan’s vision and principles and strategic objectives and whether the current Plan needs a refresh or complete rewrite.</p>
March 2026	<p><b>Step 2: Notifying others</b></p> <p><b>Step 3: Environmental and equality impact assessments</b></p> <p><b>Step 4: Climate adaptation management plans</b></p> <p><b>Step 5: Engaging Stakeholders</b></p>	<p>Formal notification to Natural England of intention to review the Broads Plan.</p> <p>Notifying all the Broads Plan partners listed in Appendix A of the current Broads Plan of the timetable, process and how they can contribute and be involved. Invite to workshop.</p> <p>Commission consultants to prepare assessments at the appropriate time.</p> <p>This is in progress. The Broadland Futures Initiative will be an important contributor to the new Broads Plan.</p> <p>Invite comments from Broads Plan partners on what has worked well in the current plan and should be retained and their priorities for the next plan period with copy of Review document.</p>

<p><b>April to July 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Step 6: Monitoring conditions, gathering evidence and reporting</b></p> <p><b>Review feedback from Members and Stakeholders</b></p> <p><b>24 July 2026 Report to Broads Authority</b></p>	<p>Commission a State of the Park report.</p> <p>Prepare a report summarising feedback.</p> <p>Hold 1<sup>st</sup> Broads Plan Partnership Workshop to comment on feedback report, review current Broads Plan and ambitions for Broads Plan 2028.</p> <p>Report on progress to Broads Authority and seek input from members on emerging ideas</p>
<p><b>August to December 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Step 7: Drafting the Plan</b></p> <p>Prepare initial draft based on the feedback received</p>	<p>Prepare plan template (DMS) and roll out to lead officers</p> <p>Lead officers to start editing plan in liaison with partners</p> <p>Prepare Sustainability Scoping Report and consult key bodies</p>
<p><b>January to March 2027</b></p>	<p>Consult on emerging draft plan</p>	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> Member Workshop</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Broads Plan Partnership Workshop</p> <p>Assess member feedback and prepare draft plan ready for consultation</p> <p>Opportunity to view draft action tables - members, delivery partners</p>
<p><b>March 2027</b></p>	<p>Prepare for consultation</p>	<p>Prepare consultation processes (database, mail merge, social media, EDP ads, etc)</p>
<p><b>April – May 2027</b></p>	<p>Finalise Consultation Draft plan ready for consultation</p>	<p>HRA – tender start</p> <p>SA – draft BP objectives to be ready for assessing against SA objectives</p>
<p><b>June 2027</b></p>	<p>Broads Authority approves for consultation</p>	<p>Report to Authority to approve Draft Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment for consultation</p>

<b>June - July 2027</b>	<b>Step 8: Consultation</b>	Formal consultation on Draft Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment – 6-12 weeks
<b>August – September 2027</b>	Assess consultation responses and prepare final plan	Consider responses and advise on final wording in plan. Start design of final plan.
<b>September 2027</b>	<b>September 2027 Broads Authority report following consultation</b>	Agree on amendments following consultation
<b>October 2027</b>	<b>Design final version</b>	Comms will start designing plan but will need adopted version before finalising
<b>November 2027</b>	<b>Step 9: Adoption Broads Authority adoption</b>	Broads Authority adopts final Broads Plan 2028
<b>December 2027</b>	<b>Step 10: Presentation</b>	Send copy of the final plan to the Secretary of State Publish and make widely available
<b>January 2028</b>		Start process for Monitoring