

Broads Engage - Biodiversity in the Broads: Managing change

Feedback report from event held on 25 April 2019 at Hoveton Village Hall

This report outlines the presentations and feedback from the Broads Engage workshop event on the future management of biodiversity and water. The output from the workshop has helped to inform the preparation of the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy Action Plan 2019-22.

Around 50 people attended the workshop, including representation from parish councils, conservation organisations, local authorities, farming and landowner interests and farm advisors, boating organisations, charitable trusts and societies, and environmental companies.

Presentations about assets, priority issues and a framework for action

Andrea Kelly (Broads Authority) gave an introduction on the status, location and importance of the Broads' key habitats, including water as a key asset, and key species, and highlighted priorities to be addressed. Karen Kramer-Wilson (Natural England) set out a framework for action, looking at the main principles, policy opportunities and successful approaches for tackling priority issues including legislation, funding, environmental benefits and net gain from development.

The presentations are available to view on the [Broads Engage workshops](#) webpage.

Information on drivers, pressures, risk and opportunities was also sent to participants in advance of the meeting. This is included in Appendix 1.

Group discussion about the pressures facing the Broads

Participants were asked if they understood/agreed with our identified priority issues for action.

They encouraged **long-term thinking**. Some suggested that in 100 years' time, large areas may be permanently flooded with salt/brackish water. They also supported a clear approach to using evidence to prioritise action.

The wording of the following pressures was strengthened:

- UK food security and the importance of the Broadland Catchment for crop production.
- Conversion of grazing marsh to arable.
- Local rise in numbers of people living in the Broads (along with global population growth).
- Water resources to meet increasing demands from a rising population and water companies statutory duty to provide water.

- Unemployment meaning that people focus on other pressures and the need for development of land management skills.
- Lack of ecological knowledge within Planning decisions outside of the Broads.
- Lack of understanding about biodiversity, lack of facilitation and coordination of conservation actions (e.g. under management of grazed wet meadow and fen).
- Small sites not eligible for agri-environment funding, with Natural England being aware of this issue.
- Tidy management could be restricting opportunities for biodiversity particularly in garden and public spaces.
- Lack of car parks and busy roads, particularly in the St Olaves area, – Where will people go?
- Changing social values - consumerism means that is it important to engage with people.
- Vested interests and unwillingness to change.
- Climate change is a priority, with extreme events, water run-off, pollution.
- Employment and the need for development of land management skills.
- Climate pressure producing new pests and diseases. Risks include ash dieback and many others over the horizon.

Presentation about proposals for action

Based on our identified priorities for action, Andrea Kelly highlighted some of the projects that the Broads Authority and partners plan to do in the next Broad Biodiversity and Water Strategy plan period.

Group discussion about the proposed actions

Participants gave their feedback on these actions and added their own ideas on how we can work together to achieve our priorities.

Principles for working

Participants encouraged **long-term thinking, vision and boldness**, particularly with coastal and sea level rise and climate issues, and future proofing short term plans/projects. There was support for clear leadership on conservation issues as well as joined up thinking and clear mechanisms to pay for services.

There was support for **prioritising actions** rather than doing small actions on everything. Attendees also encouraged **spreading the word** and getting biodiversity and water issues and actions into more meetings and conversations outside of regular partnership meetings.

Support for existing proposed actions

- Investigating translocation of species, e.g. swallowtail, milk parsley from areas most at risk.
- Monitoring the impact of environmental change on plant and invertebrate communities with a focus on researching iconic species.
- Prevent the spread of invasive species.
- Share research topics and management results amongst partners to avoid duplication.
- Improved strategy on water and sustainable water use for all the new housing development, including challenge around water company promise to supply water.
- Provide high quality, joined up advice to farmers and land managers on specific site management.
- Influence ELMS (Environmental Land Management Services) to support the local needs of lowland grazing and fen management in future whole farm plans.
- Continue to work within the catchment-based approach and join up pockets of excellence (river restoration, capturing water to stop it flooding off the land), WFM, buffers).
- Mains sewerage (joint projects to reduce septic tanks, etc).
- Water cycle studies (ensure Local Authorities have these).
- Greater contact with Parish Councils via the Parish Forums, for example sharing South Yare Wildlife Group's Wild Patch.
- Continue working effectively together and collaborating on projects, such as working through partnerships and smaller focussed groups as required.

Action themes not currently in the B&W strategy

- Wild patch – places throughout the community that could be safeguarded/developed.
- Parish councils as riverside communities recording presence of invasive species.
- Migrating habitat, planning for washlands (such as the Bure loop scheme) or managed retreat to make space for flooding and help find ways to manage this land in the interim (also related to Climate Plan).
- Charges for water to include costs of managing and investigating the impacts of water abstraction.
- Grazing projects (new post to encourage, facilitate and gain funding for grazing projects in wider catchment – undergrazing of wet meadow and fen).
- Electric boating and encouraging all new boats built in Broadland to have grey water storage.
- Wheatfen salinity trials.
- Payment for water efficiency when growing food, a water tax could fund this, national capital pilots.
- Rainwater harvesting and reuse, better mechanisms to incentivise water storage and local pilot to investigate how do we do this.

- Gain funding from airlines to manage peatlands for carbon sequestration as offsetting.
- Training Planners and applying the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) checklist.
- More joined up planning strategy (BA advice others more – holistic accounts for impact outside BA area).

Action themes in other Broads strategies

- How to engage the next generation.
- Greater involvement with schools.
- Improve general education to connect everyone to land use, drainage.
- Access to water for canoe and boats creates problems for people.
- Create more boat access points – reference access.
- Slowing down boats on Broads – can BA legislate to limit throttle speed to prevent speeding?
- Electric boat replacement of diesel – solar boats and electric boats (Wroxham parish council keen to promote more electric boats).
- Rubbish – still issues on back of District Councils taking away litter bins/sites.

What happens next

The next stage will be to use the feedback received from the Broads Engage event to inform the preparation of the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy Action Plan 2019-22. This action plan will be taken to Broads Authority Committee in July 2019 for adoption. The plan will be implemented via Broads Biodiversity Partnership.

Contacts

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Broads Engage workshop – Biodiversity in the Broads: Managing change

1.30-4.30pm, 25 April 2019, Hoveton Village Hall

The purpose of this workshop is to inform the next Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy Action Plan. You can see the current strategy (published in 2013) [here](#). These notes provide background information for the workshop. For more information, please contact Andrea Kelly (Broads Authority) on andrea.kelly@broads-authority.gov.uk or telephone 01603 610734.

Aspirations and strategic objectives for water and biodiversity (Broads Plan 2017)

The Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy (BBWS) is a guiding strategy linked to the higher level [Broads Plan](#), the partnership management plan for the Broads. The Broads Plan contains a common vision and outcomes for the Broads, bringing together environmental, social and economic issues. While the Broads Authority is responsible for producing the Plan, its implementation very much depends on shared outcomes by a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including public, private and third sector bodies, land managers and farmers, businesses, statutory agencies, water companies and local communities.

The two key aspirations for biodiversity and water in the Broads Plan 2017 are:

Aspiration 1: Improve water capture and efficient water use across the Broadland Rivers Catchment, and develop a longer-term integrated flood risk management strategy for the Broads and interrelated coastal frontage.

Aspiration 2: 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 related strategies for the Broads include the Broadland Rivers Catchment Plan, the emerging Rivers and Broads Strategy (containing information on managing sediment, water plants trees, riverbanks and invasive species), Broads-based plans for education, access and volunteering, and many site-based plans. The Broads Local Plan informs spatial land use policy.

To meet the above aspirations, we want to see a future where:

- Nature in the Broads National Park is thriving and contributing to a larger network of wildlife-rich places, as part of Government policy to restore nature and in keeping with the status of the Broads as a globally important wetland.
- Wildlife-rich places are becoming larger and buffered from intensive agriculture. Land management options for farmers create more species-rich habitats and bespoke solutions for wildlife to `spill over` into the wider countryside.
- Wetlands function more naturally, and the catchment supports water dependent wildlife that has space and ability to move and adapt to climate change and sea level rise.
- Abundant wildlife is moving from place to place, and rare species have their environmental needs met and a secure future under peoples' care across the landscape.
- Research and monitoring in the Broads is providing the evidence base to enhance nature and direct conservation management.

- Agricultural and water management businesses work together to produce a range of benefits including biodiversity, food and biomass, high-quality water supply, carbon storage, pollination, disease and pest regulation, landscape character and sustainable recreation. Projects achieve multiple benefits that result in biodiversity gain, water improvements and profitable business.
- Invasive alien species are actively managed, with damage to habitats and native species being controlled.
- Development is appropriately located to avoid adverse effects on protected areas and wildlife and actively deliver net gains for wildlife, and people who manage land have enough resources to deliver the biodiversity gain needed.
- Communities better understand and are involved in making decisions in their own areas that support their local nature projects, with more volunteers supported to carry out management and monitoring.
- Sustainable tourism is in place and water users choose sustainable activities to enjoy the rivers and broads.
- People recognise and understand the value of biodiverse habitats and undertake appropriate sustainable development and recreation – ‘Saving nature through people’.

Some headline achievements over last BBWS period (2013-2018)

- Lake enhancement works, with major projects at Hickling Broad and Hoveton Great Broad to recreate reed margin and clear water areas.
- Monitoring water plant and water quality to provide evidence of lake recovery.
- Promoting mapped evidence and implementing projects carried out to reduce agricultural run-off (soil, nutrients and pesticides) such as WaterLIFE/WWF & Cola-Cola Partnership; 11 engineered silt traps constructed in the Broads catchment since 2015.
- Enhancing priority habitats, such as creating more than 130 turf ponds in Ant valley, reconnecting floodplain around Hickling Broad, removing scrub from 34 km of reed margin at Trinity Broads, and Halvergate Fleet scheme (4.5km high level water carrier, creating scrapes and wet areas to benefit breeding waders).
- Joint efforts are resulting in priority species such as fen orchid and fen raft spider increasing their populations; the *Nathusius pipistrelle* project 2018 involved 43 surveys, 20 sites, 31 volunteers, estimated 650 volunteer hours, and 81 *Nathusius pipistrelles* ringed.
- Invasive species controlled in some areas including floating pennywort on River Waveney and more than 300 mink caught in Broads river catchment; expansion of invasive crayfish, mussels and some plants into some areas.
- Creating ‘bigger, better and more joined up’ areas of priority habitat including more than 250 hectares of habitat created, or due to be created, to benefit wetland species and mitigate climate change.
- Six research PhD furthering environmental understanding in the Broads; greater coordination of monitoring and research between organisations is required to meet resourcing issues.

Issues matrix of pressures/drivers in a changing environment

Looking ahead, we face changes that are likely to have a significant and increasing impact on the natural environment of the Broads and surrounding area, as well as associated impacts on social and economic factors. Table 1 highlights some of the key drivers, pressures, risks and opportunities.

Table 1: Major changes and pressures

Drivers	Projected pressures	Risks and opportunities
Climate change	Greater likelihood of flooding due to increasing occurrence and severity of weather events	<u>Risks:</u> More winter rainfall and higher winter river flows and floodplain wetland water levels. Surge tides and salinization of floodplain wetlands and loss of freshwater dependant species, such as Fen Orchid, Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and Swallowtail butterfly and numerous other species of conservation concern.
Sea level rise	Higher water levels, increase in incidence and impact of seasonal storms.	<u>Risks:</u> Surge tides and salinization of floodplain wetlands and loss of freshwater dependant species, such as Norfolk Hawker dragonfly, Swallowtail butterfly, Fen orchid, fish and numerous other species of conservation concern. Coastal change could be significant for northern Broads.
Climate change	Hotter drier summers, more frost-free days	<u>Risks:</u> Wetland habitats (e.g. dykes, and fens) drying out resulting in species losses dependant on the severity of the drought. Stagnation and dissolved oxygen crashes with reduced freshwater flow and summer storms. Increased risk of fires and damage to habitat and peatland resource. <u>Opportunities:</u> Colonisation by species such as willow emerald damselfly and egrets.
Water abstraction	Lower than natural river and groundwater flows	<u>Risks:</u> Poorer river and broad water quality, making wetland habitats more sensitive to pollution and having potential negative impacts on groundwater dependant fen vegetation communities.
Waste water and diffuse water pollution	Negative effects on water quality of floodplain habitats and waterbodies and their ecosystems	<u>Risks:</u> Nutrient enrichment deteriorates natural ecosystems, which results in less rare species and takes decades to restore with some changes being permanent.
Land management	Positive and negative influences, depending on management practices, e.g. lack of scrub removal resulting in woodland development and loss of rare fen communities	<u>Risks:</u> Numerous and can generally be managed via good practice. Some losses can be permanent, such as land subsidence as a result of water drainage. <u>Opportunities:</u> Significant chance to benefit nature through good land management practice.
Alien invasive species	Negative effects on the conservation funding, land and water management, habitats and species	<u>Risks:</u> Dependent on alien invasive species and include predation (e.g. American mink), competition (New Zealand pygmyweed), flooding and navigation risks from choking rivers (e.g. Floating pennywort)
Development	Habitat loss, modifications, isolation and fragmentation	<u>Risks:</u> The majority of small developments in the Broads result in minor negative impacts that can add up to be more significant, although this is often dependant on the management of the scheme over the long-term.

APPENDIX 1

		<u>Opportunities:</u> Some development has the potential to enhance wildlife, particularly in rural areas, including flood alleviation schemes and making homes for bats and owls in mills and barns. Mitigation funds can enable improvements to habitats.
Visitor numbers	Potential for disturbance to species and habitats	<u>Risks:</u> Direct disturbance to wildlife and habitats, such as breeding birds and trampling of sand dunes. <u>Opportunities:</u> Improved engagement with people about nature.
Brexit	Potential pressure on a wide range of issues including environmental legislation and European funding	<u>Risk:</u> At the time of writing, there is no clarity on a deal (whether the UK will leave the EU with no deal, an extension to Article 50, or potential second referendum). This obviously creates uncertainty. <u>Opportunities:</u> Leaving the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy provides an opportunity for reform to rural payments for example towards an ecosystem approach that rewards provision of public goods, such as flood prevention and carbon storage.
Local economy	Developing wildlife and nature-based tourism economy, larger visitor numbers	<u>Risks:</u> Lack of affordable housing can result in conservation contractors and reedcutters not being able to live locally. <u>Opportunities:</u> Positive engagement through wildlife base holidays and guides. More money into the local economy.
Urbanisation and disconnect with nature	Low awareness, engagement and support for nature conservation	<u>Risks:</u> People disconnected and unfamiliar with the natural environment. <u>Opportunities:</u> Positive engagement is able to increase awareness
Knowledge and dedicated funding resource	Lower numbers of experienced ecologists and conservation officers Less funding for wildlife conservation	<u>Risks:</u> Cuts in government funding, previous European grants no longer available and drop in membership of charities may result in lower resources for conservation, leading to poorer understanding and less wildlife. <u>Opportunities:</u> for future activities planned with Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Project, along with CANAPE and ENDURE EU Interreg projects

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