

BFI Elected Members Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 09 October 2023

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Present

Eric Vardy - in the Chair - Norfolk County Council, Harry Blathwayt – North Norfolk District Council, Jan Davis-Broadland District Council, Robert Savage- South Norfolk Council, Matthew Shardlow- Broads Authority, Paul Wells - Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Melanie Vigo Di Gallidoro – Suffolk County Council.

In attendance

Libby Bush- Jacobs, David Cobby – Jacobs, Peter Doktor - Environment Agency, Felicity Monger-Jacobs, Charlotte Rivett- Norwich City Council, Marie Pierre Tighe - Broads Authority, Kylie Moos - Broads Authority (minutes).

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

The Chair thanked everyone who attended the workshop held on the 10 July and for their input into the online survey.

No apologies were received.

2. General overview of BFI progress

Peter Doktor (PD) provided a short presentation on the progress of Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI). The new hydraulic model is still underway alongside the updating of existing coastal models. The model is due to be completed by mid 2024.

The public consultation on the longlist of possible flood risk management actions was completed over the summer. The consultation confirmed that the list included all the possible actions, and nothing was missed. A possible modified approach is being considered for producing the shorter list of actions for appraisal by using work that has been carried out in previous strategies and introducing a geographical element.

The development of tools to be used in the appraisal of actions has begun including, how to assess social value and wellness; impacts of designated wildlife sites; landscape. The salinity modelling tool has yet to start. The model will consider how the salinity regime would change based on statistical analysis.

A member recently attended an Internal Drainage Board (IDB) meeting on Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) in the area. It is anticipated that the plans will take 5-10 years to complete. The member commented that there could be overlapping actions for BFI and the IDB. PD responded, the WLMPs are aimed at designated sites and the factors influencing the development of the WLMPs will be the same as those for the BFI. An officer from the IDB sits on the BFI Initiative Project Team (IPT) and several of the elected members are also on the IDB forum.

The importance of peatlands was also discussed at the IDB meeting. A member noted that peat is not mentioned in the BFI plan, but it is a key issue in the Broadland area. PD responded, the role of peat will be included as part as the BFI objective CAM2, actions being carbon neutral.

A member asked if BFI is looking into winter water extraction in the Broads and the impact on salinity levels. PD confirmed that they have been in contact with the Broadland Agricultural Water Abstractors Group (BAWAG) concerning the salinity modelling tool and will continue to work collaboratively going forward.

PD confirmed that there is a salinity monitoring station at Cantley and Acle Bridge and seasonal monitoring takes place at Repps. Information has also been collected from the RSPB, Natural England and organisations who are monitoring in the Broads. The salinity modelling tool will bring all this information together.

3. Completion of the prioritisation of objectives activity

This discussion item follows from the workshop with members in July 2023, where we had some very useful discussion, and the surveys which took place in the summer.

David Cobby (DC) gave a presentation and update on the survey results which had been shared with members ahead of the meeting. One of the main uses of the prioritisation of objectives is to help select Flood Risk Management (FRM) actions for implementation in the BFI area. To do this, the objective prioritisation will be combined with scores of how well each FRM action fulfils the 13 BFI objectives.

DC thanked members for taking part in the surveys. Their results show that there is support for prioritising the BFI objectives.

- There is an approximate 8% difference between the lowest and highest priority objectives.
- There is a preference for some objectives to be achieved over others.

Given that EMF members have decided to have near-term and longer-term priorities, a decision is required about how to use the two lists of priorities.

Options for prioritisation of objectives

1. Use 'Near-term' priorities throughout
 - For: Best represent our current position and a realistic starting point for future planning; we will focus on near-term decisions in context of longer-term
 - Against: Current position may not reflect future challenges and aspirations
2. Use 'Longer-term' priorities throughout
 - For: BFI strategy should achieve the future we aspire to; we need to start now to achieve this
 - Against: May not reflect a realistic starting point today
3. Use average of 'Near' and 'Longer-term' throughout
 - For: Emphasises consistency of priorities
 - Against: Loses value in have separately considered near-term and longer term

4. Transition between 'Near-term' and Longer-term' through the 100 years of the strategy.
 - For: Reflects gradual change in priorities between starting point and desired outcomes
 - Against: Perhaps more complicated to communicate

Suggestions posed by EMF members during surveys

- 'EDV1: Pathways of actions are cost-beneficial and can be afforded' should always be achieved as an overarching objective rather than one of 13
- 'CAM2: Actions are carbon neutral within the 100-year plan period' should always be achieved as an overarching objective rather than being one of 13
- 'NC1: All opportunities are taken to conserve and enhance the natural environment' and 'CHSP1: Through enhancing the areas special qualities and landscape, people's wellbeing and sense of place is improved' are closely related. DC added, there will be overlaps between the 13 objectives and some boundaries need to be made.

Following the workshop, officers considered the feedback from members, and presented the rationale for the proposals presented at today's meeting.

Final recommendations for decision

1. BFI Objectives are prioritised using the latest results.
2. Transition between 'Near-term' and 'longer term' priorities through the 100 year strategy
3. Keep economics and carbon within the prioritised objectives
 - More important in near term to make realistic decisions; less certain what appraisal/funding rules/environment will apply in the future
 - Strategy level will not determine full details of economics; emphasis on setting realistic direction which individual schemes will implement according to rules
 - May wish to chose FRM actions that are not cost beneficial or affordable but will fund locally for local reasons

Discussion

At the workshop there was a complex talk regarding objective EVD1, which has two parts to the objective ('cost-beneficial' and 'affordable'); the affordability of pathways of actions in a different future did not seem relevant. A member questioned why affordability is still included in this objective.

A member suggested that the focus for objective EVD2 should be economic stability instead of economic growth as there is limited opportunity in the Broads. EDV2 is low on the order of preference.

Referring to the second recommendation, a member asked how the strategy will be able to transition to long term priorities when there will always be the immediate future to look at.

Another member suggested that periodic reviews would be the best way forward, and that the transition of long term to near term will become clearer as the EMF progresses. DC added, the near to long term underpins the analysis which is happening now. The 100 year strategy would be divided into different time periods to consider which are the best performing actions for each of those time periods.

A member commented that water security and storage for flood overflows is becoming more important but is not reflected in the objectives.

Referring to objective CAM2, a member asked if being carbon neutral is enough or if the strategy should be aiming higher. At the recent IDB meeting the subject of land use in the Broads was discussed and its present use is not sustainable in all areas. For example, some areas of arable land could be used for paludiculture to help preserve the built land and reduce emissions compared to its current use.

The Chair reminded members that there will always be an element of uncertainty and unknown future budget restraints but, the BFI strategy is taking an adaptive approach. The priorities of this Forum need to be kept under review but a decision on the objectives and a framework to move forward needs to be decided now. PD added, the Thames Estuary plan is good model for a 100 year flood risk management plan which is using the adaptive approach. The plan is reviewed and refreshed every 10 years.

A member asked if objective EP1 is in relation to flood resilience and commented that engagement and participations needs to be happening all the time. DC responded, the main uses of the prioritisation of objectives is to help select FRM actions for implementation. Some of the actions will be focused more on engagement and participation than others.

A member asked if coastal erosion and breaches at the coast are included in the analysis. DC responded, breaches are a scenario which will be run through the hydraulic modelling as well as the impact of inland flooding. PD added, this is a flood strategy, looking at the factors that would influence the risk of flooding and so not focussing on the higher coast with cliffs. Places like Walcott could be points for water coming into the Broads, which are included in the hydraulic model. The Chair is currently working with Officers at Norfolk County Council (NCC) on a Norfolk coastal erosion and incursion strategy.

Referring to the third recommendation and objective EVD1, the Chair proposed that the affordability wording was removed, but to keep 'cost beneficial' included in the objective.

It was resolved unanimously to remove the 'can be afforded' text from objective EVD1.

A member asked, with increasing sea levels and salinity levels if objective HW1 should be about managing salinity instead of minimising. PD responded, within the Broads Plan, stakeholders agreed to keeping the Broads as a freshwater system for as long as it is sustainable to do so, but that does indicate there are limits as to how reasonable it is to do that. Once the modelling is in place, the salinity will be investigated further.

A member described a recent news article which reported on the receding ice caps and the increase in sea levels. DC responded, the rate of sea level rise is unknown, but the modelling will be able to provide a range of projections based on different levels of sea level rise.

The Chair proposed that the Forum accepted the three recommendations, subject to the amendment to objective EVD1 as discussed in the meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to accept the three recommendations, subject to the amendment to objective EVD1 excluding ‘affordability’

- 1. BFI Objectives are prioritised using the latest results.**
- 2. Transition between ‘Near-term’ and ‘longer term’ priorities through the 100 year strategy**
- 3. Keep economics and carbon within the prioritised objectives**

4. Proposed meeting dates 2024

The following dates were agreed for future EMF meetings.

Date	Time	Location
Monday 15 January 2024	10.00-11.30am	Online
Monday 22 April 2024	10.00-11.30am	TBC- in person
Monday 8 July 2024	10.00-11.30am	Online
Monday 14 October 2024	10.00-11.30am	Online

5. Any other business

The East Anglian Coast and Estuaries Conference 2023 is taking place on 12 October, tickets are still available.

6. Date of next meeting

10.00am-11.30am Monday 15 January 2024.