

## Broadland Futures Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is the BFI?**

The Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) is a partnership for future flood risk management in the Broadland area. Our main goal is to agree a framework and plan for future flood risk management that better copes with our changing climate and rising sea level, up to 2130. Flooding can affect many aspects of community life in our area; tourism, recreation, the natural environment, agriculture and where we live and work can all suffer adverse impacts as a result of flooding. The Initiative will make sure that these interlinked interests are all considered, with the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders.

### **Which organisations are involved?**

The Initiative has been set up by organisations responsible for managing coastal and inland flood risk. The Environment Agency have the lead responsibility and are working with Natural England, County and District Councils, Internal Drainage Boards, Broads Authority, National Farmers Union and other organisations with water, nature and conservation responsibilities across the Broadland area. These organisations form the Initiative Project Team (IPT). The Broads Authority supports the Initiative Project Team and governance arrangements.

The BFI will also work with local communities and other stakeholders to identify the way forward. This will be a democratic process, with local politicians making the core decisions to agree a framework for future flood risk management that better copes with our changing climate.

The decisions made must be acceptable for our local communities, for the environment, and be technically possible and affordable. The cost of future flood risk management will require local as well as government funds, and we will also need to identify where the money will come from.

### **What are the objectives of the BFI?**

Our agreed objectives for the BFI are available on our web page. The document helps you to learn more about what these important objectives mean for the future development of the strategy and how they shape our collective mission to improve the resilience of people, places, and the environment to flooding, as we adapt to the changing climate.

The BFI's objectives will guide decision-making for future flood risk management. It introduces a structured approach to evaluating options using both economic and non-economic criteria, ensuring that decisions reflect environmental, social, and community values.

### **What is the BFI Plan area?**

Sometimes referred to as the BFI study area, the BFI Plan area boundary has been drawn to be the maximum extent of the following largely overlapping layers: Flood Zones 1-3, the benefit area for previous flood risk management strategies, and the Broads Authority executive area. This includes key stretches of the low-lying coastline which could influence flooding in the Broads. Whilst the coverage of the BFI Plan area stops short along the River Yare, it also includes those parts of Great Yarmouth that are at risk of tidal flooding along parts of the Yare and the Bure. The BFI Plan area is predominantly in east Norfolk, but also crosses into north east Suffolk. Please refer to the map below for more detail.



### What will BFI success look like?

BFI success will result in an agreed framework for future flood risk management that better copes with our changing climate and rising sea level. The framework will set out the management intent and long-term strategy for the area, so that individual projects which deliver flood risk management can be advanced in accordance with the agreed plan.

Managing flood risk can be done in many ways. This could be through structures such as barriers, drains and pumps to hold back and remove water. But it can also be achieved through non-engineering means such as the way we use the land, build our homes, or forecast when flooding is likely. Therefore, the BFI will suggest a wide variety of measures. Because the BFI is considering the next 100 years, an increasingly prominent feature will be the impacts of climate change both on the risk of flooding and the wider Broadland economy and environment. With uncertainty about the rate and scale of such changes and impacts, especially the further into the future, the BFI will not set out a single way forward. For the medium and longer term it will identify a series of critical points, based on adaptation pathways where decisions will likely have to be made, and the possible options available then. This will allow the management of flood risk to adapt to changing conditions.

### **Why do we need a strategy and what will the BFI Plan give us?**

The sources of flooding for a large and low-lying area like Broadland can be complex and interconnected. Flood risk strategies describe what needs to be done, where and by whom to deliver flood risk management. They set out a framework that help communities, the public sector and other organisations to work together to manage flood risk. The BFI Plan will guide local decision making around flood risk management and ensure risks are managed in a coordinated way. The Plan will also guide Local Planning, strategic planning, land use and other asset management planning. The BFI Plan will not directly lead to flood risk management projects and works – but it will provide the clarity in the short to medium term for flood risk management authorities to design works to assets and structures, create business cases for projects and bid for funding.

### **What is an adaptive pathway?**

Looking ahead to 2130, we need to help local places better plan and adapt to future flooding and coastal change. This will mean being agile to the latest climate science, growth projections, investment opportunities and other changes to our local environment. We call this 'adaptation pathways'. An adaptation pathway is a decision-making approach, which allows decision-makers to take actions under uncertainty. It enables them to identify what actions can be taken now and in the future.

It allows decision-makers to plan, prioritise and sequence investments in climate adaptation actions. The concept is based on two questions:

1. Are there climate change impacts that make current assets or services inefficient, ineffective, or redundant? For example, the climate change thresholds beyond which things do not work.
2. At these thresholds, what are the best adaptation actions?

The BFI is considering four possible pathways and information on these will be shared during future engagement. Each pathway sets out steps to a different future outcome for flood management across the BFI area.

Each pathway comprises a series of flood risk management actions across the Plan area, which act together to achieve a particular outcome; some actions need to be 'exceptions' to the general direction of the pathway.

The adaptation approach does not focus on eliminating actions but on keeping realistic actions available to deal with future uncertainty. We should therefore be able to switch from one pathway to another if future circumstances require it. The BFI Plan will not attempt to agree actions for 100 years but suggest a preferred pathway and agree the first/next step along this.

### What is the approach and timeframe for developing the BFI Plan?

The diagram below shows the steps we are working through to develop the BFI Plan. We started at step 1 in 2019, which included extensive engagement to understand what matters most to people who live, work in and visit the Broads. This led to developing the BFI Objectives (step 3) – these are guiding the development of the BFI and will form the basis of appraising the flood risk management actions pathways which are long-term and strategic (in step 6).

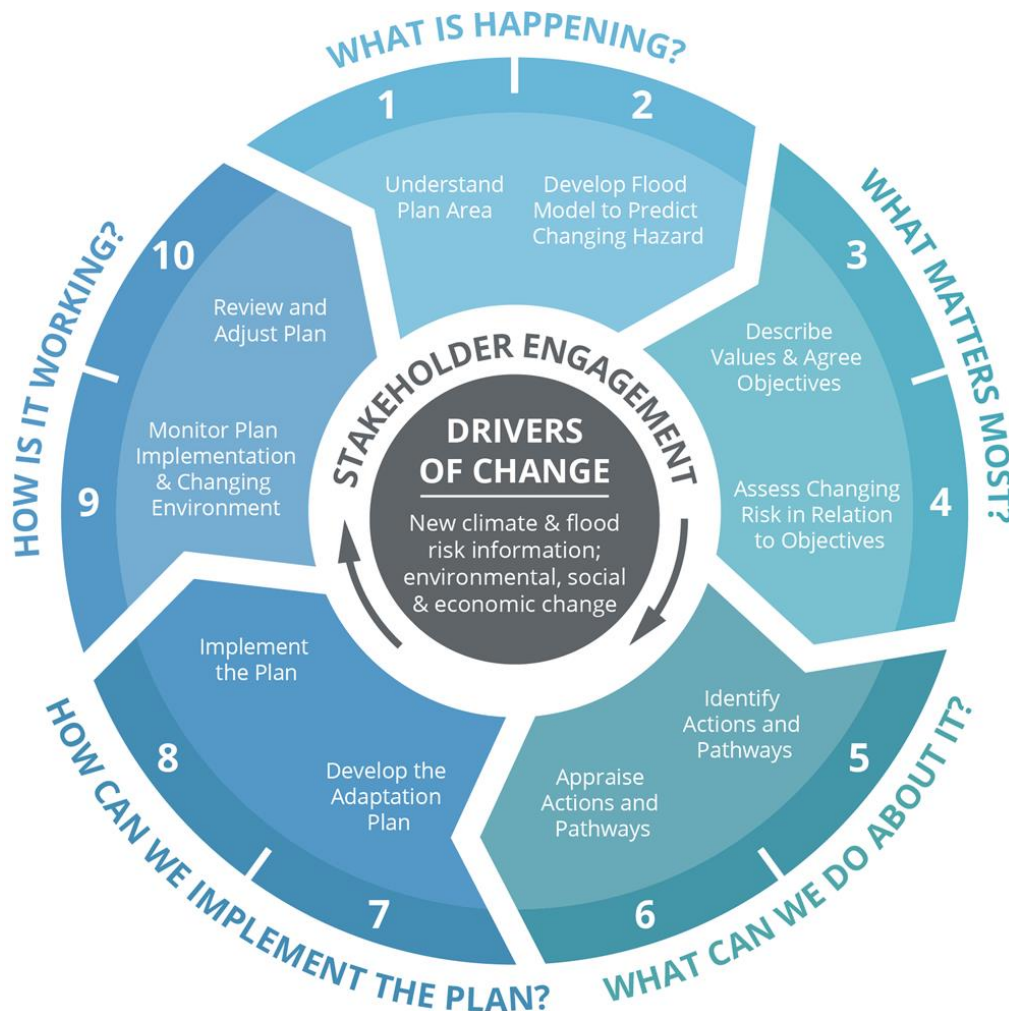


Image: The framework for developing the BFI Plan, based on British Standard 8631:2021 steps to develop climate change adaptation pathways

Extensive computer-based modelling of the Broadland rivers and the sea to understand how climate change may affect the risk of flooding in different locations is a significant part of the BFI programme (steps, 2, 4, 6).

In step 5 we identified potential actions to manage future flood risk. Such actions include traditional measures including flood embankments and walls, or those that have been considered previously such as barriers and washlands.

A Flood Risk Management (FRM) action toolkit was developed from a review of what has been done or considered previously for the BFI Plan area, as well as similar studies being undertaken nationally and internationally. At the stage of the toolkit creation, actions were

not being considered for particular locations and were not being assessed for their suitability. Instead, it was simply creating a long list of all the actions that could potentially be taken, either alone or more likely in combination with other actions, to manage flood risk in the area.

These actions are not all new, with some being a continuation of existing practices and infrastructure. In summer 2023 we asked the public for feedback as to whether all the actions proposed in the FRM toolkit should be in the toolkit and whether there were any actions missing. The support expressed for some actions, and concern about others, is being considered as we explore possible locations for actions in the BFI Plan area and evaluate their benefits.

From autumn 2025 to summer 2026 we will be in step 6. We will be modelling and appraising the effectiveness actions, and combinations of actions in the FRM toolkit for three time periods – 2030, 2070, 2130. Later in 2026, we will engage with stakeholders and communities on what the modelling is showing us and how it's guiding how we develop the BFI Plan.

There will also be further opportunities to get involved in 2027 when we do a non-monetary appraisal of the actions against the BFI Objectives, followed by an economic appraisal of longlist of actions, and then shortlist the actions.

In Steps 7 and 8 we'll produce the BFI Plan, funding strategy and associated environment assessments, and seek approval from our Elected Members Forum and Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. Once approved, partner organisations will adopt and use the BFI Plan.

Steps 9 and 10 highlight, in a changing world, the need to check and evaluate our progress, with a possible need to revisit certain aspects of the cycle.

### **How will the works be funded?**

The production of the BFI Plan is a fully funded strategy, paid for by the Environment Agency.

Flood risk management projects are usually delivered using central government funding and additional private funding, termed partnership funding. This is where local authorities, businesses and potentially homeowners contribute directly to the cost of the flood risk scheme. Partnership funding allows central government funding to be spread across more flood risk projects and enables more local choice, with the scheme being informed more by the knowledge of the community.

At this early stage we do not know what projects and other flood risk management measures the BFI will suggest and therefore we cannot yet estimate the funding requirement. However, this will become clearer as the BFI develops. Below is a diagram illustrating the current funding streams.

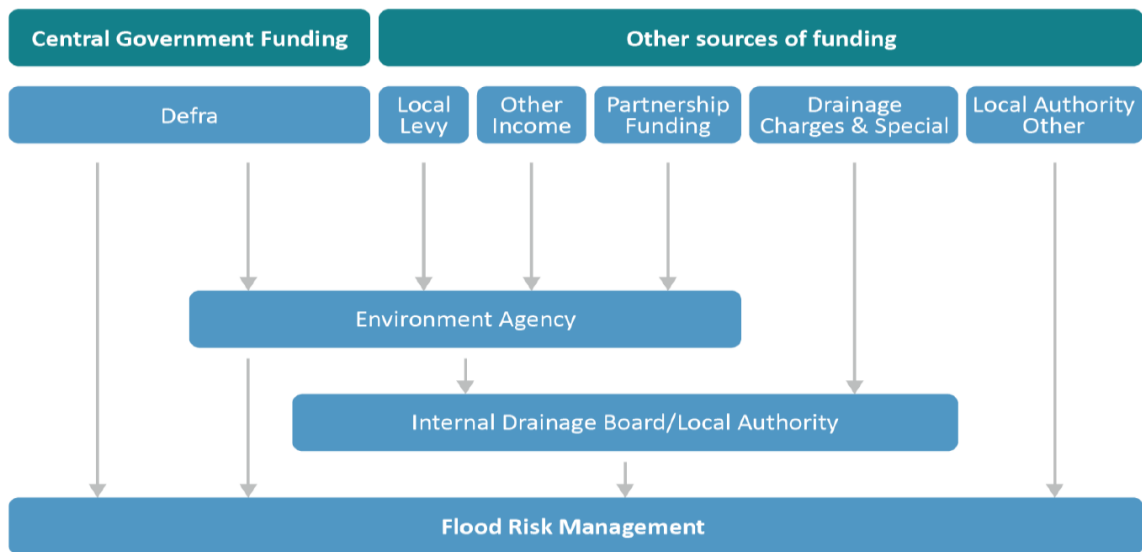


Figure 1: Sources of funding – BFI Study – Current approaches to flood risk management

### What can we learn when extreme river levels or flood events occur?

Although the impact or even the threat of flooding can be very upsetting and alarming, such events also help us better understand the risks that we face. The records of river levels that occurred in different places can be collected and used to confirm that our hydrological models for Broadland work correctly and helps improve the accuracy of future predictions. Such events also add to the statistical record, helping us better understand the probability of a similar event happening in future, and therefore improving our resilience and choices we make around flood and coastal risk management.

### Will this replace Broadland Environmental Services Ltd (BESL) and the Broadland Flood Alleviation Project (BFAP)?

The BFAP was the outcome of the last flood risk management strategy for the Broads which was undertaken in the mid-1990s and ended in 2021. The BFAP has demonstrated that large scale improvement schemes with a strategic approach to improving existing flood risk management structures can be accomplished within a nationally and internationally important wetland area. The BFI will be evaluating these good working practices and learning from the BFAP findings to make informed decisions for the future regarding flood risk management. Following the end of BFAP the responsibility for the Broadland flood defences that were managed by BESL has returned to the Environment Agency. The local operational team monitors the condition and performance of the flood defences and where necessary undertakes maintenance and repair work.

### Will the Broads be allowed to change?

The Broads we see today is a greatly cherished place for people to live, work and enjoy themselves. In addition, it hosts a range of nationally and internationally important landscapes and wildlife. Much of the heritage of the Broads is built on adaptation to a changing environment, such as the flooding of man-made peat diggings and the building of wind pumps. Our landscape has been influenced and shaped over thousands of years by natural processes and by the way people have lived and worked.

Rising sea levels together with warmer wetter winters and hotter drier summers mean that, in the long term, change is likely. Flood risk management will be able to influence some but not all of these future changes. The BFI seeks to reach agreement amongst all those with a stake in the Broads as to what change is acceptable or desirable, and minimise the risks

associated with these future changes. But this may also be an opportunity to do things differently and better in future. In doing so, BFI will put democracy at the heart of decision making.

### **Is the BFI considering the benefits provided by ecosystem services?**

Yes. We know natural capital and ecosystem services provide significant benefits. By considering these benefits we hope to raise awareness and understanding of the natural capital assets in the area. We need to understand how any proposed future flood risk management options could impact on natural capital assets and the ecosystem services delivered. This allows for more informed choices and better consideration of environmental concerns within decision making. We also hope to identify opportunities for protection and enhancement of natural capital assets and ecosystem services.

### **Isn't a Yare or Bure barrier the obvious solution?**

Justification for new flood risk management schemes (including physical structures, like barriers) require a rigorous evidence base that demonstrates both that the scheme will be beneficial and feasible, and that the scheme will not have negative impacts. A flood barrier is just one approach that will be investigated by the BFI. If funded wholly or in part by central government there are mandatory tests to select the most appropriate flood risk management approach and these can be simplified into a strategic case (is it needed?), technical (is it achievable?), economic (is it value for money?), financial (is it affordable?) as well as checking environmental impact. These assessments need to consider not just the immediate investment (e.g. construction), but the whole life impacts of the scheme.

### **Wouldn't dredging resolve most of the flood risk issues on the Broads?**

It has been shown in Broadland locations and through various modelling studies, that increasing the depth in tidal rivers does not influence the water levels during flood events. The Broads are dredged in places for navigation purposes. Dredging across the whole of the Broads takes up roughly 60% of the Broads Authority's Construction team's time, so is a significant aspect of the work funded by toll payers.

In general, dredging to reduce flood risk isn't the best long-term solution because rivers can quickly silt-up again and other measures such as building walls or storage upstream may be more effective. If undertaken incorrectly dredging can increase flood risk and erosion and alter the ecosystem and wildlife.

On much of the Broads, dredging for flood risk purposes is unlikely to be effective as the system is tidally influenced. This means that dredging will not reduce peak flood levels in the event of a tidal surge because any additional channel volume created is insignificant compared to the volume of the North Sea (i.e. the tide will still reach the same level). In fact, dredging could increase flood risk by increasing the amount of tidal water able to enter the Broads system and contribute to the erosion of riverbanks, due to an increase in water flow speeds.

For more information, please feel free to view our video on the effects of dredging here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mldiS-ACHvw&t=3s>

### **Is the BFI taking into consideration the reports of persistent high winter water levels in the northern rivers of the Broads?**

When developing strategies such as BFI, anecdotal evidence is an important source of information and regularly used to cross check other data sources. BFI will be using evidence of historical flooding events to inform what the potential future impact could be.

### **Is BFI considering how to manage saltwater incursions?**

Saline incursion is a naturally occurring event, where high tide levels pushes more saltwater up the estuary into the main river channels, raising the salinity level and impacting on some freshwater fish species, wildlife habitats, and water abstraction. Such events are likely to become more frequent with the impacts of climate change: as sea levels rise, saltwater will be pushed further up the Broads system, meanwhile drought and reduced summer rainfall lowers freshwater flow which reduces the natural flushing out of the system. *Read more: [Saline incursion on the Norfolk Broads – Creating a better place](#)*

Because high tide levels can cause both flooding and saltwater incursion up the Broad's rivers there is a connection between these issues. BFI is considering different possible actions that can be undertaken in future to manage the risk of flooding. This does include structures such as sluices and barriers that could prevent or reduce the incursion of saltwater to the Broads rivers. Mindful of the potential harm caused by saltwater, and the wider desire to keep the Broads as a freshwater system as far as possible, when appraising these future flood management actions, the extent to which they can also prevent or reduce saltwater incursion will be a consideration. In addition to tide level, the amount of freshwater coming down the rivers is also a key factor in determining how far saltwater travels. Therefore, when freshwater flows are low, measures designed to prevent flooding might not stop saltwater incursion taking place.

### **What areas benefit from flood risk management structures and why are some areas not protected?**

The presence of flood risk management structures is something that has developed over centuries in response to a need or possibly events. For example, embanking of the grazing marshes began in Medieval times to enable the land to be farmed more intensively. The construction of the concrete sea wall along the Eccles to Winterton coast was in response to breaching of the dunes resulting in extensive flooding and loss of life in 1938 and 1953.

There are though some parts of the BFI area, particularly the upper reaches of the rivers Yare, Bure and Ant where for whatever historical reasons no structures have been built to manage flooding. Even if your property does not benefit from the presence of a flood risk management structure you can still be resilient through receiving flood warnings. Such warnings enable you to take action such as moving valuables to reduce damage from flooding and to keep yourself and your family safe.

Find out if your home is at risk, sign up for flood warnings and be ready to take action. For more information visit [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood) or call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

### **How will the BFI work alongside existing plans in the area?**

The BFI will consider existing and new plans that will emerge and impact upon the BFI plan area. The BFI is represented by several organisations each with their own plans and directives, therefore, through good communication, partnership working and sharing of knowledge we will ensure that these plans are taken into consideration when decisions are made.

Our partner organisations are all keen to ensure their work is informed by the latest findings of the BFI. The BFI is pleased to endorse plans which support the aims of the BFI and help to deliver our objectives and aspirations. Therefore, the preparation of some local plans and documents need not be restricted by the timings of the BFI. It is important to remember that the BFI is a strategy and local plans often have a shared goal that the BFI endorses and supports. Lastly, the BFI can make recommendations regarding Shoreline Management Planning (SMP) policy but it cannot implement changes to existing policies.

It is expected that the BFI will inform the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA). The BFI is represented at the NSFA by a number of organisations, therefore, we will endeavour to maintain good partnership working between the BFI and the NSFA through good communication and sharing of knowledge to ensure that the aims and aspirations of both initiatives support and complement one another.

### **Can I attend the technical meetings?**

The Initiative Project Team (IPT) technical meetings are where partnership representatives meet two-monthly to share progress and discuss next steps in the development of the technical study reports and to review ongoing planning of the BFI's public engagement works and calendar. The IPT meetings are not open to the public but notes from the meetings are posted on the BFI website.

Any decisions that need to be made regarding the BFI's direction, objectives, and options are made in collaboration with stakeholders and the wider community to then be delivered to the Elected Members Forum.

If you do want a particular issue to be discussed at the IPT technical meetings that you feel you would like the BFI to consider in the development phase, please get in touch via the 'Contact Us' section.

### **What is the Elected Member's Forum?**

The role of the Elected Members Forum is to provide a strategic steer, receive advice and recommendations, review Initiative progress and reach agreements based on financial, environmental, and technical evidence presented by the Initiative Project Team. The Elected Members Forum will take back conclusions and seek formal endorsement from our Local Authorities, before final adoption by our Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

The Elected Members Forum comprises one appointed representative from each Local Authority within the Initiative study area with an interest in flood and coastal risk management. The Broads Authority is also represented by one of their appointed councillors. The Elected Members Forum elects its own chair and is serviced by the Broads Authority for secretariat purposes.

### **How will decisions be made?**

Elected members representing local communities will be the decision makers. This will be a democratic process, with local politicians making the core decisions to agree the future flood risk management plan, having considered the latest projections on our changing climate, the opinions and views of the community and the data available through the BFI project.

### **Where can I go for practical advice if I have been impacted by flooding?**

Flooding can cause all kinds of problems to communities, and these problems can be long-lasting.

One of the best things to do first is to check your local flood risk at any time by visiting the Environment Agency website [www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy](http://www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy). Here you will find practical advice and steps you can take before, during and after a flood. You can also sign up for free flood warnings either on the above website or by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

In addition to the Environment Agency website, if you are affected by flooding recently, or know someone that was, useful practical help is available from the following sources in the event of a flood:

- The British Red Cross – practical advice on how to prepare for a flood.  
<https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/how-to-prepare-for-floods-and-flooding>
- UK Health Security Agency – advice and help to manage the mental health impacts of flooding <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flooding-health-advice-mental-health-following-floods>
- Association of British Insurers - helpful advice around property insurance  
<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/flooding/recovering-from-a-flood/>

### **My area was impacted by flooding, but it is just outside the BFI plan area, where do I stand?**

Whether you are in the BFI Plan area or not has no impact on the immediate support you would receive in the event of a flood. The same level of support via the Environment Agency and local incident response teams will be given to all. For more information on what support and advice is available please visit [www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy](http://www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy)

In terms of future flood risk management schemes for places outside the BFI plan area, other initiatives may already be taking action to improve flood resilience in your location. But, in general circumstances, the Environment Agency and lead local flood authorities will use the data and information arising from any given flood event to assess the viability of possible measures to improve resilience to flooding in the affected area. Many factors need to be considered. If you are interested in how decisions are made, we recommend contacting the Environment Agency at [Enquiries\\_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk) and they will be able to provide more details.

### **Why have a long-term strategy, shouldn't we just be fixing the problem now?**

Past flooding events in Broadland such as Christmas 2020 and winter 23/24 has highlighted the vulnerability of the BFI Plan area and unfortunately climate change will increase the risk of future flooding. We appreciate the distress and concern caused for some people and the desire to see immediate action in response. However, the factors influencing flooding within the BFI Plan area are complex. Also it is a place with many valued features that are of importance locally, nationally and internationally.

Working in collaboration with all those who have a stake or interest in the area, we need to agree what the priorities are in seeking to manage flood risk. When considering different possible management interventions, we need to understand what the likely effects of these will be to avoid unintended detrimental consequences that we would regret in future. Through this process we will identify possible actions for implementation in the short, medium and long term. We strongly believe having such a strategic approach to better manage and improve our collective resilience to climate change and flooding events can only happen when we work together, and that is why Initiatives such as the BFI are so important for our local communities now and in the future.

### **I don't have easy access to the internet, how can I view information?**

We appreciate that not all people have easy access to the internet. Please write to us at Broadland Futures Initiative Broads Authority, Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1RY and we will be happy to assist you.

### **I have a visual impairment, are your documents accessible?**

We have taken every effort to make our documents as accessible as possible following the government accessibility guidelines for online content. If you do experience any difficulties accessing the information then please get in touch via our contact details below.

### Where do I go for more information?

To find out more about the BFI you can visit our webpage, hosted by the Broads Authority at: <https://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/looking-after/climate-change/broadland-futures-initiative>

You can also write to us at:

Broadland Futures Initiative

Broads Authority, Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1RY

Or email [info@broadland-futures.org.uk](mailto:info@broadland-futures.org.uk)