

Broadland Futures Initiative

Minutes of the meeting held on 01 December 2025

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Attendees

Rob Rogers (Chair)- Broads Authority, Rebecca Bromley- National Trust, Wendy Brooks- Norfolk County Council, Amy Capon- Environment Agency, Peter Doktor- Environment Agency, Kellie Fisher- Environment Agency, Catherine Harries- Environment Agency, Kevin Hart – Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Fiona Hinds- Natural England, Dan Hoare- Broads Authority, Andrea Kelly- Broads Authority, Andrew Marsh – Historic England, Matthew Philpot- IDB, Hannah Purkis- Suffolk County Council, Rob Wise- NFU, Kylie Moos – Broads Authority (minutes).

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Rob Rogers (RR) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received from Giles Bloomfield, Vanessa Gouldsmith Charlotte Rivett.

2. IPT Terms of Reference

The Initiative Project Team (IPT) has been running for several years now and the involvement to the BFI has been extremely valuable, but it is recognised that there has not been a Terms of Reference (ToR) in place. As we look ahead to the next year and beyond generating the BFI Plan, the expertise and input from IPT members on behalf of organisations will be ever more important. Amy Capon (AC) asked the IPT if they had any comments on the draft ToR which was shared with the papers ahead of today's meeting.

The ToR refers to the Elected Members Forum (EMF) ToR on a number of occasions, Rob Wise (RW) asked if this information can be shared. AC responded, the EMF ToR has recently been updated following a refresh at the last meeting and can be shared with the IPT.

AC agreed to share a copy of the EMF ToR with the IPT.

RW commented that the sentence 'The BFI Elected Members Forum (EMF) reaches agreement' under the context of the BFI in the ToR is brief and the relationship between the IPT and EMF should be made clearer.

Fiona Hinds (FH) suggested that the delivery of the BFI objectives for the programme should be included in the ToR, even if the objectives may be refined over time.

Regarding the functions of the IPT in the ToR, RW recommend that the wording for item seven: 'Engage within their organisation (or membership) to ensure that IPT member organisations will be ready to adopt the BFI Plan and embed its actions into their statutory responsibilities where applicable' should be more aspirational rather than definitive. They added that they cannot guarantee that the Plan will be signed off and adopted by their organisation. Andrea Kelly (AK) added, a similar approach should be taken for the paragraph three under Purpose of the IPT'... and adopted by member organisations, as well as being accepted by multiple stakeholders with an interest in the Broads...' It may be that stakeholders do not accept the BFI Plan, and this is out of the control of the IPT.

Amy Capon (AC) thanked everyone for their comments and agreed to share the revised IPT ToR with the minutes.

3. The BFI Plan

At the last IPT meeting AC started the conversation around the BFI Plan which is due to be completed in 2028. Since then, AC invited all IPT members to take part in an 1-1 meeting to understand what organisations require from the Plan and how they expect to use it in the future. Feedback from the meetings to date include:

- Planning early for change rather than reacting to change and managing expectations.
- A clear narrative explaining why adaption is necessary and its long-term benefits.
- Clear and realistic actions and timelines.
- Technically feasible recommendations and clarity on trade-offs.
- Organisations to seek consistency and potential links between the BFI and other strategies such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and ELMs
- Integrate the key functions of organisations represented in the IPT, for example when Natural England duties underpin decision making for the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts.
- Flood risk management to support habitat restoration, species conservation, carbon storage, and wetland creation.
- Clarity around funding, understating compensation for land use change and central government funding commitments.
- Ensuring the plan is adopted by councils and used to guide planning – similar to how shoreline management plans are used. The plan should also support wider political influence and the remit of the future combined authority mayor.
- A simplified version of the plan for wider use with a clear accessible summary version to share with communities and stakeholders.

AC will continue to meet with members of the IPT to discuss the plan and recognises that there are some who are newer to the BFI who may benefit from more of an induction, which is also an option.

As part of the final BFI Plan there will be a section which summarises what the plan means for different sectors and how organisations are expected to use the plan. It would be beneficial for this information to be available sooner, so the project team have started to draft the summary which will be presented for input and discussion at the next IPT and EMF meetings in January 2026.

4. Pathway model build

Over the last month Jacobs have been adapting the Broadland model to show separately the four different pathways which represent different combinations of Flood Risk Management (FRM) actions over the three different time periods. Peter Doktor (PD) presented the different actions which are coming out of the model with two caveats; the maps are schematic, and

locations and scale should not be taken as literal; the pathways will be optimised following the initial modelling results and there will likely be further changes from what is presented today.

The different time periods are:

- Present day up to 2040
- 2040-2070
- 2070-2130

PD asked the IPT for their initial feedback and welcomed further comments via email once the slides are shared with the minutes so that they can be fed back to Jacobs.

Protect (Embankments and Open Channels)

Of all of the pathways, this one is the most similar to what is taking place at the moment regarding FRM. Andrew Marsh (AM) asked what freshwater storage would look like on the ground. PD responded, online storage involves removing the existing flood embankments and allowing water to come on and off as the water levels within the rivers rise and fall effectively acting as a washland and in a similar way to how Breydon Water currently operates. For offline storage there would still be an embankment and structure dividing the storage area from the river and water would move between the two in a controlled manner. Freshwater storage also provides an option to use the water for irrigation or other purposes. Rather than excavating areas, the storage would be created using existing embankments and working with the topography of the area.

AK commented, the highlighted areas for FRM actions are not very specific on the map and it would be useful to understand the process that has occurred to get to this point and if the model is informed by strategic Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA). They added that the maps are going to generate discussions and more information is needed to go alongside the images to explain why certain areas have been targeted and not others. PD agreed that we need to be very careful about how the information is presented. At the moment the initial areas come from Jacobs knowledge and experience of the system and this is the first run through of the modelling to see how effective it is at managing flood risk. The optimisation process will fine tune this and firm up the appropriate areas for FRM actions.

Catherine Harries (CH) agreed that the maps will create discussions and the areas on the maps are purposely vague and up for discussion, but they are not yet ready to be shared outside of the IPT and require context and a narrative to go with them.

Rebecca Bromley (RB) commented that they would also like to see more information on the narrative, particularly for some of the National Trust sites and also what managed realignment may look like. They added that they would also like to see how the maps interact with the Countryside Stewardship scheme and how it can benefit neighbouring landowners. RB asked what 'present day' looks like regarding the timeline. PD responded, present day is 2030 and that more detailed information will come out as the modelling stage progresses. It is also

possible that some of the ideas presented today will not go any further, these are the initial thoughts for testing.

RW commented that this is a single image for the protect pathway and there are still three other pathways to go through. There may be multiple images of what protect looks like and focusing on just this one could be misleading and some of the comments may be different once the IPT have been presented with all four images.

Protect (Individual Channel Structures)

This approach focuses on in channel structures on each of the main rivers and is combined with maintaining or upgrading the existing pumping capacity. Over time gravity drainage structures will become less effective and towards the end of the 100 years there would be a move towards a barrage at Great Yarmouth that would cut of the Broads system from the sea.

PD confirmed that the initial climate scenario used for appraisal is based on RCP 8.4 which equates to just over one meter of sea level rise by the end of the 2130. Wendy Brooks (WB) asked if the adaptive pathway will be overlayed, for example if sea level rise takes places earlier than anticipated, than the barrage will need to be brought in earlier. PD confirmed that the adaptive pathway would be considered and that this approach includes the maintenance and raising of defences.

Protect (Tidal Barrier/Barrage)

This is the final protection option which relies on a tidal barrier in Great Yarmouth going in around the 2040's. In doing so there will be less reliance on the need to provide flood storage in the catchment area. The existing pump capacity would need to be upgrade and the existing network of embankments and walls maintained. Dan Hoare (DH) asked if the modelled outcomes and emergency outfall are reliant on a tidal barrier in Lowestoft Harbour. PD confirmed that they are not.

Accommodate

The accommodate pathway maximises the approach of making space for water within the catchment. AK asked if the whole of the floodplain should be identified as storage in this scenario. The map suggests that there are some levels of control and something is stopping the overtopping in certain areas. They added that it would be beneficial to have a session on the model and the scenarios knowing how the Broads behaves with the current heights of embankments. PD responded, in addition to the four pathways there are two baseline scenarios that are being looked at, the 'do nothing' and 'sustain' scenario which looks at how the system would behave over the next 100 years if the defences were maintained at their current height. PD added, by 2130 it may that there is little control as suggested, but certainly the transition to such a state would be a controlled process.

WB questioned if there would be more saline storage at the mid century point rather than freshwater. PD responded, although the tidal washlands and freshwater storage has been identified, it is not possible to control which waters go in there. It is likely that towards the bottom end of the system it will be tidal water and at the top end of the system it would be

fresh water, but how that interface moves will depend on the conditions. WB responded, we need to be careful how this information is presented otherwise people think that a particular area is always going to be freshwater, or tidal water. Describing an area as a washland only may be more suitable.

There has been a press release on the completion of the works in Somerset Levels and the three reservoirs which are controlled offline storage: [Essential Somerset reservoirs upgraded to prevent flooding - GOV.UK](#). DH commented that Environment Agency (EA) colleagues in Somerset must have gone through a process to identify which areas would be suitable and communicated this to the local population which would be useful for the BFI. PD responded, they have previously been in discussions with the colleagues in Somerset at the beginning of the BFI, but they will engage with them again.

AK commented that the washlands that have been identified as performing the best need to be clearly defined. PD responded, at the present day the models are looking to maximise the effectiveness of managing flood risk. It may be that a washland in a particular location is on one side of the river, but in reality, it could be on the other side. At this stage we are looking at what will work technically, but we will need to start to think about what can work practically in terms of delivery and against the BFI objectives. CH added, an action may work from a flood risk point of view but will need appraising against the wider objectives. These objectives reflect the wider implications of flood risk management is why it is important to have the objectives in place. FRM actions. PD clarified that this is starting point and the areas for action are deliberately vague on the map. Nonetheless specific locations have to be tested within the model in order to see how the system generally works and reacts, and these locations may ultimately not be taken forward.

RW commented, the four pathways are presented as black and white options for example, either everywhere is accommodated or not, but we will be looking at a mixture of embankments and open channel work alongside individual catchment structures with or with a tidal barrier at different timescales, all of these elements interact and may dictate a different level of what would be acceptable accommodation in other areas. The future will not be just one of the four maps presented and there needs to be a narrative that talks about the interaction between those different levers. It would be useful to put all four maps on one slide so you can see how they vary and see how the shaded areas for actions could move around. PD responded, the challenge is that there are an infinite number of combinations.

RW asked if the maps are four separate models or if they are a single model with different levers and if there the capability for a 4x4 analysis when different levers are flexed. PD responded, they are four separate models, and the idea of adaptive pathways is that you can move between the pathways depending on circumstances and opportunities. It is possible that a pathway is not applied to the whole area, there may be different pathways in different geographical locations. These are broad pathways that have been created to put a structure in place and they are not set in stone, and do not necessarily represent the medium or long term.

RW asked how much of Product 35: Modelling of the four adaptation pathways is about those interactions as opposed to optimising within the four individual models. PD responded, they

expect the focus to be on the pathways, the optimisation within the pathways, but PD would need to discuss this with Jacobs. RW commented, for all of the work that the IPT has done over the last few years, to have four standalone pathways is quite simplistic in terms of being able to answer the questions that stakeholders in different geographies will have. Stakeholders will want to know that if something is tweaked in one of the pathways, is the protection that they thought was coming out of the optimisation process still as strong. RW requested that Jacobs are asked these questions and to make the pathways as interactive as possible. Kellie Fisher (KF) agreed and added that we need to be realistic. In reality, the BFI will not pursue just one option because that is not what is going to happen in the real world. However, we're trying to appraise and assess something at scale and have a spatial conversation about potential options across a large area. To have a meaningful conversation about options we have characterised different approaches with maps. It is not intended for one of these mapped approaches to be the only way forward, more for these to provide options which could form an adaptive pathway across multiple mapped approaches. Maps at scale are often tricky because the first thing that someone can do is zoom in to their area to see what is happening, when the map is really intended to show something at a larger scale. Future modelling needs to stay within reasonable bounds otherwise there could be thousands of different modelling iterations, and there is not the budget or technical capability for all potential scenarios. There are things that can influence the adaptive pathway which the model cannot consider such as the potential impact of a large tidal surge to change current day assets, an opportunity that arises with a landowner, or funding and policy change. Today is the first outing of the maps and there will be more opportunities for the IPT to provide feedback.

As part of the last flood alleviation project there was a lot of work relating to proximity and area, AK asked if figures could be added to the spatial map. For example, HRA and habitat protection are one of the biggest drivers and the proximity of washlands to these sites needs to be considered. CH commented, this has been discussed with Jacobs, and they are aware that there may be areas which can achieve more or different FRM actions than others based on the weightings and appraisal process.

Hannah Purkis (HS) asked how much cross over there has been between teams who work on managed realignment of the coast and the work here on managed realignment of the Broadland storage areas as many of the engagement conversations with stakeholders will have similar themes. CH responded, the team working closely with colleagues, both internally and externally when considering/delivering managed realignment. At the moment we are at the very early stages so have not reached out specifically about these particular managed realignment considerations. Once there is more detail the team will reach out and see how engagement may align.

5. Programme look forward

PD presented the programme timeline for Product 34 and 35 over the next four IPT meetings in 2026. These may be subject to change depending on progress.

Product 34: Modelling and appraisal of the Do Nothing and Sustain baselines:

- January – update on the ongoing Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) and economic appraisal of the baselines.
- March- update on the on-going drafting of the baseline appraisal report.
- May- review future baseline appraisal report.

Product 35: Modelling of the four adaptation pathways:

- January – update on the ongoing optimisation of the pathway models.
- March – update on the on-going running of the optimised pathway models.
- May- update on the ongoing drafting of the pathways modelling report.
- July- review the pathways modelling report.

6. Engagement update

AC provided an update on engagement since the last meeting and a forward look for the next 9 months.

Aims for engaging between now and autumn 2026:

1. Preparing for communicating modelling outputs and next steps for appraising FRM actions and pathways.
2. Starting to explore and develop FRM action opportunities based on modelling outputs.
3. Confirming and communicating what the BFI Plan will do and how it will be used by organisations.
4. Developing the approach for the funding strategy.

AC asked the IPT to consider what sort of opportunities within their organisations there may be when it comes to the engagement aims listed above. One of the ideas is a webinar for Local Authority Planning teams so that they understand what the BFI Plan will mean for them. RR responded, the Broads Authority (BA) planning team have advised that they would like to take part in the webinar.

WB advised that they would take this to their executive leadership team at Norfolk County Council and they also have a planning department that would be suitable for the webinar. There will be an opportunity to brief the new mayor in May 2026 and there may be new councillors who will also need to be briefed after May. WB also recommended contacting Water Resources East (WRE).

Kevin Hart (KH) asked if there is a time frame for the modelling outputs and how that will be communicated. AC responded, there is still a lot of work to do, and the aims listed above are largely for the EA project team, with the IPT and EMF, over the coming months. The EA team will also run a webinar earlier next year for internal EA teams to bring them up to speed.

7. Next meeting agenda

CH presented the provisional agenda for the next IPT meeting on 26 January 2026.

- Update on modelling progress
- Funding strategy discussion
- Review a summary of 'what the BFI Plan means for me.'
- Local Government Reorganisation- maintaining and supporting IPT involvement.

RW asked if the EA have published their initial Risk Management Authority (RMA) guidance for the Government's new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management policy which was due by 30 November. KF confirmed that they are still waiting for further RMA guidance.

8. Any other business

The BFI Objectives (product 22) went to the EMF in October and there a few edits to the wording. The updated version of that report was shared with the papers for today's meeting. The updated version will be presented to the EMF on the 14 January 2026 for agreement. If the IPT have any further comments on this product, please send them to PD.

The project team have been working with the BA to update the BFI webpage. AC has produced a number of summary and non-technical versions of the main reports produced during the programme. The full reports will remain on the webpage, and the updates are due to be made this month.

There is a new BFI key messages document that can be used for briefing stakeholders or responding to inquiries from the media. The document will be shared with today's minutes.

The EA fisheries team have been busy dealing with the impacts of the saline incursion over the last few months. Thousands of fish were rescued, but unfortunately there were thousands more that did not survive. This has been widely covered in the media and enquiries from stakeholders. The project team have inputted into responses explaining the link to the BFI work. Those messages are included in the key messages documents referenced above.

The revised IPT ToR will be shared with the minutes ready for sign off at the next meeting in January.

WB advised the IPT that the timeline for the mayoral authority is on track with elections taking place in May 2026. The businesses cases for Local Government Reorganisation have been submitted and there is a live public consultation. The outcome is due next spring and if it goes ahead then the new unitary authority will come into place in 2028.

RR reminded everyone that the pathway diagrams that were shared today are for the IPT only and there will be another opportunity to continue the discussion.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Broadland Future Initiative is 9.30am-11.00am 26 January 2026.

Summary of progress

Outstanding actions	Meeting date	Assigned to
Share a copy of the EMF Terms of Reference with the IPT	01.12.2025	AC