

Broads Authority

22 September 2023

Agenda item number 8

Strategic priorities- update

Report by Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report sets out the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2023/24.

Broads Plan context

The Broads Plan is a key part of the Authority's strategic framework.

Recommended decision

To note the progress in implementing this year's strategic priorities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Each year the Broads Authority identifies a small set of strategic priorities, which focus on projects that have high resource needs or a very large impact on the Broads, or that are politically sensitive. Setting these priorities helps target the Authority's resources and make the most of partnership working and external funding opportunities. Priorities are set each financial year, although some large-scale projects carry across several years.
- 1.2. In addition, Defra has introduced a new requirement for National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority to provide quarterly updates on deliverables against the Business Plan, as part of its grant funding agreement. These update reports on our strategic priorities are used by officers to comply with that requirement.
- 1.3. The latest update on the agreed strategic priorities for 2023/24 is in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Strategic priorities 2023/24 – progress update

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
1. Climate Change crisis response Aim: To implement the next steps of the various projects tackling climate change related issues, including the	Status: on track	Director of Strategic Services

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>actions in the Authority’s Climate Change Action Plan.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative BFI newsletter, by March 2024. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2024. (iii) Various technical deliverables from BFI consultant including the new hydraulic model, throughout 2023/24. (iv) Work with partners to secure funding and implement Phase II of the “Electrifying the Broads” project, by March 2024. (v) Deliver the actions set out in the Authority’s Climate Change Action Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 12th edition of the newsletter published in June 2023. (ii) Following the Elected Members Forum (EMF) workshop on 10 July 2023, the results of the prioritisation exercises were shared with the EMF at the end of August. A formal decision is expected at their next meeting on 9 October. (iii) On track. (iv) Round 4 of the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition was announced in July 2023. Unfortunately, the funding excluded capital spend, so we will seek other sources of funding. (v) The tender for solar panels on the Dockyard closes on 15 September, with the intention of awarding a contract for installation to be carried out by March 2024. Following consultation with Visit The Broads members, we are continuing to work on a potential bid to the Norfolk Investment Framework. 	
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including the legacy of the peat project.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Endorsement of Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) New Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Manager started mid- 	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>Strategies – timings to be confirmed subject to further details expected from government.</p> <p>(ii) To implement the next steps of the Nature for Climate Peat restoration project within agreed budget and timeline, and review lessons learnt by June 2023.</p> <p>(iii) Complete site selection for potential restoration, and support the submission of Restoration Grant Application, if appropriate, by 26 May 2023.</p>	<p>July, on secondment from Natural England. LNRS expected to be published August 2024 with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils as “Responsible Authorities” and the Broads Authority as “Supporting Authority”.</p> <p>(ii) The Nature for Climate Peatland Discovery project closed on 31 August 2023. Final reporting is under way, including lessons learnt.</p> <p>(iii) A Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme Restoration Grant bid has been awarded for Buttle Marsh in August 2023, with co-funding secured from Anglian Water. Peatlands set to be restored to help tackle climate change - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). The restoration is for ~£300k and co-funded by Anglian Water Get River Positive scheme. It aims to restore peat building conditions at Buttle Marsh by holding and transferring water across the site.</p>	
<p>3. Navigation IT</p> <p>Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Develop timetable and specification by May 2023</p> <p>(ii) Progress workplan for 2023/24 as per agreed timeline.</p>	<p>Status: delayed</p> <p>(i) Further to meeting with Management Team on 2 May to report on discussions with other waterways, Navigation Committee were consulted re specific functionality on 8 June.</p>	<p>Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>An anonymised version of the current internal system is being prepared and will be sent to a developer to ascertain the feasibility of updating it to run on the latest, cloud hosted, software platform.</p> <p>With the scope of the project almost complete, the full specification and tender preparation are scheduled for completion by March 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Ongoing</p>	
<p>4. Water Mills and Marshes</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the WMM programme to latest agreed schedule and budget.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Monitor and report progress (July & Dec 2023).</p> <p>(ii) Submit quarterly claims to National Lottery Heritage Fund (April/Jul/Oct/Jan).</p> <p>(iii) Complete individual project plans with project partners (June)</p> <p>(iv) Complete final project evaluations with external scheme evaluators (September)</p> <p>(v) Hold project legacy partner conference (November)</p> <p>(vi) Prepare final project report</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) All projects progressing well to adjusted plans</p> <p>(ii) Quarterly returns submitted on time and paid by NLHF.</p> <p>(iii) Most external partner projects now completed with individual project evaluations being conducted and submitted.</p> <p>(iv) External scheme evaluators have circulated the first drafts of the final report which we are reviewing.</p> <p>(v) Planning for the Landscape Partnership legacy conference is ongoing. Conference will highlight the works accomplished since 2018 and look at planned legacy works</p>	<p>Broads Landscape Partnership Programme Manager</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>and opportunities derived from the scheme.</p> <p>(vi) Evidence for the final scheme report is being gathered and collated.</p> <p>Work is nearing completion at Mutton’s Mill. The millwright has lifted the new stocks and 2 of the sails back into place on the mill; we are awaiting his return to complete the task.</p> <p>Repair work is nearly completed at the drainage structure at the pumphouse at Strumpshaw Fen. We expect this to be complete in September.</p> <p>There has been an unexpected delay in the completion of Tom Williamson’s new book on history of the Broads, which is the final output from our work on the Broads Hidden Heritage Project. We still expect this to be completed in the next 6 months.</p> <p>Our exhibition on the history of drainage windmills in the Broads in the museum of the Broads in Stalham is currently open to the public for its second season. It will remain open through October 2023.</p> <p>Our new Changing Places toilet has been installed at Whitlingham Country Park. It is complimented by the tactile map we delivered to the park last year, and the recent works to improve the circular path around the Great Broad, which we supported last year.</p> <p>We have also received our latest tactile map from the RNIB which is soon to be installed at Beccles Quay.</p>	

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>5. Local Plan for the Broads</p> <p>Aim: To review the Local Plan for the Broads for adoption in 2024 (estimated).</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Preparation of the Preferred Options version of Local Plan (with HRA and SA) consultation – towards consultation in autumn 2023. (ii) Preparation of the Publication version of the Local Plan throughout 2024. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Policies are being drafted and taken to Planning Committee each month. Sites put forward for consideration are being assessed. (ii) On track. 	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>
<p>6. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p> <p>Aim: To run the FiPL programme and allocate Broads grants to farmers and landowners, and support the Broads and Norfolk Coast Land Management Board to allocate their funding.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2024. (ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2023. (iii) Engagement activities to showcase case studies funded through FiPL, by March 2024. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Held Land Management Board meeting on 4 September 2023; one project was approved by the Board in the Broads. In total there are 20 projects that have been approved so far this programme year. (ii) Defra has confirmed an increase in the programme budget, meaning that the grant pot for the programme is now £275,986.64. So far £209,130.40 has been allocated to grants. (iii) Juliette Howlett has joined us as our new full time Farming in 	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	Protected Landscapes Officer, to help with communication and delivery of the programme. The Defra FiPL team will visit one of our completed projects on 14 September.	
<p>7. Budget pressures</p> <p>Aim: To operate at a level in line with expected income.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <p>(i) Use January budget report for 2023/24 and the three-year horizon to continue discussions with Defra officials on future funding levels.</p> <p>(ii) Further savings and additional income (including from external funding) for 2024/25 Budget (January 2024)</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Work to start over the summer period on the 2023/24 budget. Establishment (salary) budgeting completed.</p> <p>Initial conversations held 23 August 2023 with DEFRA around potential new funding model.</p> <p>(ii) The Philanthropy Company has been appointed on behalf of the English National Parks and DEFRA to look at income generation opportunities.</p> <p>Draft second phase report received 10 July 2023, meeting to discuss scheduled for 14 July 2023.</p> <p>Legal advice sought on the Authority's ability to engage in commercial activity.</p>	<p>Chief Executive & Director of Finance</p>

2. Financial risk

- 2.1. If the Authority fails to comply with any of its obligations in the Grant Funding Agreement, DEFRA may, at its discretion, reduce, suspend or terminate payments of grant, or require any part or all of the grant to be repaid.

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Date of report: 06 September 2023

[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: all