

Broads Authority

24 November 2023

Agenda item number 8

Strategic priorities for 2024/2025 and update on strategic priorities for 2023/2024

Report by Chief Executive and Senior Governance Officer

Purpose

This report provides an update on setting the strategic priorities for 2024/2025, together with the latest progress in implementing the Authority's annual strategic priorities for 2023/2024.

Broads Plan context

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

Recommended decision

To agree the strategic priorities for 2024/2025 and note the progress in implementing the 2023/2024 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 will assist officers in compiling the information necessary to comply with that requirement.

2. Strategic priorities for 2024/2025

- 2.1. The first draft of the strategic priorities was presented to members at the Authority meeting on 28 July 2023. The updated list in Table 1 below takes account of those discussions.
- 2.2. **Table 1**
Strategic priorities 2024/2025

Strategic priority	Expected milestones	Lead officer
<p>1. Responding to climate change (Broadland Futures Initiative)</p> <p>Aim: To implement the next steps of the Broadland Futures Initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish at least two editions of the Broadland Futures Initiative BFI newsletter, by March 2025. (ii) Hold at least two meetings of the BFI Elected Members Forum, by March 2025. (iii) Various technical deliverables from BFI consultant including the new hydraulic model expected mid-2024. (iv) Engagement activities, including consultation as required. 	<p>Director of Strategic Services</p>
<p>2. Biodiversity crisis response</p> <p>Aim: Co-ordinate and implement with partners the development of strategies and projects, including the three Nature for Climate projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Endorsement of Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Strategies – timings to be confirmed by responsible authorities. (ii) To complete the “Broads Authority consideration” of biodiversity actions by 1 January 2024. This is the first requirement of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty introduced in the 2021 Environment Act for local authorities and will consider action to take by the Broads Authority to comply with the duty. (iii) To review and refresh the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy with partners by March 2025. (iv) To implement Nature for Climate Peat restoration project at Buttle Marsh within agreed budget ~£300k and timeline by March 2025. (v) To implement Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund ‘FibreBroads’ project within agreed budget ~£500k and timeline by March 2025. 	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Strategic priority	Expected milestones	Lead officer
<p>3. Local Plan for the Broads</p> <p>Aim: To produce an updated Local Plan for the Broads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Preferred Options consultation: March 2024. (ii) Publication consultation: December 2024. (iii) Submission: By end of June 2025. (iv) Adoption: By end of 2026. 	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>
<p>4. 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2025. (ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2024. (iii) Engagement activities to promote and showcase FiPL, by March 2025. 	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>
<p>5. Navigation IT</p> <p>Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop timetable and tender document by June 2024 for amendments to core system and a replacement web interface. (ii) Publish and then review tender responses by end of September 2024. (iii) Award contract (depending on affordability) and agree timescales with contractor. 	<p>Head of ICT / Collector of Tolls</p>

3. Update on strategic priorities for 2023/24

3.1. The latest update on our agreed strategic priorities for 2023/24 is in Table 2.

Table 2

Strategic priorities 2023/24– progress update

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>1. Climate Change crisis response</p> <p>Aim: To implement the next steps of the various projects tackling climate change related issues, including the 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. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 12th edition of the newsletter published in June 2023. (ii) Meeting of the Elected Members Forum (EMF) workshop on 9 October July 2023, where the list of prioritisation for the BFI objectives were agreed. (iii) On track. Some deliverables which were planned as sequential activities will be combined to bring forward the most beneficial options for specific locations. The combination will not change the overall timeline of the project. (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>Director of Strategic Services</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<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 Strategies – timings to be confirmed subject to further details expected from government. (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. (iii) Complete site selection for potential restoration, and support the submission of Restoration Grant Application, if appropriate, by 26 May 2023. 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) New Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Manager started mid-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”. A Partnership meeting is scheduled for December. (ii) The Nature for Climate Peatland Discovery project closed on 31 August 2023 and reporting is complete. (iii) A Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme Restoration Grant has been awarded for Buttle Marsh in August 2023 for ~£300k, with co-funding secured from Anglian Water Get River Positive scheme. Peatlands set to be restored to help tackle climate change - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). It aims to restore peat building conditions at Buttle Marsh by holding and transferring water across the site. <p>A further ~£500k was awarded for a Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund – FibreBroads a partnership led by the Broads Authority to grow wetland crops,</p>	<p>Environment Policy Adviser</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>engage with farmers, regulators, and fibre product developers. In addition, two further Nature for Climate partnership bids totalling ~£260k have been applied for focusing on water management and farmer collaboration.</p>	
<p>3. Navigation IT</p> <p>Aim: To replace current tolls system and provide improved online functionality.</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop timetable and specification by May 2023 (ii) Progress workplan for 2023/24 as per agreed timeline. 	<p>Status: delayed – due to long term sickness in IT team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Further to meeting with Management Team on 2 May to report on discussions with other waterways, the Navigation Committee was consulted re specific functionality on 8 June. <p>An anonymised version of the current internal system was sent to a software company for analysis as to the feasibility of updating it to run on the latest, cloud hosted, software platform.</p> <p>This work has been undertaken and a quotation received for upgrading the software. This is being reviewed with a view to the work being done in Q4 of 2023/24.</p> <p>With the scope of the project almost complete, the full specification and tender preparation are scheduled for completion by June 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Ongoing 	<p>Head of ICT/Collector of Tolls</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Monitor and report progress (July & Dec 2023). (ii) Submit quarterly claims to National Lottery Heritage Fund (April/Jul/Oct/Jan). (iii) Complete individual project plans with project partners (June) (iv) Complete final project evaluations with external scheme evaluators (September) (v) Hold project legacy partner conference (November) (vi) Prepare final project report 	<p>Status: on track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) All projects progressing well to adjusted plans. Scheme nearing close in 2024. (ii) Quarterly returns submitted on time and paid by NLHF. (iii) Most external partner projects now completed. (iv) External scheme evaluators have completed and delivered their report. (v) Planning for the Landscape Partnership legacy conference is ongoing. Conference will highlight the works accomplished since 2018 and look at planned legacy works and opportunities derived from the scheme. Will now hold in the spring to match with NLHF availability. (vi) Evidence for the final scheme report is being gathered and collated. Website is being redeveloped into its legacy, archival form. <p>Work is nearing completion at Mutton’s Mill. All four sails are now back on at the mill for the first time in many decades. We are now completing the final tasks before closing this project.</p> <p>Repair work is nearly completed at the drainage structure at the pumphouse at Strumpshaw Fen. The main channel has been rebuilt, and the new pipe installed. Water levels have been high in the River Yare, which have delayed</p>	<p>Broads Landscape Partnership Programme Manager</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
	<p>our works to the outer sluice gate walls.</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 delivered in the spring from the publisher.</p> <p>Our exhibition on the history of drainage windmills in the Broads in the museum of the Broads in Stalham has recently closed for its second year. We have agreed to keep it in place for an additional year at the museum.</p> <p>We have recently received our second tactile map for Beccles Quay, which will be installed this winter. We have also undertaken repairs to the braille map at Whitlingham, which had some recent vandalism.</p> <p>We have also partnered with SWT Carlton Marshes in the acquisition of two new all-terrain mobility scooters, to enable greater access across the reserve.</p>	
<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> <p>(i) Preparation of the Preferred Options version of Local Plan (with HRA and SA) consultation – towards consultation in autumn 2023.</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Policies are being drafted and taken to Planning Committee each month. Sites put forward for consideration are being assessed. Consultation on Preferred Options likely to be March 2024.</p>	<p>Planning Policy Officer</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
(ii) Preparation of the Publication version of the Local Plan throughout 2024.	(ii) On track.	
<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> <p>(i) Hold six Land Management Board meetings, by March 2024.</p> <p>(ii) Allocate all grant funding to projects, by December 2023.</p> <p>(iii) Engagement activities to showcase case studies funded through FiPL, by March 2024.</p>	<p>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Held Land Management Board meeting on 16 October 2023. In total there are 20 projects that have been approved so far this programme year.</p> <p>(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 £208,988.27 has been allocated to grants.</p> <p>(iii) The Defra FiPL team visited one of our completed projects on 14 September. The Catchment and Farming Officer and the FiPL Officer have been on National Park visits where they discussed the FiPL Programme.</p>	<p>Catchment & Farming Officer</p>
<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>Status: on track</p> <p>(i) Work to start over the summer period on the 2023/24 budget. Establishment (salary) budgeting completed.</p>	<p>Chief Executive & Director of Finance</p>

Themes, aims and milestones	Progress	Lead officer
<p>(ii) Further savings and additional income (including from external funding) for 2024/25 Budget (January 2024)</p>	<p>Annual review meeting with DEFRA scheduled for 20/11/23.</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>Options on level of tolls included in proposed navigation charges for 2024/25 committee reports. Considered by Navigation Committee on 2/11/23 and on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	

4. Risk implications

- 4.1. 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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[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: all