

BFI Elected Members Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023

Contents

1. Apologies for absence and welcome	2
2. Introduction to workshop	2
3. Prioritisation activity	3
4. Discussion of results and next steps	5
5. Any other business	5
6. Date of next meeting	6

Present

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

In attendance

Marie Pierre Tighe - Broads Authority, Kylie Moos - Broads Authority (minutes), Libby Bush-Jacobs, David Cobby - Jacobs, Peter Doktor - Environment Agency, Cherry Harper-Jones- Norfolk County Council, John Jones- Norfolk County Council, Felicity Monger- Jacobs, Gavin Rumsey - Environment Agency.

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies received from James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council).

2. Introduction to workshop

Gavin Rumsey (GR) introduced the workshop and explained the purpose of today. The previously agreed objectives are not currently prioritised. As the Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) Plan develops there is likely to be constraints which will require choosing between flood risk management actions that fulfil some objectives more than others. The purpose of this activity is to understand the partnership priorities and to agree the collective priorities for the objectives. GR added, it is also a valid outcome if all the objectives are equal in prioritisation.

The BFI plan objectives are based on public engagement approximately 18 months ago and various desk-based exercises. The 13 objectives fall under one of three themes; Communities are aware and involved, Places are resilient to flood risk and BFI supports sustainable growth.

A member asked what timescale the prioritisation exercise is based on, and how does the prioritisation take into account long term vs short term. Peter Doktor (PD) responded, the BFI plan is looking at the next 100 years. It would be difficult to anticipate how priorities may change over the next 100 years, this is why BFI are looking to adopt an adaptive pathways approach instead of a singular route from today to 100 years. The adaptive approach identifies key future decision points and allows for the opportunity to reappraise what are objectives are. The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan follows a similar approach with a 100 year plan which is reviewed every 10 years.

The immediate horizon of 2-10 years will shape current priorities. A member commented that agriculture is likely to see in a change in the future, but it will not be sustainable unless there are changes to the natural and built environment and to payments to farmers. Changes to the Planning Policy Framework will also direct and influence the BFI.

The Chair attended a Parish Council meeting where flooding was being discussed. Members of the public asked why measures have not been brought in to address the droughts in the area. The Chair added, it is worth considering the messaging around flooding when topical issues in Broadland are about drought.

A member commented that tidal flooding due to the rise in sea level seems more of a concern than fluvial flooding for the Broads and asked about the scenarios considered by BFI. PD responded, BFI has explored a range of scenarios looking at the outcomes of a 1.5°C to 4°C increase in global temperature. At 4°C the sea level is predicted to rise by approximately one meter by 2100. At 1.5°C, the sea level rise is expected at about half a metre. PD added, even if emissions are reduced, sea levels will still rise and have an impact on the Broads, most of which is at or below sea level.

The relationship between Mutford Lock and the Broads will be included in the hydraulic modelling.

A member suggested that all options are kept open, not knowing what may happen in the future, but it is worth considering that some of the flood risk management action costs may increase with time and will be harder to achieve. David Cobby (DC) responded, a real options analysis will be run to explore the economics and possible pathways to determine whether it is beneficial to invest now or to defer developments. For example, looking at an area of land which may need to be kept as flood storage in the future. A member added that it is just as important to consider options which are unacceptable and can be ruled out early on.

The Chair was interested to see how affordability would be considered when considering the objective prioritisation. DC responded that the prioritisation of the objectives will not affect the required conditions to secure funding or any legal obligations.

Regarding engagement, careful consideration needs to be given when looking at the language used to avoid panicking communities.

3. Prioritisation activity

DC introduced the prioritisation activity and presented the results of the online surveys. The BFI toolkit of actions to reduce flood risk is currently out for consultation with the public. The toolkit is made up of 16 actions. The actions will be assessed on how well they achieve the BFI objectives and the final score for each action will combine how well it achieves each objective and the prioritisation (weights) of the objectives.

Five EMF members completed the survey which produced a list of the BFI objectives in order of preference. The results are set out below:

1. NC1: All opportunities are taken to conserve and enhance the natural environment.
2. BE1: The built environment is more resilient; flooding is less disruptive, and recovery is faster.
3. ICM1: Flood risk and water resources are managed in an integrated way, from upstream rivers to coast.
4. EP1: Communities and stakeholders are informed and collaborate to improve resilience.
5. SA1: Flood management and sustainable agriculture are aligned to improve climate resilience.

6. CAM1: Actions are adaptable to future changes in climate.
7. CAM2: Actions are carbon neutral within the 100 year plan period.
8. CHSP1: Through enhancing the area's special qualities and landscape, people's wellbeing and sense of place is improved.
9. HW1: Surface water quality is improved, and salinity increases in freshwater environments are minimised.
10. EDV1: Pathways of actions are cost-beneficial and can be afforded.
11. EDV2: Flood management contributions to sustainable growth in the local rural and urban communities.
12. RTN1: Access to recreational and tourism activities is supported and impacts to navigation are minimised.
13. CHSP2: The historic environment, heritage assets and their settings are conserved.

A member suggested that the Upper Thurne Working Group have the opportunity to complete the survey. GR agreed to investigate the request.

A member questioned which areas are considered when referring to coastal erosion. PD confirmed, in the context of BFI, coastal erosion does not include the high coast with cliffs which is the responsibility of the local authority. Coastal erosion for BFI considers beaches and dunes as they are part of mitigating flood risk.

A member asked if a flood barrier in Great Yarmouth has been considered. PD confirmed that it is a possible action which will be considered along with other flood risk management actions.

Referring to BE1 and the built environment, a member commented that much of this objective is control by spatial planning. Another member added, if BE1 was ranked highly and prioritised then CHSP2 and the historic environment would also be protected.

A member questioned if objectives should be aspirational if they are not affordable. DC added, funding is more important in the short term when there is a good understanding of FCERM budget, but less important in the long term when the funding processes are unknown. Another member suggested that future funding pots could become available at short notice and to take advantage of the funding, projects need to be ready to go. Another member also added, if local authorities are not costing these projects and asking for funding then it will not be made available by central government. The Chair suggested prioritising the objectives to short, medium, and long term.

Members discussed if objective EDV1 should be removed from the list of objectives and instead used as a filter for all objectives. A member suggested removing 'can be afforded' from the objective description to leave the objective focused on cost benefit.

A member suggested raising the priority of objective EDV2 adding that particularly on the Norfolk Coast, rural and urban economies need to be protected. Another member responded

that there is still the option for rural and urban economies to move inland, but there are occasions where some people might make changes themselves which could increase flood risk.

Referring to CAM2 and actions being carbon neutral, members discussed if this should also be removed from the list and applied to all objectives which should all be aiming towards carbon neutrality. A member commented that to achieve some of the short term aims it may be that the actions are not carbon neutral. Future offsetting will also need to be considered under this objective. A member suggested that the objective should have a low priority over 100 years as many local authorities have already set their own targets to reach net zero.

Members discussed the importance of communities and stakeholders being informed as referenced in EP1 as soon as possible. A member noted that BFI have been engaging with local communities from the start of the initiative. Another member noted that BFI can inform communities and stakeholders, but they cannot force collaboration. Amending the wording of the objective to 'informed and engaged' was suggested. Listening to communities is also an important part of the communication and making sure that people are empowered.

A member questioned if the surface water quality which is in objective HW1 was not already covered in NC1: All opportunities are taken to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Another member commented, water quality and salinity are both referenced in HW1, but water quality should have a higher priority than salinity.

A member commented that much of today's discussions have been around the objectives which were ranked in the middle in order of priority. The highest and lowest scoring objectives have not been mentioned which suggests that there is a consensus for their position in the list, which is welcome. A member responded, they would have like to have seen BE1: The built environment is more resilient; flooding is less disruptive, and recovery is faster as the priority.

DC noted that resilience has been used across several of the objectives. Resilience is now seen as more important over the long term than protection. Resilience relies on people looking after their own assets instead of relying on authorities.

4. Discussion of results and next steps

As no formal decision was made at the end of the workshop EMF members were asked to complete two surveys. The first survey will focus on the BFI objectives in the short term; approximately until 2050. The second survey will focus on the BFI objectives in the long term; approximately 100 years to 2125. The deadline for completion is 21 July.

The surveys have the option for members to provide additional feedback in the comments section. Any members who experience difficulties accessing the survey should contact Jacobs for support.

The results from the survey will be presented to the EMF for agreement at a future meeting.

5. Any other business

No matters of any other business were raised.

6. Date of next meeting

10.00am-11.30am 9 October 2023, Microsoft Teams