

Risk, Audit and Governance Committee

24 February 2026

Agenda item number 7

External funding

Report by Chief Executive, Director of Resources and External Funding Officer

Summary

This report provides an update members on the Authority's multiple income streams and the opportunities to gain further external funding.

Broads Plan context

The availability of finance underpins all the strategic objectives of the Broads Plan.

Recommendation

To note the variety of the funding sources and the consequential need for project management, financial and administrative support for delivery of capital programme and other projects.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Authority has two main income streams: National Park Grant from Defra and Navigation income from boat owners using the waterways. While the value of the navigation income has been maintained through annual increases in charges the revenue element of National Park grant has declined in real and absolute terms – £3.4 million in 2021/22 increased by RPI would now be £4.5 million in 2025/26. In the last two years this has in part been offset by National Park capital funding of over £1.39 million in 2025/26 and £250,000 in 2024/25. Flexibility in the use of this funding by Defra has funded projects which have a wider public benefit including to the boating community. The projected income from these two sources over the next three years is shown in the following Table.

Income	2025/26	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/28
National Park revenue	£3,189,020 ¹	£3,154,020	£3,154,020	£3,154,020
National Park capital	£1,385,058	£1,420,058	£1,420,058	£1,420,058
Navigation	£4,496,984	£4,546,000	£4,583,000	£4,599,000

1.2. The streams of other funding have grown in number and complexity, split between revenue and capital.

Sources of income	Amounts 2025/26
Access for All (£10,799 carried forward from 2024/25)	£146,277
Active Travel England (carried forward from 2024/25)	£54,806
BMW sponsorship (£65,000 carried forward from 2024/25)	£95,000
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)	£339,833
RAMS Broads Responsible Recreation Programme	£176,500
	Norfolk RAMS

¹ This included a £35,000 revenue and capital swap with FiPL

Sources of income	Amounts 2025/26
	<p>Since 1/4/25 we have received £221.17.</p> <p>On 1/4/25, we passed on £1052.18 to the Norfolk-wide 'pot'.</p> <p>Suffolk RAMS Since 1/4/25 we have received £384.51.</p>
National Lottery Heritage Fund	£129,312 ²
Lowland Agricultural Peat Water Discovery Pilot	£78,441
National Parks England Nature Recovery Capital Grant	£10,881
Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund	£175,280
Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme	£188,270
Open Digital Planning Grant	£50,000
Water Restoration Fund	£205,376

2. Access for All

- 2.1. Access for All funding is for physical and digital infrastructure improvements to make Protected Landscapes more accessible for people of all ages and abilities and from all socio-economic backgrounds, creating 'places for everyone.' Funding available 2025-2026 for capital spend totalled £135,478.
- 2.2. Current projects include: £79,002 being spent on refurbishing the Acle toilet block to create an accessible space with showers; Hoveton Riverside Park improvements continue with the installation of a paddle craft launch pontoon including accessible kayak launch module at £38,881; replacing and refurbishing fishing platforms at Worlingham, improving angling accessibility for £16,836.54; finally £1,423 for revamped accessible paddle craft safety signage at launch points throughout the Broads to improve visitor experiences, highlighting alternative routes and local, accessible facilities.

² We've only had £64,656 in 25/26, remaining 50% in 26/27

3. Active Travel England

- 3.1. Active Travel England is the government's executive agency for promoting walking, wheeling and cycling. The multi-year investment fund will create 500 miles of new and upgraded routes for walking, wheeling, and cycling. It will also enable 170,000 greener, more active trips every day. These changes support the Government's Plan for Change missions: improving public health, making streets safer, and boosting economic renewal.
- 3.2. Phase One of the Active Travel England Capability Fund was completed in 2025, culminating in the production of the Broads Local Cycling, Walking, Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This Active Travel Plan proposes access schemes for improvements to walking, wheeling and cycling around the Broads, linking communities, visitor attractions and moorings. These plan development activities were funded by £100,000 from ATE direct to the Authority.
- 3.3. There are indications that Phase Two of the active Travel England Capability Fund will commence in March 2026 following an application by the Broads Authority submitted in January. Final funding amounts and confirmation are yet to be announced. Phase Two funding would see employment of an additional member of staff to help deliver the project. This role would develop relationships with a variety of active travel partners, produce design ready schemes to facilitate and increase active travel opportunities, carry out on-going consultation and public engagement events. Maintaining and updating the Broads LCWIP as a living document will be a key output of this role and Phase Two of the ATE Capability Funding.

4. BMW sponsorship

- 4.1. The BMW Recharge in Nature Funding has delivered a new car charger at the Hickling Pleasureboat Inn. The Ra and Liana are currently undergoing their refit at Landamores and are due to be back in the water for the new season. The remaining project, the installation of new Electric Pillars at Norwich Yacht station, is due to begin on the 9th of March and also be ready ahead of the new season.

5. Farming in Protected Landscapes

- 5.1. The Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme supports bottom-up projects delivered by farmers and land managers in the Broadland catchment. The projects help to mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide public access opportunities, and support nature-friendly farming. The programme is funded by Defra and administered by the National Park. In 2025/26, we received a one-year extension to the programme with a total budget allocation of £339,833.00. This was split into £260,833.00 for (capital) project delivery, and £79,000.00 for programme administration. We have supported 25 projects, ranging from water use efficiency improvements to educational items for school farm visits.

6. RAMS Broads Responsible Recreation Programme

- 6.1. The **Broads Responsible Recreation Programme** focuses on safeguarding the Broads internationally important wetlands from the growing recreational pressures because of development around the Broads. Reducing environmental impacts from visitor activity while supporting sustainable enjoyment of the Broads is our focus. Key measures include expanding the electric boat charging network, with four new charging pillars planned at Ludham Bridge by 2027 and other potential future sites, subject to funding. The programme also includes the installation and use of watercraft decontamination facilities from 2026 to safely manage antifouling, fuel residues and other contaminants, alongside engagement with marine operators to promote best practice, reduce pollution, and trial solutions for abandoned and end-of-life vessels.
- 6.2. Alongside infrastructure, the programme delivers strong education, outreach and engagement. This includes a schools and youth project linking young people to protected sites and supporting youth-led campaigns, as well as the provision of responsible recreation information for all hire boats and visitor centres from 2026. A dedicated Responsible Visiting webpage will launch in 2027, followed by a Sustainable Tourism Business Guide in 2028. Broads Rangers will deliver around ten engagement events annually, reaching hundreds of people, supported by social media campaigns and targeted messaging on biosecurity, pollution, wildlife disturbance, speed reduction, and wildfire risk. Together, these actions aim to foster long-term behaviour change, protect sensitive habitats, and balance recreation with conservation across the Broads.

7. Local Plan Delivery

- 7.1. The Local Plan for the Broads is likely to be submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate mid-February 2026. This funding will be used to pay for the various elements of the examination such as printing, advertising in the press, paying for the Inspector's time and paying for the input of various consultants as required.

8. National Lottery Heritage Fund

- 8.1. In October 2025 we were awarded a total grant of £129,312 for the Broads Heritage Partnership: A Vision for the Future project. This Landscape Connections funding allows us to bring together a new expanded partnership to develop a long-term vision for the heritage of the Broads. This work is the first in step towards the next phase of development work for the Landscape Connections scheme.

9. Lowland Agricultural Peat Discovery Pilot

- 9.1. The Broads Water Level Management project supports Net Zero by reducing emissions from lowland agricultural peat through collaborative, farmer-led water management. Using the Broads water table model, machine learning, and costed feasibility studies, the project will develop practical water management plans across whole hydrological blocks at Upton, Beccles Marsh, and Langley Abbey. Delivered with partners, it shares

learning through workshops and a water-focused conference and launch the Broads Peat Partnership, a [webpage](#) and a series of [Podcasts: Broadland Speaking](#) to strengthen engagement and long-term collaboration.

We are awaiting the announcement of new peatland restoration funding in spring 2026, which will help shape the next phase of delivery.

10. National Parks England Nature Recovery Capital Grant

10.1. In October 2025 we began the Broads ROV Test & Trial Project which is funded by a grant of £10,881 from the NPE Nature Recovery Capital Grant. The project is a test and trial initiative using an underwater ROV to improve the management of our Protected Landscape. The goal is to generate proven best practices and a compelling business case, enabling other Protected Landscapes to adopt this safe and cost-effective technology and unlock new capabilities for their own waterways.

11. Nature for Climate Paludiculture Exploration Fund

11.1. In 2025/26 we have received additional funding from Natural England to extend the original two -year FibreBroads project for the duration this financial year. The project focuses on advancing Paludiculture in the Broads. Key activities include: engagement with landowners, farmers and the public; spatial opportunity mapping for Paludiculture; assessing the availability of reed resources across East Anglia, evaluating both their current and future potential for thatching; sharing and learning operational methods and techniques used in large scale reed harvesting in the UK and Netherlands as well as contracting ADAS to update an economic model for reed and the development of an acoustic panel product using reed and miscanthus fibres.

12. Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme

12.1. This is funding the Buttle Marsh Project. The Project has had to be reduced in scope due to challenges with the Eel Regulations, which have meant we have not been able to install a windpump as planned. The sluice installation and raised bund along the southern end are still planned, and will be delivered by the end of this financial year.

13. Open Digital Planning (ODP) Grant

13.1. Digital Planning Improvement Fund is to support Local Planning Authority's to start a five-step improvement journey that begins with a digital planning maturity assessment, followed by an action plan and access to training and peer support through ODP, a community of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) supported by the programme.

13.2. LPAs work to improve and publish four spatial datasets (Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, Article 4 Directions) to the programme.

14. Water Restoration Fund

14.1. In April 2025 we began work on the project *Broads Catchment Partnership Development Plan*, which is being delivered as part of a grant of £205,376.49 from the Water Restoration Fund and administered by the Rural Payments Agency. This funding supports the development of a comprehensive project plan for the Broadland Catchment, the development of a replicable well-established monitoring programme for the Waveney catchment, a monitoring plan for the Broadland catchment with an analysis of gaps and areas in need of more analysis, and the development of innovative virtual environments to model collective evidence and potential interventions.

15. Financial implications

15.1. Each funder's rules vary on the grants awarded and the evidence required to satisfy these. Natural England grants for nature for climate require additional auditing which has been carried out by internal audit and the costs reimbursed by the projects. Staff recharges often form part of these projects and it is important to ensure that double funding has not occurred. It is not uncommon for claim deadlines for the various projects to fall at the same time.

16. Conclusion

16.1. External funding will never replace core revenue however carefully selected projects should support the Authority's strategic priorities and the Broads Plan.

16.2. Future funding bids must incorporate potential audits and the impact on staff resources, be it project management, financial or administrative support. This includes back filling posts to enable other key tasks to continue. Where possible claim deadlines should be negotiated to avoid pinch points.

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[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: These diverse sources of funding support many of the activities identified in the Broads Plan