

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Report title:	Norwich River Wensum Strategy - Adoption
Date of meeting:	7 September 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services
Strategic impact Working with Norwich City Council, the Broads Authority, Norwich Society and other stakeholders to maximise the potential of the River Wensum to drive economic, social and environmental improvements within the city.	

Executive summary

This report feeds back on the recent public and stakeholder consultation on the draft strategy and sets out the revised strategy for endorsement by the Committee.

Recommendations:

To adopt the River Wensum Strategy on behalf of Norfolk County Council.

1. Proposal

- 1.1. The River Wensum Strategy Partnership (RWSP) was created in December 2014 to develop a strategy for the River Wensum in Norwich in order to maximise its potential for regeneration, in particular by encouraging greater access to the river corridor, enhancing its natural and built environment and biodiversity value, and by stimulating business and economic activity. The RWSP is led and project managed by the City Council. Partners comprise the Broads Authority, Norfolk County Council, Environment Agency, and the Wensum River Parkway Partnership. One of the key aims of the strategy is identification of funding opportunities and potential to attract private sector investment in the City's river corridor.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to present the proposed final version of the River Wensum Strategy (Appendices 1 and 2) for adoption by the Committee. This is a long term strategy to facilitate positive change in the river corridor, by helping to change perceptions of the City as a visitor destination, improving the quality of life, and acting as an economic driver to attract external investment and contribute to the City's regeneration.
- 1.3. The next step for the Strategy is to widen the engagement to include more stakeholders and in particular the business community. This will include working with the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce to investigate creating business opportunities in the River Wensum within the City boundaries. There is potential for sponsorship of some of the planned projects by business.

2. Evidence

- 2.1. The strategy proposed for adoption is the culmination of sustained partnership working by the partners in the River Wensum Strategy

Partnership (RWSP) since late 2014. The city council has project managed the process, and all partners have contributed to the development of the strategy through regular Working Group and Project Board meetings.

- 2.2. Over the past couple of years the RWSP has consulted the public and stakeholders on issues and opportunities for the river corridor (in 2015) and on a draft strategy document (in 2017).
- 2.3. Following the most recent consultation a revised draft strategy was produced. In its production the RWSP considered feedback from the consultation and from the stakeholders. This has now been incorporated in the final strategy document.
- 2.4. The revised strategy has taken on board many of the consultation responses. Overall, the strategy is not proposed to be fundamentally changed from the draft version published in 2017. The revised strategy still has the same key themes as the draft: management and partnership working, access for walking and cycling, waterways access, and environment, with the overall aim of regenerating the river corridor. In terms of delivery, the revised strategy continues to stress the importance of working in partnership with key stakeholders to implement policies and proposals, and the importance of seeking external project funding.
- 2.5. However there are several changes of emphasis in the revised document, set out in detail in the Panel report. In particular, the strategy has been revised to clarify that its focus is not just on the city centre to east Norwich area but that it includes a number of potential projects in the area upstream of New Mills. Other changes highlight the importance of the natural and built environment, including the historic environment in the river corridor, and inclusion of assessment criteria for assessment of potential projects. Greater reference is also added into the strategy to encourage the active participation of local communities and stakeholders in project delivery where appropriate. The action plan has been amended by deletion of a project to complete the missing link of riverside walk between Fye Bridge and Whitefriars Bridge, although the principle of completing this link will remain a proposal in the local plan and an aspiration in the River Wensum Strategy.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. Funding is being explored for projects in the action plan and a number of them can be found in the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan. All will be delivered through securing new funding. Key potential funding sources include Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Anglian Water, Heritage Lottery Fund and sponsorship. The latter will include exploring civic crowdfunding initiatives such as [Crowdfund Norwich](#), set up by the City Council to support community groups, social enterprises and charities.

The River Wensum Strategy has many potential benefits for the city of Norwich and the County Council, its partners, residents, and visitors to the city. The Strategy's objectives are to help:

- **Attract external investment:** the strategy will act as a basis for funding bids; its emphasis on working closely with key partners and stakeholders is likely to improve access to funding opportunities.
- **Support growth:** Delivery of enhanced green infrastructure along the river corridor will support the major housing and employment growth planned for the city centre and east Norwich.

- **Support the local economy:** a more accessible river corridor with a high quality public realm will help boost the local economy, both by providing a backdrop more attractive to the relocation and creation of business in the creative sector and also by attracting tourists and visitors with benefits to Norwich's shopping, heritage and visitor attractions.
- **Reduce inequalities:** the strategy has potential health and recreational benefits for existing communities adjacent to the river, some of which suffer from high levels of deprivation and health inequalities.
- **Address management and maintenance of the river corridor:** The strategy will not add to the council's management and maintenance liabilities. Through more streamlined management of the river corridor, issues such as illegal mooring should be resolved more quickly and help reduce related costs. There is also potential for involving volunteers and local communities in delivery, which has the potential for reducing management and maintenance costs.
- **Generate income:** The strategy has potential to assist with income generation for the city, for example by creating the conditions to increase activity in the river corridor and support the use of council owned river infrastructure, thus leading to increased revenue.

4. Funding Conclusions and next steps

- 4.1. The revised strategy provides a clear vision and set of objectives for the area, and proposes a set of policies and projects that will help to bring about sustainable regeneration of the river corridor for the benefit of the city council, its partners, residents, businesses and visitors to the city. Following adoption by partners, a strategy launch event is planned for autumn 2018 to focus the attention of partners and stakeholders on the implementation of the strategy's policies and proposals.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

Officer name : **Andy Hutcheson**

Tel No. : **222767**

Email address : andrew.hutcheson@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.