

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Item No.

Report title:	River Wensum Strategy Public Consultation
Date of meeting:	19 January 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 outlines the main contents of the draft River Wensum Strategy and provides details of the recent public consultation.

Recommendations:

To endorse the vision and objectives of the draft River Wensum Strategy and to support the ongoing partnership working.

1. Proposal

- 1.1. The emerging River Wensum Strategy recognises that the River Wensum is a valuable asset to the city of Norwich with a rich heritage and great potential to drive wider economic, social and environmental improvements. The development of the River Wensum Strategy is an opportunity 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. One of the key aims of the strategy is identification of funding opportunities and potential to attract private sector investment to the river corridor.
- 1.2. The River Wensum Strategy is a partnership project led and managed by Norwich City Council with the County Council is represented on the Strategy steering group by the Environment Service. The county council has significant assets in the river corridor in terms of buildings, including Norwich Castle and Wensum Lodge.
- 1.3. Other partners are the Broads Authority, the Norwich Society, and the Environment Agency.
- 1.4. The draft River Wensum Strategy went out to Public Consultation between July and September 2017. The responses are currently being considered with the intention that the final strategy will be produced in Spring 2018.

2. Evidence

2.1. The strategy's overarching vision for the river corridor is to:

'Breathe new life into the river by enhancing it for the benefit of all and increasing access to, and greater use of, this important asset. The river will once again play an important part in the growth and vitality of the city, strengthening the visitor economy and helping to give the city a competitive advantage in attracting inward investment'.

2.2. 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.

2.3. The strategy looks ahead for a ten year period, and includes an action plan focused on the first three years to kick-start regeneration of the river corridor. The strategy contents have been informed by the previous issues and opportunities consultation, and through ongoing dialogue between partners and stakeholders.

2.4. The full draft strategy is available on the Norwich City Council's [website](#).

3. Financial Implications

3.1. None arising from this report. Once the strategy is finalised it is anticipated that the County Council would continue to be involved in the delivery process and

may lead on actions or sub-projects as appropriate.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. The strategy also addresses maintenance and management issues relating to the river Wensum where it flows through the urban area. Projects within the draft strategy will not add to any financial burden of the County Council and it is anticipated that, through more partnership working and streamlined management of the river corridor, management issues should be resolved more quickly and could help reduce related costs for all partners.

5. Background

- 5.1. The public consultation was held between July and September 2017. There were over 250 on-line responses and around 25 written responses. The majority of the responses, over 79%, were supportive of the objectives and vision of the draft strategy.
- 5.2. There has been a good coverage of organisations which provided responses including partners, Historic England, Visit Norwich, RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, riverside landowners including Norwich Playhouse, Friends groups of Train Wood and the Marlpit, user groups such as anglers, canoeists, developers, and residents groups including from St Edmund's Wharf, Old Millers Wharf and Quayside.
- 5.3. Analysis of responses is currently being undertaken. Overall the responses are very supportive although many additional detailed comments were made.
- 5.4. The Culture & Heritage Services of the County Council responded to the consultation, strongly supporting the River Wensum Strategy and the vision which is set out within. The synergies between the strategy and Norwich Castle Keep Project, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Strangers' Hall, and Wensum lodge were re-iterated.
- 5.5. Officers from the Environment Service of the County Council have been involved in developing the strategy, supporting the intention to improve green infrastructure alongside the river, with benefits to health and well-being. Specifically the County Council will work with the City council towards completing the Riverside Walk and to integrate the river through the city with the promoted Norfolk Trails: the Marriott's Way to the north and the Wherryman's Way downstream.

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:

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