

Report to Cabinet
13 June 2018
Report of Director of regeneration and development
Subject River Wensum Strategy

Item

8

KEY DECISION

Purpose

This report feeds back on the recent public and stakeholder consultation on the draft strategy and from the recent meeting of Sustainable Development Panel, and sets out the revised strategy for endorsement by cabinet.

Recommendation

To adopt the River Wensum Strategy on behalf of the city council.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority a safe, clean and low carbon city, a healthy city, a fair city, and value for money services.

Financial implications

None arising from this report.

Ward/s: Multiple Wards, including Wensum, Mile Cross, Mancroft and Thorpe Hamlet.

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. The River Wensum is a valuable asset to the city, with a rich heritage, and has great potential to drive wider economic, social and environmental improvements.
2. 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. Councillor Stonard is the member lead and chairs the RWSP Project Board. Partners comprise the Broads Authority, Norfolk County Council, Environment Agency, and the Wensum River Parkway Partnership.
3. The purpose of this report is to present the proposed final version of the River Wensum Strategy for adoption by cabinet. 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.
4. The strategy's executive summary is set out at Appendix 1 for information.

The final strategy

5. The strategy proposed for adoption is the culmination of sustained partnership working by the city council and its 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. Cllr Stonard has been actively involved in the process in his role as chair of the Project Board.
6. 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).
7. Following the most recent consultation a revised draft strategy was considered by Sustainable development panel at its meeting on 21 March 2018. The panel considered feedback from the consultation, endorsed the revised River Wensum Strategy, and recommended that cabinet adopt the document, subject to an amendment to the environment objective to include reference to water quality. This has now been incorporated in the final strategy document.
8. Feedback from the recent consultation is set out in the report to Sustainable Development Panel on 21 March 2018, available on the council website, see [here](#). There was a very positive level of response from the public consultation demonstrating a strong public interest in the strategy from local residents, key public bodies, the business community and stakeholder groups. The committee report shows that analysis of the comments overall is very supportive of the draft strategy.
9. 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 strategy: 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.

10. 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.
11. Following the Panel meeting in March several further changes have been identified as necessary to the action plan in section 8 of the strategy document. These changes relate to timescales for specific projects, to reflect some potential slippage in likely implementation. The action plan as proposed to be revised is set out in appendix 2.
12. The revised strategy document and annex are available on the council's website as a meeting document of cabinet 13 June 2018 available [here](#).

Conclusions and next steps

13. 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. It will help to:
 - (a) 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.
 - (b) 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.
 - (c) 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.
 - (d) 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.
 - (e) 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.
 - (f) Generate income: The strategy has potential to assist with income generation for the city council, for example by creating the conditions

to increase activity in the river corridor and support the use of council owned river infrastructure, such as some of its pontoons, thus leading to increased revenue.

14. It is therefore recommended that cabinet approves the revised River Wensum Strategy for adoption by the council. The strategy will also be reported to the committees of the partner bodies during the summer for adoption.
15. 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.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with the completion of the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	13 June 2018
Director / Head of service	Dave Moorcroft
Report subject:	River Wensum Strategy adoption
Date assessed:	24 May 2018

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct financial impacts for the council from adoption of the strategy
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and its implementation should help support the local economy and attract external investment
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and its implementation should improve management of the river corridor and help reduce anti-social behaviour
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and its implementation should have positive health and recreational benefits for existing communities beside the river, some of which have high levels of deprivation and health inequalities

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and its implementation should have benefits for existing communities beside the river, and assist with community cohesion
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and implementation of action plan projects should have positive impacts by improving access to and on the river for residents and visitors
Natural and built environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and implementation of action plan projects should have positive impacts for the natural and built environment
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no direct impacts from adoption of the strategy
Energy and climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adoption of the strategy and implementation of action plan projects should have positive impacts for the climate change

	Impact			
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impacts

Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
Adoption of the strategy and its implementation will have a range of positive impacts as set out above.
Negative
No negative impacts have been identified
Neutral
A number of neutral impacts have been identified, where there are no direct impacts arising from adoption.
Issues
None identified other than those highlighted above.

Executive summary

About the River Wensum

The River Wensum runs through the heart of Norwich and was once the centre of city life and industry. However as the city has changed the focus of activity has moved away from the river. Now very little activity is currently evident on the river itself or on the open spaces beside it.

But the river is now cleaner and greener than in the past. It now enjoys much improved public access, with 11km of riverside walk created since the 1970s and three new bridges built since 2001. It is a short walk from one of the most vibrant city centres in the country, and adjacent to Norwich University of the Arts. It runs through the most historic part of the city centre with many nearby notable landmarks including Norwich Cathedral, The Halls, Fye Bridge and Bishop's Bridge.

A thriving riverside environment with improved access and a high quality public realm has the potential to greatly benefit the city and wider Norwich area. The River Wensum Strategy is a long-term strategy aimed at facilitating change and regeneration 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 Norwich's regeneration.

About the River Wensum Strategy Partnership

A new partnership has been established to develop a strategy to revitalise the River Wensum. The River Wensum Strategy Partnership (RWSP) is led by Norwich City Council working alongside the Broads Authority, Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency, and the Wensum River Parkway Partnership.

The RWSP has consulted with other stakeholders and the public to help it shape a 10 year strategy and a 3 year action plan. It is anticipated that a final strategy will be adopted by the RWSP members in mid 2018.

The strategy vision

The strategy covers the River Wensum corridor from the city council boundary at Hellesdon in the west to Whitlingham Country Park in the east. The vision 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. An enhanced river corridor, with its unique natural and historic environment, 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'.

The objectives are for delivering the vision are:

- improving the management of the river corridor and its surroundings for the benefit of the city, residents of the wider Norwich area, and visitors;
- increasing access to, and use of, the area by all, including enhanced connectivity with the Norfolk Trails network;
- enhancing the natural environment, biodiversity and green infrastructure;
- enhancing the city's environmental, cultural and historic offer in a manner which maximises the attractiveness of the area as a location to do business;
- enhancing the historic environment, ensuring its long term conservation where practicable, and making the most of the unique and significant heritage assets within the river corridor;
- addressing social deprivation and inequalities;
- maximising the efficiency of public expenditure in the river corridor, where possible reducing the pressure on stretched public sector budgets; and
- identifying and exploiting external funding opportunities including private sector investment.

The draft strategy proposals:

Management

A well-managed river corridor, with effective joint working between partners, is a prerequisite for the regeneration of the river corridor and to maximise benefits to the city and wider area. Management proposals (set out in section three) include:

- Clarification of Partners' roles and responsibilities to make it easier for stakeholders and the public to know who to contact.
- Establishment of delivery arrangements including a delivery board to oversee day-to-day management of the river, and a strategic board to oversee implementation and monitoring, involving joint working with key delivery partners.
- Working with local stakeholder groups and those who live and work in the vicinity of the river to help deliver the strategy.
- Ensuring that ongoing maintenance is addressed fully for all projects and proposals to make sure that they do not add to ongoing public maintenance expenditure.

Access and leisure

A key strategy theme is increasing access to the river corridor, including enhancing connectivity with the Norfolk Trails network (section four), and encouraging greater leisure and commercial use of the river itself (section five). Proposed access measures will encourage increased use of the river corridor by commuters and leisure users, and help to create the conditions for local businesses to thrive through increased footfall and activity including event and festivals, whilst supporting health initiatives which encourage activity.

Proposals include:

- Completion of the riverside walk between New Mills and Trowse Swing Bridge, including construction of the key 'missing link' of the Riverside Walk between Duke's Palace and St George's Street
- Improvements to the accessibility of the Riverside Walk downstream of New Mills making it accessible for people of all ages and abilities, and enhanced signage between the river and key tourist and visitor locations including the city centre
- An improved cycle crossing of the Barn Road roundabout to encourage greater commuting and leisure usage of the Marriotts Way and the Riverside Walk
- Enhanced links with the Broads network at Whitlingham Country Park in the longer term
- Enhancement of existing, and creation of new, river infrastructure. This includes an improved slipway at Friar's Quay and enhanced moorings at the Yacht station. New short-stay visitor moorings are proposed in a number of locations including Quayside and between Carrow Bridge and Lady Julian Bridge. The strategy also encourages improved canoeing infrastructure including new canoe access points at New Mills
- Enhancement of angling access and fish habitat
- Promotion of river events and trails including a proposed river festival.

Environment

The strategy aims to improve the natural and historic environment, the public realm and open spaces near to the river (section six). The river is a wildlife corridor and its sensitive enhancement has the potential to improve ecology and biodiversity in the heart of the city. Proposals include:

- Improvements to water quality in specific stretches of the river including a proposal to reduce the levels of oils and fats entering the river from food related businesses in the Magdalen Street/Fye Bridge Street area
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity of the river and riverbanks including proposals for floating vegetation platforms; a biodiversity enhancement and non-invasive species management plan to manage non-native species; and an eel pass at New Mills to assist with migration of this protected species (which has now been installed)
- Improvements to open spaces adjacent to the river to maximise their use for leisure and recreation as well as enhancing biodiversity and heritage features where appropriate.
- Conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment and individual designated and non-designated heritage assets along the riverbank.

Ideas for the future

The strategy also identifies some potential projects as opportunities for the future (section seven), which may be developed in the strategy lifetime as opportunities arise. These include the historic New Mills pumping house, the medieval Boom

Towers and city walls/wooded ridge in east Norwich, Mary Chapman Court riverside site in the northern city centre, and Wensum Park. These potential opportunities require detailed investigation in order to establish feasibility and costings.

Action plan and funding

The strategy aims to facilitate regeneration of the river corridor in the longer term, but includes an action plan with a number of projects considered capable of delivery in the short to medium term (approximately three years) to kickstart the process of positive change. The action plan also includes an assessment of potential project suggestions in order to identify additional projects for future delivery. It is a living document and will be updated as required.

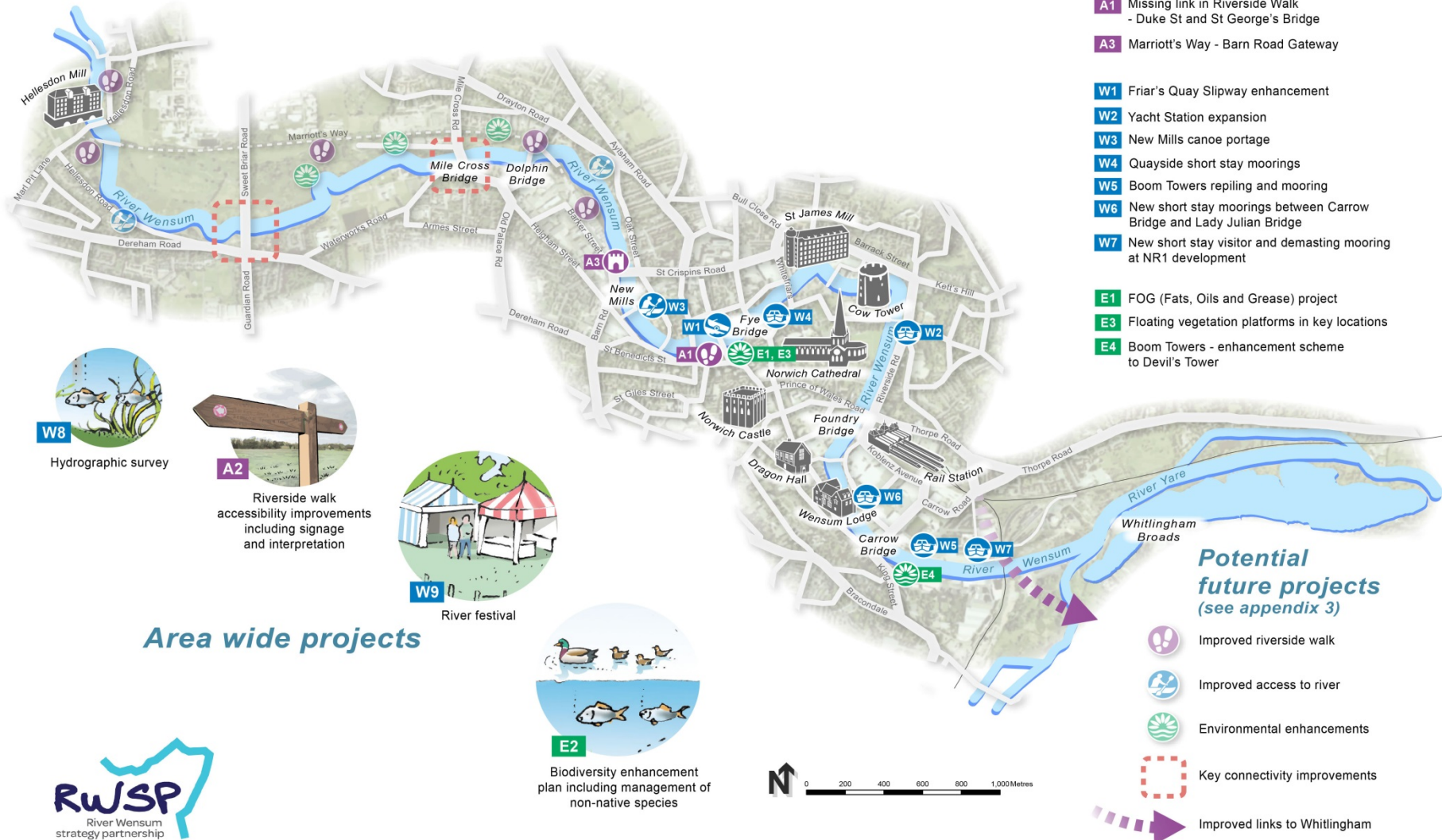
The strategy proposes working with external partners and relevant stakeholders and community groups to attract funding to the river corridor. Potential sources of project funding for action plan projects include Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Anglian Water, and the Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership. Other sources of funding will be applied for as projects develop.

Strategy benefits

The strategy will have a range of economic, social, environmental and heritage benefits including:

- Increased access to the river corridor and an enhanced public realm for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors
- Boosting the local economy by providing an environment conducive to the establishment and growth of various creative businesses and by attracting tourists and visitors with benefits to Norwich's shopping, heritage and visitor attractions
- Improved green infrastructure to support the delivery of major housing growth planned for the city centre and east Norwich areas
- Providing health and recreational benefits for the existing communities adjacent to the river, some of which suffer from high levels of deprivation and health inequalities
- Improved natural environment and biodiversity in the river corridor, acting as a green lung in the heart of the city
- Identification of funding opportunities and potential for private sector investment, through focused attention on the river.

Summary of projects & key opportunities



Revised action plan

Theme	Reference	Project	Anticipated delivery	Lead authority
Walking and Cycling Access	A1	Missing link in Riverside Walk between Duke St and St George's Bridge	2019/20	Norwich City Council (NCC)
	A2	Riverside walk accessibility improvements including signage and interpretation	Ongoing (2017/18 – 2018/19)	NCC
	A3	Marriott's Way - Barn Road gateway	Ongoing (2017/18 – 2019/20)	Norfolk County Council
Waterways Access and Leisure	W1	Friar's Quay slipway enhancement	2021/22	Broads Authority (BA)/NCC
	W2	Yacht station expansion	2020/21	BA/NCC
	W3	New Mills Canoe portage	2020/21	BA/NCC
	W4	Quayside short stay moorings	2021/22	BA/NCC
	W5	Boom towers repiling and mooring	2019/20	BA/NCC
	W6	New short-stay moorings between Carrow Bridge and Lady Julian Bridge	2019/20	BA/NCC

Theme	Reference	Project	Anticipated delivery	Lead authority
	W7	New short stay visitor and demasting mooring at the NR1 Development	2019/20	BA/NCC
	W8	Hydrographic survey for dredging	2019/20	BA
	W9	River festival	2019/20 (at earliest)	NCC
Environment	E1	FOG (Fats Oils and Grease) project	2019/20	Environment Agency (lead) and Anglian Water
	E2	Biodiversity enhancement plan including management of non-native species	Ongoing (2018/19)	EA / NWT
	E3	Floating vegetation platforms in key locations (and as part of new development)	Pilot – 2018/19	Environment Agency
	E4	Boom Towers - enhancement scheme to Devil's Tower	2019/20	NCC
Project assessment		Assess all proposed projects against assessment matrix	2018/19	RWSP