



NORWICH City Council

Committee Name: Cabinet
Committee Date: 08/12/2021
Report Title: River Wensum Strategy Update 2021

Portfolio: Councillor Stonard, Cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth

Report from: Head of planning and regulatory services

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide an update on the progress of the River Wensum Strategy since its adoption in 2018.

Recommendation:

To note the progress that has been made to date on delivering the River Wensum Strategy, and the Delivery Plan which sets out priorities going forward.

Policy Framework

The Council has three corporate priorities, which are:

- People living well
- Great neighbourhoods, housing and environment
- Inclusive economy

This report meets the people living well, great neighbourhoods, housing and environment and inclusive economy corporate priorities.

This report addresses the following strategic actions in the Corporate Plan:

- Provide means for people to lead healthy, connected, fulfilling lives, particularly those who are most vulnerable
- Ensure there is a range of cultural, leisure and social opportunities and activities which are accessible to all.
- Maintain a clean and sustainable city with a good local environment that people value
- Ensure our services mitigate against any adverse effects of climate change and are efficient to reduce carbon emissions
- Continue sensitive regeneration of the city that retains its unique character and meets local needs
- Mobilise activity and investment that promotes a growing, diverse, innovative and resilient economy.

This report helps to meet the following objectives of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan:

- Housing, regeneration and development
- Climate change and the green economy
- Business and the Local Economy

Report Details

1. In 2018, the [River Wensum Strategy](#) was adopted by Norwich City Council. The document was produced by the River Wensum Strategy Partnership which is led by Norwich City Council, and includes representation from Norfolk County Council, the Broads Authority, the Environment Agency and the Norwich Society, as well as input from other external stakeholders. The River Wensum Strategy Board oversees implementation and monitors outcomes of the Strategy, and is chaired by Cllr Stonard. The Delivery Board meets on a regular basis to ensure the delivery of individual projects and effective management of the river corridor, and reports to the Strategy Board.
2. The overall vision of the Strategy is to breathe new life into the river by
3. 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 in-ward investment.
4. The River Wensum Strategy sets out a number of objectives to help deliver the vision. These are set out in section 2 of [the document](#). The Strategy also includes an action plan with projects capable of being delivered in the short to medium term to fulfil the objectives and vision. The action plan identifies future projects and is intended to be a living document requiring updates as necessary.
5. Since the adoption of the Strategy in 2018, progress has been made on delivering projects despite the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and changing resources and priorities at each of the partner organisations.
6. The River Wensum Strategy Partnership have produced the [Delivery Plan 2021 \(appendix 1\)](#). This document provides an update on the status of the projects identified in the 2018 Strategy, sets out the delivery priorities for the strategy over the next 2 years and identifies projects to be delivered over the longer term. The Delivery Plan is also an opportunity to identify any new projects or initiatives that the River Wensum Strategy can deliver or collaborate on to deliver the vision and objectives. In summary, the Delivery Plan contains:
 - a. Updates on each of the projects included in the River Wensum Strategy
 - b. Details of any newly identified opportunities
 - c. Criteria for prioritising projects for future delivery
 - d. An updated action plan outlining the short, medium and long term delivery priorities.

7. As per paragraph 5a, the Delivery Plan includes details of projects that have been completed or have progressed since the adoption of the Strategy. These include:
 - a. Marriott's 'Way/Barn Road Gateway – this project involved enhancing access to the Marriott's Way route by improving legibility from the Barn Road roundabout entrance through removal of overgrown vegetation, upgrading fencing and enhancing public realm space. This was completed in 2019 and the project was led by Norwich City Council.
 - b. New Mills Canoe Portages – this project involved the installation of two low freeboard pontoons either side of New Mills sluice gate to allow users of the river to safely enter and exit the river in this location. This project was completed in 2020 by the Broads Authority.
 - c. New Mills Eel Pass – this project involved the installation of an up-and-over pump to allow eels to pass the New Mills sluice gate and have access to further reaches of the river. These eels would otherwise be stuck downstream with no hope of progressing upstream to complete their life cycle. This project was completed in 2018 by the Environment Agency.
 - d. NR1 moorings – short-stay and de-masting moorings have been installed as part of a nearby development (NR1 housing development which includes Brennan Bank, Lockhead Bank, Robinson Bank, Nethercott Bank and Gavin Bank).
 - e. Hydrographic survey – this project involved a survey to assess current dredging requirements and inform future dredging operations. The survey was carried out in 2017 led by the Broads Authority. The survey showed that the Wensum was not highest priority for dredging but a section up to Trowse Bridge was dredged in 2020.
 - f. Riverside walk 'missing link' – this project is currently in development and aims to complete a section of Riverside Walk between Duke's Palace and St George's Street bridges adjacent to Norwich University of the Arts. An initial consultation exercise has been undertaken and funding bids have been submitted. This project is being led by Norfolk County Council.
 - g. Riverside walk accessibility – this project is currently in development and was delayed due to the pandemic. The project includes installing additional signage to improve wayfinding and legibility of Riverside Walk through the City up to New Mills. CIL funding has been secured for this project and design and tender work is due to commence in 2022. This project is being led by Norwich City Council.
8. The Delivery Plan also outlines other potential opportunities which can add value to the river corridor and help to deliver the objectives of the Strategy. Such opportunities include the East Norwich redevelopment, which aims to create a sustainable new quarter of the city with new housing and employment development and has the opportunity to add more life and activity to the river as well as offering improvements to walking and cycling, including connecting the City with Whitlingham Country Park.
9. In addition to focusing on project delivery, the River Wensum Strategy Partnership have also been working on some additional communications with the Norwich City Council Communications team:

- a. As a way of communicating the successful completion of projects delivered as part of the Strategy and Delivery Plan, the City Council's website will be updated with 'completed projects' pages. These pages will include photographs, and details such as which organisation led on the project, when it was completed and how it was funded.
- b. A strategy map was produced as part of the original Strategy document showing each of the planned projects and their locations across the City. As the Delivery Plan has now updated the list of project opportunities, the map will also be updated and included on the City Council's website.
- c. More use is to be made of the City Council's social media presence to promote both the River Wensum Strategy and associated activities, news and information about the river corridor.

10. Despite the challenges of the last 18 months, the River Wensum Strategy Partnership have progressed and completed a number of projects identified in the Strategy document. Going forwards, the Partnership's focus will be on the continued delivery of projects identified in the Delivery Plan, continuing to identify new opportunities to help deliver the objectives of the Strategy, and continuing to communicate the work of the Partnership group to members and the public.

Consultation

11. Extensive public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken between 2015 and 2017 before the final Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in June 2018.
12. Continued consultation and joint working within the Partnership takes place through the regular meetings of the Strategy and Delivery Boards.
13. In addition, Cllr Stonard as the relevant portfolio holder is kept up to date with the Strategy work.

Implications

Financial and Resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Budget.

14. This is a report for information. There are no financial or resource implications arising from this report.

Legal

15. This is a report for information. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	This information report does not have any direct implications for the council's equality and diversity considerations.
Health, Social and Economic Impact	This information report does not have any direct implications for the council's health, social and economic impacts considerations.
Crime and Disorder	This information report does not have any direct implications for the council's crime and disorder considerations.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	This information report does not have any direct implications for the council's children and adults safeguarding considerations.
Environmental Impact	This information report does not have any direct implications for the council's environmental impact considerations.

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
This is a report for information and therefore there are no associated risks arising from this report.	N/A	N/A]

Other Options Considered

16. This is a report for information. No other options have been considered.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

17. It is recommended that Cabinet note the progress that has been made to date on delivering the River Wensum Strategy and notes the Delivery Plan which sets out priorities going forward.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

[1 River Wensum Strategy Delivery Plan 2021](#)

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