

# Greater Norwich Growth Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Thursday 30 March 2023

**Time:** 2.00pm

**Venue:** County Hall, Council Chamber

## **Present:**

### **Board Members:**

Cllr John Fuller (Chairman)

Cllr Shaun Vincent

Cllr Alan Waters

Cllr Graham Plant

### **Organisation**

South Norfolk Council

Broadland District Council

Norwich City Council

Norfolk County Council

### **Officers**

Phil Courtier

Broadland and South Norfolk  
Councils

David Cumming

Norfolk County Council

Trevor Holden

Broadland and South Norfolk  
Councils

Helen Terry

Norfolk County Council

Graham Nelson

Norwich City Council

### **Also in attendance:**

Grace Burke

Greater Norwich Project Team  
Leader

Ruth Oyeniyi

Greater Norwich Senior Project  
Officer

Thomas Cushan

Greater Norwich Project Officer

James Overy

Broadland and South Norfolk  
Councils – clerk to the meeting

Matt Haywood

Norfolk County Council

**Item Minutes  
no**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from CJ Green, T McCabe, V Muspratt, A Proctor, L Rawsthorne and C Starkie.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Proctor had stepped down as Leader of Norfolk County Council and he wished him a full and speedy recovery.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Phil Courtier declared an interest in respect of item 7 (How Greater Norwich is taking action to ensure future development is Nutrient Neutral), as he had been appointed a director of Norfolk Environmental Credits Limited.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

**4. PROJECT SHOWCASE: KETTS COUNTRY LONG DISTANCE TRAIL**

The Board received a presentation from Helen Terry, Team Leader - Greenways, Norfolk County Council on the Ketts Country Park Long Distance Trail.

The trail had been inspired by Kett's Rebellion, an uprising that started in Wymondham in 1549 in response to land enclosures and a push for a fairer society. The trail was not the actual route taken by Kett into Norwich but was instead an inspiring journey across a historic landscape.

The trail was an 18-mile route connecting Wymondham to Norwich on Rights of Way that had been enhanced by the project. There were five waymarked circular walks along the route at; Wymondham, Wrenningham, Mulbarton, Swardeston and Cringleford.

The trail, which had been fully funded by £98,000 provided through the Greater Norwich Growth Board, was officially launched on 25 March 2022 and provided additional green infrastructure in areas of significant growth where there was an increased demand for access to green spaces.

The work on the trail had involved reviving old public Rights of Way with the installation of new signage, removing obstacles, cutting back vegetation, and installing new bridges, handrails, gates and boardwalks to improve access. A promotional map had also been produced, as well as a webpage on the County Council website. Carved sculptures had also been installed at the start and end of the trail.

In terms of strategic fit, the trail allowed connectivity from local areas of development into the local countryside and the wider areas of the Norfolk countryside. The trail would also help connect people with the environment to improve their health and wellbeing and bring more people closer to a Norfolk trail within growth areas.

The trail had been a successful public engagement project, with the public voting on their preferred circular walks and useful local feedback being provided by parish councils. Similarly, local experts had provided additional information about the history, wildlife and landscape along the trail.

The walk was being promoted as a rich experience that could encompass heritage and nature, as well as community and family events and was more than 'just going for a walk'.

The trail also aimed to give local businesses the opportunity to share local knowledge and add value and create experience to visitors' trips.

An annual 'Rebellion Run' in July had been established and had proved very successful.

More details about the trail were available on the County Council's website.

Members thanked Helen for her presentation and commended the project.

## **5. GREATER NORWICH GROWTH BOARD WEBSITE UPDATE**

The Board received a presentation from Tom Cushan, the Greater Norwich Project Officer, on the completion of the first phase of a project to revise the Greater Norwich Growth Board website.

The aim of the update was to improve the way that the work of the Board was communicated to the public and to make the experience of navigating the website easier.

A major change was the introduction of a project showcase section on the website. This included detailed case study information about projects, including which district it was in, what type of project it was and the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy funding it had received. Each case study would include an image gallery, video, and interactive map and a link was also provided to other similar projects delivered by the Board which might be of interest.

Six of the 91 projects that had been delivered by the Board were currently featured in the showcase section; more would be added as the website was developed.

The Chairman noted that there was a lot of ongoing work to be done to show a comprehensive catalogue of the work that had been achieved by the Board.

Cllr Waters noted that the revisions to the website showed how effectively the Greater Norwich Growth Board had been in delivering projects that had brought real benefits to the communities that it served, and he commended the work that officers and members had put into bringing this about.

The Chairman suggested that some additional hyperlinks might improve the user experience even further.

Cllr Plant noted that this was a work in progress, but that it was a significant improvement on the original website, and he commended officers for their hard work on bringing it to this stage.

## **6. GREATER NORWICH ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Phil Courtier, the Director of Place at Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils introduced the report, which confirmed the Greater Norwich Annual Growth Programme.

The report set out the new projects which had been prioritised for delivery in 2023/24 and were to be funded either wholly or in part by the Infrastructure Investment Fund. Each District Cabinet had now agreed the recommendations within the Draft 5YIIP.

There were nine new projects in the Annual Growth Programme, which demonstrated good use of the pooled Community Infrastructure Levy across the three authorities, which remained a national exemplar for cooperation at this level.

Grace Burke, the Greater Norwich Project Team Leader, advised the meeting that the digital version of this report would be embedded in the new website and included links to all of the projects. This demonstrated the direction that the Growth Board was moving in the way it would be reporting in future.

Members were shown an interactive map on the website that showed the location of the projects coming forward, a description of the works to be undertaken and illustrations to show how they were progressing. Similarly, there was a fully interactive map that showed the projects that had been completed, with their full details.

The Chairman noted that the projects were well spread across the three local authority areas.

### **RESOLVED**

To accept the Greater Norwich Annual Growth Programme 2023/24,

committing £10,632,243 from the Infrastructure Investment Plan to nine new projects.

## **7. HOW GREATER NORWICH IS TAKING ACTION TO ENSURE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IS NUTRIENT NEUTRAL**

Graham Nelson, the Executive Director of Development and City Services at Norwich City Council, introduced the report, which confirmed that the Greater Norwich authorities were at the forefront of developing a strategic approach to securing nutrient neutral development, thereby enabling the delivery of planned growth in their partnership area.

The report outlined the progress so far and sought the Board's commitment to further explore how they could use their joint skills, influence, and resource to support the delivery of a programme of mitigation through the establishment of a joint venture.

The Board were reminded that guidance from Natural England had highlighted the biological health of key waterways, which had placed immediate constraints on local planning authorities issuing legal sound planning consent on most types of residential development. The consequence of this action had had a severe effect on the development industry, as well as the ongoing ability of the Board to deliver growth across Greater Norwich.

The report confirmed that new development generated a very small percentage of the total nutrient load compared to other existing uses, such as agricultural, existing housing stock and industrial processes, the impact of the guidance was disproportionate to the effect it was having on development across Norfolk. This would have serious implications for housing need, investment, infrastructure delivery and the long-term health of the Norfolk economy.

The Norfolk authorities had commissioned a calculator to assess the mitigation needed and work was ongoing on setting out the full range of mitigation for water quality that needed to be planned and the timescales for them.

Within the recent Budget, it was announced that the Government would provide funding to support 'innovative local solutions' for the delivery of 'nutrient neutral' sites.

The issues above had led to all five of the affected Norfolk local authorities to agree to develop proposals for a joint venture company to be established jointly with Anglian Water to address nutrient neutrality.

The joint venture, to be called Norfolk Environmental Credits Limited (NECL), would develop a mixed programme of measures, that could be converted into credits and sold to developers thereby unblocking the constraints on housing delivery.

The report considered the role of the Greater Norwich Growth Board in relation to the joint venture and proposed that the Board should consider opening new streams of funding to support mitigation to be brought forward via the Infrastructure Investment Fund, as well as via the borrowing capacity that the Board had through the City Deal and the Cyclical Loans Fund that was established to support local infrastructure projects.

The Board were asked to support the work on the joint venture whilst noting that there were several financial and legal risks that would need to be considered in detail as the model was developed along with other sources of external funding that might become available and that further agreement on these matters would be brought back to the Board for determination in due course.

The Chairman noted that the directive from Natural England was having a devastating effect on the development industry despite only 0.2 percent of additional nutrient load being generated by new dwellings. He also urged caution in respect of paying too much for mitigation, as he considered that the market would find its own level for this, which would be significantly less than the figures that were currently being suggested.

## **RESOLVED**

- i. GNGB to do what it can to respond to the need to protect the two Special Areas of Conservation: the River Wensum and the Broads, from rising nutrient levels
- ii. Confirm GNGB's commitment to using their joint skills, influence, and resource to help ensure that all participants in the market, especially SMEs, are able to mitigate the direct effects of additional environmental load resulting from their activities.
- iii. GNGB to agree to explore commercial, operational and regulatory risk factors and, where justified, develop the financing options or market interventions to support the work of Norfolk Environmental Credits Limited.

## **8. LONG STRATTON BYPASS**

The Chairman noted that need for a bypass in Long Stratton had been first identified in 1937, and since that time there had been 23 steps that had finally brought the project to the stage when construction would begin next year.

He emphasised that this had been achieved by a great deal of work across the partnership and was a significant achievement.

The Board noted the report.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Forthcoming retirement of Cllr Waters.**

The Chairman advised the meeting that Alan Waters contribution to the Greater Norwich Growth Board had been superb.

He noted that the pooling of the Community Infrastructure Levy between the three local authorities remained unique and that this had called for a mature approach to growth across the districts without consideration of the boundaries between them and that Alan had played a significant role in this. He had also Chaired the Board twice.

Cllr Vincent thanked Alan for his contribution to the Board and that even when there had been disagreements they had often led to other ways forward that as a group had made them stronger working together. He thanked Alan for his participation on the Board, which had been very much appreciated.

Cllr Plant emphasised that the ability of the Board to work across party and boundary had been outstanding and he was confident that it would continue to do so.

Alan Waters noted that the great thing about the Greater Norwich Growth Board was the veto, which meant that members had to listen to one another and to take account of different perspectives.

He noted that the GNGB was unique and was recognised as a great success. He wished to record his thanks to Grace Burke, Ruth Oyeniya Thomas Cushan and the rest of Greater Norwich Project Team, who had really helped the Board punch above its weight.

He wished the partnership well and that it should continue to be as successful, forward looking, and ambitious in the future, as it had been in the past.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 6 June 2023 at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber, County Hall.

The meeting closed at 2.58 pm.