

To: Dr Nik Johnson

By email only

30 July 2021

Dear Nik,

**Future Fens: Integrated Adaption Project**  
**Proposition for the CPCA to join the Sponsor Group**

**Introduction**

The inaugural Future Fens Integrated Adaptation (FFIA) Taskforce event was held on the 19 May 2021. It was co-hosted by Anglian Water (AW), Water Resources East (WRE) and the Environment Agency (EA).

In attendance were over 80 different stakeholders from 47 different organisations representing national and local government, agriculture, business academia, energy, water and environmental sectors. Key note speeches and presentations were received from Emma Howard-Boyd (Chair - Environment Agency), Norman Robinson/Paul Burrows (Environment Agency), Dr Robin Price (Managing Director - WRE), Hannah Stanley Jones (Head of Water Resources - Anglian Water), Dr Nik Johnson (Mayor - Cambridge & Peterborough), Peter Glass (Delta Commissioner - Netherlands Government), Kamyar Guivetchi (California Water Resources), Mike Emmerich (Founding Director - Metro Dynamics) and Stephen Barclay MP (Chief Secretary to the Treasury).

The event was well received and considerable momentum created. One of the next steps agreed at the event was to develop the governance needed to take this collaborative and innovative concept forward. The Sponsor Group is part of this proposed governance and will represent the key driving force to influence direction, shared funding opportunities and pace. Terms of reference are currently being developed. In addition to the three organisations already heavily involved in the FFIA it is hoped that the CPCA will also join the Sponsor Group and help play a lead role. Some initial discussions have already taken place in this regard.

## **Key issues and challenges driving this Project**

The impact of climate change is presenting us all with a huge and urgent challenge.

The Fens are one of the areas of the UK most at risk from climate change. With one third of the land already at or below sea-level. The Fens were drained centuries ago, resulting in a dry, highly fertile agricultural region supported by a system of drainage channels, relief channels, automated pumping stations and designated temporary flood washes.

Half of the UK's most fertile agricultural land is located in the Fens, providing a fifth of the nation's crops and a third of its vegetables.

In addition to the current flood risk from extreme weather events there is an increasing coastal flood risk mainly due to the impact of climate change. Not only is sea-level rising but the current range of projections for sea-level rise (re Met Office Hadley Centre) show a continued rise beyond 2100 across all future emission scenarios. It is important to note that even for the low emission scenario there is significant rise in the projected sea-levels around the East Coast. Coastal inundation therefore presents a real threat of irreversibly changing the landscape. This would be disastrous outcome on so many levels.

At the other end of the spectrum, East Anglia is one of the most water scarce parts of the country. The pressure on our water resources is increasing due to climate change and population growth, along with the need to provide water for farming, industry and to protect and enhance the environment.

In addition, the Fens have suffered historically from low economic growth and recorded high deprivation levels. The recent work commissioned by the CPCA, for example 'Growing Fenland - Strategy Proposal' and 'Market Town masterplans' has highlighted the scale of issues and the fundamental priorities to allow for regeneration and sustainable growth. Flood resilience was identified as a key part of this strategy and the need for more certainty regarding the future. For example, discussions with MHCLG on the idea of a Wisbech Garden town have so far been met with a red flag and a question. 'Given the potential impact of climate change what is the long-term solution with regard to flood resilience for this area?' To allow major infrastructure and investment to move forwards this question needs to be answered.

## **What is Future Fens: Integrated Adaptation?**

FFIA is a concept to bring together many different but key sectors, organisations and people into a single integrated, holistic approach to help solve the problems we all face together.

We have started the process to develop this partnership that builds on the strategic work across sectors, aiming to draw on international experience to lead, develop and deliver a truly integrated water management approach.

As part of this work on resilience Anglian Water are looking at proposals to develop two new large surface water reservoirs. One in South Lincolnshire and one on the Norfolk/Fenland boundary. These reservoirs are being planned as multi-purpose assets and

will use source water from Fen rivers. The likely cost of these reservoirs is £1.5 to £2.0 billion depending on the final design options/locations.

The proposed integrated water management approach created by this partnership aims to be a solution addressing the environmental, economic and social challenges faced. The Project would look to identify shared public value and efficiencies. To this end it promises massive benefits both for the area and the UK. This Project enables the Fens to take control of its own destiny, adapting and becoming climate change resilient. It has the potential to unlock wider benefits including:

- long-term food security for the UK;
- Increased biodiversity and natural capital;
- Supports carbon sequestration within the peat;
- New sustainable housing growth and thriving regenerated communities;
- New investment in green transport systems;
- Business and job creation.

The ambition is for this project to be a UK exemplar for adaptation in the UK.

### **Timeline**

We have launched the taskforce with two distinct phases. The first phase takes us up to the immediate milestone of COP26. The second phase develops the detail proposals, the funding options and delivery. See the Timeline attached.

### **Mapping existing activity**

One of the next steps, in collaboration, is to understand what is already happening and what isn't, across each sector. Mapping these will help understand the full picture and any gaps that need addressing.

Each of the three lead partners have been in contact with organisations across sectors. Those with projects already planned, or underway, are being invited to share them at this mapping exercise to see where they can support one another, both in securing funding and driving synergistic development into the future.

Following the inaugural taskforce meeting, three things became clear:

- The Fens are an area with great potential. Containing 48% of England's grade 1 agricultural land, it is the 'breadbasket of the UK': all despite only accounting for 5% of its agricultural land. It is also home to a range of SSSI's, reserves and unique ecosystems found nowhere else. If utilised properly, sitting in the heart of England these areas can provide accessible locations for people to enjoy and interact with nature.
- Time is of the essence. The looming climate and biodiversity crises will not wait and decisive action is needed to avoid the worst effects these threats present. With COP26 swiftly approaching this presents an opportunity we are keen to grasp in

raising the profile of these threats and gaining support both domestically and internationally.

- The integrated, collaborative approach to these issues, outlined in the taskforce, is key to adapting to and mitigating the challenges faced in the Fens. By pooling collective resources and expertise cross-sector, we can ensure projects and decisions provide the most benefit to the communities and wildlife inhabiting this unique area, as well as more widely through climate change mitigation.

This initial mapping exercise is the start point in the complex path.

This exercise will unlock discussions around where, how and when to collaborate, and deliver the full potential of the Fens in the short to medium term. It will also influence discussions on what our combined vision for the Fens long term will be, setting up another, key, 'visioning' workshop. This is planned for early September.

### **Coordination**

We want to build on the hard work done by many organisations over the last few years and develop and help coordinate this holistically.

AW / WRE and the EA have already committed resource such that the Project can progress at pace to meet the immediate timeline milestones. This commitment recognises the opportunity at COP 26 to raise the profile on the national and international stage.

At a sponsoring and commissioning level there is considerable support at director level to meet the Project needs.

- Peter Simpson (CEO - AW) commitment to chair the Taskforce / support nationally.
- Alex Plant (Dir S&R AW) commitment to the Sponsor Group and wider.
- Dr Robin Price (MD WRE) commitment to the Sponsor Group and wider.
- Norman Robinson (Area Dir) commitment to the Sponsor Group and wider.

At project level the direct resource commitments at this stage are:

- AW - Project Manager (Russell Beal) and graduate (Will Davies).
- EA – Paul Burrows (Senior Manager) taken offline to focus on future Fens.
- WRE - Project Manager (Rachel Dyson) part-time.

### **Proposal**

Our proposal is that that CPCA join this Sponsor Group and makes a commitment to support financially the collective aims.

The level of commitment would be flexible and any necessary changes agreed through discussion at the Sponsor Group, but to include:

- An invitation for the CPCA to nominate someone to join the Sponsor Group and to be part of our presence at COP 26 on the resilience hub (details TBC);

- Financial support to enable a further full-time resource role to align the work on climate change, transport, sustainable economic growth and future funding bids / shared public value. A further option would be to provide some financial support to fund an external resource to the same end. This commitment would be similar in scope to the existing commitment for Future Fens being made by AW/WRE/EA.
- An announcement on this commitment to be made public on or before the next Taskforce meeting on the 22 September 2021.

This proposition is intended to help formulate an important opportunity for the Mayor and CPCA to consider. We welcome further discussion on this.

Yours Sincerely,

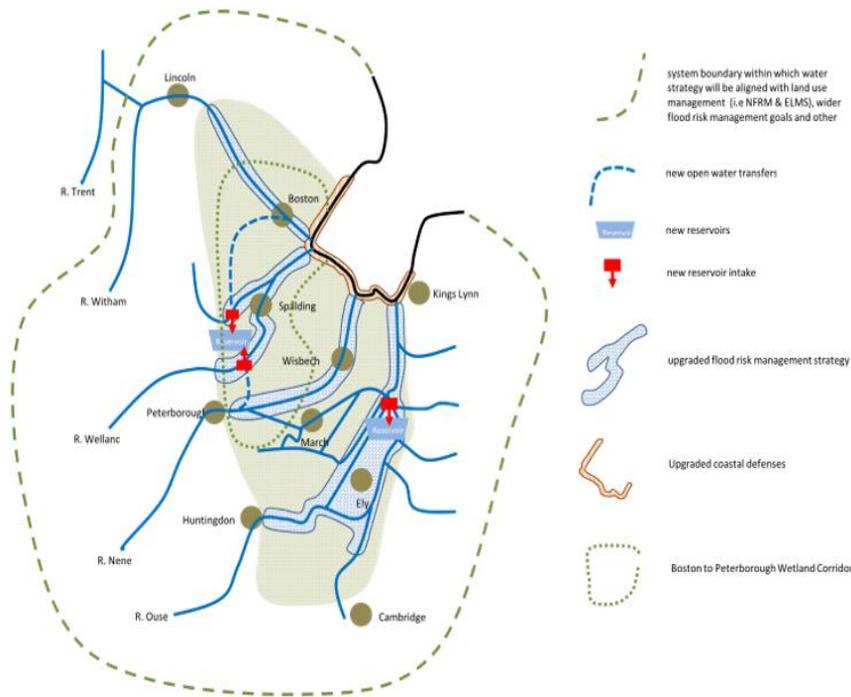
Signature  
redacted

Alex Plant  
Director of Strategy & Regulation  
Anglian Water  
(on behalf of the Sponsors' Group)

## Appendix

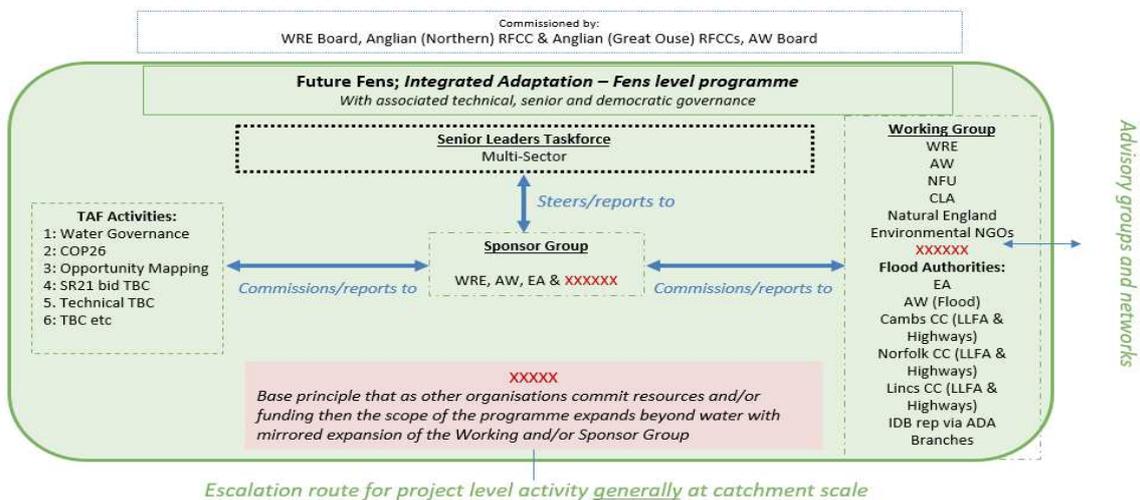
1. FFIA - Schematic
2. FFIA - Governance proposals
3. FFIA - Timeline up to COP 26

### FFIA - SCHEMATIC



### FFIA - GOVERNANCE PROPOSALS

#### Future Fens: Integrated Adaptation Governance (Integrated – Multi Sector)



FFIA – TIMELINE UP TO COP 26

