



***Black Point***  
**BEACH CLUB**

**DRAFT Master Plan**

**August 2023**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Introduction**

### **What is a Master Plan?**

This document presents Black Point's first community Master Plan. The Master Plan reflects the community's values and enables the Black Point Beach Club Association (BPBCA) to define its own strategy for maintaining and sustaining the high quality of life offered by the community for the next ten years and beyond. The Master Plan is a road map consisting of objectives, and action items that the community can implement to achieve its goals. This document is intended to be a "living document" that codifies existing or ongoing initiatives and serves as a blueprint for future decision making, while also maintaining flexibility to address unforeseen future challenges.

### **Master Planning Process**

The development of the Master Plan was overseen by the Master Plan Steering Committee made up of representatives from the Board of Governors and the community at large. Technical assistance was provided by the consulting firm, The SLAM Collaborative. The Steering Committee reviewed technical materials, provided feedback and direction to the consultant, and served as project ambassadors.

The Master Plan was developed over a roughly 12-month process. The project began in the summer of 2022 with an inventory of existing conditions and community assets. This was a "point in time" inventory that evaluated information related to land use, natural resources, coastal resources, infrastructure, and community facilities. This task identified key trends and conditions and potential focus areas that warranted a deeper dive as part of the planning process. For the full existing conditions report, please refer to Appendix B.

As a community-driven Master Plan, it was important that the planning process capture the sentiment and concerns of residents. There was community involvement throughout the planning process. An online community survey was launched in fall of 2022 and 388 residents responded. It is estimated that roughly half of BPBCA households participated in the community survey. The survey covered a broad range of topics including community strengths and weaknesses; beaches, boating, and piers; community facilities, and recreation; infrastructure; and land use and zoning. The community survey allowed the Steering Committee and consultant team to understand community sentiment and values that helped identify the Plan's focus areas. For full community survey results, please refer to Appendix A.

Following the community survey, the consultant team formulated initial ideas for goals, objectives, and actions. Four overarching goals were developed focusing on the themes of financial planning, governance, the waterfront, and quality of life. Under each goal, a series of more detailed objectives and action items were developed. These items were reviewed by the Steering Committee and by the community at large. A public workshop was held on June 15, 2023 in the Association's clubhouse. Approximately 50 people attended in-person, and another 30 people participated in the online versions of the exercises. Participants shared their vision for the community, prioritized potential capital improvements, and provided feedback on the initial goals, objectives, and actions.

Incorporating feedback from the community survey, public workshop, and the Steering Committee, the consultant team developed the Draft Plan inclusive of key findings and trends, a vision statement, goals, objectives, and actions. Additional feedback will be incorporated into the Final Master Plan.

## **Key Findings and Trends**

Throughout the Master Planning process, several key findings and trends emerged that informed the development of the goals, objectives, and actions. These items are summarized below.

### **Focus on the Beaches and Waterfront**

Throughout the Master Planning process, the beaches and waterfront were identified as the central element of the Black Point's identity. These assets serve as the recreational and social hub for the community and contribute greatly to Black Point's quality of life and sense of community.

One of the greatest challenges facing Black Point and other coastal communities over the next decade is the impacts of sea level rise and climate change. According to the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), Connecticut is projected to experience sea level rise of 20 inches by 2050. Similarly, climate change is producing stronger coastal storms, which could exacerbate beach erosion and could damage infrastructure and property in coastal areas.

Black Point will need to continue to maintain and enhance the beaches and coastal infrastructure such as groins, piers, and stormwater infrastructure to better protect against these natural threats. Many of these investments will be expensive and will require greater financial planning and foresight by the Association than has been done in the past. This Plan is intended to establish an initial "road map" that can inform these necessary future detailed capital planning efforts.

### **Changing Demographics and Shift to Year-Round Living**

Historically, Black Point has been primarily a seasonal community. However, in recent years there has been a growing shift towards year-round living. The community survey conducted in the fall of 2022 indicated that about half of the nearly 400 survey respondents were year-round residents. As Black Point's year-round population grows, there may be increasing demand for services and facilities that support year-round use. Notably, the clubhouse is not winterized and cannot currently support year-round use. Over the next ten years, Black Point will need to continue to balance the needs of its growing year-round population while still maintaining its accessibility for seasonal residents.

Black Point has a high share of residents over age 65. About 44% of survey respondents were age 65 years old and over, making it a much older community than the state and Town as a whole. As the Association makes investments in its facilities and infrastructure over the next decade, they should be designed in a manner that is accessible to all age groups. Accessibility improvements should be incorporated into projects as practicable. Over the next decade it will be important to maintain a balance of providing for the unique needs of the Association's older residents while also meeting the needs of younger residents, families, and children.

### **Preserving a Sense of Community**

Throughout the Master Planning process, the strong sense of community was cited as a cornerstone of life in Black Point. The sense of community is fostered by Black Point's people, places, organizations, and events. Black Point has many multi-generational residents, and Black Point is rooted in history, traditions, community spirit that enhances the quality of life for residents of all ages. Community spaces such as the beaches, clubhouse, recreational facilities, and walkable streets serve as social hubs of the community and provide space for local organizations, social clubs, and seasonal community events. Over the next decade Black Point will continue to focus on maintaining its strong sense of community and supporting the places, organizations, and events that make Black Point a great place to live.

## **Vision Statement**

The Black Point Beach Club Association is a private tightknit beach community dedicated to serving the needs of its members and their guests. Its peninsula location and limited access points provide a sense of privacy and security, making it a sought-after community. The beaches, shoreline, and coastal rights-of-way are central to Black Point's identity and the Association is committed to protecting and enhancing these resources so that they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations. Black Point prides itself on the breadth of its amenities, including several beaches and piers, a clubhouse, playgrounds, sports courts, and a range of community organizations. The Association will embrace its history and build on the work of previous generations, while continuing to adapt to meet new challenges. To achieve this Vision, the Association is committed to its longstanding values of volunteerism and community service and fostering responsible, transparent, and fiscally responsible governance.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Actions**

The Master Plan is organized around four overarching goals, which are described in detail on the following pages:

1. Improve the Financial Sustainability and Fiscal Accountability of the Association
2. Strengthen and Build Organizational Efficiency and Structure to Support a Proactive, Collaborative, and Accountable Association Governance
3. Invest in and Improve the Waterfront to Support Long-Term Resiliency and Community Access
4. Foster a Healthy and Vibrant Lifestyle for All Community Members through Safe and Comfortable Access to Resources

Goals are not listed in order of importance. However, the Master Plan recognizes that many of the financial and governance actions under Goal 1 and Goal 2 are needed in order to support the infrastructure and facilities investments envisioned in Goal 3 and Goal 4.

Under each goal, there are a series of more specific objectives and action steps that the Association can take to achieve each goal. A rationale is provided for each objective that describes the impetus for the objective along with any supporting data. Detailed action items are organized under each objective. For each action item, the responsible entity is identified, and the relative priority of the action is noted.

- High Priority Items should be addressed in the next three years.
- Medium Priority Items should be addressed in four to six years.
- Low Priority Items should be addressed in seven to ten years.

The relative priority of each action item list in this Plan should be taken as a general guide, rather than a rigid timeline. As a "living document" the relative priority of each action item should be revisited periodically to make sure they align with current conditions.

## Goal 1: Improve the Financial Sustainability and Fiscal Accountability of the Association

### Objective 1.1: Enhance Capacity to Fund Major Capital Projects

The Association is anticipated to have major capital needs over the next ten years, including upgrades to its groins and piers, beach maintenance projects, and improvements to the clubhouse.

There is a need to create an equitable and transparent capital and financial plan to allow the Association make investments in this critical infrastructure in a proactive manner. The community outreach process identified beaches and coastal infrastructure as the top priorities from a capital funding standpoint. Funding approaches were also discussed as part of the Master Planning process. In general, participants in the planning process favored annual contributions, or a mix of annual contributions and one-time assessments as the best approach to funding future capital projects. Few participants favored using only one-time assessments.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Create and maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to guide and prioritize use of Capital Improvement Funds. This should focus on critical infrastructure that has community-wide benefits. The CIP should prioritize projects based on need, benefits, and costs.	Board of Governors	High
Establish a dedicated Capital Improvement Fund for critical infrastructure projects that have community-wide benefits. Consider funding this program through annual contributions or a mix of annual contributions and one-time assessments.	Board of Governors	High
Create a policy framework regarding the use of Capital Improvement Funds. The intent is that these funds would be used exclusively to fund major capital investments and emergency repairs to Association assets such as piers/groins, clubhouse improvements, resiliency projects, beach improvements, storm cleanup, etc.	Board of Governors	High
Explore alternative mechanisms for funding long-term financial obligations (e.g. line of credit, loans, etc.).	Board of Governors	Medium

**Objective 1.2: Explore Alternative Funding Mechanisms and Revenue Generating Opportunities.**

In addition to establishing a Capital Improvement Plan and fund, there are other revenue generating opportunities that the BPBCA should explore that supplement property taxes and one-time assessments. Potential areas to be explored in greater detail include private fundraising, establishing fees, or pursuing grants. Grants will require a partnership with the Town of East Lyme and likely will need to focus on public (i.e. Town-owned) assets such as roads, pump stations, and stormwater infrastructure.

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Evaluate alternative funding mechanisms for community infrastructure and programs, such as limited users' fees (provided fees are invested in the infrastructure that they support) and private fundraising.	Board of Governors	Low
Explore opportunities to monetize existing Association assets and policies. Potential areas to explore include short term rental fees and creating beach passes for purchase for homes within walking distance to the beaches that are not within the Association boundaries.	Board of Governors	Medium
Partner with the Town of East Lyme on potential grant opportunities (see Objective 2.3 for more details)	Town Liaison	High



## Goal 2: Strengthen and Build Organizational Efficiency and Structure to Support a Proactive, Collaborative, and Accountable Association Governance

### Objective 2.1: Maintain Up-to-Date Bylaws, Rules, and Policies

Association rules and regulations should be evaluated periodically to ensure that they are up-to-date and having their intended impact. The survey noted several areas where rules, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms should be evaluated, including beach rules, traffic rules and enforcement (notably golf carts), and zoning regulations. While survey respondents were generally satisfied with the current rental policy, it should nevertheless be periodically revisited. Ad hoc committees could be utilized to help review current policies, solicit community feedback, and provide recommendations to boards and commissions.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to review Association Bylaws, Beach Use Rules, and Policies, as well as enforcement strategies and make recommendations to the Board of Governors for implementation. Conduct public outreach as part of this effort. Implement changes as recommended by the Ad. Hoc Committee	Board of Governors, Ad Hoc Committee	Medium
Maintain current rental policy in the near-term. However, this policy and enforcement mechanisms should be revisited periodically, with input from Association members, to ensure that it is meeting intended objectives.	Board of Governors	Low
Periodically review the zoning regulations and enforcement strategies and make updates as necessary.	Zoning Commission	Ongoing
If necessary, coordinate with the East Lyme Building Department and Fire Marshal to address any blight issues that pose a threat to health, safety, or public welfare.	Zoning Commission, Zoning Enforcement Officer	Ongoing

### Objective 2.2: Promote Civic Participation

Civic participation and volunteerism will continue to be core tenets of the Association over the coming decade. With both seasonal and year-round population, it is important to focus on a mix of digital and in-person opportunities to participate in local government and ensure that Black Point is an inclusive community for seasonal and full-time residents and residents at different stages in life. A well informed and engaged citizenry will be key implementing the recommendations of this Master Plan and provide the foundation for future volunteers. Like many communities in Connecticut, Black Point's population is aging. In order to ensure the long-term health of the Association, there needs to be a succession planning process that ensures institutional knowledge and governance can be passed down to the next generation of community leaders.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Implement hybrid meetings. This could be achieved through physical investments in IT infrastructure at the clubhouse or by using another local facility (such as Town Hall meeting High room or library) where such infrastructure is available.	All boards & commissions	Medium
Consider hosting an annual "Volunteer Fair" to market volunteer and civic opportunities to residents. This could be used to improve awareness of Association governance and recruit new and prospective board and commission members.	Board of Governors, Community Groups	Low
Upgrade and modernize BPBCA Website to make it more user friendly and interactive.	Webmaster	Medium
Create off-season electronic issues of the Black Pointer, making it a year-round publication. Continue print publications during the summer season.	Volunteers	Low

**Objective 2.3: Strengthen Partnerships between the Association, the Town of East Lyme, and neighboring Beach Associations.**

Much of the infrastructure within the Association boundaries is owned and maintained by the Town of East Lyme. The BPBCA needs to advocate to Town leaders to ensure this infrastructure is maintained in a state of good repair. In addition, municipalities are eligible for grants and other discretionary funds that could be used to support public-benefit projects within the Association. In addition, neighboring Beach Associations are facing many of the same issues as Black Point. Strengthening connections with these groups can help share knowledge on best practices, potentially share resources, and collectively lobby the Town to ensure beach and costal issues are being addressed.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Designate a Liaison who can represent Association interests to Town Departments and elected officials and communicate relevant Town news to residents.	Board of Governors	High
Partner with the Town of East Lyme on grant opportunities, specifically those pertaining to coastal resiliency and Town-owned infrastructure (roads, stormwater management, sewers, pump stations).	Town Liaison	High
Ensure greater Association participation in the Town's next Plan of Conservation and Development, Hazard Mitigation, and Coastal Resilience Plan updates.	Town Liaison	Medium
Consider strengthening partnerships with neighboring Beach Associations in the areas of best practices, coastal issues advocacy, collective purchasing, and equipment sharing.	Town Liaison	Medium

## Goal 3: Invest in and Improve the Waterfront to Support Long-Term Resiliency and Community Access

### Objective 3.1: Modernize and Maintain Groins and Piers

Mitigation of beach erosion was identified as the top waterfront priority in the Community Survey. Black Point will face further challenges due to sea-level rise and climate change. The piers and groins play an important role in mitigating beach erosion while also providing areas for fishing, boating, and recreation. The Association has completed upgrades to the Steel Pier and is planning upgrades to the remaining piers and groins over the next decade. As described in Goal 1, these improvements will be costly and require a greater level of financial planning and foresight.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Develop a capital and financial plan for pier reconstruction and rehabilitation projects. Consider separate funds for major capital improvements and ongoing maintenance/repair. (see Goal 1)	Board of Governors	High
Leverage existing engineering reports and hire professionals (as needed) to conduct additional studies to better understand condition and prioritize projects.	Board of Governors, Engineering Consultant	High/Medium
Conduct preliminary design and develop cost estimates for priority projects.	Board of Governors, Engineering Consultant	High/Medium

### Objective 3.2 Maintain and Improve the Beaches and Swimming Areas

The beaches are a critical component of Black Point's quality of life. According to the community survey about 94% of respondents visited the beaches and over 85% of respondents took part in swimming, making it the most used amenity within Black Point. The Plan envisions several actions to maintain and enhance the beaches over the next decade. In light of sea level rise and strong coastal storms, a beach nourishment program may be needed to supplement improvements to piers and groins. It should be noted that beach nourishment programs temporarily address erosion and require replenishment every few years. In addition, the community outreach process noted areas where enhanced maintenance or infrastructure upgrades are desired, including more frequent eelgrass and rock removal, stormwater upgrades (in cooperation with the Town), and accessibility improvements.

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Initiate a periodic beach nourishment program. Consult with DEEP to better understand state and federal permitting requirements prior to developing and implementing a beach nourishment plan.	Board of Governors, DEEP	Medium
Consider cooperative purchasing of beach nourishment services, equipment, or other operational expenses with neighboring Associations that may result in lower costs.	Town Liaison	Medium
Consider enhanced beach maintenance, including more frequent seaweed/eelgrass and rock removal on designated beaches. Meet with DEEP to discuss potential eelgrass management strategies on the state side of the coastal jurisdiction line.	Board of Governors, DEEP	High
Ensure that beach maintenance strategies do not exacerbate erosion (such as excessive removal of underwater vegetation).	Board of Governors	Ongoing
Work with the Town of East Lyme Public Works Department to ensure that stormwater outfalls along Niantic Bay are properly maintained and have proper erosion control measures in place (such as adequate rip-rap)	Town Liaison	Ongoing
Maintain proper separation of uses at the different beach areas.	Association Manger	Ongoing
Make accessibility improvements to the beaches. Improvements may include beach grading improvements, mobi-mat expansions, and surface treatments/accessibility upgrades at beach access points. Designate and sign a portion of beaches closest to handicap parking areas as an "accessible" area, with priority given to those in need of accommodations.	Board of Governors	Medium

**Objective 3.3: Enhance Access to the “Backwater” on the Pattagansett Estuary**

Improving kayak storage and water access on the Pattagansset Estuary was cited as the top coastal resource in need of improvement in the community survey. A key obstacle to improving this area is state regulatory hurdles, as the area is within the DEEP coastal jurisdiction area and therefore must meet state permitting and public trust access requirements. A first step is to meet with DEEP to get a better understanding of project feasibility prior to conducting more detailed work, if necessary.

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Meet with DEEP to better understand regulatory requirements to building a permanent boardwalk/boat launch to the Pattagansett Estuary.	Board of Governors	Medium
If necessary, conduct a site survey to determine the location of the Coastal Jurisdiction Line.	Board of Governors, Survey Consultant	Low
Based on conversations with DEEP, develop preliminary designs and cost estimates and obtain all necessary state and local approvals.	Board of Governors, Engineering Consultant	Low
If building an improved facility on existing Association land is not feasible, consider alternative strategies for estuary access, such as leasing kayak launch rights at properties with adequate facilities along the estuary.	Board of Governors	Low

**Objective 3.4: Strengthen Stormwater Management to Protect Water Quality**

Most of the stormwater infrastructure within Black Point outfalls into Niantic Bay and directly impacts water quality at the beaches. Implementing strengthened stormwater management controls can help maintain and enhance water quality. The Town of East Lyme is responsible for stormwater infrastructure within the Association limits, so this objective requires cooperation with the Town's Department of Public Works (DPW).

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Work with the Town of East Lyme DPW to implement stormwater best management practices, particularly for areas that outfall onto the beaches.	Town Liaison	Ongoing
Run an awareness campaign on water quality.	Volunteers	Low
Educate homeowners on Pest and Pet Waste Management and the impact of improper pet waste disposal on water quality.	Volunteers	Low
Consider strengthening stormwater management requirements in the zoning regulations for new construction. Consider requiring on-site stormwater management techniques such as rain gardens and subsurface stormwater detention/infiltration systems.	Zoning Commission	Medium

**Objective 3.5: Build a More Sustainable and Resilient Black Point**

The State of Connecticut has adopted a 20-inch sea level rise by 2050 as a standard for coastal resilience planning. In addition, coastal storms are increasing in frequency and strength and thus may exacerbate both coastal flooding and erosion. The BPBCA should incorporate resiliency elements into its long-term planning efforts to help build a more resilient community.

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Plan for climate change and sea level rise as part of coastal infrastructure investments.	Board of Governors	Ongoing
For properties in the coastal flood zone, consider adding “freeboard” requirements in the zoning regulations to account for the 2050 sea level rise projections from the State of Connecticut.	Zoning Commission	Low
Improve coordination and collaboration with the Town of East Lyme in the areas of emergency preparedness and disaster preparedness.	Board of Governors, Town Liaison	High
Consider installation of an emergency generator at the Clubhouse in order to enhance its use in emergency situations. Consider working with the Town of East Lyme on potential grant funding opportunities.	Board of Governors	Medium
Work with the Town to install emergency evacuation route signs.	Town Liaison	Low

## Goal 4: Foster a Healthy and Vibrant Lifestyle for All Community Members through Safe and Comfortable Access to Resources

### Objective 4.1: Modernize the Clubhouse to Support Year-Round Use

The clubhouse serves as the governmental and social hub of the community. With a growing number of year-round residents, the clubhouse could be improved so that it can serve residents throughout the year. Improvements to the clubhouse should be included in the Associations capital planning efforts.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Complete winterization improvements to the clubhouse including insulation and heating system.	Board of Governors	Medium
Make energy efficiency upgrades to lower operating costs. Improvements include LED lighting, weather sealing, and energy efficient appliances (when in need of replacement).	Board of Governors	Ongoing
Study potential expansion of the clubhouse building as part of a larger site/feasibility study (see Objective 4.2).	Board of Governors	Low

### Objective 4.2: Leverage Available Land at the Clubhouse to Expand Community Amenities

The ~4 acre clubhouse property constitutes the Association's largest property. Currently about 1.3 acres of land on the eastern end of the property remains undeveloped. This land could be used to meet the community's long-term recreational needs. However, it is also important to weigh potential new development against the current open/green space benefits that the property provides. In addition, existing uses should be evaluated to ensure that the "highest and best use" of the properties is maintained, in light of changing recreational trends and member preferences.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Establish an Ad-Hoc Committee to oversee a comprehensive study of the recreational/social programs and properties, inclusive of the Clubhouse Property and the Clay Courts on Nehantic Drive. This process should incorporate extensive outreach with the community to determine community-wide program and facility usage and needs.	Board of Governors	Low
As part of the study, evaluate existing facility and program usage, identify site constraints and limitations, desired facilities and programs, development of conceptual plans, cost estimates for improvements, and potential funding opportunities.	Ad Hoc Committee	Low

**Objective 4.3: Build a Connected Community Through Programs and Events**

Community programs and events contribute to Black Point's sense of community. With a growing year-round population, there is growing interest in expanding community activities during the off season while maintaining the rich summer offerings. In 2031, Black Point will celebrate its centennial, providing a unique opportunity to share the Association's rich history with residents and to celebrate its strengths and accomplishments.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Continue annual community-wide events sponsored by the Association.	Board of Governors, Volunteers	Ongoing
Bolster off-season programs and events through the provision of year-round community space at the clubhouse.	Board of Governors, Volunteers	Medium
Support existing social clubs and encourage the establishment of new clubs/organizations by leveraging space and amenities at the clubhouse.	Board of Governors, Volunteers	Ongoing
Celebrate the Centennial of the BPBCA through community events and the publication of historical materials/booklets.	Board of Governors, Volunteers	Medium

**Objective 4.4: Maintain a Safe Multi-Modal Transportation Network for All Users**

Black Point's peninsula location, with limited access points into the community, provides a sense of privacy, security, and safety. The Association's road network, which is owned and maintained by the Town of East Lyme, serves all travel modes, including drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. According to the community survey, walking is the predominant mode of travel within the community. The Association should work with its Town partners to ensure that this infrastructure is in good repair, and that safety for all users is prioritized. Parking within the beach rights-of-way and Association parking lots is limited, and parking should be evaluated further to ensure that this space is being efficiently and equitably utilized.

Actions:	Responsible Entity	Priority
Consider strengthening enforcement procedures and regulations for traffic safety violations through partnerships with the Town of East Lyme Police Department.	Association Manager, Town Liaison	Medium
Consider the expansion of handicap parking spaces at the Nehantic Drive parking lot to support accessibility improvements (see Objective 3.2).	Board of Governors	Medium
Consider converting one or more lots into a designated drop-off area for loading and unloading (for example, 15-minute maximum parking).	Board of Governors	Medium
Consider creating separate and designated vehicle and golf cart parking spaces at beach or Whitecap parking areas. Golf cart spaces could be restriped to smaller dimensions to create additional spaces.	Board of Governors	Low



## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

This Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap that guides Association decision making for the next decade and beyond. As a "living document," the Plan needs to be flexible and adaptable to be responsive to changing needs and trends. Planning is a continuous process. To that end, the Plan should be periodically reviewed and updated so that it continues to align with the Association's priorities. It is recommended that the Plan be reviewed on an annual basis and the relative priority of the action steps evaluated, particularly those that may be implemented in the coming year. A more substantial update should be considered after five years.