

6 Tourism and Recreation



One of the Authority's core responsibilities is to enable people to enjoy the Broads. Closely allied to this is the Authority's duty to protect the navigation. The Authority encourages quiet forms of recreation on land and water, based on the area's distinctive beauty, culture, traditions, history and wildlife. In other words, it supports tourism and recreation that does not damage the Broads' environment, or other people's enjoyment of it. It is vital to ensure that enjoyment of the area is combined with an awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the Broads as a national park. The economic viability of the Broads' tourism industry relies on a healthy and attractive environment and opportunities to engage in a range of appropriate recreational activities. Water-borne tourism is considered to be the largest contributor to the Broads' economy.

The potential for tourism and recreation in the Broads is immense. Visitors are attracted by the beautiful wetland landscapes, opportunities for sailing, motor-boating, canoeing, angling and bird-watching, and other recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling and horse riding.

Sustainable tourism

Tourism drives the economy of the Broads and is a key product in the economy of the East of England. It benefits hire boat operators, shops, restaurants, hotels, cafes and attractions catering for visitors. A recent study by the East of England Tourist Board shows that the overall value of tourism to the Broads in 1998 was about £146.6 million, of which 82% was generated by staying visitors and 18% by day visitors. This level of expenditure supported the equivalent of 3,107 full-time jobs (4,350 actual jobs, including part-time and seasonal workers). In terms of staying visitors, there were 1 million trips to the Broads and a further 1.3 million trips made by day visitors. This same study shows that the hire boat industry is the single most important provider of holidays in the Broads, accounting for 53% of trips by staying visitors and a total of 4.4 million nights.

Environmental awareness is increasingly widespread among tourism operators and the Authority is proactive in supporting the development of sustainable tourism initiatives, such as canoe and cycle hire schemes. Managed in a sustainable and sensitive way, tourism in the Broads will continue to provide environmental, economic and social benefits to local communities.

Navigation and water-based recreation

The Broads is one of the most extensive and varied inland waterway systems in the UK, offering 190 km of boating on lock-free tidal rivers through magnificent scenery. There are approximately 1,974 ha of water space (6.5% of the Broads' executive area) and 63 permanently open water bodies, covering 841 ha. Many of these water bodies are broads in the traditional sense (see glossary), while others are of more recent and/or different origins as at Whitlingham. Some broads are open to public navigation, others have more limited access, generally for environmental or land ownership reasons, while some others are landlocked and inaccessible to craft (**Map 11: Extent of navigation within the Broads, with the distribution of 24-hour moorings managed by the Authority** page 61).

The Broads has been important for sailing and other types of boating since the end of the 19th century, when it became a popular tourist destination. The rivers and broads give the Broads its distinctive charm and special qualities, offering a sense of seclusion, tranquillity and even wildness that can best be appreciated from the water.

The number of licensed boats using the Broads has been in excess of 10,000 boats since 1971, reaching a peak of 13,573 in 1993 and subsequently fluctuating between 12,700 and 13,200 (Figure 6.1a). The majority of boats are motor cruisers (Figure 6.1b). The dramatic decline in the hire boat industry is not so evident from the less marked decrease in overall boat numbers, reflecting the fact that boats from hire fleets tend to remain in the Broads in private ownership (Figure 6.1a). These figures also mask changes in the distribution of boat movements around the waterways: the Yare and Waveney have become quieter, while the Bure and its tributaries have become busier. Highest use of the rivers and broads occurs in the most important parts of the system for biodiversity.

Top: 'Ra', Britain's first purpose built solar powered passenger craft

Right: Yacht station quay attendants provide an important service to visitors.

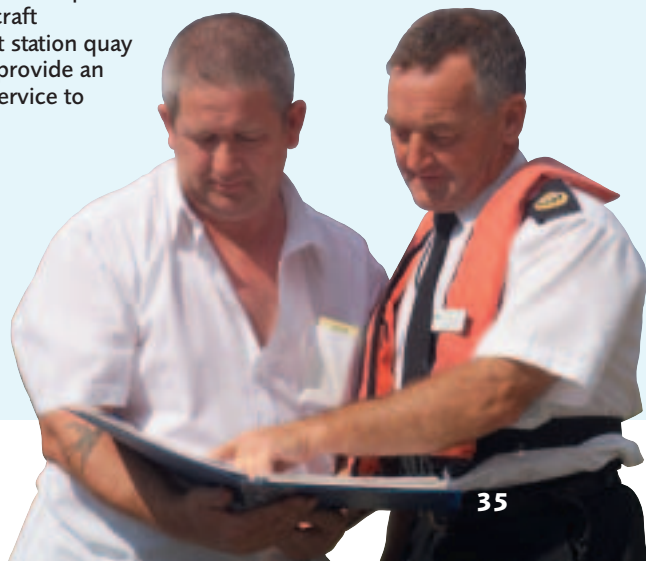


Figure 6.1a Number of private and hire boats on the Broads

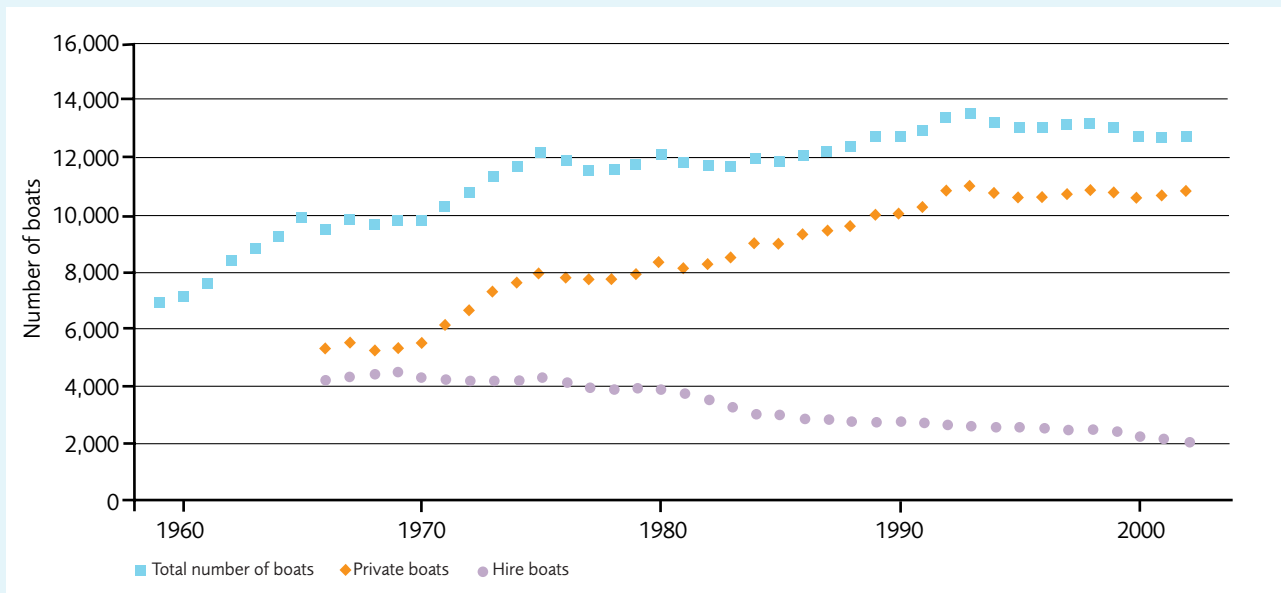
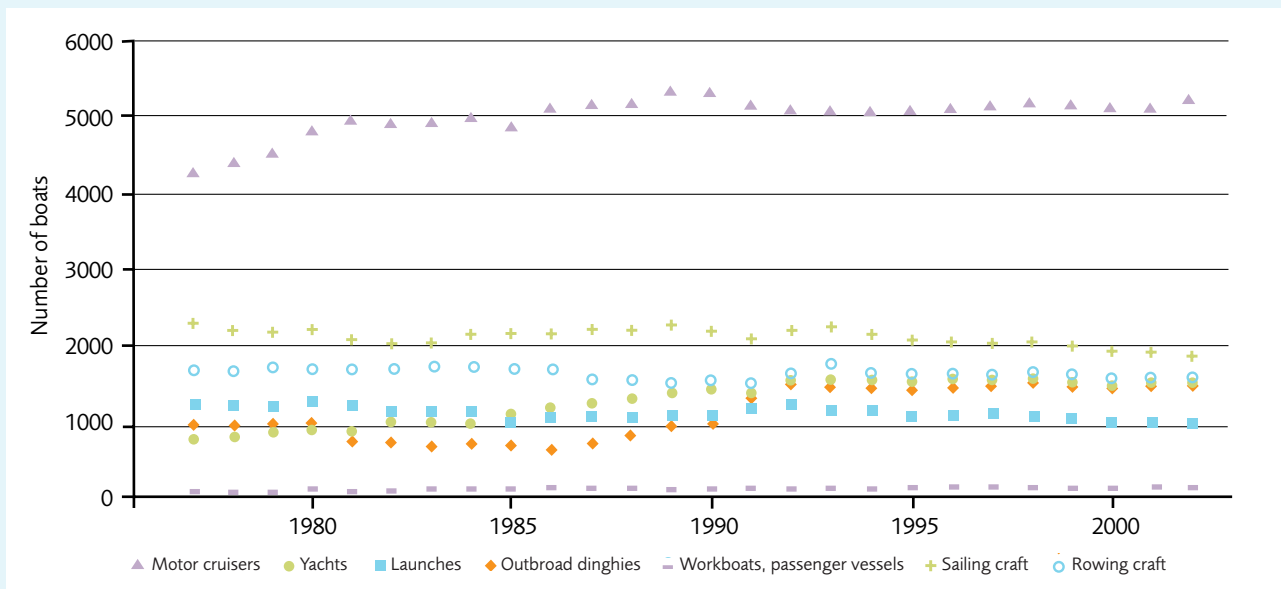


Figure 6.1b Types of boats on the Broads



Local person who has expanded his business by diversifying into environmentally sustainable canoe and bike hire schemes.

The hire boat industry remains a vital part of the local economy, despite its decline over the last decade. Recognising changes in traditional holiday patterns towards later bookings and shorter notice, and improving environmental and quality standards within the industry are key to its revival. Diversification, including the service, maintenance and storage of private vessels, is also important. A strategy and action plan for the revival of the hire boat industry is now being implemented under the Broads Boating Holidays Project. Actions include the introduction of a quality assurance scheme for hire boats and the refurbishment of the yacht stations at Great Yarmouth and Norwich.

Sailing, part of the Broads' history and landscape, is in keeping with the national park philosophy of quiet recreation. The Broads is an ideal place for the novice and experienced sailor alike. There are many sailing clubs on the Broads: competitive racing is organised throughout the year and cruising under sail features with some clubs. Classic Broads' sailing craft, including wherries and Norfolk punts, remain a distinctive part of the Broads' heritage. Some broads and reaches of rivers have been identified by the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association as Very Important Sailing Areas⁸.

Angling is extremely popular in the Broads, which offers some of the best coarse fishing in England. The 'angling pound' makes a significant contribution to the local economy. The Broads Angling Strategy Group has produced a Broads Fisheries Action Plan that seeks to optimise the environmental and socio-economic benefits of fisheries and to maintain, improve and develop sustainable fisheries.

Recreational pressures on existing water space are considerable and somewhat exacerbated by some broads being closed to the public, and certain upper reaches being inaccessible. The number and types of boating activities can have implications for safety, quiet enjoyment of the waterways and river-banks and for nature conservation interests, and must be carefully managed. Improvements in access must also be tempered with limited or no access to certain water space that provides a key refuge for wildlife. Zoning of the water space, both in time and space, is a recognised means of reducing conflicts between different user groups. Promotion of good boating practice may also help to reduce environmental impacts of boating. Opportunities for the creation of more water space can also be explored, although options are limited in a nationally protected area.

⁸ Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association, 2002. *Strategy for Boating on the Broads*.



Top: Bird-watching is a popular pastime for visitors to the Broads.

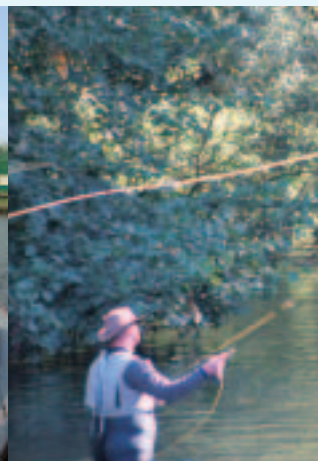
Above: Woods End, Bramerton - consistently high standards while afloat and on-shore are a vital ingredient of people's enjoyment of the Broads.

Land-based recreation

Water is what the Broads is all about, and most activities relate to it in some way. However, there is much to be enjoyed on land. Simply looking at this unique waterscape, with its countless moods, is a huge source of pleasure for many people. Here are opportunities for fishing, bird-watching, painting, photography and many other such pursuits, not least the chance for quiet reflection amidst beautiful and tranquil surroundings.

The existing rights of way network offers quiet enjoyment to visitors by foot, horse or bicycle. Circular walks and cycle hire networks allow visitors to explore the Broads' landscape and gain an understanding of the area (**Map 12: Network of canoe and cycle hire centres, information centres and long distance paths within the Broads** page 62). Improvements to existing rights of way and new statutory rights of access to heath and common land in the Broads will be provided under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, for which the Authority

Far left: Whitlingham, on the edge of Norwich, is an important gateway to the Broads now that two new broads have been created from gravel extraction.
Left to right: Popular recreational activities in keeping with the national park philosophy of 'quiet enjoyment'



has set up a Local Access Forum. Opportunities also exist for enhancements under the Broadland Flood Alleviation Project.

Conservation volunteering, organised by the Authority and other conservation groups, provides a valuable opportunity to learn about practical habitat and access management and to experience the enjoyment of working in the Broads' environment.

The Authority works with the boating industry, local councils, catering providers and other agencies to ensure that services and facilities for recreation and tourism are of an appropriate and acceptable standard. This includes the provision of public toilets, showers, launderettes and car parks.

Innovative work is going ahead with the development of the Broads Quality Charter, a pioneering initiative designed to highlight the good practice already widespread in the Broads. It will foster further improvements in the quality standards of catering establishments throughout the area, and provide the model for a national quality assurance scheme.

Whitlingham Country Park, occupying the Yare flood plain on the south-eastern fringe of Norwich, is developing as a 'gateway' to the Broads. Acting as an interface between the Broads and the city, the country park already offers a variety of outdoor activities. A visitor centre is currently under development, and this will provide an important introduction to the Broads' experience.

Accreditation mark used by pubs and restaurants that meet the standards of the Broads Quality Charter.



Maintaining the waterways

The Authority is responsible for the maintenance of the navigation on the waterways, which is funded through boat tolls. Management includes health and safety provisions, dredging, clearance of wrecks and other hazards, signing and marking the waterways, maintaining the network of free 24-hour moorings and providing a ranger service to assist the public and enforce the byelaws, particularly speed limits.

Bank erosion is a recurring issue, with a number of causes. The action of wind and boat induced waves are major contributory factors, along with water quality, land use and feral geese, all of which may damage reed fringes. Once the causes have been addressed, action must be taken to restore and protect banks. The Authority enforces a pattern of speed limit controls to limit the damaging effects of boat wash. It also provides advice to landowners on appropriate bank protection methods, encouraging the use of natural or 'soft' engineering techniques wherever possible. Strong healthy reed beds are the most effective form of bank protection, acting as a natural buffer against wave action. They are also a characteristic feature of the Broads' landscape and provide an important habitat for wildlife.

Maintaining adequate water depths for safe navigation is a fundamental river management task for the Authority. An annual dredging programme is undertaken to combat siltation. The Authority seeks to dispose of dredged material in ways that minimise the impact on the environment. Beneficial use of dredgings is encouraged where possible. However, a number of traditionally used sites for dredgings are now protected under European nature conservation legislation, requiring more creative solutions. A Sediment Management Strategy for the Broads, which integrates the disposal options available

as part of a sustainable and holistic approach, is currently being developed.

Thriving aquatic plant communities are part of a healthy wetland ecosystem. Some of these plant communities are European features protected under the Habitats Directive. Certain species of plants are rare and restricted in the UK to parts of the Broads (Figure 5.3). With improving water quality and rising temperatures, aquatic plants are likely to become more prolific and have an increasing impact on navigation and recreation, unless nutrients are so low that their growth is inhibited. Sustainable management solutions will be required.



A navigation ranger enforces speed limits using a radar gun.



Grab dredging on the River Wensum

Issues, aims and priority objectives

Sustainable tourism and recreation

Issue: Considerable achievements have been made in improving water quality and restoring wetland habitats within the Broads. Such efforts need to be supported by ensuring that tourism and recreational activities are environmentally and socially sustainable.

20-year aim: Tourism and recreation will be promoted and managed at environmentally and socially sustainable levels, thereby contributing to a vibrant and stable local economy. They will be founded on the natural and cultural beauty of the Broads, which is enhanced by its tranquillity and sense of remoteness. Boat numbers and the intensity of boating use will be managed at levels that are environmentally and economically sustainable, as well as socially acceptable among those using the Broads.

5-year priority objective:

TR1 Develop a sustainable tourism and recreation strategy.

Managing water space

Issue: There is considerable pressure in certain areas on the use of water space for navigation, recreation and nature conservation purposes. Its management requires an integrated approach, based on existing levels of use and importance, and suitability and potential for different uses.

20-year aim: The waterways will be in sound ecological condition, with 'good' status⁹ water quality and high levels of biodiversity. A wide range of appropriate recreational activity will take place in suitable locations on and beside the waterways, according to public rights and permissions that are clearly understood and supported by all interests.

5-year priority objectives:

TR2 Develop a strategic, integrated approach to managing water space.

TR3 Develop and implement site management plans for key broads.

TR4 Examine and promote opportunities for expansion of navigation water space, consistent with nature conservation interests.

⁹ As defined in the Water Framework Directive.

An increasing number of specially adapted hire craft enable people with limited mobility to enjoy boating.



Wherries, of which only seven remain afloat, are a unique part of the Broads heritage.

Safety of the navigation and boats

Issue: The Authority is responsible under the Port and Marine Safety Code for reducing and maintaining all risks associated with navigation to 'As Low As Reasonably Possible'. It is also responsible for introducing and enforcing the Boat Safety Scheme. The intensity of boating activities varies across the Broads and, at times, certain reaches of river are congested. This has potential implications for boat safety, as well as the quiet enjoyment of the waterways and river-banks.

20-year aim: Provisions to ensure the effective safety management of the navigation and the technical safety of boats will be in place in accordance with best modern practice.

5-year priority objective:

TR5 Introduce and enforce appropriate safety systems and measures for the navigation and boats, respectively.

Environmentally friendly boating

Issue: New designs and technologies are becoming increasingly available to the boating industry to minimise environmental impacts from noise, wash, and spent fuel. Opportunities and incentives will need to be found to introduce them to the Broads, within both the commercial and private sectors.

20-year aim: Boating activity in the Broads will cause the minimum of harm to the environment. Boats will be quiet, generate nominal pollution and, by virtue of appropriate size and design, cause minimal damage to banks by wash or erosion.

5-year priority objectives:

TR6 Promote the design and use of environmentally friendly craft.

TR7 Promote boat etiquette and good boat handling among boat users to improve safety and reduce environmental impacts.

TR8 Promote the preservation, restoration and use of craft historically used on the Broads, and sustain continued use of traditional styles and materials.

Boating holidays

Issue: The hire boat industry is a vital part of the rural economy. It has been in decline over the last decade for a variety of reasons. The Broads Authority, in partnership with the industry and key agencies, has developed a strategy and action plan to address the key issues.

20-year aim: The hire boat industry in the Broads will thrive, providing a quality experience that is customer focused and economically viable at environmentally and socially sustainable levels.

5-year priority objective:

TR9 Implement the Broads Boating Holidays Project Action Plan.

Access to land and water

Issue: Much of the Broads is relatively inaccessible. Moreover, links between land and water-based recreational provisions are limited. Enjoyment of the fens by the public is very limited. Viewing of this part of the Broads' landscape tends to occur from fixed locations rather than as a journey, and is not an holistic experience. Direct access on to fen habitat is difficult due to the fragile and often hazardous nature of the peat substrate.

20-year aim: The Broads will be easily accessible for all to enjoy recreational activity on land and water. Access will be sensitively managed, and of a kind and an intensity that respects and preserves the special qualities and ambience of the Broads, its landscape and delicate ecosystems. Opportunities will be provided for land access in the Broads, via a linked and extensive network of footpaths, cycle ways and bridle paths that take advantage of the natural valley contours. More limited opportunities will be available for visitors to experience the fens and appreciate their fragility without degrading this habitat. Where existing access is in danger of being lost, for example through erosion along river-banks, compulsory purchase powers will be exercised on adjacent land.

5-year priority objectives:

TR10 Develop and implement a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the Broads, in accordance with the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act.

TR11 Develop a strategy for managing public enjoyment of the fens.

TR12 Improve launching facilities for small craft.

TR13 Improve physical access to facilities and services for all, including people with disabilities.

Visitor services and tourism infrastructure

Issue: Services, standards and facilities vary considerably across the Broads and in many cases do not meet the expectations of visitors.

20-year aim: Visitor services and associated infrastructures will meet minimum quality standards that represent good value for money.

5-year priority objective:

TR14 Introduce and develop initiatives that foster improvements in visitor services and facilities.

Dredging and disposal of dredged material

Issue: Current levels of dredging are insufficient to maintain the navigation. Moreover, sites for the disposal of dredged materials are scarce: traditionally used sites are now protected under European nature conservation legislation and opportunities for using adjacent arable land are few.

20-year aim: Waterways will be maintained at adequate depths for navigation purposes by dredging. Dredged material will be disposed of in environmentally and economically sustainable ways.

5-year priority objective:

TR15 Develop and implement a sustainable sediment management strategy.

Bank erosion

Issue: Bank erosion is a recurring problem for landowners and impacts on water quality. A range of bank protection measures is used, and the Authority promotes 'soft' or natural engineering solutions where possible.

20-year aim: Bank erosion will be minimal, with sustainable and where practicable natural or 'soft' engineering solutions used to protect the more vulnerable stretches of waterways.



Fleet Dyke, South Walsham Broad: old dredgings are removed to form a flood bank and public footpath. Coir rolls are then secured in place to reduce boat wash when water levels are high.

5-year priority objectives:

TR16 Minimise bank erosion where caused by boating activity.

TR17 Protect and restore vulnerable banks and ronds.

Management of aquatic plants for navigation

Issue: Thriving aquatic plant communities are part of a healthy wetland ecosystem. Aquatic plants will respond in abundance and diversity to improving water quality, particularly as Water Framework Directive targets are met. Some of these plants are rare, their UK distributions being restricted to parts of the Broads, and some of these plant communities are European features protected under the Habitats Directive. With improving water quality, aquatic plants are likely to increasingly impact on navigation and recreation.

20-year aim: Aquatic plants will be managed sustainably in ways that: do not impact on the ecological integrity of sites; keep waterways open to navigation; and provide for appropriate recreational activity.

5-year priority objective:

TR18 Develop and implement a strategy for the sustainable management of aquatic plants.



7 Understanding the Broads

High quality, effective communication is essential to help people understand and enjoy the Broads in ways that do not damage its natural and cultural features or its sense of space and tranquillity. Promoting understanding secures public and, therefore, political support for a shared vision of the Broads. Promoting understanding ranges from providing information to visitors about facilities and things to do in the Broads or to local people about the role of the Authority, to describing complex research and management tasks to those interested. It is important to ensure that everyone who wishes can access information appropriate to their needs using a variety of means.

In its recent review of national parks, Government encourages national park authorities to promote greater



understanding of national parks among a wider audience, including those from urban areas, ethnic minorities and young people. With this in mind, and in order to clearly identify and promote the national park status of the Broads, the Authority is seeking to change the name of the area to 'The Broads National Park'. As this may require legislative changes, the Authority will change its branding in the meantime to make more explicit its membership of the national park family.

Information provision

The Authority produces many high quality publications and other interpretation for local people and visitors. One hundred thousand copies of the Broadcaster visitor newspaper are printed annually and delivered to boatyards, pubs and other service providers in the area.

The Authority manages a network of five small information centres. Information and interpretation about the Broads' environment is displayed alongside information on local attractions, accommodation, boating and other activities (**Map 12** page 62).

Talking face-to-face to a knowledgeable, friendly member of staff is a key part of the Authority's communications. Many people rely on electronic communication, but the opportunity for personal contact with the Authority's information centre staff, countryside and navigation rangers, seasonal wardens and other staff is invaluable.



Above: Nutmeg Puppets raise children's interest in the Broads. **Left:** Hoveton Information Centre, one of five in the Broads (*top*). Wherries tour the Broads as part of an annual Fun in the Broads events programme that attracts 10,000 people annually (*bottom*). **Below:** The Electric Eel boat trip is equipped with hearing aids.



Information about what to visit in the Broads is publicised in the *Broadcaster*, a free newspaper financed by advertisements.



Issues, aims and priority objectives

Understanding the status and importance of the Broads as a national park

Issue: The Broads Authority is a member of the national parks family, with its own legislation to address the needs of navigation. It wishes to change its name to more clearly identify the Broads as a national park and is seeking ways to further promote such status. The recent review of national parks by DEFRA encourages national park authorities to promote greater understanding of national parks among a wider audience, including those from urban areas, ethnic minorities and young people.

20-year aim: The Broads will be renowned as a national park, whose purposes and special qualities are clearly understood. Appropriately interpreted information will enable people to enjoy the Broads in ways that do not damage its natural and cultural features or sense of space and tranquillity.

5-year priority objectives:

UB1 Promote and raise awareness of the Broads as a member of the national park family.

UB2 Reach a wider audience, including young people, those from urban areas, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, with appropriately interpreted information and appropriate opportunities for enjoying the special qualities of the Broads.

UB3 Further develop the Broads Environmental Education Network.

Local traditions

Issue: Special traditions, skills, crafts and oral culture are in danger of being lost from the Broads.

20-year aim: The social history and local traditions that reflect the character of the Broads' landscape will be understood, documented by readily accessible multi-media, and promoted.

5-year priority objective:

UB4 Develop and promote a greater understanding of the social history and associated local traditions of the Broads.

Responsibilities and role of the Broads Authority

Issue: The Authority's statutory duties are to manage the Broads for the purposes of: conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads; promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public; and protecting the interests of navigation. It is also the responsible

authority for planning and navigation. These duties and responsibilities are not always widely understood.

20-year aim: The responsibilities of the Broads Authority will be well understood and its role in key areas will be clearly defined in relation to other partners.

5-year priority objectives:

UB5 Ensure that the statutory duties of the Broads Authority are adequately promoted and interpreted in information available to the public.

UB6 Develop and promote the role of the Broads Authority.

Provision and distribution of information

Issue: Information about the Broads should be readily accessible to all interest groups in a variety of means that are appropriate to their needs, using available technologies.

20-year aim: High quality information about the Broads will be appropriately targeted to a wide range of interest groups. It will be readily accessible to everyone, using available technologies.

5-year priority objective:

UB7 Develop a communications strategy and associated action plans.

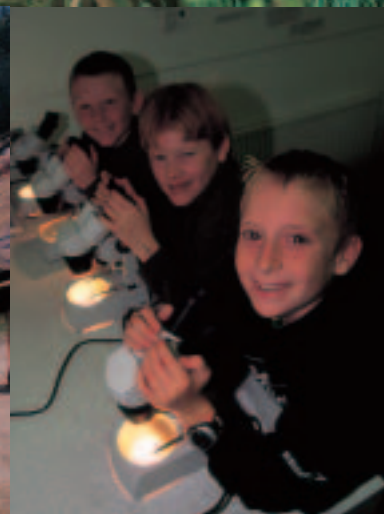
Stakeholder and community participation

Issue: Many different and sometimes potentially conflicting interests centre on the Broads. These need to be shared and understood by the relevant stakeholders in order to integrate common objectives and reconcile differences. Stakeholder and community participation is also critical, in terms of political support and resources, to the successful implementation of the Broads Plan.

20-year aim: Relationships between the Broads Authority, its stakeholders and local communities will be improved, with better understood and more widely agreed strategic approaches to major issues facing the Broads. Active partnerships will take forward common objectives to the benefit of the Broads.

5-year priority objective:

UB8 Increase the capability and capacity of the Broads Authority to engage stakeholders and involve communities in the management of the Broads.



Left to right, top to bottom: Children learn how to make dragonflies, staff member assists visitor, David Bellamy enthuses children while opening the boardwalk at Barton, how to bundle reeds is explained to visitors from an urban area, new How Hill Ecology Centre features a laboratory, interpreted information adds to visitors' enjoyment, ranger instructs students how to cut scrub, face painting - part of the fun for all ages!

