



Saving the planet and money is key for Broads Businesses

Going green can mean a healthy profit for local businesses as well as the environment according to speakers at a conference in Norwich.

Nearly 60 Broads businesses attended the Green Sky Thinking Day at the Assembly House organised by the Broads Authority with the aim of promoting greener tourism on the Broads.

Chaired by Ian Russell MBE, Director of award-winning Wroxham Barns and chairman of the Broads Tourism Forum, said that being environmentally friendly was “a vital component of every business”.

“It is important for the needs of the business to be matched to the needs of the environment , the local community and the visitor,” he said. “All the members of the Broads Tourism Forum have signed up to this.”

Mr Russell urged the delegates to promote their businesses as part of the whole Broads experience and pass business on to one another rather than just promoting their own interests.

“If we are going to be part of this very special place, which is a member of the National Park family, we need to behave responsibly and be seen to be looking after it better,” he said.

Ingrid Marques, Sustainable Tourism Executive of East of England Tourism, said Sustainable Tourism East had a vision to make the East of England the first region of choice for the responsible visitor, with a strong focus on local distinctiveness.

The conference was funded by the European Regional Development Fund as part of the Interreg Two Seas project.

Simon Hooton, the Broads Authority's Director of Conservation and Countryside Management, stressed: "There is a necessity to live within our environmental limits. We have abused our planet and we really do need to look after it. It looks after us and we need to look after it in return."

He encouraged businesses to promote the Broads through their customers' eyes—highlighting the unique wildlife such as the Swallowtail butterfly which is found nowhere else in the country, the waterways, dry, sunny weather and local culture.

The audience heard examples of how the Forest of Bowland, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Lancashire, had transformed its tourism industry after the Foot and Mouth outbreak. It was the first protected area in England to gain the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, just before the Broads Authority, and had now set up The Bowland Experience, a limited company which provides opportunities for shared training and bulk buying for local businesses.

One businessman Jon Beavan , who runs camp sites and other accommodation in the Forest of Bowland, explained how he had put pressure on the local council to adopt better recycling policies for businesses, and highlighted energy saving devices he had fitted which had saved him money.

Bruce Hanson, Head of Tourism at the Broads Authority said: "The conference has greatly strengthened the spirit of partnership between the Broads Authority and the Broads Tourism Forum. There is now a real opportunity for us to tap into European funding, seize the green initiative, and together lift the quality of the Broads experience to a new level."

