

# REPORT OF STEP PARTNER VISIT TO BROADS

**THEME OF THE VISIT:**

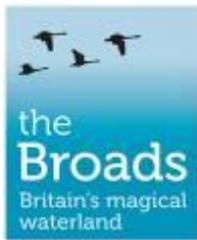
**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ESTUARY PARKS:  
PUBLIC - PRIVATE CO-OPERATION**



**DATE**  
**6-8TH NOVEMBER 2011**

**"Investing in your future"**  
Crossborder cooperation programme  
2007-2013 Part-financed by the European Union  
(European Regional Development Fund)





This programme was designed to accompany the 3<sup>rd</sup> combined meeting of the International Steering Group and Coordination Group STEP which took place in Norwich on Monday 7th November 2011. The intention was to explore the experience that has been acquired in the Broads of co-operation between tourism businesses and the Broads Authority in order to improve the sustainability of the tourism sector. The three days of the visit were planned as a whole, although the participants varied from day to day. Visits were made to six tourism businesses and a further three businesses were involved with the final workshop. Visits were also made to two public facilities where the Broads Authority has a direct involvement. All of the tourism businesses involved had some experience of the Green Tourism Business Scheme – from some just starting out, right through to one business holding the Gold Award.

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We would like to thank each representative of the tourism businesses that we visited, who gave their time to share their experiences with us.



Visiting:

Rockland St Mary Staithe; Somerleyton Estate; Waveney River Centre

Participants, from the Biesbosch: Harry Wagemakers; Dick Verheijen; Hans Thiebou; Rolinka Spriensma; Wim van Hooff

Accompanied by:

Bruce Hanson, Broads Authority; Jackie Denman, The Tourism Company

**ROCKLAND ST MARY STAITHE**

For a quick introduction to the Broads landscape and how the Broads Authority is involved with actively encouraging its enjoyment, we called in at a parish staithe on the River Yare. Rockland St Mary is located on the Wherryman's Way, a 35 mile walking route which follows the River Yare from Norwich to Great Yarmouth. We were able to see some of the interpretation that had been installed as part of the investment in the Wherryman's Way, 24 hour moorings and an electric charging point for electric boats, parking facilities, a seven mile circular walk and an easy access path which leads to an RSPB bird hide.



Photo: Hans Thiebou



## SOMERLEYTON ESTATE

The Somerleyton Estate is in the south eastern corner of the Broads area, lying almost entirely outside the boundary of the Broads Authority. The estate, which is managed by the Hon. Hugh Crossley, includes a number of elements which are open to visitors, primarily from Easter to September. We were welcomed to Fritton House Hotel by Stuart Burgess, Manager of Fritton Country Park, which is based around Fritton Lake in the northern part of the estate. Fritton Country Park currently sees around 35,000 visitors a year. Somerleyton Hall and Gardens, in the southern part of the estate, are also open to the public and receive around 45,000 visitors a year. The Somerleyton Estate is a member of Broads Tourism.



Each of Fritton Country Park and Somerleyton Hall and Gardens had recently been assessed for the **Green** Tourism Business Scheme. Stuart, who has worked for the estate for the past 8 years, had been responsible for preparing Fritton Country Park for assessment, and he made a presentation about the importance of the Country Park as an area for conservation, the environmental ethos encouraged by Hugh Crossley throughout the business, and the work that had gone into assembling evidence and making the changes required prior to presenting themselves for assessment under the GTBS. Stuart told us about the reasons why the Somerleyton Estate has been keen to 'go green', which include:

- Hugh Crossley is personally very committed to being green and acting in a sustainable way.
- Looking for long term cost savings / reduction in waste
- Ensuring that the business is operating in line with UK / EU legislation
- Improving procedures and routines
- Being well placed to benefit from public perception / green choices

They have moved forward in a series of well planned steps. In 2005, they joined the David Bellamy Conservation Award scheme for Holiday Parks and attained Gold Award. In 2008, an independent report was commissioned from Earthly Ideas, a Norfolk based consultancy offering sustainability and environmental advice to businesses. This was



followed in 2009 by fact finding visits to other organisations which had already joined GTBS. In November 2010, Somerleyton Estate (Fritton Lake and Somerleyton Hall and Gardens) joined the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

The decision was made to postpone their grading assessment until Autumn 2011. The Scheme requires that supporting evidence, documents, photos and other relevant information is prepared and available for inspection. It soon became clear that a great many things needed to be put in place in order to achieve this, including:

- Creation of a Green Team and introducing regular meetings
- Producing the Green File: assimilating evidence in preparation for the grading
- Development of policies for staff, visitors and contractors to abide by; developing action plans and framework documents
- Introducing regular monthly monitoring of waste / energy consumption / water usage / staff travel / wildlife etc
- Careful assessment of suppliers / contractors / staff procedures etc.
- Changing suppliers and purchase choices to 'greener products' (eg light bulbs, recycled toilet paper, chlorine free paper, green toilet products etc) or sustainable businesses, which can be costly.

The outcome was awaited from the assessment for GTBS, which had taken place in October. Meanwhile, Stuart was able to share some lessons from the experience at Somerleyton:

- The commitment to the GTBS is not to be undertaken lightly – a vast amount of work is required.
- Carolyn Ashton and Stuart Burgess spent 4 solid weeks, working 70hrs+ a week to get the folders in shape while maintaining their regular responsibilities during the main season.
- It had not always been easy to encourage all of the staff from the top down, and in some departments, to act in a more responsible and in a green way
- The initial cost of introducing some new products can be high and may need to be staged
- The grading visit did not mark the end of a process but a beginning; there would be a need to maintain a high level of commitment to the scheme into the future

*(I am delighted to be able to tell you that both Fritton Country Park and Somerleyton Hall and Gardens learned on 19<sup>th</sup> December that they had achieved a Gold Award under the Green Tourism Business Scheme – a great reward for all their hard work.)*

For the last part of our visit, Stuart took us on a guided tour of the Fritton Lake Park to show us some of the things that he had been talking about.





Photos: Hans Thiebou



## WAVENEY RIVER CENTRE

The Waveney River Centre is a 5-star Holiday Park and Marina in the south eastern corner of the Broads area attracting 10,000 visitors a year. The Holiday Park adjoins the river and is surrounded by marshes, nature reserves and abundant wildlife. Year-round lodge holidays are offered as well as touring caravan and camping pitches, together with day cruiser, canoe and cycle hire. We were shown round the facilities by Ruth Knight, who has owned and run the business with her husband James since 2003. The Waveney River Centre has held a Gold David Bellamy Conservation Award for several years and gained a Silver Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme in 2010-11.



Ruth and James have taken a proactive approach to environmental management in their business and have a strong interest in conservation which they are keen to share with their visitors. The success of their business is based upon its location in an exceptional landscape and the opportunity for their visitors to enjoy an outstanding environment. Ruth was able to show us a number of their initiatives, including: energy management; rainwater harvesting; wetrooms with low carbon heat recovery units; recycling facilities; wildlife garden; cycle storage facilities; locally sourced goods on sale in the shop; recent investment in state of the art energy saving swimming pool water heating; and visitor information aimed at reducing distance of travel from the Centre. We were also introduced to 'A Fish called Eddie', a character that has evolved from a sculpture at the centre of the Park, whose messages pop up all around the Park asking visitors to join him in taking care of the environment in all sorts of ways.

On the opposite bank of the River Waveney is Carlton Marsh Nature Reserve, 120 acres of grazing marshes in the care of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Ruth told us of the plans that they have been making with Suffolk Wildlife Trust for future joint activity, based around the re-introduction of a historic connection with a small passenger ferry service that they will run. The possibility of using an electric motor is being investigated. This service will not only give their guests an opportunity to explore the Reserve but also opens up the possibility of offering services to people who are visiting the Reserve – for example providing breakfasts for an early morning guided walk.



Ruth mentioned the importance of advice that they had received from the Broads Authority conservation officers and also the regular contact that they had enjoyed with the conservation rangers, although she thought that this was now diminishing due to staff reorganization. She also talked about their relationship with the Broads Authority over planning issues, where the opportunity to talk about plans at a very early stage had proved very helpful. Over the 8 years that they have owned the site, James and Ruth have driven through a steady programme of investment to upgrade their facilities and improve the site and its appearance. They have a programme to replace old static caravans with new lodges over time, which are able to achieve 40 weeks of occupancy. Their reception building and new shop were expensive to build because they required



deep piles to be driven, and they had been able to offset the cost through building an upper floor which contains holiday apartments to let.

They have an important role in pointing their visitors to other tourism businesses, suggesting places to visit, routes to walk/cycle/paddle and places to stop, and making new connections, such as their relationship with a guide offering birdwatching tours. Their involvement in Broads Tourism has supported these networks, and they make use of the Broads' branding on their website and in their promotional material.

At the end of the visit, Ruth told us that they are planning to withdraw from the Green Tourism Business Scheme, despite the raft of initiatives that they have in place to support good environmental practice in their business and amongst their visitors. Visitor feedback has suggested that customers are divided 50/50 over the influence that Waveney River Centre has over their own environmental practices. This may be that they attract the sort of visitors who are already environmentally aware and where there is little room for improvement. Having reviewed all their costs, Waveney River Centre were concerned about the assessment fee, especially given that they were able to promote the Gold Award that they already hold through the David Bellamy Conservation Scheme. Ruth expressed a wish for assessment for the GTBS to be amalgamated with quality grading assessments in order to keep costs down.

## **SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS AT THE END OF DAY 1**

- Environmental improvements need commitment and support from the top.
- This may stem from a personal ethos, or from a combination of motives.
- The fact that the Broads is designated as a protected area may be one factor in driving environmental improvement, but the Somerleyton Estate values and cares for its special landscape which lies outside the Broads Authority boundary.
- Even with top level support, attitudes can vary within the business.
- It is a challenge to bring all staff on board; the attitudes and habits of full time staff can be especially difficult to change.
- Seasonal staff can present less of a challenge as they can be introduced to the ethos and policies through their induction briefing.
- It is important to engage with visitors and to enroll them into active support for good environmental practice and initiatives.
- A high level of knowledge and concern about conservation issues is being demonstrated by individuals involved in tourism businesses.
- Environmental improvements take time to plan and time to implement, including phasing costs and allowing for savings made to fund new investment.
- This can often go hand in hand with a phased programme of investment in upgrading facilities.
- Sustainable technologies can require high levels of investment; sources of external funding can help here.
- The Green Tourism Business Scheme can involve businesses in a great deal of work.



- The public do not necessarily understand the meaning of different levels of the Green Tourism Business Scheme or what is involved on the part of businesses to achieve them.
- A business can earn a Silver Award under the Green Tourism Business Scheme while being awarded a Gold David Bellamy Conservation Award; this can lead to the latter being seen as a more positive asset.
- Success in any of the many annual awards which are now presented to tourism businesses, including for sustainable and environmental best practice, cost nothing to enter and can lead to much greater public exposure than GTBS.
- Tourism businesses are actively engaged with Broads Tourism, making use of the Broads branding on promotional literature, websites and sales items.
- There is good evidence of cross-promotion of tourism businesses within the Broads Tourism family.
- Where businesses are located within the Broads Authority, important relationships can be established with a range of staff, including conservation and planning officers.
- Tourism businesses are establishing partnerships with conservation organisations, such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust.



Visiting:

Whitlingham Country Park; BeWILDerwood; Wroxham Barns; Hautbois Residential and Activity Centre

Participants:

*From the Biesbosch:* Tijmen van der Wal; Adriaan Schuller; Peter van Beek; Michael Wansink

*From the Polders of Kruibeke:* Pia De Monie; Rita Pauwels

Accompanied by:

Sam Bates, Broads Authority; Jackie Denman, The Tourism Company

## WHITLINGHAM COUNTRY PARK

Whitlingham Country Park extends to 35 hectares and is managed in a partnership between Whitlingham Charitable Trust and the Broads Authority. Sam Bates, Visitor Services Supervisor, led our short tour around the site. Sam's role includes managing the Broads Authority's three visitor hubs, including Whitlingham. This former quarry site acts as a gateway to the Broads, being located in the Broads Authority Area, right on the edge of Norwich City and just separated from the River Yare by a narrow strip of land. The first area of water, Little Broad, was completed in 1997, followed by the Great Broad in 2005. The Park has cycle paths, a picnic meadow, and a visitor centre with a café, information point and toilet facilities. The Park is also home to Whitlingham Outdoor Education Centre, a purpose built outdoor activities centre funded by Sport England, Big Lottery and Norfolk County Council, where facilities are available for a number of outdoor activities including windsurfing, sailing, archery, kayaking.



We were able to see the new touch-screen information panel which was installed in summer 2011 with the support of STEP funding, to help visitors learn more about the Broads. The panel offers information about the history and natural history of the area, with detailed information about Broadland birds and animals, and users can find the location of wildlife sites and learn about the variety of Broadland habitats and the species found in them. Visitors can choose from a series of menus, with information presented as images and videos, with written or audio commentary.

## **BEWILDERWOOD**

BeWILDerwood, 'The Curious Treehouse Adventure', closes each winter after the October half term but we were fortunate to be shown round by Simon Egan, one of the two friends who came up with the original idea for a treehouse adventure park. The other, Tom Blofeld, is the landowner who was faced with the prospect of a declining farm income and some beautiful but unused woods. Tom is also the author of a successful series of childrens' books that tell the story of the creatures in BeWILDerwood, the first of which was published to coincide with the opening in 2007.

The site lies within the designated area of the Broads, so early discussions were held with the Broads Authority as the planning authority for the site, and in order to eliminate concerns as the idea developed. Since the granting of planning permission, the Broads Authority has welcomed the attraction with its strong offer to young families and its national profile which has drawn new attention to the Broads. The attraction has also provided new, especially, seasonal employment in the area.

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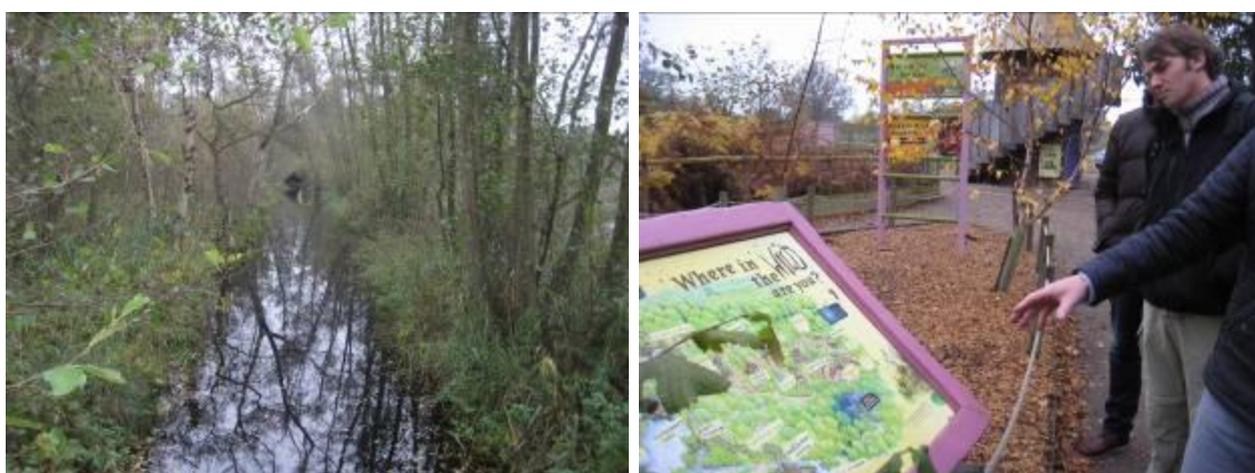
The initial plan was for perhaps 35,000 visitors. This target was exceeded in the first year of operation and there were 160,000 visitors in 2010. BeWILDerwood is engaged with Broads Tourism and has registered its interest in joining the Green Tourism Business Scheme. They are anxious to make sure that they have everything in place to put them in the best position to achieve a high grading on their first assessment. A new business manager has recently been appointed, who will be taking responsibility for preparing BeWILDerwood for entry to the scheme.

A number of aspects of the attraction are already well in tune with GTBS, including:

- BeWILDerwood was designed to have a light environmental impact and to carry a sustainable approach throughout every aspect of the business.
- Through providing a fun experience and immersing visitors in the stories, families can have a totally outdoor experience and interaction with the natural environment, with lots of physical action for children
- Although the site is essentially woodland, an existing wetland environment has been incorporated into the experience through a boat ride which takes visitors into the main part of the site.
- Food sold on site is sourced locally, wherever possible
- BeWILDerboats are reclaimed lifeboats, converted to electric
- Fences within the site have been made from wood harvested in BeWILDerwood's own woods



- BeWILDerwood has helped to upgrade local footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths to allow sustainable access and is home to Broadland Cycle Hire to allow people to explore further beyond their gates
- More than 14,000 trees have been planted, helping to enhance the woodland environment, which has gone a long way to reducing the, already light, carbon footprint
- Toilets have been upgraded with push taps
- Over 70% of waste is recycled by sending it to a waste recycling company that sorts everything by hand. Fun bin signage is used to encourage visitors to help to recycle. Maybe as a result and certainly an additional benefit, there is almost zero litter, even on the busiest days – BeWILDerwood find that visitors respect the woodland environment that they are playing in.
- Tree and Environmental Management Plans are in place for a previously unmanaged landscape, creating a new use for land that had been lovely, but almost useless, and in the process creating up to 70 new jobs for local people in the process.



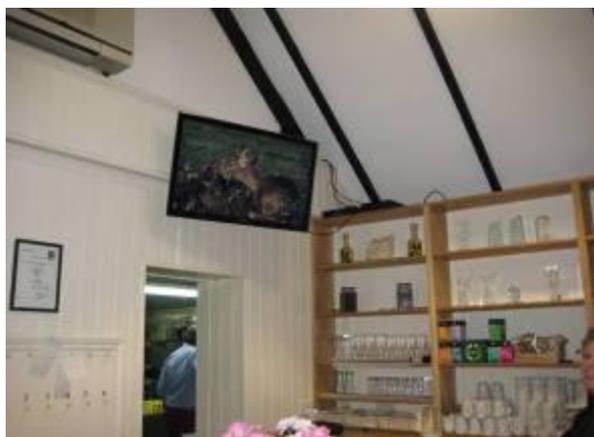
## WROXHAM BARNES

Our lunch stop was at Wroxham Barnes, a popular visitor attraction and retail development to the north of Hoveton. We were really there to enjoy the restaurant-café, but we also had a chance to look round the studios and retail space. Wroxham Barnes holds a Silver Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme, is a member of Broads Tourism and makes good use of the Broads branding. (Ian Russell the owner is a former chairman of Broads Tourism and found time at short notice to welcome us during our meal). As well as providing a well-resourced visitor information kiosk, a video screen has been installed in the restaurant where a series of photographs about the natural and historic heritage of the Broads can be played in the background.

The restaurant-café holds a Broads Quality Charter Gold Award. This Broads Authority scheme highlights some of the very best pubs, restaurants and cafes in the Broads. Establishments are quality checked and scored by independent assessors – a score of 80% or more is required for a Gold Award. Wroxham Barnes' quality charter scheme



assessor said: "Wroxham Barns has a well run restaurant-café with high quality food using excellent local produce throughout the menu. The welcome and service is also very good." The 2011 guide to Eating out in the Broads, which includes details of 38 Broads Quality Charter establishments, was published by the Broads Authority with support from the STEP programme. (The guide also includes information about 'what to do between meals', such as walking, cycling and cycle hire, canoeing and canoe hire, boat trips and 'Fun in the Broads' events).



## HAUTBOIS RESIDENTIAL AND ACTIVITY CENTRE

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Hautbois Residential and Activity Centre is a residential and activity centre owned and managed by Girlguiding Anglia, a non-profit making organization. The 28-acre private estate is located in the north-western corner of the Broads, seven miles north of Norwich and just outside the Broads Authority area. Rachel Jarman, Business Manager, showed us round their outside facilities and pointed out some of their environmental innovations. Hautbois sleeps a total of 42 people in the main house, plus 7 separate campsites. The estate has a private cut onto the River Bure, which offers the perfect location for water sports, including kayaking, canoeing and raft building, as well as a number of landbased activities.. All activities are run by fully qualified instructors, some of whom are trained on-site at Hautbois at the beginning of the season.

Hautbois opened its purpose-built environmentally friendly training suite/dining room in 2007. This has enabled it to add to its substantial involvement with the youth market by offering facilities for small conferences, meetings and activities to the corporate sector. The training suite was built using Beco blocks, an insulation concrete framework left in place permanently as thermal insulation. The building has a sedum living roof and rainwater is harvested from this and from an adjoining part of the house and is used for flushing toilets. A ground source heat pump was installed and underfloor heating, which uses floating condensation for maximum energy efficiency.

Building on the development that took place in 2007, Anglia Region of the Girlguiding UK made a conscious decision in April 2008 to go green and to be environmentally aware in



all its activities. This is seen as a perfect fit with the ethos of the organisation, preparing young people to take their place in society as confident and thoughtful adults. Hautbois has taken new steps in this direction each year. The catering offer has been completely revised, with menu development based on healthy eating and use of local produce. They are working with Natural England to encourage children to discover the outdoors. Schools can visit Hautbois and take part in lots of on-site and off-site activities from environmental studies to milking cows to canoeing on the River Bure.

The latest project, which is ongoing, is the ambitious design and self-build Eco Hub teaching space. This stand alone building is located in a field some way from the main house. The eco hub is made from recycled and natural materials including old car tyres that would otherwise end up at rubbish tips and in landfill. Large holes were dug 1.2 metres wide, the tyres rammed with gravel and stacked high to make the strong foundations of the building and then the holes were back-filled with the soil. The walls were made of over 175 straw bales, piled high and compressed into load-bearing walls which will be topped by a sedum roof. Hautbois was one of 24 properties which took part in CPRE Norfolk's Green Buildings Open Day, which offered visitors the chance to learn from, and ask questions of, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and impartial owners of environmentally-friendly buildings in Norfolk.



With so many environmental initiatives and practices in place, Hautbois is now considering joining the Green Tourism Business Scheme.



*AP3 Workshop at Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens  
'Actions and investments aimed at stimulating and supporting companies with regard to measures and products in the field of sustainability'- some examples from the Broads*

## WORKSHOP AIMS

- Learning from tourism businesses in the Broads with experience of (highlighting) sustainable practices
- Thinking (further) about why green certification for tourism businesses might matter to a protected area
- Considering how protected areas and tourism businesses can work together to a) encourage and b) benefit from the best practice in environmental and sustainable management.

## WELCOME FROM BROADS TOURISM

Barbara Greasley (Chairman) welcomed everybody to the Broads on behalf of Broads Tourism, the group of private sector tourism businesses working in partnership with the Broads Authority to deliver the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Broads, taking responsibility for the development and implementation of the Broads brand 'Britain's Magical Waterland' and for the marketing campaign and associated website.

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## FAIRHAVEN: WHY WE MADE OUR JOURNEY TO GREEN TOURISM BUSINESS SCHEME GOLD AWARD

Louise Rout (Manager) welcomed everyone to Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens, which are owned and managed by a charitable trust. The 130 acres of natural woodland, water gardens and private inner broad, are set in countryside in the heart of the Broads and were opened to the public in 1976 and currently receive 33,000 visitors a year. She explained that the challenge of controlling costs had been one reason for entering into the Green Tourism Business Scheme – being very frugal and very green can go hand in hand. But it was also a part of their ethos, inherent to Fairhaven. The aim has remained the same since the gardens opened: 'to run the charity in a way that is responsible to the environment so that future generations can enjoy the gardens as we do'.

Fairhaven was one of the first tourism businesses in the Broads to go into the Green Tourism Business Scheme, and they are proud of their role as trailblazers and the green things that they do. Their initial assessment gave them a Silver Award but their programme of continual improvement, informed in part by advice and ideas from the



assessment process, has meant that they now hold the Gold Award from GTBS. They had started by looking for small ways to make the best use of their resources, and they engaged their visitors in what they were doing right from the start. Fairhaven is all about the visitor experience and the aim was for visitors to learn a little, in quiet ways – not to be too pushy with messages. Louise described her staff team (6 full-time and 20 part-time) as 'fantastic' – this was a team effort and this was key to being green. Staff training, including induction for new and seasonal staff, is important for encouraging everyone to feel part of Fairhaven's ethos and to deliver environmental policies and practices around every part of the operation.

Since holding the Gold Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme, Fairhaven has become more confident about telling people what they do and why they are doing it. The staff team are proud of their achievement, and it is important to them that they do everything to maintain the high level that they have achieved. They are always looking for new opportunities and feel quite competitive – if there was a Platinum GTBS Award, then they would go for it! They are actively looking at the possibility of Fairhaven becoming a conservation area.

Management practices include:

- The gardens are 100% organic- no chemicals are put onto the land or into the water.
- Leaf soil is the only fertiliser used, made from rotted down leaves that fall onto the paths in the autumn.
- Gardeners use traditional methods of gardening which use less machinery than modern gardening.
- Leaf soil is sold in bags so anyone can be a more organic gardener - every effort helps the environment!
- Two 6,500 litre rainwater harvesters are buried in the ground to collect rainwater which can be used to water the plants and flush toilets. The water is called grey water and cannot be consumed but means that not much tap water is used, reducing the amount of chemicals.
- The new tea room was built from wood taken from sustainable forests and was delivered on one lorry.
- All suitable waste is recycled including all glass, cans and paper.
- As much waste as possible is composted in a composter and wormery.
- Home growing tomatoes and looking into growing other salad crops.
- All other food is locally sourced where possible. This includes apple juice, ham, bacon and salad.
- The new appliances in the tea room are A-rated which reduces the carbon footprint.
- Detergents used have no phosphates. This is much better for the environment as too much in the water has a damaging effect.

Balancing the budget is an ongoing challenge – they are hoping to reach a break even point this year.



## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE BROADS GREEN BOAT SHOW - AN ANNUAL SHOWCASE FOR GREEN ENERGY, SUSTAINABLE "LOW CARBON" BOATING AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRACTICES**

Peter Howe (Broadland Cycle Hire, Eco-Boat Ltd) and Tobi Baker (Salhouse Broad head ranger)

The Broads Green Boat Show began 16 years ago in an informal way as the 'Silent Sensation' to celebrate quiet enjoyment of the Broads. It was started as a social event for members of the Broads Society, an organisation with a mission *to help secure a sustainable future for The Broads as a unique and protected landscape in which leisure, tourism and the local economy can thrive in harmony with the natural environment.* Increased interest in the use of electric boats on the Broads was supported by a financial incentive for electric conversion, supported by the Sustainable Development Fund. Approximately 20 boats were converted at a cost of £50,000, but interest beyond this has been limited. In 2006, it was decided to create a public event on Salhouse Broad. The aim was to increase visitor appeal, increase commercial attendance, and to showcase more sustainable technology. Mr H.G. Cator, the owner of Salhouse Broad, was able to make available an open field site with car parking and access to the water with good quay-heading, moorings and a shelving beach for the launch of small boats such as kayaks, rowing boats and canoes. Support was also made available by the Broads Authority and the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

The Broads Green Boat Show is the original Green Boat Show in the UK, organised to encourage 'low carbon' propulsion for boats – rowing, paddling, pedalling, sailing, electric and biofuel-powered – as well as to promote other aspects of environmentally-friendly design and construction for boats. It is also a show-place for green energy – fuel cells, solar panels, wind turbines – and for all types of 'low impact' materials and products that encourage responsible use of the waterways. Exhibitors can take space in a marquee or by the water, where they can demonstrate boats and allow the public to try them out on the water.

The sixth show was held in September 2011, focusing on the origins of the show with a variety of 'green' boats for people to view and to take trips on. There were also a variety of canoes on display and free canoeing sessions were offered. Rather than a wholly technical show, the aim is to promote 'green thinking' in all areas, for all ages, and the show has been expanded in the last few years to include families in the target audience, with entertainment, activities and carefully selected refreshments.

Visitors were encouraged to think about how they arrived for the show, with reductions for those arriving by public transport (walk required), on foot or by bike. An electric water taxi was provided along the River Bure from Wroxham, manned by volunteers from the Broads authority.

The show has grown from 600 visitors in 2006 to a peak of 3000, but it has proved a challenge to break through this number. Money is raised through exhibitor fees and the



modest admission charge, and goes back into the running costs of the show and into promoting greener boating and environmentally friendly practices.



A considerable amount of hard work goes into organising the show. Challenges for the future include publicity and PR, generating core funding, introducing new ideas and maintaining enthusiasm on the part of the dedicated band of organisers. Salhouse Broad, which continues to provide the venue and the active support of their Head Ranger, has a Silver Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

## **(SOME OF) THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM GAINING OUR SILVER AWARD BROADS GREEN BOAT MARK**

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Barbara Greasley (Director) and Mick Derbyshire (Chief Engineer), Norfolk Broads Direct Ltd

Before Barbara began, Peter Howe outlined some of the challenges that he saw in encouraging other boat hire businesses to come on board with the Green Boat Mark, including:

- The need to demonstrate that investment in sustainable technology is good for business
- The need to provide more evidence about the wider benefits of sustainable technical solutions
- Concerns about pricing – in order to capitalise on the growing awareness amongst future customers, an improved understanding will be required about their willingness to pay a premium.

Peter illustrated these points with an example about anti-fouling, where the cost of using the best available technology is four times the cost of the copper-based anti-foul which has been used traditionally but which is known to be damaging to water quality. For businesses, these are real issues. What can make these changes more attractive? He gave the example of UK Government Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax) being used to incentivise the availability and take-up of low emission vehicles. It has been difficult to



persuade boatbuilders to incorporate new technologies into boat design. Could something similar happen to incentivise boat-builders and hire boat companies to make the changes that would benefit the environment? There is a need to prove the market and to make it more desirable. The Green Boat Mark is a first and important step here, giving an opportunity to collect some new evidence and to test market interest.

Barbara then took up her story. From their base in Wroxham, Norfolk Broads Direct Ltd operate a modern fleet of 57 quality hire cruisers, sleeping from 2-11. All cruisers are 4 or 5 star rated under the Visit England quality grading system and in 2011, Norfolk Broads Direct was proud to have the first green graded hire cruisers in the country, based on a set of criteria which the Green Tourism Business Scheme, Broads Tourism, the Broads Authority and the Eco boat project worked together to create.

Before any individual boat classes could be considered for the Green Boat Mark, it was first necessary for the hire yard to have achieved a minimum of a Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) Bronze level certification for its yard operations. Norfolk Broads Direct had been active in raising environmental management standards for some time, so they found that as a yard they were already doing quite a lot which would count towards the 140 criteria considered by GTBS. In 2011, they started to work out what they already did and a Green Team was set up for the hire yard. They knew that they would have to provide evidence of the things that they were doing and in addition they would need to introduce some new practices. In effect, they were able to tackle the hire yard and the individual boats in one overall change programme, but aware that separate documentation would need to be presented. Paperwork was reviewed – a green letter was designed to send out with confirmation of booking, and a new question added to the customer satisfaction survey about the impact of green business credentials on the decision to book. A green handbook for staff was compiled and evidence files were created. Many changes on the boats were mirrored by changes in the yard: separate bins for recycling on board were matched with improved recycling facilities in the yard; phosphate free toiletries for the boats were also made available in reception and phosphate free washing up liquid was provided. They were able to share ideas with and learn from other tourism businesses, for example the customer toilet block uses harvested rainwater to flush the toilets. Half of the boats were already on a low wash hull, and they had undertaken a 1 year trial of biodiesel. They were able to arrange deferred payment with AR Peachment of Brundall in an agreement to trial new technology for a hybrid engine for one of their boats.

Over one day in June 2011, the grading assessment took place for both the hire yard and for Fair Princess, the first boat to be put through the Green Boat Mark. The yard gained a GTBS Silver Award, scoring 76% . Barbara was very happy with this. She was pleased to have time during the 2011 season to test the systems that they had put in place before going after the score of 80% which is required for Gold.

Fair Princess was awarded a Silver Green Boat Mark, an excellent achievement. All of the hire cruisers in the fleet have been put through the Green Boat Mark now. Three classes have been awarded Silver and the remainder Bronze.



The Green Boat Mark is made up of 25 criteria, of which four are compulsory: provision of phosphate free cleaners; regular servicing and maintenance; hire guidance manual/Green File; and sewage water disposal. The remaining criteria are grouped into the following topics:

- Water quality issues (5)
- Engine performance and boat design (7)
- Hirer information (2)
- Energy and resource efficiency (6)
- Innovation (1)

Barbara took us through some of the challenges that they had faced in meeting the grading criteria for the Green Boat Mark. She explained that some criteria which relate to boat design will require a long time horizon to introduce change, which essentially can only be made as part of their overall regular programme to maintain the quality of the fleet through boat replacement and expansion. So none of their fleet scored points for use of recycled materials and only half the fleet currently has a low wash hull. However, other criteria can be met across the whole fleet through the introduction of overall change in practices, so use of phosphate free cleaners across the fleet meant a score of 5 for all the classes of boat. A score of 4 was given to each class for the guidance/Green File, with advice offered as to what could be done to score 5 in future.

The standard of fittings in the Norfolk Broads Direct (NBD) fleet is very high and this poses a few problems. Boats with showers using a maximum of 7 litres a minute scored 5. But some of the boats have a whirlpool bath, which prevents them receiving a score. This requires further research: for example, is it possible for the water to be re-used? Is it possible for green to be comfortable? It is important to create a great visitor experience that the customer will want to talk about – NBD know that luxury sells but they also know that a boat with a bath needs to refill water tanks more often.

Barbara talked us through what has been involved in introducing new practices on the boats – this is not always quite as simple as it sounds! Traditionally, boat users have discharged their washing up water into the river but this is known to affect water quality through the introduction of fats into the river water. It took a considerable amount of time and effort to locate a supplier of fat traps, which will be provided on all NBD boats in 2012. Almost all the NBD boats scored 3 out of a possible 5 for use of anti-foul. It has been easy to restrict the use of anti-foul to a strip coating but identifying an affordable source of copper-free anti-foul continues to present a problem. Extensive research has produced only one supplier, and their product is very expensive. More evidence is required before committing – for example, if it will last longer, then the extra cost might be justified. An individual boat yard cannot take responsibility for this research. In addition, metal-free anti-foul is considered to be difficult to apply on new boats.

One or two criteria have proved contentious. The compulsory criteria relating to sewage water disposal is one such example: it is essential to have a holding tank in order to enter the Green Boat Mark scheme. A decision was taken by the Broads Hire Boat Federation back in 1970 that all yards would install pump-out facilities and holding tanks are in use across the whole hire fleet. But some smaller, simpler craft in the Broads such as sailing



yachts currently have no such facility available and ways need to be found in order for them to comply.

Barbara reflected that she has had to change her thinking, and to persuade other members of her team to do the same, as well as to change processes. She also reflected on the fact that all 25 criteria have the same weight. No alterations were required for their whole fleet to achieve a reasonable score on criteria 1-10. But no points could be awarded for criteria 15 and 16, where no change was possible because they relate to boat design. 5 points were awarded for a fat trap, where compliance was relatively cheap and easy, but only 4 for the fact that Fair Princess is a hybrid boat, which has required significant investment and technical know-how. Fair Princess is their top scoring boat, scoring 65% and awarded Silver. 80% is required to achieve Gold. Bruce Hanson was able to report that the Green Boat Mark is still being trialled and there will continue to be opportunities to make further improvements based on experience.



Barbara concluded with some thoughts about how to move forward. There are challenges with encouraging other hire yards to take up the Green Boat Mark. She knows that it is time consuming, in both the preparations required and introducing new processes, but she is happy to share the experience that she has acquired. As discussed above, some changes can be difficult and sometimes impossible to make. Joining the scheme is quite expensive as each class of boats must be separately assessed; she estimates the total annual cost to their yard at £748.63. Booking agents have paid for the Visit England grading but, as yet, they are not prepared to pay for green grading. There have also been some issues over the timing of assessments, with some delays in getting an assessor to the area. This is particularly crucial when a yard wishes to include green gradings in the brochure for the following season.



Through customer feedback, visitors have been indicating more frequently that they really do care about the environment. This is early days but Barbara would like to see other yards coming on board. The prize is for the Broads to be the most sustainable boating destination in Europe. The involvement of the Broads Authority and the support of Broads Tourism has been important in getting to this point, and their continued commitment will be an important factor in achieving this goal.

## **GUIDED WALK OF THE GARDENS AND BOAT TRIP ON SOUTH WALSHAM BROAD**

During our lunch break, Louise led a guided walk and arranged a short boat trip on Fairhaven's private inner broad so we were able to see in practice some of the things that she had told us about during the morning.



## **WORKING TOGETHER: WHAT'S IN IT FOR US? PRESENTATION AND GROUP DISCUSSION**

Jackie Denman began with a short presentation '*Communicating with tourism businesses on aspects of sustainability- a review of Park Authority experience*' based on some findings drawn from the recent STEP AP1 survey report, led by the Biesbosch. (*This presentation has been provided separately*)

Jackie's main presentation was based on the visits made by some members of the group over the past two days, focussing on engagement of the private sector, often encouraged



and supported by the Broads Authority, with processes in quality and sustainability management.

Jackie reminded everyone that the Broads Authority starts from its purposes and duty as a UK living, working landscape associated with its designation as an IUCN Category V Protected Area. These are as follows:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Broads
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Broads by the public
- *Protect the interests of navigation*
- In meeting these purposes, have regard to the economic and social interests of those who live and work in the area

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, which has been held by the Broads Authority since 2006, provides an additional focus on improving the sustainable development of tourism in protected areas.

Jackie shared some observations from the visits that had been made over the past two days:

- Regardless of whether the tourism businesses associated with the Broads are in the Protected Area or outside the Protected Area, ALL of the tourism businesses that we visited have an ethos or a vision that includes high environmental standards.
- This is being driven by individuals – owners, managers and members of staff - with vision and passion and commitment.
- In addition to taking a raft of management decisions about day to day operations, many have freely chosen to invest heavily in facilities using best available technologies.
- Engaging visitors in the practices that they have adopted is important to the businesses – they want to share these messages with them – to give a great visitor experience while reducing impact AND changing behaviour.
- Many of these tourism businesses have chosen to offer their visitors an understanding of the wider Broads.
- Most of these businesses have contact with very high volumes of visitors.

She suggested a number of things that the Protected Area might want to get out of its relationship with tourism businesses, such as:

- Helping the Protected Area to fulfil its purposes and duties;
- Reinforcing the importance of the Protected Area status;
- Influencing more tourism businesses to further reduce their environmental impacts;
- Associating with the most sustainable tourism businesses in order to present the Broads as a sustainable destination with high environmental standards in keeping with the Protected Area status;
- Reaching more visitors in order to enhance the level of engagement and awareness of the Broads and of wider sustainability issues.



Some of the businesses that were visited have green certification, while others are thinking about it. In one case, a business is considering withdrawing from GTBS. As far as the Protected Area is concerned, does this matter? Is it more important that tourism businesses are **taking measures** to reduce their impacts OR that tourism businesses **can be seen** to be taking measures that will reduce their impacts?

Jackie wondered what tourism businesses can expect to get from working with the Broads Authority, thinking especially of the encouragement to take up green certification. She made some suggestions:

- GTBS may provide a road map by which businesses can reassure themselves that they are doing the 'right thing' by the local and global environment;
- GTBS recognises and rewards tourism businesses that have taken the (considerable) trouble to do the 'right thing';
- GTBS (perhaps) rewards innovation;
- GTBS provides a mechanism for the Broads Authority to identify tourism businesses which sit most comfortably with the Protected Area status;
- GTBS can be used by the Broads Authority to draw attention to the most sustainable businesses, offering differentiation and market advantage;
- GTBS identifies tourism businesses that will provide their own visitors with an experience that meets the expectations of a visit to a Protected Area;
- Good environmental management (may) save tourism businesses money;
- Engaging with Broads Tourism enables tourism businesses, whether or not they are in GTBS, to associate themselves with a protected area and a well known destination brand.

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Is green certification necessary in order to have a flourishing partnership between tourism businesses and the Protected Area?

- It is useful for the Protected Area to be able to point tourism businesses towards a systematic approach to reviewing operations and planning future actions to minimise environmental impact and enhance the visitor experience.
- It is helpful to have an objective assessment based on evidence to provide reassurance to the Protected Area that it can associate with confidence with those tourism businesses identified.
- It provides a label which can be used in visitor information and which (may) be recognised by (some) visitors.
- It provides an external goal to encourage tourism businesses to 'make things happen', leveraging the engagement of their managers and staff and giving a deadline to work towards.

However, the Protected Area should recognise that tourism businesses may require some encouragement to engage with green certification. Some tourism businesses are disinterested or skeptical and even those that have committed to the idea have raised some concerns, such as the fact that it:

- places great demands and pressures on team leaders;
- can be costly - in staff time and in fees;



- may not give enough recognition to some big investments;
- may not yet be recognised or considered important by enough visitors.

The Broads Authority has been aware of this and have been able to take some steps to support entry into the Green Tourism Business Scheme, for example through subsidising assessment fees, supporting training, publishing 'Greening the Broads', offering advisory visits etc.

The question for the three Protected Areas engaged with STEP is how protected areas and tourism businesses can work together successfully to encourage and to benefit from the best practice in environmental and sustainable management. What more needs to happen in order to win the prize that Barbara Greasley talked about, which is for the Broads to be the most sustainable boating destination in Europe?

During our discussion, a number of important points were raised, such as:

- If a protected area wants to become more sustainable as an area, it needs to be done together with the businesses.
- Tourism is important in creating or reinforcing the importance of the Protected Area status.
- Many people in protected areas earn their income from tourism, while others depend on its success. We need sound businesses for the future: it is in the interests of the Protected Area to do everything they can to help them.
- Tourism businesses are conscious that their prosperity depends on the quality of the environment – if you work in nature, it is the core of your product – you want to keep it in its natural state and protect the values that go with it.
- Those who make their living locally can be allies with the Protected Area in caring for our wonderful, fragile and important wetlands. They are stakeholders and should participate in management of the Protected Area, and the Protected Areas should work with them to help support conservation.
- Appreciation of wider conservation values will grow – the more you get people into contact with nature, the more they will appreciate it.
- Protected Areas on their own haven't a hope of reaching enough people; through tourism businesses there is an opportunity to reach many more.
- Businesses want to find other people who want to do the same thing and who also meet the same quality of visitor experience – to be part of something bigger, a network where businesses collaborate with each other.
- Protected areas should give more recognition to tourism businesses that have achieved green certification. For example, designing a web search facility which favours businesses with a GTBS award or supporting certificated businesses with tourism signposting.
- Protected areas should consider ways in which they can incentivise more hire yards to come into the Green Boat Mark; at the very least this would have a demonstrable effect on water quality<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011, the Navigation Committee of the Broads Authority requested that officers prepare a paper for a future meeting identifying options available for encouraging eco-friendly practices by Broads hire yards.



- Protected areas should consider how they can work with tourism businesses, including hire yards, to introduce economies of scale through joint purchasing and possible branding of supplies.
- Businesses contemplating certification will want to know 'what's in it for me' – the Green Tourism Business Scheme and Green Key are not yet sufficiently well known in the way that, say, the Blue Flag is.
- Unless it is better understood by the public, being 'green' may continue to be associated with being more expensive.
- Ways should be found to reward real innovation.
- Protected areas can involve responsible tourism businesses with their marketing and brand development and implementation.
- Larger corporate businesses and governmental organisations are increasingly making choices about their purchases based on suppliers that can demonstrate that they are responsible businesses; responsible tourism businesses in protected areas can position themselves to take advantage of this.
- The same ideas about responsibility can be applied to all businesses in a protected area, not just to tourism businesses.
- Tourism businesses can be overwhelmed by all of this – more examples are needed to make it seem possible. Lots of things which are 'painted' green are simple common sense.
- Better tools may be needed to get businesses started – especially those that are disinterested or skeptical.
- Partner areas have experiences that they can share; for example, some practices have been required in the Netherlands for some time in relation to water quality so technology, products and advice may be available there.
- This should be part of the DNA of those involved with Protected Areas – we need good examples to lead to more people owning these values and ideas. It is the natural thing to do.



**PARTICIPANTS AT THE WORKSHOP ON 8TH NOVEMBER 2011:**

**Biesbosch**

Hans Thiebou	Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch
Marianne den Braven	Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch
Tijmen van der Wal	Biesbosch Evenementen
Adriaan Schuller	Rondvaartbedrijf Zilvermeeuw
Peter van Beek	Biesbosch Museum Werkendam
Michael Wansink	TeamBiesbosch

**Polders of Kruikeke**

Stefaan Nollet	Waterwegen en Zeekanaal NV
Mieke Vander Elst	Waterwegen en Zeekanaal NV
Pia De Monie	Schepen van Middenstand Kruikeke
Rita Pauwels	Chairman of the local private business union of Kruikeke
Gert Stappaerts	Antea Group
Tom Wezenbeek	Idea Consult

**Broads**

Barbara Greasley	Chair, Broads Tourism; Norfolk Broads Direct Ltd
Bruce Hanson	Head of Tourism, Broads Authority
Jackie Denman	The Tourism Company
Simon Hooton	Director of Conservation and Countryside Management, Broads Authority
Clare Weller	Head of Communications, Broads Authority
Sam Bates	Visitor Services Supervisor, Broads Authority
Carolyn Scarrow	Consultant to Broads Authority
Louise Rout	Manager, Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens
Peter Howe	Broads Green Boat Show, Eco-boat Ltd, Broads Cycle Hire
Tobi Baker	Broads Green Boat Show, Countryside Ranger - Salhouse Broad
Mick Derbyshire	Chief Engineer, Norfolk Broads Direct Ltd

