

Tourism: Final STEP Report
The GREAT Campaign and Future Work Programme
Report by Tourism and Promotion Officer

Summary: This report presents a summary of the key achievements of the STEP Interreg Programme Sustainable Tourism in Estuary Parks), which was formally closed in June 2013. The report goes on to detail the Authority's programme of work on tourism for the coming year. It concludes with information on plans for participation by the English National Parks in a major Visit Britain marketing campaign.

Recommendation: That the Authority notes the content of this report and support the Authority's engagement in the Government's GREAT Campaign at a cost of £7,000.

1 Background

- 1.1 Tourism in the Broads is a significant component of economic activity in Norfolk and Suffolk. An estimated 7.4 Million visitors spent £482 Million in the area in 2012 and 6,487 jobs depended on tourism. Many more are indirectly dependent on the industry. The Broads Authority, since its establishment in 1989, has sought to support the industry wherever possible, although its resources have always been strictly limited. Tourism is indeed encompassed by the Authority's second statutory purpose, and also by its underlying duty "to have regard to...the economic and social interests of those who live or work in the Broads", since the industry is clearly so important to local people
- 1.2 The traditional experience of the Broads is a holiday aboard a hired motor-cruiser. This remains true, although private boating activity has increased steadily as the hire fleet contracted over the last thirty years. But far more people are based on land than on the water, and the importance of the land-based offer of the Broads is regularly underestimated.
- 1.3 The tourism industry itself is composed of a number of distinct sectors – boating, pubs, accommodation, retail etc. – and the Broads Authority has worked hard to break down the sector boundaries so that businesses can work better together. To this end the Broads Tourism Forum (now known simply as Broads Tourism) was established in 2004. Broads Tourism is an independent body, but it receives significant administrative support from the Broads Authority and there is a close relationship between the two organisations.

- 1.4 A key aim for the Authority in working with the industry has always been the promotion of sustainability – the ‘greening’ of the Broads. There are two strands to this. One is the encouragement/instigation of sustainable tourism experiences – e.g. the ‘Electric Eel’ water-borne nature trail, bike and canoe hire networks etc. The other is the ‘greening’ of the industry itself through models such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme.
- 1.5 Recognition of the Authority’s work came in 2004, when it gained Beacon Council Status for ‘Promoting Sustainable Tourism’. Two years later, it became the first of the English National Parks family to be awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (and then again in 2011, as the Charter lasts for only five years). Then in November last year the Broads was Highly Commended in the Green Destination of the Year award, at the annual Green Tourism Conference in Bristol.
- 1.6 The Broads Authority is now considered to be one of the leading practitioners of sustainable tourism in the UK. In the words of the Director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism: “Wherever I go, the Broads is one of just three or four destinations which is regularly quoted (in discussions of good practice) as having got it right. ”

2 The STEP Programme

- 2.1 STEP is an acronym for ‘Sustainable Tourism in Estuary Parks’. It was an Interreg IVA 2 Seas programme (EU cross-border), financed by the European Regional Development Fund.
- 2.2 The Broads Authority had been approached in June 2009 by the Biesbosch National Park (Netherlands), to join it in putting together a range of initiatives appropriate for developing tourism in sensitive wetland areas. Exchange of knowledge is a key feature of Interreg programmes and a third partner, the Polders of Kruikeke (an area in Flanders, under development for flood control on the River Schelde), was keen to learn from the experiences of the Broads and the Biesbosch. Only two weeks were available to prepare a detailed submission before a deadline at the end of that month, which is very tight for such a complex project. It was decided to proceed, however, and we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the application had been successful.
- 2.3 Approval to begin work on STEP was given in December 2009 and four years later we are able to consider the impact of the wide range of individual projects which have been completed. There can be no doubt that tourism in the Broads has received a remarkable boost from it. In cash terms, STEP has been responsible for an influx of €445,131 (Equivalent of £363,509 at March 2014 exchange rate of £1 = €0.82035) into the area, a significant sum indeed.
- 2.4 The STEP programme was divided into three ‘Activity Packages’, into which the various individual projects were grouped. The three groupings broadly covered strategic issues, visitor management, and work with businesses to promote sustainability. There was much overlap and some work fell across two, or sometimes three, of the ‘Packages’. Additionally, each of the three

partner areas was responsible for leading on a joint project that should be of value to all partners. The principal results are summarised in the legacy 'Guideline' document which can be viewed on the STEP website: <http://www.step-projects.eu/english/results/public-private-cooperation> – and as follows:

- The 'Enjoy the Broads' tourism website, developed in partnership with Broads Tourism
- Britain's Magical Waterland branding work, developed in partnership with Broads Tourism
- Major revision of the Broads Tourism Strategy, in partnership with Broads Tourism
- Renewal of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
- Development and establishment of the 'Love the Broads' visitor payback initiative
- Pin-badges and display/collection boxes supporting 'Love the Broads'
- Creation of the Broads Outdoors Festival
- The Broads Outdoors Festival website
- Promotion of the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Development of the Green Boat Mark
- Production of the 'Broads by Bike' booklet
- Giant touch-screens running Broads Wildlife Explorer programme
- Development and production of canoe trail maps
- Buttle Marsh interpretation
- 'Augmented Reality' smartphone interpretation for How Hill
- Pontoon moorings at the Dutch Tea Gardens
- Eight new electric charging points added to the Broads network
- Hoveton & Wroxham station 'Welcome' refurbishment/interpretation
- Feasibility study for new information building near Toad Hole Cottage
- Inspirational introductory book – 'A Green Traveller's Guide to the Broads'
- Promotional videos of Broads businesses
- Visits for Broads Tourism members to view businesses in The Netherlands and Belgium
- Reviews of Broads businesses by national journalists
- Guide to the Broads on Greentraveller and Cool Places websites
- 'Enjoy the Broads' smartphone app

A short video illustrating some of this work can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BS0RGecB0&feature=youtu.be>

- 2.5 The STEP programme was brought to a close at a final conference in Dordrecht, in June 2013. Some work continued until October, as the administration was wound up, but all is now complete and we can reflect on what has been achieved.
- 2.6 The legacy is extensive indeed. Some really important projects were completed thanks to STEP, but it is difficult to single one out as being more important than another and with hindsight we can see that many of them are

closely linked – branding work, for example, runs through several. It is perhaps more meaningful to consider how STEP has brought together such a wide range of people and organisations to work together for the good of the Broads – the real legacy perhaps?

- 2.7 It is vital also that the European aspect is not forgotten. All the partners are agreed that STEP was a great learning experience. Clearly nothing would have happened without the money, but all of us believe that the end results have been so much richer as a result of our cooperation. We remain in contact and expect to continue to benefit from the experience for years to come. And the Broads continues to be admired for its sustainable tourism activities in Europe as well as across the UK.

3 Current Tourism Activities

- 3.1 Following the closure of the STEP programme, a new post of Tourism and Promotion Officer was created, so that the Broads Authority's active engagement with tourism can continue. The job description contains much that was covered by the previous tourism post, but the focus has shifted somewhat from tourism development to a more active marketing/promotion role. The main purposes are summarised thus:

- Promote enjoyment of the Broads - Britain's Magical Waterland
- Oversee the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Broads
- Work in partnership with the public, private and third sector to develop and deliver projects which will meet the seven strategic objectives, and the areas for action set out in the Plan

- 3.2 Many Broads Authority staff support tourism activities to a greater or lesser degree. All of the Communications Team, for example, is involved for substantial periods in producing 'Broadcaster'. The team also works on the Enjoy the Broads website and brochure, plus a range of other publications which benefit visitors, as well as having substantial input to the Outdoors Festival.

- 3.3 Staff from other sections play important roles too. For many visitors, for example, the rangers represent the face of the Broads Authority. Often performing an ambassadorial role, they provide advice and assistance to hirers and private boaters alike, whether at yacht stations, moorings or on the rivers. On land, it might be at visitor 'hubs' or anywhere else out in the field where they happen to meet people.

- 3.4 The Authority also works with other organisations, public and private, for the benefit of tourism. The developing partnership-working with Hoseasons is a case in point and it is clearly in our mutual interest that the destination is cared for to the highest standards possible, so that people and wildlife can thrive in harmony in a pristine environment.

3.5 The delivery of the Action Plan of the Broads Tourism Strategy is wide-ranging in its scope, with forty-nine actions grouped under seven strategic objectives. This represents something of a challenge in the current climate of shrinking financial resources, but good progress is being made against all strands of the Plan. Some of the key activities undertaken, on-going or planned to support tourism in the Broads are as follows:

- Support for Broads Tourism – on-going and set to increase from April 2014 when the Authority will take over back-office work which is currently carried out elsewhere
- Production of ‘Broadcaster’ and a range of other publications such as ‘Enjoy the Broads’, ‘Wild Days Out’, ‘How Hill’, Boat Trips’ etc.
- The Broads Quality Charter/ ‘Eating Out in the Broads’
- Visitor ‘hubs’ providing information and boat trips
- Refreshment and continued promotion of the Britain’s Magical Waterland brand
- Broads Outdoors Festival
- Continuing development of the ‘Enjoy the Broads’ smartphone app
- Attendance at the RSPB Birdfair at Rutland Water, August 2013
- Attendance at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure and Travel Show at ExCeL in Feb 2014
- Developing strategy for future show attendance locally and nationally
- Seeking commercial sponsorship for shows, events and publications;
- Co-ordination of press familiarisation visits
- Visit England thematic campaigns – the new campaign for 2014 (‘English Countryside’ will deliver significant national media coverage late March/early April 2014, including features in special editions of ‘Time Out’ and ‘Metro’)
- Work with the Greentraveller and Cool Places media marketing groups, which started during the STEP programme and continues to bear fruit – the latest manifestation being a half-page piece in ‘The Guardian’ on Saturday 1st March entitled “Cool Cottages in the Norfolk Broads”
- Participation in Visit England’s invitation-only Destination Management Forum
- Attendance at Visit England seminar considering a recent EU ruling on state aid
- Visit Norfolk Board
- COOL Tourism project’s Core Stakeholder Group. This is an EU-funded project enabling Norfolk County Council to better promote the Norfolk Trails. It focuses principally on a triangle between Norwich, Great Yarmouth and the North Norfolk Coast, including much of the Broads area
- Future involvement with Visit Britain’s GREAT campaign, targeting overseas markets
- Development of strategy for future direction of yacht stations and visitor centres
- On-going support for the Love the Broads visitor giving initiative

4 Countryside is GREAT Campaign

- 4.1 The Government's GREAT Campaign is at the heart of its economic growth strategy to raise the standing and image of Great Britain globally. It has specific aims, e.g. for tourism, exports and culture, and an inter-connected overall aim to ensure the UK's positive image overseas.
- 4.2 For several months the National Park CEOs have been involved in discussions exploring the possibility of Visit Britain show-casing the National Parks to spear-head a new strand of the campaign, to be called 'Countryside is GREAT'. Following a meeting at No 10 Downing Street last November, agreement has been reached to proceed. Several members of the National Parks family, including the Broads, have each committed a contribution of £7,000 to the campaign. This has been warmly welcomed by Tourism Minister Maria Miller, DEFRA Secretary Owen Paterson and the Prime Minister, resulting in their full political support – although the sums involved are tiny indeed compared to the commitment from Visit Britain of £500,000 in 2014/5 and £1Milion in 2015/16.
- 4.3 Contributions are also expected from the Canal and Rivers Trust, the National Trust and the Forestry Commission. The pot is likely to be added to by the travel trade (especially Expedia) plus carriers like BA and Eurostar. Following the outcome of Visit Britain market research, targeted marketing programmes will begin in Year 1 in Germany, the US and Australia and in Year 2 China and India. There will also be ad hoc activities in all of the 20 GREAT target countries and all 150 or so countries with significant embassies and Visit Britain presence. The programme will start this summer with some ad hoc opportunities, but the real push will be in the autumn of 2014.

5 Visit England

- 5.1 In parallel to the work with Visit Britain the park authorities are working closely with Visit England on raising the profile of the national parks in the domestic market. National Parks England has set aside £20,000 from its resources to support a joint initiative with Visit England.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 While the Authority's budget for marketing and promotion is modest for salaries and for projects, a great deal of support is provided to this aspect of the local economy through the work of the Rangers, the role of the visitor centres and yacht stations and key publications such as Broadcaster.
- 6.2 The GREAT Campaign offers the opportunity to raise the profile of the national parks in overseas markets at a relatively modest cost and members are asked to confirm the Authority's contribution of £7,000 to this initiative. It is proposed that this will be funded from national park reserves via existing tourism budgets and may result in a small overspend in this area in 2013/14.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Members are invited to note results of the STEP Programme. The Authority had already built an excellent reputation for its work in promoting sustainable tourism, and this has been further enhanced. The resources garnered from STEP have enabled it to significantly strengthen its existing relationship with the tourism industry. They have allowed it also to raise its profile substantially with Visit England, to the great advantage of the Authority's continuing tourism activities and in accord with its strategic priorities.

Background paper:	None
Author:	Bruce Hanson
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Broads Plan Objectives:	PE1, PE2, PE3, TR1, TR2, TR3
Appendices:	None