

The Broads

Planning, buildings and landscape



"...what makes the Broads landscape such a visual jewel? Other nationally protected areas, such as the Lake District or Snowdonia, contain formidable scenery. The stirring majesty of mountains, with plunging gorges between, have a dramatic impact. The landscapes of the Broads are more subtle. Anyone sailing on the tentacle-like rivers will encounter many different strands of countryside, from the lonely windswept grazing marshes to the more intimate and secret pastoral scenes of enclosed, land-locked broads." (No Easy Answers, Broads Authority)

The historical, cultural, social and economic developments in an area are mirrored in its landscapes. In the Broads, the landscapes have always been influenced by the patterns of human existence. The very creation of the broads was the result of people's efforts to dig peat for fuel, and over the centuries, the rivers, dykes, fens, woods and grazing marshes have been shaped by the way people have lived and farmed. This pattern of historical use is one of the keys to the special character of the landscapes, which can vary significantly, even within one river valley. Unfortunately, in some places, neglect, intensive agriculture and development which is out of character have spoiled parts of the landscape. Many such areas could be restored to reflect the distinctive character but care must be taken to consider the social and economic needs of the area and not simply fossilize it and preserve it as it was in the 19th century. Consideration must be given to new designs and buildings, to create new landscapes which are in keeping with the distinctive character of the area.

The Broads Authority is the District Planning Authority for the Broads. In consultation with neighbouring local authorities, parish councils and others, it decides most planning applications, as well as preparing planning policies and local planning guidance. It is also responsible for other planning work, for example designating Conservation Areas* and taking enforcement action when harmful development is carried out without permission.

* Conservation Area - an area of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.' It has added protection against unsympathetic development and this applies to an area or group of buildings rather than an individual building alone.

The Broads was granted special status equivalent to a National Park, in 1988, under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act. The 'new' Broads Authority started its work in 1989. (see **General Information** sheet for more information.)

The Authority's duties are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Broads
- to promote the enjoyment of the Broads by the public
- to protect the interests of navigation.

By creating a Special Statutory Authority, the government recognised that the Broads needed the same level of protection as the National Parks. As the District Planning Authority, the Broads Authority must have regard to the national importance of the Broads as an area of natural beauty which offers opportunities for open-air recreation and the need to protect the natural resources of the Broads from damage. It must also have regard to the needs of agriculture and the economic and social interests of those who live or work in the Broads.

Under the Broads Act, the Authority has to produce a Broads Plan which is its overall strategy for managing the area. It also has to produce a Local Plan. This provides detailed land-use policies which are consistent with the Structure Plans produced by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils and with the objectives of the Broads Plan. It must also take account of Regional Guidance and Government Planning Advice. The Local Plan makes controlling development easier because it provides a clear and consistent basis to work from. It also gives guidance to those considering investment and development in the area.

Planning policies

Planning policies for the Broads are intended to protect the unique landscape and the special qualities of the natural environment. Where development is acceptable, the aim is to achieve high quality layout and design which improves the built environment.

Specific policies are intended to:-

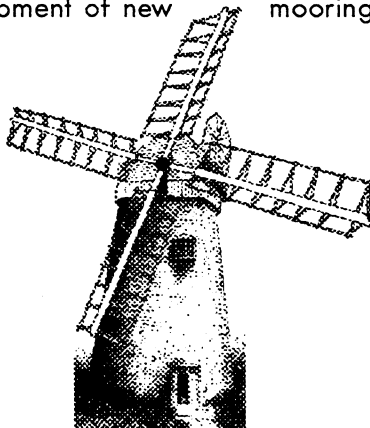
- prevent development which would damage landscapes, including grazing marsh, fen, carr woodland (wet woodland) and the undeveloped riverside.

For example, a modern agricultural barn, if it is sited without any thought, can ruin an empty, windswept grazing marsh.

Overhead electric and telephone cables are unattractive features in the open Broads' landscape. Eastern Electricity and British Telecom are strongly encouraged to put cables underground where possible. Unfortunately, the cost of undergrounding existing lines is high and the contribution from the companies, while significant, is well short of the total cost. Where amenity schemes are carried out, Eastern Electricity currently provides 40% of the costs and BT only 20%. The rest has to be made up by local authorities. At present, only small schemes are possible. For example, the Authority is providing £1,250 of grant-aid towards putting power lines underground to a new drainage pump at Belton.

- help overcome the problems of bank erosion by controlling development which would lead to more motor craft on the Broads.

For example, there are strict controls over the development of new moorings.

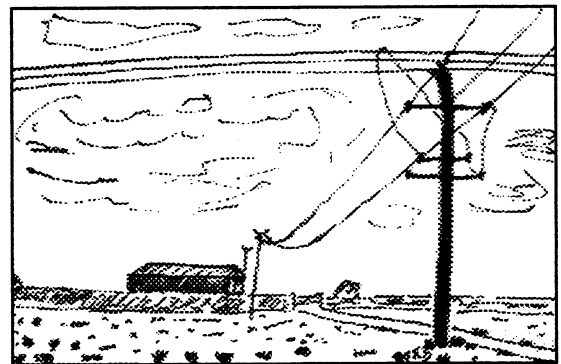


The Broads Authority makes grant aid available to help repair or restore special buildings which are an important part of the built environment.

- encourage development for the holiday industry and recreation only where its scale, location and design will positively improve the area.

For example, a new windsurfing beach was completed at Hickling Broad in September 1995. Elsewhere, schemes for large-scale and inappropriate development have been refused.

The Authority also carries out a wide range of local enhancement schemes, for example at Ranworth Staithe and Potter Heigham. At Oulton Broad, seating is being renewed and shrubs are being planted. (For further examples see the sheet *Tourism and recreation*)



Overhead lines look out of place in the Broads. Without careful siting and design, farm buildings can be too prominent on the marshes.

- conserve and enhance the special character of Broads villages and of buildings of special historic, architectural and landscape interest.

The Authority makes grant aid available to help repair or restore special buildings which are an important part of the built environment. For example, recent grants have been made to prominent riverside homes, thatched boathouses and drainage mills. Design Guides are used to encourage a better quality of new buildings.

This sheet provides an overview of planning in the Broads. More detailed information on specific policies and design guides which give advice on specific developments are available from the Broads Authority (see 'Further Reading').

Further Reading

Broads Authority,

No Easy Answers Draft Broads Plan (1993)
Broads Local Plan: Deposit Version 1995
Planning in the Broads (leaflet) (temporarily out of print)

Broads Design Guidance

BADG2 Agricultural Buildings
BADG3 Boatyards and Boatsheds
BADG4 Waterside Parks and Recreation Areas
BADG6 Private Boathouses
BADG9 Waterside Homes and Chalets

Project design series

BAPD2 Potter Heigham Bridge Local Plan: Draft for Consultation
BAPD4 Trinity Broads: A Consultative Document
BAPD6 Staithe: A Survey and Register
BAPD7 Loddon and Chedgrave Riverside Development
BAPD8 Oulton Broad Study
BAPD9 Hickling Land-use Study
BAPD10 Broadshaven Planning Brief

Broads Fact Pack

Why conserve? (looking after the Broads) (1985)

George, M. *The Land Use, Ecology and Conservation of Broadland* (1992, hardback; 1995, soft back, Packard)

The Broads links with other sheets in the series

Tourism and recreation
Farming and land management
Bank erosion

All available from the Broads Authority, 18 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ