

Public Question Time
Question from Mr Peter Riches

At the last Broads Authority meeting it was agreed that, to improve the marketing potential for tourism, the Broads Authority Executive Area should be rebranded as a national park and that to achieve this rebranding, concessions should be made on conservation.

In particular the planned ambition to become a full legal national park was dropped and it was agreed that the Sandford principle, which gives priority to conservation, would not be used. This principle was said to be unnecessary because the Habitats Directive provides sufficient protection for the Broads Authority to meet its conservation objective.

I have three related questions:

1. In your consultation on the rebranding did you make it clear to consultees that you proposed to make these two concessions on conservation in order to obtain the agreement of the boating lobby?
2. Only the 25% of the Authority's area which is made up of SSSI's and SAC's is protected under the Habitats Directive while the remaining 75% has no statutory or non-statutory protection for wildlife. How can the Habitats Directive be a protection for this land which includes many outstanding natural features? Did you consult with Natural England to obtain their views?
3. What is the Authority doing to ensure that the statutory bodies are fulfilling their existing obligations under the Habitats Directive regarding the supposedly protected 25% given the deficiencies recognised by the Authority as a result of the Catfield case?

The Authority's response will be reported at the meeting and read out by the Chairman.