



Please find attached a short discussion paper on a proposal that we in the Broads Society would like to see debated. It is a simple idea, but could be very controversial. Taking the theme of Broads Heritage, there are many features of our wonderful wetlands that typify the Broadland Landscape. One important feature is the typical Broads boat mainly built between the late 1800's and the start of the Second World War. Obviously wherries fall in to this category but there are many more, typically boats built either for hire or for racing. It is to the credit of the owners of such craft that they survive to this day, often at great expense.

We feel that it is important to retain this heritage and would suggest one way of doing this would be to offer the owners of such boats either a reduced toll, or toll exemption (such as classic cars enjoy on the roads). Clearly this would mean a reduction in toll income thus denting an already stretched budget. One way of filling this funding gap would be to address another problem we have on our rivers, particular on the Southern Broads, and that is the damage caused to the banks and habitats by large offshore twin engine boats. A surcharge on such vessels could be levied to help pay for the reduced tolls suggested as well as repairing the damaged environment.

We fully understand that this will cause much heated discussion – for example under this idea half of the White Boat fleet would be exempt whilst all the later built ones would not, although it could be argued that the newer grp boats are less expensive to maintain.

Your opinions and suggestions on the above and attached would be welcome. It is for this reason that I requested at the last Broads Forum for this to be a subject for discussion at the April meeting.

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Broads Heritage Boats

Introduction

A major attraction and delight for visitors and residents alike is to meet sailing and motor cruisers from the past. These wooden boats are time classics, impressive both for their beautiful lines and sailing abilities and also charming in their structure and design from an earlier age.

Maintenance for some, such as the Hunters fleet and the Wherry trust, is carried out by support groups but there are many private boats from the pre-war era that are maintained at great expense by their owners.

Our Proposal

Classic cars are now regarded as being an important part of our history and heritage and accordingly are exempt from road tax.

Our proposal is that classic and heritage broads built boats (built of wood before World War II) should be recognised in a similar fashion. This could be by granting exemption from or reduction of the standard annual toll.

Funding Implication and a Suggestion

The above proposal would obviously result in a loss of income and we suggest that the shortfall should be met by an increase in tolls for the very large twin engine “offshore” motor yachts. These massive craft with their propellers “Outboard” i.e. towards the edge of the hull rather than in line with the keel, by their very nature cause unnecessary damage to the river banks and reed beds. It would not seem unreasonable to expect such craft to make a greater contribution as their presence on the Broads scene cannot be compared to our heritage boats. Merely to fill up with fuel on such craft results in a bill of about £2,000 which makes their current toll bill virtually negligible.

Conclusion

The number of “Heritage” boats on the broads will never increase but will gradually disappear.

By adopting this proposal we are recognising and encouraging the effort and dedication of the owner of “heritage” boats and delaying significantly the decline of such craft.

The benefit will be to prolong the added pleasure such boats give to the many who regularly enjoy our Norfolk Broad.