

Broads Recreation and Tourism Strategy 2024-29



May 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 About this strategy

The **Broads National Park** is an internationally important wetland in Norfolk and North Suffolk, and a unique member of the family of 15 [UK National Parks](#). Centuries of human intervention has helped to shape the landscape, creating a rich mosaic of water and land habitats. The shallow lakes, rivers, fens, drained marshland, wet woodland, estuary saltmarshes and coastal dunes are home to some of the rarest wildlife in Europe.

More than seven million people a year visit the Broads to enjoy activities on land and water. With more than 200km of inland navigable lock-free waterways, the area is well known for leisure boating, but is also popular for other pursuits such as angling, walking, cycling and wildlife watching. The local coast, towns and villages, and bustling city of Norwich also offer many recreational opportunities.

The [Broads Authority](#) (BA) is the body responsible for the management of the Broads executive area. Its three statutory purposes are to conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural assets, to promote opportunities for people to understand and enjoy the area's special qualities, and to protect the interests of navigation.

When planning strategically for recreation and tourism provision in the Broads, we have to consider all three purposes and the delicate balance of economic, environmental and social needs and priorities. For example, the tourism and hospitality sector is vital to the local working landscape and needs support, development and diversification, but this has to happen without adverse environmental impacts. We cannot confine navigation considerations to the hire boat industry, but must cater to all waterways users. There is a growing desire to make the Broads and other protected landscapes more welcoming to wider audiences, but improving social inclusion may not necessarily result in immediate benefits for the visitor economy.

This **Broads Recreation and Tourism Strategy** sits under the [Broads Plan](#), the statutory management plan for the Broads. It sets out objectives and priority actions for 2024-29, although some actions will extend beyond this period. The BA leads the development and review of the strategy, but its successful delivery requires cooperation and input from key partners and other stakeholders.

Information on linked BA guiding strategies is in **Section 5**.

Environmental assessment

This strategy was subject to Habitats and Regulations Assessment (HRA) to make sure it will be delivered in a way that is sensitive to the environment. Any initiatives and projects resulting from the strategy should comply with relevant permits and controls to ensure environmental protection on habitats sites, and will be subject to their own HRA and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) where relevant.

1.2 Resources

The BA's Communications Team promotes the Broads National Park through print and digital information and interpretation, signage, events, and visitor services such as information centres and yacht stations. The BA's Head of Communications oversees the delivery and review of the Broads Recreation and Tourism Strategy.

The BA has limited resources, and partnership working and external funding are vital to the success of this strategy. The [Landscapes Review](#) (2019) stated that the Government's approach to funding England's protected landscapes is not as diverse and sustainable as it should be. However, as Government core funding is unlikely to increase in the foreseeable future, those who play a part in caring for these special landscapes will have to do as much, and more, with fewer resources. It will become increasingly important to find other sources to support local projects and services, such as corporate sponsorship, National Parks Partnership initiatives, visitor giving schemes, trusts and charities, and increased retail sales.

The BA works closely with [Visit the Broads](#) (VtB), the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the area and its main delivery partner for this strategy. VtB offers a unified voice for local tourism-related businesses and others with an interest in visitor activities. It is funded by its members, and a part-time officer manages business memberships and marketing activity. The BA gives staff time and funding to support marketing and promotional activities including events, the Visit the Broads website and Broads National Park social media accounts, and advertorial pages in the 'Broadcaster' visitor magazine. In the past, the BA has also secured external funding for interpretation, signage and paid social media advertising.

The BA also collaborates with the [Broads Trust](#), which runs the 'Love the Broads' visitor giving scheme. In 2022, the Trust also launched [Broads Discovery Hubs](#), with the ambition to create a Broads-wide network of accessible visitor information points that explain the area's history, wildlife and landscape.

More information on key partners is in **Section 5**.

2. Where we are now

Much has changed since the BA produced the Tourism Strategy for the Broads in 2016¹. A summary of progress against that strategy is on the BA's website. Key achievements include:

- A new Visit the Broads (VtB) website, app and social media accounts.
- Development of the English National Park Experience and Broads Experience collections.
- Greater engagement with the overseas travel trade, initially led by the BA and expanded and managed by Visit East of England.

¹ [Broads Sustainable Tourism Strategy \(2016\)](#)

- Numerous Broads National Park branding initiatives at key locations and public transport hubs in and around the Broads.

There have also been big challenges during this period. Travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacted the local tourism and hospitality sector. There was a low take up for the Green Tourism business scheme, and the sector saw ongoing gaps in staff skills and recruitment.

At the time of writing, the sector is still adjusting to the ‘new normal’ following the end of the pandemic. While initial trends were encouraging, ongoing recovery faces other issues, including a slowing global economy and the UK cost of living crisis. Tourism is also being affected by industrial action in the travel industry, and by the impacts of climate change, with irregular weather patterns, extreme heat, wildfires and flooding seen in the Broads and other popular visitor destinations.

The recreation and tourism data in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.13 below are from STEAM² reports, and from BA records, including boat registrations. References to ‘the area’ relate to the economic impacts of tourism within the Broads executive boundary and the immediately surrounding areas that staying visitors use as a base for visits into the Broads.

2.1 Visitor numbers

The number of visitors to the area peaked at 8.2m in 2019. The pandemic years in 2020 and 2021 saw 4.8m and 7.2m visitors respectively, and 2022 saw 7.6m. Figures for 2023 are awaited, but anecdotal evidence from the Broads and other UK National Parks suggests a decline from 2022, affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis, poor summer weather, and more people returning to overseas holidays.

The unplanned surge in visitors to the Broads during the easing of Covid travel restrictions boosted the local economy, but also created significant problems in managing visitor safety and environmentally friendly behaviour. This highlighted areas for improvement, including the need to manage future uncertainties.

2.2 Visitor profile

In 2016 the area’s visitor profile was approximately 50% couples, mostly aged over 45; 30% families, mostly with children under 11; and 20% groups of friends, mostly aged over 45. This profile changed dramatically in 2020 and 2021, when the pandemic restricted widespread travel. During this time, the Broads saw much higher numbers of first-time and younger visitors – a common theme across the UK National Parks family.

While most visitors are from the UK, external funding in recent years has supported initiatives to attract more international visitors to our National Parks, including the [English National Park Experience Collection](#). The Broads Experiences Collection has developed into ongoing promotion to the international travel trade, led by [Visit East of England](#). In 2024 we will see a renewed focus on attracting American visitors to the East of England to coincide

² The [STEAM](#) model measures tourism economic impact within UK regions.

with Apple TV's £295m production 'Masters of the Air' and associated documentary 'The Friendly Invasion', about American forces in the UK during the Second World War.

2.3 Tourism economy and employment

The economic impact of tourism in the area was £593m in 2016, peaking at £666m in 2019 before declining to £382m in 2020 (the height of the Covid pandemic). The figures of £618m in 2021 and £711m in 2022 look more positive, but are distorted by high inflation. People have less disposable income and visitor numbers have not yet recovered to 2019 levels, but significant rises in energy, fuel, services and supplier costs have resulted in businesses passing these higher prices on to their customers.

Tourism in the area supported 6,974 FTE jobs (5,323 directly related to tourism) in 2022.³ The figures show an employment decrease of 4% compared to 2016. Factors affecting staffing levels include challenges in recruitment and retention, pressures from increased costs for energy, services and supplies, and greater competition for talent from other sectors. While many jobs are full-time, the seasonality of tourism limits the sector's ability to provide year-round employment.

2.4 Broads Tourism Business Survey feedback

In Dec 2022 to Jan 2023, the BA surveyed Broads' tourism providers to gather evidence on their business performance, challenges and opportunities, and approaches to sustainable tourism. 48 businesses responded across the full range of sectors. Most were sole traders, micro or small businesses, with only five businesses having more than 51 employees. This is a fair reflection of the business profile in the Broads' tourism sector. We have noted the key findings below.

- **Business performance in 2022 compared to 2019 (pre-pandemic):** 63% reported it as the same or better; 12% didn't know or had traded for less than 3 years. Future confidence in the 2023 season was lower, with 51% predicting it would be the same or better than in 2019; early indications are for a slower recovery compared to 2021 and 2022, potentially due to the ongoing domestic cost of living crisis and poor weather throughout the summer season.
- **Visitor markets:** The markets targeted as the highest priority were UK stay visitors, local residents and domestic day visitors.
- **Staff recruitment:** Only 17% of businesses said they had no challenges recruiting; 27% had no employees or did not recruit. 37% had difficulties recruiting to seasonal roles, 27% to year-round roles and 32% to some specific roles. Several businesses reported difficulties in more than one of these areas.

³ FTE = Full time equivalent. Directly related FTEs are generated directly through visitor expenditure (food and drink, accommodation, recreation, shopping, transport), while indirect FTEs are supported through the supply chain and further expenditure, including employee spend.

- **External factors:** Of 23 listed factors directly affecting business performance, the most common were: Increased energy/fuel costs (83%); poor UK economy / less money in consumer's pockets (81%); increasing supplier costs (78%); poor/unpredictable weather (46%); seasonality of the destination (44%); availability of people to fill vacancies (37%).

All factors attracted at least 3 responses, with increasing operating costs seen as the biggest barrier to improved performance and growth (46%). In response, 68% of businesses had increased their prices and 25% had delayed investment, building or maintenance works.

- **Seasonality:** When asked which quieter months had the most potential for extra trade if better promoted, March, April, May and October all attracted scores of over 80%.

2.5 Accommodation

In 2022 about 15% of all visitors stayed overnight, with the average stay of 5.3 days being one of the highest among all UK National Parks. There is no reliable data on bed space numbers.

There are more than 700 hire boats with cabin accommodation, and 67 hire houseboats, each accommodating 2-12 people. Typically, hire boats are available from March to the end of September. More than 6,000 privately owned boats and houseboats have cabins that can provide leisure accommodation.

Land-based accommodation is varied, with self-catering being a key sector. Accommodation ranges from budget, luxurious and boutique hotels to pubs, B&B establishments, self-catering cottages and holiday parks. In recent years there has been an increase in AirBnb properties including log cabins, shepherds huts and yurts. Glamping, camping, caravans and touring motorhomes also increased in popularity following the Covid pandemic, with people seeking cheaper holidays and landowners opening pop-up sites.

2.6 Waterborne activities

Boating opportunities include privately owned boats and a hire fleet offering boating holidays and day trips. Boating is a major influence on the visitor economy, and the tolls paid by all registered boat owners contribute directly to the BA's ongoing maintenance of the waterways. Without this important work, we would lose the appeal of the Broads.

Comparisons of registered boat numbers between 2016 and 2022 show some important trends. Of the 12,549 vessels registered on the Broads in 2022, 89% were privately owned. The number of privately owned boats increased by c.6% with the biggest increases being houseboats (+49%, 22 more boats) and paddle craft such as rowing boats, canoes, kayaks and paddleboards (+35%, 541 more craft). Notable decreases were sailing craft (-22%, 246 fewer craft) and auxiliary yachts (-9%, 103 fewer craft).

Although the hire fleet only represents only c.11% of the registered boats on the Broads, it contributes around a third of the BA's toll income. Notable changes to the hire fleet were a decrease in motor cruisers (-15%, 116 fewer cruisers) and sailing craft (-29%, 29 fewer craft). There were increases in day launches (+23%, 68 more launches) and rowing craft (+20%, 38 more craft). The context behind part of this is that some boatyards have been changing their motor cruiser fleet to larger, more luxurious boats with more onboard facilities. These extend the usual hire season (late Spring and Summer) and command greater hire fees. Most of the hire boatyards are in the Northern Broads, which means the waterways south of Breydon Water are traditionally quieter.

Paddle sports have become increasingly popular, particularly since the pandemic, when many young people discovered paddleboarding and canoeing as an affordable and accessible way to be on the water. Used in an environmentally responsible way, smaller non-powered craft can provide good opportunities to explore quieter areas, away from 'pinch points' in more congested boating locations. 2,026 more paddle/rowing craft used the Broads in 2022 than in 2016. Members of British Canoeing can use their craft on the Broads and other English waterways, with some of the membership revenue directed to the BA. Membership of British Canoeing increased from 36,407 to 93,306 members between 2018 and 2022, a rise of 259%.

The BA sells 'short visit' tolls to people who do not need an annual toll. These sales have increased by 23% since 2016. The BA sold 3,477 short visit tolls in 2022, of which 2,012 (58%) were non-powered craft. Short visit tolls for paddle/rowing craft has increased by 72% since 2016.

The demand for day boats has risen since 2020, and an increasing number of these are electrically powered.

2.7 Walking and cycling

While it may be argued that the Broads is best appreciated from the water, many visitors prefer land-based activities.

The area has 303km of public rights of way, including three county long distance trails and part of the national England Coast Path trail. However, while the landscape is mostly flat, walking conditions can be tricky, including on managed reserves, with muddy surfaces due to wetland habitats, and there is a limited rights of way network in parts of the area. There are also concerns about the future of permissive access negotiated within Agri-Environment Schemes with life-limited agreements. While partners promote some short and circular walks, the offer is fragmented. The three longer distance routes are waymarked and maintained within Norfolk County Council's Norfolk Trails programme. Promotion of walking trails includes the [Norfolk Trails access-tested trails booklets](#) and the Broads Park Rangers' Favourite Walks book (2022, Harper Collins), and routes are also featured on the Visit the Broads website.

The flat landscape of the Broads is well suited to leisure cycling and there are many quiet country lanes ideal for less experienced cyclists. Long distance routes, National Cycle Network Route 1 and Regional Route 30, both skirt the Broads. The Broads by Bike website and booklet offer 16 circular rides using the country lane network, with some short off-road sections. The Cycle Hire Operators Forum originally mapped these routes, but this organisation no longer exists and the booklet will need updating within the next few years. We could link this update with established, widely used cycling route apps.

The number of cycle hire operators in the Broads has declined in the last 20 years from around 10 hire points to just three, seen as a result of the poor business case for cycle hire and the lack of good off-road routes.

2.8 Angling

The Broads has a thriving angling scene, and around 40% of private boat owners go fishing. The coarse fishing season runs from 16 June to 14 March. Angling visitors help to extend the tourism offers from the boat hire, land-based accommodation, retail and hospitality sectors, including off-season holiday bookings. According to Environment Agency data, angling accounts for at least 16% of visitors to the area and contributes up to £150m a year to the local economy.

2.9 Habitats and wildlife

The Broads is one of the most important freshwater wetlands in Europe, with many sites designated internationally and nationally for their importance to nature conservation. 28% of the Broads is protected for nature and the area is home to more than 26% of the UK's rarest species of wildlife.

There are nature reserves and wildlife sites throughout the Broads, owned and managed by a variety of conservation bodies and private landowners. These sites are highly important in providing access to the area's unique biodiversity, especially for land-based visitors. Many sites have informal access throughout the year and from dawn to dusk, and a small number have visitor facilities and infrastructure. Some facilities, such as visitor centres and guided boat trips, run on a seasonal basis.

Water quality and quantity have to be carefully managed, both for nature and for people. The increasing impacts of climate change and rising sea levels present significant challenges for the management of this low-lying coastal location, as identified in the [Broads Plan 2022-2027](#). Compared to these pressures, the impacts of tourism development and activity on the natural environment have been relatively limited. However, threats from human disturbance to habitats and species in specific locations and at certain times of year require sound management and a responsible approach by visitors and the tourism sector as a whole.

2.10 Built and cultural heritage

The Broads has significant cultural heritage value, with extensive evidence of past human settlement and landscape change. Many individual sites relate to a history of

peat extraction, reed and sedge cutting, land drainage and other activities associated with a wetland environment. There are around 63 remaining windpumps and windmills in various states of repair, access and use. Among a number of schemes, the HLF-funded [Water, Mills and Marshes project](#) has given major impetus to restoring and interpreting these iconic structures.

The area's settlements are an important part of its built heritage and visitor appeal, notably for their staithe and other waterside features. The quality of the public realm (outdoor, publicly accessible spaces) and the conservation of the built heritage is variable, and in need of improvement in places. Churches feature strongly in the flat landscape, and some have accessible towers providing fine views. Some churches and historic religious sites, such as St Benet's Abbey, have benefited from conservation and interpretation projects in recent years. Boating is in itself a hugely important part of the area's heritage, and the remaining wherry fleet gives a special dimension to the physical and cultural landscape.

2.11 Attractions, food and drink, shopping

There are relatively few visitor attractions within the Broads, and they tend to relate to the area's culture and heritage. The largest attractions such as 'Bewilderwood' have around 150,000 visitors a year.

Pubs, restaurants, tearooms, takeaways and cafés play an important role, with many sited in waterside locations. It is felt that the quality and extent of the offer has generally improved in recent years. There has been a small number of closures, while other businesses have benefited from significant investment. There are several breweries and vineyards, and locally sourced produce is increasingly popular as visitors look to reduce their own carbon footprint.

The Broads sits between popular coastal resorts, market towns and the city of Norwich, and there are numerous food, drink and retail outlets and large-scale attractions within a short distance of the Broads, including theme parks, cinemas, aquariums, miniature railways, formal gardens and racecourses. Shops and artisan centres range from sizeable outlets in busy settlements like Wroxham to a small but growing number of craft studios, mainly in rural locations. In 2023, the popular Norfolk Open Studios tour included around 50 studios within the Broads.

2.12 Physical access network

Recreation and tourism in the area rely on good public access, both on land and between land and water, along with appropriate services and facilities. We need to plan for the impacts of climate change, particularly changing water levels, and provide access to the Broads in ways that will not damage sensitive habitats or disturb wildlife.

Actions to maintain and improve the physical access network to and around the area are set out in the [Broads Integrated Access Strategy](#). Wider county and regional access, travel and local plans also recognise the need for more investment in public transport, walking and

cycling facilities, and links between visitor hubs such as rail stations, town centres, tourist attractions and riverside access points and facilities.

The Visit the Broads website has information on [Accessible visits in the Broads](#) including easier access walking routes, boats and boat trips, museums and nature reserves.

2.13 Information and events

Visitors need clear and consistent information, both before and during their visit.

As the DMO for the area, [Visit the Broads](#) is the official website for promoting information about the Broads National Park. There is also a Visit the Broads mobile phone app.

Most people expect to get information digitally through websites, social media and phone apps. While the use of such media is increasing, poor Broadband and mobile phone coverage in parts of the Broads limits online access. There is still a demand for printed information, especially for popular publications like the BA's annual visitor newspaper Broadcaster.

Budget cuts and a greater use of digital information have contributed to the closure of some Local Authority run Tourist Information Centres (TICs), including those in Norwich and Great Yarmouth. However, the Broads is a somewhat hidden landscape to land-based visitors, and face-to-face advice on places to go and things to do is still valued. The BA's TICs at Hoveton, How Hill and Ranworth remain popular, as do the boat trips from these locations. The BA also runs three yacht stations. Those in Norwich and Great Yarmouth give boating visitors a way to access all the city and the seaside town have to offer, and Reedham and Great Yarmouth are popular mooring locations for those travelling between the Northern and Southern Broads via Breydon Water; being more tidal, these can be tricky places to moor, and the staffed facilities provide safety and reassurance to inexperienced boaters.

Partners have developed other opportunities for physical information points, such as the phone box visitor information point in Thurne and the Broads Discovery Hubs network. The BA has participated in trials to reinstate a TIC at the Forum in Norwich, alongside the Forum Trust, Norwich City Council and Norwich Bid. The partners view this as a valuable 'gateway' to inspire the city's residents and visitors to access the Broads. A Broads National Park visitor centre is also proposed as part of a future substantial redevelopment of the Richardsons Leisure boatyard in Stalham.

Broads National Park representation at organised events like the Royal Norfolk Show, and self-led or guided visitor itineraries and packages such as the 'Broads Experiences Collection' and guided Ranger walks, are a useful way to introduce people to what the Broads has to offer. However, we need to do more to offer information tailored to more diverse and harder-to-reach audiences.

The BA works with partners to run a varied environmental education and outreach programme. These events offer schoolchildren, young adults and people from under-represented communities a chance to learn about and be inspired by the Broads, and gives many participants their first experience of visiting the area.

3. Looking ahead

The UK's protected landscapes face considerable challenges. They must work harder to mitigate and adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change, and to contribute to the UK's commitment to nature recovery. They also have to manage tourism and recreational activity in sustainable ways, while attracting new and more diverse audiences. These challenges are highlighted in the [Landscapes Review](#), which sets out 27 proposals for the future management of England's National Parks and AONBs⁴, including priority actions for nature recovery, responding to climate change, and providing 'landscapes for everyone'.

3.1 Nature recovery

The 25-Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021 have raised expectations and requirements for nature recovery and sustainable development in the UK. The Government has committed to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030, known as '30x30'. This target will be a key driver in reversing the historic decline of nature in the UK, by expanding and improving its protected landscapes and creating new areas for wildlife. Measures include Biodiversity Net Gain, which aims to ensure that any development subject to planning permission has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will cover the whole of England, providing a focus for the strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The county-level strategies prepared by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils will cover the Broads. The BA is also producing a **Broads Nature Recovery Strategy (BNRS)**, which will replace the Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy 2019-2024.

3.2 Sustainable recreation and tourism

The [UN World Tourism Organisation](#) describes sustainable tourism as 'tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities'. Its Tourism in 2030 Agenda identifies 17 sustainable development goals. While all are relevant to the Broads, the following goals are of particular relevance for this strategy:

- Goal 3. Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4. Quality education
- Goal 7. Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 12. Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13. Climate action

⁴ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

For many years, the UK's National Parks and AONBs have promoted sustainable recreation and tourism as fundamental to meeting their statutory purposes and duties. Such activities have generally been welcomed where they support local economies and employment, complement the area's natural and cultural heritage, and promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.

[National Parks UK](#) has invited its members to sign up to this common vision:

'UK National Parks will be leaders in regenerative tourism - managing tourism in such a way that we don't merely minimise its impact but strive towards tourism making a net positive contribution to our National Parks. Regenerative tourism is a step further than sustainable tourism, which seeks to minimise negative impacts.'

We will:

- Champion and support tourism development that contributes to the enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates.
- Support tourism activity that helps reduce carbon emissions and increases nature-recovery, whilst ensuring National Parks are relevant to everyone's needs.'

Greener tourism provision

Most respondents to the recent Broads Tourism Business Survey said that reducing the environmental footprint of their business had become more important to them over the last three years. The most popular reasons were to reduce energy use/costs (73%), to reduce waste generation and costs (63%), and to highlight their commitment to climate change through actions such as local food offers and ethical purchasing (63%). Only one respondent said that sustainability was not important to their business.

The most common sustainability actions these businesses were taking were recycling (77%), preferring local suppliers (70%) and energy saving (68%). The most popular planned activity was to monitor utility and wastage (25%). However, 73% did not have, or had no plans to implement, an optional green donation scheme for customers.

While much of this is positive, membership of the Broads Green Tourism Business Scheme is low, and only 10% of respondents to the survey were members of a green tourism accreditation scheme. Barriers include financial implications, lack of knowledge, other pressures taking priority, and uncertainty that the changes they could make would have a real impact.

When asked what would encourage businesses to be 'greener', the most popular response was more information (55%). The most common barrier was the fear that sustainable practices might have a negative impact on their financial bottom line (35%). The most important measures to drive sustainable tourism development across the Broads were better promotion of the area as a sustainable tourism destination (63%), more electric vehicle/boat recharging points (60%), improved public transport (58%), and more provision for active travel (55%).

Reducing carbon emissions

In 2022 the [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment and Target Scenarios report for the Broads](#) was published by Small World Consulting Ltd. Similar reports were produced for all UK National Park Authorities and some Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to provide a robust and consistent evidence base for climate action across UK protected landscapes. The report for the Broads gives a consumption-based assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to residents and visitors, and recommends targets towards a low-carbon economy.

In 2019, total carbon emissions from tourism in the Broads were 198,322 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e)⁵; 112,728 tCO₂e were from travel to and from the area, 70% being vehicle fuel. To give some context, Broads' residents contributed 252,105 tCO₂e and Broads' industry contributed 341,896 tCO₂e.

Of the 85,594 tCO₂e emission from visitor stays in the area, 52% was from food and drink, 6% from vehicle fuel and 7% from boat use. Car travel was the single largest contributor, being 33% of the combined footprint of residents and visitors.

The report recommends a 10% reduction in visitor travel emissions to and from the Broads per year, and a 5% reduction in emissions from food and drink consumption and other goods bought by residents and visitors. Measured from the 2019 baseline, this would require a 61% reduction in visitor travel emissions and 37% reduction in food and drink emissions by 2029. The [Broads Climate Statement](#) (2019) includes an ongoing commitment to working with local organisations to reduce carbon emissions and to promote sustainable tourism.

Managing flood risk

Most of the Broads executive area is at some risk of flooding, including thousands of properties and around 25,000 hectares of farmland and mainly freshwater habitats. The [Broadland Futures Initiative](#) is developing a long-term integrated flood risk management strategy for the Broads and interrelated coast. Their work includes engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including those with leisure and tourism interests.

3.3 Attracting wider audiences

Evidence shows that access to nature benefits our physical and mental health and wellbeing. While a positive outcome of the pandemic was a new perspective for many people on the appeal of the natural environment, the [Landscapes Review](#) pointed out that our protected landscapes are sometimes seen as an exclusive, mainly white and middle-class club, and they must do more to encourage greater visitor diversity. The Review names underrepresented groups as older people, the young, those from lower socio-economic groups, people with disabilities and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

⁵ tCO₂e is a measurement covering the seven main greenhouse gases. It weights each gas based on its potential to cause [global warming emissions \(data.gov.uk\)](#).

Broads National Park brand identity

Clear and coordinated messages about the area help to strengthen visitors' understanding and enjoyment. In 2015, the BA adopted the Broads National Park brand, developed for Visit the Broads and its business members to promote the area with a consistent identity for the benefit of the visitor economy. The brand does not change the BA's statutory purposes or the legislation for the management of the Broads. The Broads remains a unique member of the family of 15 National Parks in the UK.

Experiential travel, where people immerse themselves fully in the areas they visit, is an increasingly influential trend. The BA helped to create a 'Broads Experiences' collection (part of the English National Park Experience Collection), which has developed into ongoing promotion to the domestic and international travel trade, led by [Visit East of England](#). Alongside the Broads National Park brand, this initiative is helping to increase awareness of the area's special status and qualities.

3.4 Destination management

The [UK Tourism Recovery Plan](#) notes that, as well as having a significant impact on supply and demand, the Covid-19 pandemic emphasized structural barriers holding back the tourism industry from reaching its full potential, including market fragmentation and a lack of information about the tourism offer across the UK.

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) coordinate tourism marketing campaigns for a defined area. In 2021, the Government commissioned an [independent review of DMOs](#) to see whether there is a better model to support English tourism at the regional level. As a result, it is creating three tiers of DMO: A top tier of 15-20 Destination Development Partnerships, funded by Government; a second tier of up to 40 accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) to be supported by Visit England; and a third tier of non-accredited DMOs that will receive little or no support from Visit England.

[Visit the Broads](#) does not meet the criteria to become a LVEP, and would be classed as a third tier DMO. Norfolk County Council has agreed to support Visit Norfolk to develop an application for a Norfolk LVEP, hopefully expanded to include Suffolk. If the bid is successful, the LVEP will provide an opportunity to get support from Visit England within a boundary that reflects the geography of the Broads.

3.5 Summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The summary in Table 1 is based on updates from the last Broads Tourism Strategy, Sustainability Appraisal baseline data for the Broads Plan 2022-27, the Broads Tourism Business Survey 2022, and STEAM data.

Table 1

SWOT analysis of recreation and tourism provision in the Broads

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique wetland of international importance and member of the UK National Park family. • Diverse and highly valued biodiversity. • More than 200km of navigable and lock-free inland waterways; long-established leisure boating culture and economy. • Popular destination for boating, angling and land-based activities including walking, cycling and wildlife watching. • Significant cultural and heritage assets, including 60+ iconic drainage mills. • Wealth of archaeological remains (the Broads itself is identified as a site of Exceptional Waterlogged Heritage). • High levels of tranquility and dark skies through much of the area. • An established and independent charitable trust. • Close to varied and complementary visitor destinations, including Norwich, Great Yarmouth and other coastal resorts. • Good rail access in some areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance between Northern and Southern Broads in supply and demand. • Inconsistent quality in accommodation and catering offers. • Lack of coordination between tourism-related bodies. • Lack of 'point of need' visitor information • Poor broadband and mobile coverage in some areas. • Insufficient provision of moorings and waterside facilities. • Poor transport links to Norfolk; high dependence on private transport and a lack of public transport in rural areas. • Undeveloped walking and cycling offer. • Lack of funding and human resources (paid staff and volunteers). • Seasonality of demand and offer. • Lack of diversity in visitor markets (general issue for National Parks family)

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to use the UK National Parks brand to raise public awareness and interest in the area’s status and special qualities. • Enhanced use of multi-media to share visitor information. • Forecast growth in domestic and inbound markets. • Growing market interest in distinct ‘Broads experiences’ including wildlife, cultural heritage and active health and wellbeing. • Growing interest from multi-generational markets. • Trend of milder winters, giving potential to prolong the visitor season. • Private sector interest in sponsorship. • Interest among businesses in improving conditions for investment, including advice and training. • Public and business support for ‘green tourism’ initiatives. • Potential for complementary and mutually beneficial action across different interests. • Local communities interested in caring for the area. • Growth in paddle sports (SUPs & kayaks). • Potential new international interest in area (‘Masters of the Air’ Apple TV series in 2024 featuring Norfolk & Suffolk). • DMO tier changes and Norfolk LVEP bid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of climate change (e.g., flooding, drought, heatwaves). • Impacts of UK economy and Brexit on costs (especially energy, food), supply chains and consumer spend. • Cheap international travel / package holidays, especially those from countries with stronger currencies offering greater value for money. • Uncertainty about legacy of Covid-19 pandemic on visitor trends. • Reduction in public sector funding. • Over-reliance on repeat visitor markets. • Decline in hire boat fleet and in boatyard/ boat building industry. • Potential loss of mooring sites and other riverside facilities. • Pressures on ‘honeypot sites’ and on protected, remote and tranquil landscapes. • Impacts of traffic growth on safe cycling, walking and horse-riding routes. • Visitor provision not meeting expected standards. • Labour and skills shortages within tourism and hospitality businesses. • Competition from other destinations. • Vulnerability of subsidized public transport services to and within the Broads. • Other barriers to social inclusion.

4. 5-year Action Plan

Objectives and actions are set out under three integrated themes. While this is a 5-year plan, many actions will continue beyond this period, and we may add new actions where appropriate. Where relevant, there is an underlying principle that actions to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Broads will also promote environmental awareness and responsible visitor behaviour, particularly for the protection of sensitive habitats sites.

4.1 Nature: Greening the Broads

The overarching aims in the Broads Plan 2022-27 are to:

- Prepare a long-term flood risk strategy for the Broads, Great Yarmouth and interrelated coastal frontage and maintain current adaptive coastal, tidal and fluvial flood risk management approaches for the area. (A1)
- Promote action to reduce carbon emissions from BA operations and from within the Broads National Park, including business, recreational, travel and other sources. (A2, A3)

Table 2

Objective 1: To increase the green credentials of local tourism businesses, and enhance their resilience to climate change and flood risk.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
1.1	<p>Strengthen local green tourism business participation, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking advice from Green Tourism and green tourism schemes run by NPAs and other organisations. • Offering training, advice and support to individual businesses on Broads Green Tourism Business Scheme (BGTBS) membership and Green Tourism accreditation. • Exploring the potential to offer a BGTBS as a 'stepping stone' to Green Tourism accreditation. • Creating a BGTBS badge and branding for use by member businesses. 	BA, VtB	Min. 25 businesses Green Tourism accredited or committed to BGTBS from 2025	<p>Green Tourism accreditations</p> <p>BA/VtB in-house membership of BGTBS</p> <p>BGTBS accreditation badges added to member business listings on VtB website</p>
1.1	Update and promote the ' Greening the Broads' Guide .	BA	Published online by Dec 2025	BA website

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
1.1	Promote individual tourism business measures for energy and water efficiency, local and ethical purchasing, and waste management and recycling.	VtB	Ongoing	VtB website, blogs and social media accounts
1.2	Emphasize greener options in tourism business marketing and visitor information, such as businesses using green energy, offering locally sourced produce and selling recycled products.	VtB, BA	Ongoing	Monitor promotional material, output and engagement
1.3	Seek partnership and funding opportunities to support green tourism initiatives via UK Government, county councils, corporate and National Parks Partnerships schemes and others.	BA, VtB, external funders, BCT	Ongoing	Monitor NPP projects and funding secured through BA Funding Officer
1.4	Support the Broadland Futures Initiative planning for integrated flood risk management in Broadland.	BA, VtB	Ongoing	BFI Comms Plan

Table 3

Objective 2: To encourage visitors to make more sustainable travel choices when visiting and exploring the Broads.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
2.1	Provide orienteering and booking information on 'Active Travel' opportunities such as walking routes, bridleways, non-powered boating trails and hire facilities, and cycle routes and hire facilities.	VtB, tourism businesses, BA	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
2.2	Promote public transport options and itineraries, including links to destination and access points, in all tourism marketing and visitor information, and work with public transport operators to promote customer incentives.	VtB, BA, businesses, Greater Anglia, Community Rail Partnership, bus operators	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials
2.3	Promote ' Electrifying the Broads ' and other green energy options, including the solar/electric charging point network and tourism hotspots in Electric Vehicle and Alternative Fuels strategies.	BA, District and County councils	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials

4.2 Place: Valuing the National Park

The overarching aims in Broads Plan 2022-27 are to:

- Promote the Broads National Park identity; Provide information and other resources to encourage environmentally responsible visitor behaviour; Provide safety information and support to recreational users and tourism providers. (E3, C4)
- Create and promote year-round, high quality/low impact 'experiential' itineraries, events and packages, linked into coastal and urban visitor offers. (E2)
- Increase income generation to support Broads-themed projects. (F5)

Table 4

Objective 3: To enhance the recognition and appreciation of The Broads National Park identity.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
3.1	Promote the Broads National Park brand at local and neighbouring visitor events and destinations, and through print and digital media.	BA, VtB, tourism businesses	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
3.2	Supply Broads National Park brand assets and guidelines to local and neighbouring visitor-facing businesses and organisations.	BA, VtB	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials
3.3	Maintain and continue to install Broads National Park signage and interpretation such as artworks and exhibitions at appropriate locations, including public transport sites, the Discovery Hub network and hospitality venues.	BA, BCT	Existing signage maintained; new signage installed as funding and locations available.	Broads National Park TICs, displays, Broads Discovery Hubs
3.4	Strengthen the Broads presence within UK National Parks campaigns and project activities such as calendars, newsletters, and competitions.	BA, UK National Parks comms team, National Parks Partnerships	Ongoing	UK National Parks websites, social media accounts, 'Postcards from the Parks' e-newsletter
3.5	Support the delivery of VtB multi-media marketing and awareness campaigns promoting the Broads National Park.	BA, VtB	Ongoing	Annual VtB marketing and publicity calendar
3.6	Produce 'Enjoying the Broads National Park responsibly' visitor guide and other materials to promote environmental awareness and responsible visitor behavior, including the protection of sensitive habitats sites.	BA, VtB	Ongoing	Use of guide in all relevant PR and marketing to visitors as appropriate

Table 5

Objective 4: To enhance the recognition of the Broads National Park and its links to the region, UK waterways and UK National Parks, and offer tourism opportunities throughout the year.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
4.1	Submit the application for a Norfolk Local Visitor Economy Partnership (expanded to include Suffolk).	Norfolk CC, Visit England, Visit Norfolk, BA, VtB	LVEP application completed by end 2024	LVEP status
4.2	Provide Broads-related multimedia content for wider marketing campaigns featuring Norfolk, Suffolk, East Anglia, UK waterways and UK National Parks, with a focus on responsible and sustainable tourism, access for all, visitor itineraries and year-round tourism opportunities.	BA, VtB, VEE	Ongoing	Media monitoring
4.3	Promote 'out of season' offers to visitors through blogs, newsletters and social media campaigns.	VtB, BA	Ongoing	Media monitoring
4.4	Promote staff recruitment, training, apprenticeship and volunteering opportunities within the local tourism and hospitality sector.	VtB, other local tourism businesses	Ongoing	VtB Events Plan Annual business survey of VtB members

Table 6

Objective 5: To encourage visitors to enjoy the Broads National Park safely and responsibly, understanding and respecting its natural environment and sensitive habitats sites.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
5.1	Produce the 'Enjoying the Broads National Park responsibly' guide and other resources to encourage responsible visitor behaviour, such as the proper use of barbecues, accessing and protecting fragile habitats, and recycling and litter disposal.	BA	Additional assets created by Dec 2025	Assets available to VtB members and used in all appropriate materials

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
5.2	Promote recreational access, facilities and attractions across the Broads network, being aware of pressure points and environmentally sensitive sites. In particular, ensure there is no adverse effect on the integrity of any habitats site.	VtB, BA	Ongoing	Monitor /review promotional material Seek feedback from partners such as NWT, SWT and RSPB
5.3	Provide targeted safety information and support to visitors through the BA Ranger Service, tourism businesses, promotional activities and events.	BA, tourism providers, event organisers	Ongoing, min. 5 events per year	BA Events Plan

Table 7

Objective 6: To increase support for the delivery of Broads-related projects and services through partnership, commercial and sponsorship funding.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
6.1	Pursue private sector funding initiatives through National Parks Partnerships.	BA, NPP	Ongoing	Specific project plans as opportunities arise
6.2	Deliver projects via current public sector funded schemes (e.g., GI-RAMS) and with partners to identify new funding opportunities (e.g., Visit England funding via Norfolk & Suffolk LVEP).	BA, VtB, Visit England	Ongoing	Specific project plans as opportunities arise

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
6.3	Run the Broads Trust 'Love the Broads' visitor giving scheme and Discovery Hubs project, and monitor the progress of the Broads Trust 5-year Business Plan 2023-2028.	BCT, BA, VtB	Members, volunteers & supporters network increased & diversified. Funding secured for min. 1 major operation or project.	Broads Trust annual report

4.3 People: A landscape for all

The overarching aims in the Broads Plan 2022-27 are to:

- Increase and promote accessible and 'taster' activities that foster physical and mental health and wellbeing for all, including under-represented groups. (F1)
- Offer volunteering opportunities and associated skills training; provide outreach environmental opportunities for young people, using the Broads as a learning resource. (F2, F3)
- Maintain and upgrade the range and provision of integrated multi-media interpretation and 'point of need' information for visitors; Provide and promote annual, year-round visitor events programme. (E2, E3)

Table 8

Objective 7: To enable more people from all walks of life to experience the Broads National Park to benefit their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
7.1	Provide guidance and promotional materials on easier access routes, facilities and services for people with mobility or sensory needs.	BA, VtB	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
7.2	Promote accessible and affordable entry-level recreational activities.	BA, VtB, District and County Councils	Ongoing	VtB website and app, social media channels, Broadcaster, print materials
7.3	Work with National Parks Partnerships to develop local health and wellbeing partner initiatives, and seek advice from NPAs running relevant schemes, including green social prescribing and other nature-based interventions.	BA, NPP, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trusts, Local Authorities	Ongoing	Project/funding outputs
7.4	Create and promote information and interpretative material tailored for target audiences, including those in urban areas (Norwich, Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth) and currently under-represented groups. In particular. the young, those from lower socio-economic groups, people with disabilities and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities	BA	Ongoing	Project plans as opportunities arise

Table 9

Objective 8: To provide visitors with the information they need, both before and during their visit, in multimedia, accessible formats.

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
8.1	Provide visitor information presence at TICs, yacht stations, Discovery Hubs and gateway sites such as rail stations, and develop initiatives to increase provision of physical information points. Where appropriate, information should raise awareness of sensitivities at habitat sites and responsible visiting.	BA, BT, Community Rail Partnership	Ongoing	Specific site displays and information
8.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and review the Visit the Broads website, linked to destination websites at local to international level. • Maintain and increase a social media presence, including the use of influencers/peer generated content. 	BA, VtB	<p>Website homepage reviewed in 2024/25.</p> <p>Reach and dwell time of website and social media following up by 5% p.a. to 2029</p>	VtB website and app, social media channels
8.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and expand the reach of the visitor newspaper 'Broadcaster' and interactive tools such as phone apps and TIC display touchscreens. • Increase walking and cycling route information available on third party apps and the Visit the Broads website; refresh the Broads by Bike booklet and online resource. 	BA, VtB	<p>Broadcaster distribution min. 95,000 p.a.</p> <p>Broads by Bike refresh by March 2026</p> <p>Maximize VtB app downloads to provide 10% growth per year</p>	<p>Broadcaster print and distribution</p> <p>VtB website and app tracking – downloads and usage</p> <p>Broads by Bike booklet in print and online</p>

Ref	Key actions	Lead/desired partners	Targets and timescales	Progress monitoring
8.4	Curate and promote bookable events, itineraries and packages, including Broads Experiences, for activities such as wildlife watching, arts and cultural heritage, and active health and wellbeing.	BA, VtB, District and County Councils, VEE	Broads NPE collection reviewed and expanded	VtB Broads Experiences website pages
8.5	Continue to explore options for additional Information Centre presence in Norwich, incorporating the Broads National Park	Norwich City Council, Norwich BID, Forum Trust, BA	N/A	

5. Linked guiding strategies

As we note in Section 1, the Broads Recreation and Tourism Strategy sits under the statutory Broads Plan and cross-relates to other guiding strategies produced by the BA. See full information on the [strategy pages of the Broads Authority website](#).

The [Broads Plan](#) is the statutory management plan for the Broads executive area. It sets out a long-term vision and strategic objectives to benefit the landscape, biodiversity, local communities and visitors. As a high-level overarching plan, it draws together and guides a wide range of plans, programmes and policies relevant to the area. The current Plan covers the period 2022 to 2027.

The [Broads Integrated Access Strategy](#) works in tandem with the Broads Recreation and Tourism Strategy. The BA plans to adopt the latest strategy in 2024. It identifies projects and programmes to maintain and improve the Broads' physical access network on and between land and water, linked to visitor facilities and sustainable transport provision.

The [Waterways Management Strategy](#) gives an overview of the challenges of managing the Broads waterways, and prioritises maintenance requirements and programmes.

The [Broads Education Strategy](#) sets out educational and outreach actions to help school children and young people, including those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, to connect with and be inspired by the Broads National Park.

The [Broads Volunteer Strategy](#) aims to offer 'hands on' opportunities for local people, including those from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, to experience the Broads and play an active part in its practical management.

The [Broads Biodiversity and Water Strategy](#) (BBWS) focuses on priority actions for the BA as a lead or joint delivery partner, and key projects led by other organisations working in the Broads. In line with the national legislative framework for nature recovery set out under the Environment Act 2021, and the Government's '30x30' commitment to nature recovery, the BA is preparing a **Broads Nature Recovery Strategy**. This is due to be adopted by the end of 2024, and will replace the BBWS.

6. Key partners

The BA works with a wide range of organisations, groups, businesses and the wider community to deliver this strategy. We note our key partners below.

- [Visit the Broads](#) is the official Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the Broads National Park. It provides a single voice to promote and support sustainable tourism and leisure businesses in and around the Broads National Park.
- [Visit East of England](#): Visit East Anglia is consumer and business focused and brings a unified voice for tourism in the region under the Visit East of England banner. It works to develop the year-round visitor economy, make tourism and hospitality a career for life, make the visitor offer accessible to the world, fill more bed nights, and develop and share

industry data. Visit East Anglia Ltd also operates www.visitnorfolk.co.uk and www.visitsuffolk.com.

- The [Broads Trust](#) manages the Love the Broads visitor giving scheme. It also manages the Broads Discovery Hubs, a network of visitor information points.
- The [Broadland Futures Initiative](#) is a partnership for future flood risk management in the Broadland area. Its main goal is to agree a framework for future flood risk management that better copes with our changing climate and rising sea level.
- The [Broads Society](#) members share a common purpose in securing a sustainable future for the Broads as a unique and protected landscape in which heritage, leisure, tourism and the local economy can thrive in harmony with the natural environment, bringing benefits to everyone, now and in the future.
- The **Broads Biodiversity Partnership** is a network of organisations, businesses and individuals working together to discuss, coordinate and deliver work for habitat and species enhancement, and helping people to enjoy the natural environment.

(End of draft document)