

Eco-rafts

**A Sustainable Tourism Initiative
in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads**

Phase II Report

Sponsored by
the Broads Authority
Sustainable Development Fund
(with grant provided by Defra)

RPA

December 2006

***Eco-rafts: A Sustainable Tourism Initiative
in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads***

Phase II Report

Final Report – December 2006

by

Risk & Policy Analysts Limited,
Farthing Green House, 1 Beccles Road, Loddon, Norfolk, NR14 6LT, UK
Tel: +44 1508 528465 Fax: +44 1508 520758
Email: post@rpaltd.co.uk
Web: www.rpaltd.co.uk

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Prepared by:	Carolyn George, Senior Consultant, RPA John Ash, Technical Director, RPA Sally Kelly, The Guild Beth Brockett, Independent Researcher
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Study

In October 2004, Ms Beth Brockett, an independent researcher, produced a feasibility study for a sustainable tourism initiative in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. The concept was called ‘Eco-rafts’ and the study was sponsored by the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund.

The initial proposal was for a canoe-based holiday which would provide low-impact, innovative, aesthetically pleasing, and locally produced floating raft accommodation in a secluded environment. This ‘wilderness’ experience would provide the base for a sustainable, educational and active holiday, with the aim of providing people with a package that could link different land and water-based activities and appeal to a wide range of interests and ability levels. It was considered that this would attract existing users and people who had not thought of visiting the Broads for such a holiday. Furthermore, it was thought that profits from the enterprise could be used to support social and environmental projects within the Broads area.

The report produced by Ms Brockett was cautiously enthusiastic. It noted that the project offered the Broads area a holiday package which has the potential to receive national attention and enhance the area’s image as an ecologically-exciting and activity-based holiday destination. However, it noted the need for more robust foundations for taking the project forward.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Phase II of the Eco-raft project was to build on the feasibility study completed in Phase I and develop a robust business case for taking the project forward to apply for funding. Phase II had the following objectives:

- to prepare detailed costings for setting up and operating the Eco-raft holiday package;
- to establish a social enterprise to manage the project; and
- to prepare funding application(s) and/or identify alternative sources to finance the project.

More specifically, the following tasks were identified:

- to develop a specification for an Eco-raft;
- to establish potential routes and locations for Eco-rafts;
- to undertake market research for the holiday package;
- to hold a stakeholder meeting;
- to establish a social enterprise and service agreements; and
- to prepare funding applications.

1.3 Structure of this Report

This Report sets out the work undertaken under Phase II as follows:

- Section 2 briefly sets out the Eco-raft concept, as developed in Phase I, compares this to existing canoeing holidays and identifies the extent to which it fits with local tourism strategies;
- Section 3 looks at the design and costs of an Eco-raft in more detail;
- the potential canoe/sailing routes and locations for camping are identified in Section 4;
- Section 5 looks at the market trends and promotional ideas for the Eco-rafts project;
- possible Eco-raft enterprise structures are discussed in Section 6;
- the financial business plan is given in Section 7; and
- Section 8 concludes the Report, including the outcome of a stakeholder workshop.

It should be noted that this Report, contains many suggestions and ideas for the Eco-rafts project, which, in some cases, have not been discussed or agreed with the stakeholders concerned. However, the aim of this Report is to pull together all the threads of ideas to give stakeholders a better idea of how the project may work. Only then can people be expected to make a firmer commitment to the project.

2. THE ECO-RAFT CONCEPT

2.1 Introduction

This Section identifies the Eco-raft concept as originally conceived and developed in Phase I. It also looks at other examples of canoeing/camping holidays to understand how the Eco-raft concept may offer a ‘different’ experience, and considers any synergies that may exist with local tourism strategies, which could support the development of the Eco-raft concept. This Section concludes by setting out the concept which has been taken forward in Phase II.

2.2 Phase I Study

The aims and objectives of the initial Eco-raft concept were set out as follows:

- to provide an example of innovative, sustainable tourism in a National Park setting;
- to enhance the image of the Broads as a tourism destination;
- to encourage a vision of the Broads as a place for active and environmentally-friendly recreation;
- to catalyse the emergence of new ideas and hopefully lead the way for unique, attractive and widely accessible sustainable tourism projects within the Broads and other National Parks;
- to link up with existing facilities, activities, businesses and facets of the Broads area, both on land and water;
- to integrate the project into sustainable transport networks and encourage new networks to emerge;
- to exploit the potential for showcasing and advertising under-accessed parts of the Broads e.g. themed breaks;
- to feed into other projects which are aiming to formalise some of the land-based camping arrangements in the area;
- to support existing visitor centres and environmental tourism initiatives;
- to be novel and innovative enough to enable a national marketing campaign to be initiated around the project – which will attract new visitors into the area; and
- to provide employment in the area (on a small scale), support existing businesses and generate a profit which will be used to expand the project to its viable limits, and also be used to subsidise visits by educational groups and disabled individuals and put money back into Broads conservation.

The feasibility study set out to explore whether the Eco-raft project would be possible to implement and whether it would be successful. It considered four main areas:

- location and wildlife considerations;
- funding and profitability;
- design and planning; and
- marketing and potential customer base.

The work undertaken for the feasibility study provides the base from which this second phase has been developed and the findings of the feasibility study are considered throughout this Report.

The initial feasibility study found that the Eco-rafts concept was well received by consultees and enjoyed support from a wide range of organisations and businesses. The report identified the market niche available to the project, the potential for the project to become a flagship tourism enterprise, and the balancing act, between tourism and wildlife interests, which needs to be carefully managed. It was found that understanding and working within the complex network of organisations, businesses and individuals is key to the success of the scheme.

The main points that arose from the consultation undertaken by Ms Brockett were:

- the desire of local businesses to see half-deckers and sailing dinghies included in the plans;
- all the canoe hire firms who have been consulted have been in favour of the plan;
- wildlife organisations are potentially supportive of the project – dependent on full consultation and consideration of wildlife impacts;
- people who work in tourism have indicated that they believe there is a need for this type of project and a large customer base exists; and
- business advice has consistently indicated that the social enterprise route is the most suitable.

The report concluded that there is a need for a sustainable tourism project in the Broads and there is a need to link up the multitude of existing activities, networks and partnerships if sustainable tourism is to flourish. The report identified a number of areas to be addressed to take the project forward; Phase II has been designed to address these points, and other issues, as necessary, based on a refined Eco-raft concept which is discussed below.

2.3 Existing Examples of Eco-rafting

A thorough Internet search has been undertaken to identify any existing examples of the Eco-raft concept. Whilst different elements of the concept have been found in existing holidays, we did not find an exact match of the concept already in use, suggesting that the idea is indeed innovative. Many of the canoeing holidays found tend to be guided, suggesting that it is perhaps more common for unguided canoe expeditions to be arranged informally. There are also many examples of whitewater holidays, but less for standard canoeing. Some examples of existing holidays are described below.

Exodus arranges a number of canoeing/kayaking holidays around the world, although these are mostly sea-kayaking. For example, a 7-day holiday on the Turquoise Coast of Turkey costs in the region of £500 per adult, excluding flights. This is a guided sea-kayaking holiday, with 4 nights accommodation in basic hotels and 3 nights wild

beach camping; some meals are also included. All technical equipment is provided and visitors will paddle between 4 to 6 hours a day.

Headwater is another company that arranges activity holidays around the world. Its canoeing holidays include canoeing on the Dordogne in France. This provides for an 8-night holiday, with independent canoeing between hotels; breakfast and evening meals are included, and 2/3 person Canadian canoes are provided. The cost of this holiday (excluding flights) starts from £670 per adult.

In Sweden, it is possible to camp on a raft overnight, although it is first necessary to build your own raft. *Wilderness in Värmland* (Vildmark i Värmland) is a company that offers nature-based activities and experiences. The company enables people to access nature in an environmentally friendly way, by offering timber rafting, canoeing and whitewater canoeing holidays. Timber rafting on the River Klarälven is one of the company's most popular activities. The rafts are built by the participants and each timber raft can hold between two and five people. Once completed, participants set off down the river with provisions and camping equipment on board for six days, either sleeping on the raft at night or pitching a tent on shore. The rafts are approximately 18m² in area, and travel with the stream at about 2km an hour. There are a variety of heritage centres, local handicraft shops, churches and beauty spots throughout the journey, as well as the opportunity to see wild animals and to do some fishing. The basic cost of a 4-night holiday is £140 per adult, with an additional £80 payable for camping equipment and provisions. Canoes can also be hired (for reaching the shore or exploration) at £55 per canoe; this provides a total price of £275 for 4 nights.

In the UK, there are a small number of examples, and these are generally guided canoe tours. For example, *Spirit of Adventure* provides two-day Brecon Canal canoe exploration trips. The cost of this trip is £299 per adult, with two nights stay in a hotel and some meals included. All equipment is provided. Similarly, *Responsible Travel* provides details of guided 7-day canoeing expeditions in the North West Highlands. These cost from £475, with accommodation provided by remote campsites.

Natural Discovery provides a similar idea for holiday packages to that envisaged for Eco-rafts. Natural Discovery promotes quality short breaks and provides green holidays in the UK. The company works in partnership with local people to develop networks of different types of sustainable accommodation, suppliers and service providers. However, an interesting element is that a 'Discovery Pack' is provided for each holiday. This provides specially tailored Discovery Information, consisting of:

- details of the activity chosen and local area information including a description, history, maps, places to visit, etc;
- the Discovery Information is sent as a website when the holiday is booked so that people can plan ahead;
- it enables people to choose local walks and cycle rides; and
- a Discovery Product can be chosen which is relevant to the type of holiday.

Whilst *Natural Discovery* provides a good example which may be followed by the Eco-rafts project, it also identifies a potentially management solution for the Eco-rafts holiday package. This is discussed further in Section 5.

2.4 Synergies with Relevant Strategies

Tourism strategies are available at a variety of levels, from international, through national and regional, to local, and these are relevant for shaping the development of the Eco-rafts project.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, developed by the EUROPARC Federation (the umbrella organisation of protected areas in Europe) provides a practical tool for ensuring that tourism development in Europe's protected areas is sustainable. The underlying aims of the Charter are:

- to increase awareness of, and support for, Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage, that should be preserved for, and enjoyed by, current and future generations; and
- to improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, which takes account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

The key issues identified by the Charter, which should be addressed by protected areas, are set out in Box 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Key Issues Identified by The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development, by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">% monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations;% encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions;% controlling and reducing activities, including tourism impacts, which adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise; and% encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation.• To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit, by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">% researching the expectations and satisfaction of existing and potential visitors;% meeting the special needs of disadvantaged visitors; and% supporting initiatives to check and improve the quality of facilities and services.• To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area, by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">% ensuring that the promotion of the area is based on authentic images, and is sensitive to needs and capacity at different times and in different locations;% providing readily available and good quality visitor information in and around the area, and assisting tourism enterprises to do so; and% providing educational facilities and services that interpret the area's environment and heritage to visitors and local people, including groups and schools.• To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by: |
|---|

Table 2.1: Key Issues Identified by The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % providing and supporting activities, events and packages involving the interpretation of nature and heritage. • To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the protected area, other organizations and tourism enterprises, based on assessing training needs. • To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area; % ensuring good communication between the protected area, local people and visitors; and % identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise. • To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % promoting the purchase of local products (food, crafts, local services) by visitors and local tourism businesses; and % encouraging the employment of local people in tourism. • To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % keeping a record of visitor numbers over time and space, including feedback from local tourism enterprises; % creating and implementing a visitor management plan; % promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars; and % controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development.
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Tomorrow's Tourism is the UK's current tourism strategy, published in 1999 (DCMS, 1999). It notes that Britain's tourism industry is growing and wants to ensure that it grows in ways which are economically, socially and environmentally beneficial. There are 15 action points at the core of the strategy, including, *inter alia*:

- a blueprint for the sustainable development of tourism to safeguard our countryside, heritage and culture for future generations;
- initiatives to widen access to tourism for the 40% of people who do not take a long holiday;
- more integrated promotion of cultural, heritage and countryside attractions to enable visitors to enjoy the full range of what Britain has to offer; and
- the development of innovative niche markets, such as film tourism and sports tourism, to unlock the full potential of Britain's unique cultural and natural heritage.

In particular, the Government has identified six key areas which need to be addressed, where these include developing products which promote our culture, heritage and countryside. The strategy notes that our cultural heritage, countryside, language and tradition are likely to remain the major reasons for visiting Britain, and that the quality of the countryside provides the basic resource on which much tourism depends. Protection of the landscapes, making the most of the rights of way network and other access opportunities, and the promotion of local products should all contribute to the success of rural tourism.

Government work on sustainable tourism suggested that action was needed on six different fronts to:

- establish an effective policy framework;
- maximise tourism's potential to benefit local communities;
- manage visitor flows;
- address the transport issues associated with tourism;
- address the planning issues associated with tourism; and
- build partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors.

It notes that tourism has tremendous potential to benefit local communities, especially in areas where traditional industries or agriculture are in decline. It can contribute to the regeneration of urban and rural areas; to the preservation and re-use of existing resources (such as historic buildings); to the protection and enhancement of the local environment; and to maintaining the economic viability of local businesses (through diversification such as farm tourism).

In order to promote sustainable tourism, the UK Strategy aims to:

- encourage tourism businesses to source and promote the use of local goods (e.g. regional beers and speciality foods) and services, employ local people and offer discounts to encourage residents to use facilities provided for tourists; and
- promote the development and uptake of visitor payback schemes to encourage tourists or businesses to contribute (financially or in kind) to local environmental protection and enhancement programmes.

The UK Strategy also identifies the need to address the transport issues associated with tourism, and aims to encourage the creation of new tourism products which integrate walking with cycling or travel by bus and rail as part of the experience and which cater for all passengers, including people with young children.

A Shared Vision: The New Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England (EEDA, 2004) was published in November 2004. This identifies a number of strategic goals for the region with associated priorities and actions. Of relevance to the Eco-rafts project is goal number four, 'high quality places to live, work and visit', and the associated priority 'developing culture, heritage, and leisure assets for residents and visitors'.

It is noted that the East of England contains natural, archaeological and built heritages of international importance, and it is stated that its distinct characteristics should be reflected in new developments. It notes that tourism is a growing sector of the economy, and it is essential that culture, heritage and leisure facilities are supported and strengthened in order to develop tourism further. Furthermore, it is suggested that the protection of existing, and the creation of new and accessible, green infrastructure is integral to the region's tourism industry and sustainable management of tourism is essential to the continued success of these areas.

Actions identified under this priority are to:

- protect, conserve and enhance key cultural, heritage and leisure assets to maintain their intrinsic value and increase their sustainable economic contribution to the region;
- work with the leisure, cultural and tourism industries to develop those sectors to the benefit of the community and the creation of local opportunities that can help overcome social exclusion;
- ensure that the leisure and cultural needs of existing and growing communities are taken into account in planning and delivering development; and
- use the skills of heritage, environment and built environment professionals to promote development which respects and enhances the existing natural, rural or urban environment.

The *East of England Regional Sustainable Tourism Strategy* was published in March 2004 (Locum Destination Consulting (LDC), 2004). It identifies a demand for ‘value for time’ and high quality, distinctive holiday experiences, and notes that the space and quietness offered by the East of England is perhaps its greatest attribute. Preserving, enhancing and selling this quality is a core principle of the East of England strategy.

It further notes that the quality of the environment is a major factor in determining the success of an area as a destination. The Strategy suggests that when people visit the countryside, they want to escape to a pristine natural environment. Wildlife tourism is recognised as a growth sector and a priority area. The Broads, as well as other natural areas in the region are noted to be “*highly desirable as recreational destinations and have particularly strong potential to attract high value tourism. They offer opportunity, but also require sensitivity to the environment and to residents, particularly in peak times*”.

The Strategy suggests:

- seeking environmental enhancements, especially in key tourist destinations such as the Broads;
- using the findings of the Countryside Agency’s ‘Countryside Character’ study to preserve environmental and cultural identity;
- helping community-led tourism initiatives such as those possible under the European Leader II initiative;
- establishing payback schemes to help preserve the environment (these will also be considered for urban locations).

The Broads Plan sets out a vision and long-term (20-year) aims for the future of the Broads. One of the Broads Authority’s core responsibilities is to enable people to enjoy the Broads, and it is not surprising that tourism and recreation issues receive considerable attention in the Broads Plan. The Plan states that the Authority encourages quiet forms of recreation on land and water, based on the area’s distinctive beauty, culture, traditions, history and wildlife. It also recognises that it is vital to

ensure that enjoyment of the area is combined with an awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the Broads as a national park.

The Plan suggests that environmental awareness is increasingly widespread among tourism operators and the Authority is proactive in supporting the development of sustainable tourism initiatives, such as canoe and cycle hire schemes.

Thus, the relevant 20-year aim in relation to tourism and recreation states that “*tourism and recreation will be promoted and managed at environmentally and socially sustainable levels, thereby contributing to a vibrant and stable local economy. They will be founded on the natural and cultural beauty of the Broads, which is enhanced by its tranquillity and sense of remoteness. Boat numbers and the intensity of boating use will be managed at levels that are environmentally and economically sustainable, as well as socially acceptable among those using the Broads*”.

2.5 The Phase II Eco-raft Concept

A number of key themes emerge from the above discussion:

- a self-guided canoe/camping holiday is a viable concept, considering existing holidays offered internationally;
- tourism strategies stress the need for innovative, niche tourism products – the Eco-rafts concept appears to fill a gap in the market given that a similar product does not appear to exist in the UK;
- the maintenance and linking up of heritage, cultural and environmental features is a key issue in every strategy, as is the need to find alternative forms of transport;
- encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation, potentially through visitor pay-back schemes, should be a key feature;
- there is a need to provide a quality product – this does not mean, for example, providing five star accommodation, but could mean providing a distinctive and authentic experience, high quality information and interpretation of the area and a high ‘value added’ holiday; and
- sustainable tourism initiatives should involve local communities, promote local products, employ local people and provide facilities for local residents.

Essentially, the Eco-raft concept is neatly captured within one of the aims of European Charter’s aims for sustainable tourism, namely “*to encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by providing and supporting activities, events and packages involving the interpretation of nature and heritage.*”

Whilst the original concept and objectives of the Eco-rafts project are in keeping with these key themes, we feel it is necessary to refine the concept to a certain extent, based on discussions held with stakeholders and consideration of the financial aspects of the project. Thus, the following refinements are identified:

- the general concept of Eco-rafts appears very simple, but the surrounding issues of developing the complete holiday package are likely to complicate the project and may lead to hurdles which prevent the realisation of the initial idea. We therefore believe that the project should be kept as simple as possible in the beginning, whilst still providing an attractive feature. There are a number of ways in which the project could develop as experience is gained and a customer base established;
- the emphasis should be placed on linking up existing canoe hire and camping facilities, with a small number of Eco-rafts (initially) to provide the focal point or ‘hook’ for the holiday package;
- the option to provide the holiday package through an existing holiday company should be explored; and
- we believe that the possibility of using a visitor payback scheme to assist local conservation, rather than the company’s profits (which could be used to develop the project further) should be considered.

Thus, we have refined and clarified the project’s overall aims and objectives as shown in Box 2.2. These maintain the essence of the project but provide objectives which have measurable outputs. This will assist with completing funding applications for the Eco-rafts project. It should be noted that the aims and objectives of the overall project are different to those for this Phase of the project (which are set out in Section 1).

Box 2.2: Aims and Objectives of the Eco-raft Project
<p>Aims of the Eco-raft Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide an innovative, sustainable tourism project in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.• To enhance the image of the Broads as a tourism destination and as a place for active and environmentally-friendly recreation.• To support existing businesses in the Broads area.• To provide a high ‘value-added’ experience for visitors, which aids discovery and understanding of the Broads area.• To support conservation in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. <p>Objectives of the Eco-raft Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To identify or establish an organisation(s) to develop, own, manage and market the Eco-rafts and associated holiday package.• To build and moor a number of Eco-rafts to enable people to camp in the wilderness of the Broads.• To link up existing heritage, cultural and environmental features with facilities, services and activities provided by local companies in the Broads area, both on land and water.• To encourage visitors to use alternative, sustainable, forms of transport.• To provide visitors with information which enables them to discover under-accessed parts of the Broads and to understand the Broads environment.• To provide a means of making a financial contribution to support local conservation projects.

Aims of the Eco-raft Project

- To provide an innovative, sustainable tourism project in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.
- To enhance the image of the Broads as a tourism destination and as a place for active and environmentally-friendly recreation.
- To support existing businesses in the Broads area.
- To provide a high ‘value-added’ experience for visitors, which aids discovery and understanding of the Broads area.
- To support conservation in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.

Objectives of the Eco-raft Project

- To identify or establish an organisation(s) to develop, own, manage and market the Eco-rafts and associated holiday package.
- To build and moor a number of Eco-rafts to enable people to camp in the wilderness of the Broads.
- To link up existing heritage, cultural and environmental features with facilities, services and activities provided by local companies in the Broads area, both on land and water.
- To encourage visitors to use alternative, sustainable, forms of transport.
- To provide visitors with information which enables them to discover under-accessed parts of the Broads and to understand the Broads environment.
- To provide a means of making a financial contribution to support local conservation projects.

3. SPECIFICATION FOR AN ECO-RAFT

3.1 Introduction

The initial feasibility study identified two options for the raft design:

- a floating structure with a static A-frame accommodation, providing a secure sleeping section. This would have the benefits of being able to lock the sleeping area, it would appeal to a wider audience than traditional camping, it could be an aesthetically pleasing and marketable feature, and it could involve local materials and crafts. However, a large amount of space would be needed, weight may be a factor, and the capital and maintenance costs of the structure could be considerable. The Phase I feasibility study costed this structure at £8,000 per raft; and
- a floating structure with an area to erect a tent, with rings to secure the tent to. It may also be possible to have stakes from which to attach a canoe tarpaulin and/or hammock. The benefits of this structure would be to have lower capital and maintenance costs, the design and realisation of the raft would be easier, it would appeal to a camping audience (and thus less likely to exclude existing canoe campers) and it could provide a cheaper holiday. However, it may reduce the potential market, it may not be as easy to promote (not so aesthetically pleasing), and it may be less secure, i.e. it would be more available to people who want to stay without booking. This simpler structure was costed at £4,000.

This Section discusses the requirements for accommodation for the Eco-rafts project, considering the legal requirements, practical requirements and how these might be developed into a specification for an Eco-raft.

3.2 Legal Requirements

3.2.1 Introduction

It is not our intention to provide a definitive guide to the legal requirements associated with the Eco-raft project, as RPA cannot provide legal advice on these issues. However, we are aware of some issues which may need to be considered; there are, of course, likely to be other issues on which those taking the project forward should seek advice.

3.2.2 Planning Permission

It is likely that the rafts will require planning permission, given that the rafts would be permanently moored for many months (although perhaps removed for storage at the end of each holiday season). Consultation with the Broads Authority¹ (see Annex 1)

¹ The advice given by the Broads Authority represents an officer's view only and does not prejudice the views of the Authority in the determination of any subsequent planning application.

indicates that while the general principle of the project would result in a form of tourism which the Authority would like to encourage, there could be a number of practical issues which would need to be addressed in the submission of planning applications. It would potentially present difficulties if one planning application were to be submitted for the whole project, as the rafts may be moored in different District Council areas and give rise to different issues. It is therefore suggested that separate planning applications should be submitted for each of the locations.

The planning applications would also need to be accompanied by detailed supporting information setting out how the rafts would be serviced in relation to the bringing to the rafts of water, provisions and any other equipment which may be required and the removal of waste and effluent from the rafts. Clearly, it would be necessary to ensure that effluent and general waste was not discharged directly into the Broads river system.

In addition, it is considered that an assessment of the ecological impact of the proposed siting of rafts at each location should also be submitted, as the Broads Authority would have to ensure that the introduction of human tourist activity into some of the more remote and inaccessible areas of the Broads system did not result in a detrimental impact on the ecology and wildlife of the area.

It should also be noted that there would be a financial cost associated with obtaining planning permission, assumed to be in the region of £265.

3.2.3 Campsite Licence

Under section 269 of the Public Health Act 1936, the use of land as a campsite for more than 42 days consecutively or 60 days in total in any 12 consecutive months requires a site licence from the local authority for the area concerned. In addition, the use of land for tented camping for more than 28 days a year normally requires an express grant of planning permission.

It is therefore possible that the Eco-rafts would require a campsite licence, which would have conditions attached. It appears to be the case that sites are normally licensed for caravans (which is granted under different legislation) with tented camping taking place at these sites for less than the specified 60 days in one year. Thus, we have not identified any district council in the Broads area which has set conditions for a tent campsite. The relevant legislation entitles a local authority to apply whatever conditions it deems necessary to the licence, however it can be expected that these conditions would relate to the provisions for:

- toilet facilities;
- waste disposal;
- clean water;
- fire-fighting equipment; and
- steps to ensure that no nuisance arises from the site.

There does not appear to be any cost associated with obtaining such a licence, beyond completing an application form, although this would have to be confirmed with the local councils.

3.3 Practical Requirements

The initial feasibility study identified a number of design specifications based on the requirements of canoeists and water sport organisations:

- a preference for a metal structure over wood for ease of maintenance;
- a mesh/matrix base for the platform was suggested to reduce the slippiness of the surface;
- easy access onto the raft from the water via a stepping platform or ramp;
- use of canoe tarpaulins as shelter;
- somewhere to cook;
- drinking water for trips longer than 2 days;
- toilet facilities;
- somewhere to hang wet clothes;
- inclusion of a survival pack on the raft (e.g. sawdust for the compost loo, first aid kit, mosquito spray, etc.);
- low level lighting that automatically comes on when light level drops; and
- larger rafts for groups of tourists.

Other issues considered during Phase II have included:

- the type of toilet facilities available, given the need to avoid discharges to the Broads;
- the need for a means of securing the raft to avoid people using it without booking; and
- the potential for the raft to be covered by bird droppings.

3.4 Specification

3.4.1 Overview

The options for raft design (set out in Section 3.1) were reviewed and it is considered that the second option, with space for a tent as opposed to a sleeping shelter, would be the most appropriate for the type of holiday experience that is being suggested. In addition, broader considerations of design, in relation to planning permission, cost and practicality suggest that the simpler option is more appropriate. A sketch of the preliminary design is provided in Annex 2.

The design and materials of the raft and its structures will need careful design to be sympathetic with the environment in which they are to be located and there are a number of primary requirements for the Eco-raft that have been identified in Section 3.3. These have been addressed in the preliminary design as discussed below.

3.4.2 Raft Construction

It is proposed that the raft is made from glass fibre reinforced cement pontoons. Standard size pontoons could be used (12m x 2.5m) for ease of transport and two could be bolted together to form the raft (12m x 5m). Wooden rubbing strakes will be provided to all sides. The surface will be non-slip.

One of the main problems with the rafts will be unauthorised access and birds roosting (goose droppings could be a health and safety hazard). Railings with a lockable gate should be provided which as well as keeping people and birds off the raft will also be for the safety of those using the raft. Access to the raft from the canoe would be via steps formed as part of the construction of the pontoons.

Rings should be placed at strategic points in the deck for mooring canoes and for tying guy ropes to for the tent.

3.4.3 Toilet Facilities

Toilet facilities should be provided in a stand-alone cubicle to a suitable design. The cubicle should house a cassette-type toilet and small hand basin (as used in caravans). The use of compostable toilets has been investigated but all require a drainage outlet, which is obviously not acceptable on the Broads (as confirmed by the letter from the Broads Authority, Annex 1). The cassette toilet will need emptying on a regular basis (every one or two days) and the provision of spare cassettes will mean that used cassettes can be easily taken to a disposal point on land. Lockable units will be required to ensure security and stop any unauthorised person from removing the cassette.

3.4.4 Cooking/Storage Facilities

A lockable box of steel construction would provide the necessary storage for gas bottles, water containers and pots/pans etc. The top of the box would be used for cooking with gas rings, which for security should be stored in the box when not in use. Water will need to be replenished on a regular basis depending on use. It is anticipated that the water provided on the raft will not be for drinking. Bottled drinking water will have to be carried by the users as part of their food supplies, and replenished at sites along the routes (drinking water sites or local shops should be marked on the maps to be provided).

3.4.5 Shelters

There should be two open shelters to protect people from rain and sun and these could be of timber construction with a roof covering of either coated metal or other suitable low maintenance material. The toilet cubicle could also be of timber construction. Although natural materials such as reed would be more appropriate for the roofs, it is not considered appropriate due to fire hazard. All the shelters will have to be sympathetically designed in consultation with the Broads Authority.

Fixed seating of wooden construction will be provided under the main shelter. Provision could be made for canvas sides to the shelters as wind/rain breaks if necessary.

3.4.6 Equipment

The following equipment will be provided for canoeing to the rafts/camp sites:

- canoe (such as Old Town Discovery 174);
- paddles; and
- life jackets.

Equipment provided and carried in the canoe:

- waterproof barrels or other containers for belongings;
- tent (4 berth dome); and
- sleeping mats.

Equipment to be provided on each raft:

- foldable table;
- bottled gas;
- water containers (possibly 2x10litre);
- cooking stove;
- cooking pots and pans;
- lamp (gas?);
- crockery/cutlery;
- washing up bowls;
- biodegradable detergent and soap;
- washing up sponges;
- brushes/mop; and
- a fire extinguisher.

Equipment to be provided by the hirer:

- sleeping bags;
- food;
- torches; and
- towels and tea towels.

3.5 Potential Costs

The following costs, presented in Table 3.1, for rafts and equipment have been estimated using a variety of sources and are therefore indicative rather than actual.

Table 3.1: Indicative Costs for an Eco-raft and Associated Equipment	
Item	Cost
Rafts	
Provision of raft (12m x 5m) including manufacture, transport, bolting together, anchors for mooring	£16,600 each
Provision of toilet cubicle and unit, shelters, and storage unit	£4,000 per raft
Equipment	
Canoe, life jackets (2) and paddles	£1,100
Tent and sleeping mats	£900
Equipment on raft	£500

Maintenance will be required on an annual basis together with either daily or every other day visits to provide water, change the toilet cassettes and clean the raft. These costs are estimated as follows:

- daily maintenance has been estimated as 1 person for 1 hour a day @ £22 per hour (including boat);
- consumables, e.g. water, toilet paper, toilet chemicals @ £8 per raft night; and
- annual maintenance is estimated at £500 including winter mooring.

It is assumed that agreements could be made with local boatyards for a member of staff to service the Eco-rafts, thus the cost of one hour of semi-skilled labour has been used, based on local marina costs. It is thought that the Eco-rafts should be visited, on average, every other day to ensure that they are maintained to high standards.

The rafts will require a licence fee and the Broads Authority have indicated that this will be £50 per year. The Eco-raft organisation is also likely to need public liability insurance, employees' liability insurance and insurance for the canoes, rafts and equipment. The costs of this could be in the region of £1,000 per year per raft but definite quotes have not yet been sought. It is possible that the organisation will only be responsible for customers when they are on the rafts, and not when they are in the boats (as this is likely to be covered by the hire companies' insurance); however, this would need to be confirmed.

Thus, the capital costs of each Eco-raft could be as high as £23,100, with annual costs of greater than £1,600.

3.6 Conclusions

This Section has presented a specification which could be used to commission the Eco-rafts. It is to be expected that a company tendering for and building the Eco-rafts would introduce their own variations on the above suggestions and the planning, legal and practical issues highlighted above must be borne in mind when accepting any such variations. A guide price of approximately £23,000 per raft has also been suggested, which could form the basis for a funding application. In order for the Eco-raft enterprise to be financially viable it will be necessary for it to meet its annual costs through hiring out the Eco-rafts. This is discussed further in Section 7 which presents the financial business plan.

4. ROUTES AND LOCATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, and their feeder rivers, offer a variety of canoeing and sailing opportunities for people of all levels of experience². There are eighteen navigable broads and many miles of river, disused canal and navigable dykes that canoeists and sail boats can use. Within the Broads area, there are many areas of water which are privately owned and their use is regulated to varying degrees. Ten percent of the Broads Executive Area is open water but there are also varied tracts of accessible lands. The 300km of public footpaths (including several long distance trails such as the Weavers Way and the Angles Way), the possibilities for cycling and long distance walking, and the profusion of land-based activities and attractions are just a few of the land options for a combined land and water-based holiday.

The initial feasibility study aimed to identify routes that would provide good canoeing/sailing for a variety of abilities and link up the routes with land-based and raft campsites. Local canoeists suggested that experienced paddlers can travel up to 20 miles a day, whilst inexperienced paddlers may only travel 3 miles a day. Whilst this can inform the positioning of rafts and campsites, it also suggests that inexperienced paddlers could be recommended to base themselves from one raft. However, sailing boats can travel much further and could possibly use an entire river system's rafts and campsites over a short break.

The initial feasibility study suggested that rafts should be situated off the main navigation channels, the amount of traffic on the routes should be considered, shelter for parts of the route and the rafts is important, and the lower reaches of rivers are to be avoided due to tidal pull. It is also important to note that wildlife organisations are keen that new canoe routes in fens and back dykes are not opened up.

This Section builds upon the initial work and these recommendations. Based on discussions with local stakeholders we have concentrated on four stretches of rivers as a first stage for this project. These are:

- the River Waveney from Burgh St Peter to Bungay;
- the River Bure from Thurne Mouth to Coltishall and from Coltishall Lock to Burgh Mill;
- the River Thurne from Thurne Mouth to Hickling Broad; and
- the River Ant from Ant Mouth to Dilham Staithes.

However, we note that the local canoe hire and cycle hire networks are working on developing routes, and thus this Section provides a guide to ideas developed through this study which could be developed further or integrated with the routes developed by local stakeholders.

²

www.norfolkbroads.com/water/canoeing.htm.

It should be noted that all craft using the Broads should be licensed, and these can be obtained from the Broads Authority. It may be necessary for participants using their own craft to arrange their own licence or for the holiday package to obtain this for them.

The following symbols have been used to identify places of interest in the rest of this Section. This is to assist with the development of themed breaks.

Table 4.1: Key to Symbols Used for Local Attractions

	Campsite
	Church or Abbey
	Cycle hire facilities or cycle path
	Footpath
	Nature reserve or garden
	Fishing
	Town or village
	Historical interest
	Tourist railway
	Museum
	Windmill or windpump
	Local art

4.2 River Waveney

4.2.1 Canoe and Sailing Routes

Burgh St Peter to Bungay

The River Waveney has become one of the more accessible rivers for canoeists during recent years. It is occasionally navigated as far as Diss, but more commonly paddled between Beccles, Bungay and Earsham. Below Beccles, the river continues to Oulton Broad and becomes subject to vigorous tidal flows³.

The River Waveney, from the Waveney River Centre at Burgh St Peter to Outney Meadow Caravan Park at Bungay, provides a route of approximately 15½ miles long, with canoe hire facilities at either end. It is possible to canoe up the River Waveney beyond Bungay, for example camping is available at the Black Swan in Homersfield. Local stakeholders may wish to consider extending the route to Homersfield to provide a route of approximately 20 miles.

³

www.norfolkbroads.com/water/canoeing.htm

The River Waveney route is described in relation to distances from the Waveney River Centre.

Canoes can be hired from the Waveney River Centre at Burgh St Peter. It is 7 miles from the Waveney River Centre to Beccles, through open country and marshland. There is little in the way of inlets and dykes on this stretch of river.

4 miles and **4½ miles** from the Waveney River Centre there are mooring facilities.

7 miles Boat hire is available at Beccles, it is not known whether canoes can be hired from here but this could be explored and encouraged in the future.

Upstream of Beccles the River Waveney is much narrower than the previous stretches.

10 miles Entrance to Geldeston Dyke, which heads north west for ½ mile to the village of Geldeston.

10½ miles Official head of navigation at Geldeston Locks.

12½ miles Ellingham Mill, canoeists can portage the weir to the left or right onto the road, carrying the canoes 30 yards towards the mill before rejoining the river. Above the sluice at Ellingham, the river becomes non-tidal.

14 miles Wainford, canoeists can portage the weir to the left or right.

15½ miles Outney Meadow, Bungay. Canoeists can continue on the River Waveney loop around Bungay Common, but would have to turn round to come back to the campsite. The Bungay Loop is approximately 3 miles in each direction.

4.2.2 Locations for Campsites and Eco-rafts

Discussions with local stakeholders suggest that there are no suitable locations for an Eco-raft on the River Waveney; however, there are a small number of campsites available.

 **0 miles** Waveney River Centre has tent pitches available, and has expressed an interest in the Eco-rafts project.

10½ miles It is believed that informal camping may be allowed at the Geldeston Locks. This route would benefit from an additional campsite, either at Geldeston Locks or closer to Beccles to allow for short distance canoeing, either by beginners, or to allow time to visit local attractions.

 **15½ miles** Outney Meadow Caravan Park, Bungay, has expressed an interest in the project. It is a family run caravan park and camping site, which is open from March to October.

4.2.3 Links with Existing Attractions

The following attractions are described with reference to the approximate distance from the Waveney River Centre at Burgh St Peter.

- **0 miles** The Church of St Mary the Virgin at Burgh St Peter is next to the Waveney River Centre. The oldest parts of the church date from c1200 but the roof is 15th century and the tower is late 18th century. The tower is an unusual feature, which is said to be based on the Ziggurat temples of Mesopotamia (Iraq)⁴.
- 🚲 **0 miles** There is the potential for the ‘Pathways in Stone’ to form a cycle route around Aldeby, with cycles hired from the Waveney River Centre. Pathways in Stone celebrates Aldeby through the Millennia and echoes the tradition of parish boundary markers. There are seven stones of Carboniferous Limestone and each is named and carved with ancient Christian symbols and Runic characters.
- ▶ **0 miles** On the south side of the river it is possible to join the Angles Way footpath. This can either be followed east for 2 miles into Oulton Broad town or west, along the River Waveney, for 7 miles into the town of Beccles and much further beyond this.
- ½ mile from the Waveney River Centre is Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve, managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This reserve is open to the general public, but it is not clear whether it could be accessed from the river.
- 2 miles** from the Waveney River Centre is Castle Marsh, also managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Access to this reserve is restricted and should be arranged with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust before visiting. The holiday package could include an arranged visit to this reserve which people may otherwise not have visited.
- ▶ **5 miles** The Millennium Garden, overlooking the Waveney Valley at Aldeby Hall, is the starting point for the network of waymarked paths which allow circular walks across farmland, marsh and along riverbank. Three circular paths are currently marked which take in two of the stones, taking from 20 minutes to 2 hours. It is also possible to join footpaths to explore the Pathways in Stone from here. However, it is not clear whether it is possible to land a canoe at this site and this would have to be explored further.
- 🐟 **5 miles** Aldeby Hall Farm Pits provides a variety of fishing lakes.
- 5 miles** Just over five miles from the Waveney River Centre is The Otter Trust at the Stanley Carrs Reserve, Aldeby. This is an SSSI and consists of 42 acres of alder swamp. It is not clear whether this site is either open to the public or accessible by canoe, but it may be able to offer something to people booking the holiday package which is not otherwise available.

⁴

Information obtained from www.achurchnearyou.com



7 miles Beccles is a market town providing a range of facilities, as well as a Heritage Trail through the town and a museum. At Beccles Quay there are toilet and shower facilities and a Broads Authority Information Point.



7 miles There are a number of circular footpaths around Beccles Marshes, ranging from 1.5 miles (approximately 45 minutes) to 3 miles (2 hours) to 4 miles (3 hours)⁵.



7 miles An alternative 6 mile circular walk can be taken from Beccles Quay to Gillingham, across Gillingham marshes, although this generally follows the river which would be canoeed through to Geldeston. Similarly, it is possible to walk from Beccles to Geldeston, a 7 mile circular route.



10½ miles Geldeston village and the Locks Inn.



15 miles The Bigod Way Walk is 10 mile circular walk, starting at Bungay Staith and providing a route which takes in the market town of Bungay, Bigod Castle, local marshes and the village of Ditchingham.



15½ miles The Outney Meadow Caravan Park provides cycle hire facilities.



15½ miles (by river) + ½ miles (by road) Bungay is an old market town and the town centre is officially recognised as a Conservation Area by English Heritage. A Town Trail includes the majority of Bungay's historic buildings and churches.



15½ miles (by river) + ½ miles (by road) Bigod Castle was originally built in the 11th century, and was rebuilt in 1294, the remains of which still stand today.

4.3 River Bure⁶

4.3.1 Canoe and Sailing Routes

Thurne Mouth to Coltishall

The River Bure is occasionally canoeed from Burgh Mill, however Buxton Mill and Wroxham are suggested as more accessible launching points, and from here it is possible to take in the broads of Salhouse, Black Horse, Ranworth and South Walsham, but other broads are closed to paddlers. Below South Walsham it is suggested that the canoeist will find stronger tidal flows and limited scenic interest⁷.

This route starts at Thurne Mouth, just below South Walsham, at the Bureside Holiday Park. The River Bure route is described in relation to distances from the Bureside Holiday Park.

⁵

Information obtained from www.beccles.info

⁶

Based on the River Bure, *Canals & Waterways: Roots & Routes*, <http://www.canals.btinternet.co.uk>.

⁷

www.norfolkbroads.com/water/canoeing.htm

1¾ mile upstream from Thurne Mouth, Fleet Dyke heads south west for one mile to South Walsham Broad. Halfway along the dyke is an unnavigable dyke.

2 miles At the end of Fleet Dyke is the entrance to South Walsham Broad where there are some moorings and a hire base. South Walsham Inner Broad is said to be a haven for wildlife enthusiasts. Motor boats are allowed on the inner broad though mooring is prohibited.

2 miles along the River Bure, from Thurne Mouth, is the entrance to the River Ant. The River Ant forms a separate Route which is described below.

2½ miles On the north bank there is a short dyke leading to Horning Hall which overlooks the river.

To the south of the River Bure are Ranworth and Bure Marshes.

3¼ miles Ranworth Dyke leaves the river and heads south across the marshland. This dyke is less than half a mile long and leads to the navigable Malthouse Broad and the unnavigable Ranworth Broad.

3½ miles There are moorings on the north of Malthouse Broad and boat facilities on the south side at Ranworth Staith.

4¾ miles Cockshoot Dyke is a few hundred yards in length and leads to the unnavigable Cockshoot Broad, which is more like a wide dyke than a broad. Cockshoot Broad Nature Reserve is at the southern end. Opposite the entrance to Cockshoot Dyke, on the north bank of the river, is Hobb's Windmill.

5¼ miles along the River Bure there are mooring facilities and a boat yard, just before reaching the town of Horning

6 miles The River Bure runs through the town of Horning for about a mile. In front of the village green there is a small staith with limited mooring⁸. On the north east side there are numerous small inlets while on the south west side is Fen Wrights Dyke heading into Woodbastwick Marshes. However, almost all of the inlets and the dyke are private.

6¾ miles West of Horning is the entrance to Hoveton Little Broad on the north side of the river. This is also known as Black Horse Broad and is navigable only in summer.

7¼ miles Decoy Broad is popular for sailing.

8 miles The River Bure passes Hoveton Great Broad, which is closed to navigation, however it is open to the public as a Nature Reserve.

8¼ miles To the south of the river is Salhouse Broad which has moorings.

⁸

www.norfolkcoast.co.uk

8½ miles There are moorings to the south of Hoveton Great Broad.

9¾ miles There are moorings between Wroxham Broad and Hudson's Bay. Wroxham Broad is the largest broad on the River Bure and is open to all pleasure craft. The river then passes between Wroxham on the south and Hoveton on the north.

11½ miles In Wroxham there are moorings.

At Hoveton, Barnes Brinkcrafts has canoes for hire and is a member of the Canoe Hire Network.

15 miles Upstream of Wroxham, there are a couple of unnavigable broads and numerous narrow dykes which are also off limits to boats. The river arrives at Belaugh, a village with moorings by the old staith.

16½ miles After Belaugh, the River Bure heads to Coltishall. In Coltishall, there are numerous mooring points.

Coltishall Island Boat Hire has Canadian canoes for hire; however it is not a member of the Canoe Hire Network.

17¾ miles Coltishall is the limit of navigation for the River Bure.

Coltishall Lock to Burgh Mill

The unnavigable route from Coltishall to Burgh Mill is about 9 miles long. Very small craft (dinghies, canoes, etc,) can still use the River Bure Navigation and the local council has provided slipways at both ends for this purpose though boats will have to be lifted over the disused locks and/or round mills and new bridges.

4.3.2 Locations for Campsites and Eco-rafts

There is a general lack of camping facilities along the River Bure, with no campsites identified in South Walsham, Ranworth, Horning, Hoveton, Wroxham or Coltishall. In fact, only one campsite was identified along the whole route, at the Thurne Mouth.



Bureside Holiday Park is a large but quiet site, situated on the River Bure at Thurne mouth. The site has moorings and a slipway for launching boats.

This suggests that the route would benefit from the mooring of at least one Eco-raft, perhaps in the marshes south of the river, such as Ranworth Marshes. This could provide a base for visitors to explore the area, rather than a continuous tour along the River Bure. Alternatively, additional camping facilities, or Eco-raft locations could be sought further upstream, perhaps in the stretch between Wroxham and Coltishall.

4.3.3 Links with Existing Attractions

-  **0 miles** Bureside Holiday Park has a private fishing lake.
-  **1½ miles** from Thurne Mouth on the north bank is St Benet's Abbey. The remains of the Abbey have stood ruined since the reign of Henry VIII. St Benet's is completely isolated from major roads and can be reached only by boat or foot. Moorings are available.
-  **2 miles (by river) + ½ mile (by foot)** To the south of South Walsham Broad is Fairhaven Woodland and Water Garden⁹, which is a natural garden environmentally managed for the benefit of wildlife. It has wild and cultivated plants and has a 950 year old oak tree. It is possible to take a boat trip on the private inner broad. The site is open all year round.
-  **2 miles (by river) + 1 mile (by foot)** South Walsham village
-  **2 miles (by river) + 1 mile (by foot)** Upton Nature Reserve
-  **3½ miles** Ranworth Broad is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust¹⁰ and is home to the Broads Wildlife Centre, which is a thatched timber building floating on a pontoon. The centre is home to a permanent exhibition depicting many aspects of the Broadlands natural history. It is accessible by boat or on foot via a short nature trail from Ranworth village and is open everyday except Friday. It is possible to arrange a boat trip to Ebb and Flow marshes from Ranworth Broad – this could form part of the Eco-raft package to take visitors to somewhere more remote.
-  **3½ miles** Ranworth village
-  **3½ miles** The tower of St Helen's church dominates the skyline, and it is possible to climb the tower for views across the Broads.
-  **4 miles** On the north bank is St Benedict Church.
-  **4¾ miles** On the south bank there are nature trails around Bure Marshes Nature Reserve. Bure Marshes Nature Reserve includes four Broads: Ranworth Broad, Cockshoot Broad, Decoy Broad and Hoveton Great Broad. Ranworth Broad and Cockshoot Broad are owned and managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust; Hoveton Great Broad and Decoy Broad are in private ownership and are managed by English Nature. At Cockshoot Broad Nature Reserve there is a board walk nature trail and Cockshoot Dyke is renowned for its water lily beds.
-  **5¼ miles (by river) + 1¼ miles (by road)** Woodbastwick village is home to Woodforde Broadland Brewery, where evening tours are available. The village does not have a local shop¹¹.
-  **6 miles** Horning village is very popular in the summer and it has a good range of shops¹².

⁹ www.information-britain.co.uk

¹⁰ www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

¹¹ www.norfolkcoast.co.uk

¹² www.norfolkcoast.co.uk

8½ miles There are moorings to the south of Hoveton Great Broad. Hoveton Great Broad Nature Reserve has a nature trail around the Broad which is open every day except Saturday between April and mid-September, admission is free. This site is only accessible by boat, offering visitors a more remote experience.



11½ miles The towns of Wroxham and Hoveton are divided by the River Bure and generally go under the heading of Wroxham. The town has a good range of shops, has many mooring facilities and is home to the Bure Valley Railway.



11½ miles Cycle hire is available at Hoveton. From here it is possible to follow a 9 mile (one way) cycle route Hoveton and Wroxham Station to Aylsham Station, through local villages and along the River Bure.



11½ miles Bure Valley Tourist Railway is an 18-mile roundtrip, the longest on any narrow gauge preserved line in East Anglia. The line runs from Wroxham to Aylsham.



15 miles St Peter's church, Belaugh is suggested to be well worth a visit¹³.



17 miles Coltishall Common is a popular site for angling.



17 miles Coltishall has a 12th century church.

4.4 River Thurne

4.4.1 Canoe and Sailing Routes

Thurne Mouth to Hickling Broad

The River Thurne is just six miles long from Thurne Mouth to West Somerton, with the head of navigation only two miles from the coast. It is suggested that the linked Broads of Horsey and Hickling offer an extended trip through important wetland reserves. Below Thurne Mouth, the River Bure becomes tidal.

The route on the River Thurne starts by heading north. All distances are approximate from Thurne Mouth.

½ mile north is Thurne Dyke, which heads east for a few hundred yards, giving access to Thurne village. There is plenty of moorings at the staith.

1 mile The unnavigable Hundred Dyke leaves the River Thurne and heads west to join the River Ant.

1½ miles Entrance to Womack Water. Womack Water is three quarters of a mile long, and is the remains of Womack Broad. Womack Water leads to Ludham.

2¼ miles Ludham Marina provides moorings and a car park. Ludham village centre is just to the north.

¹³

www.norfolkbroads.com/water/bure.htm

2½ miles along the River Thurne from Thurne Mouth is Repps Staite.

3¼ miles At Potter Heigham there is an arched medieval bridge. There are plenty of moorings and boatyards here and canoes can be launched from the slipway, with permission and a fee may be payable.

4¾ miles Candle Dyke is the narrow corridor leading to Hickling Broad.

5¼ miles At the top of Candle Dyke is Heigham Sound which is a wide stretch of water. There are moorings along Heigham Sound. At the top of Heigham Sound is a Y shaped junction; these two stretches of water lead to Hickling Broad.

6¾ miles Hickling Broad is the largest of the Broads. There are two main routes across the Broad.

7½ miles The first route leads to Catfield Dyke and Catfield Common. There is mooring available at the staite and launching is free.

8¼ miles The second route leads to the north east corner of Hickling Broad, where there are hire bases and moorings. The Parish Staite has two slipways from which to launch, permission is needed and a small fee may be payable.

7 miles From Heigham Sound it is possible to take Meadow Dyke which leads to Horsey Mere. The Dyke is approximately a mile long and is completely isolated with no villages or roads in the vicinity. Horsey Mere Nature Reserve is on the northern bank.

7½ miles At the eastern point of Horsey Mere is Horsey Staite; permission is required to launch from this staite and a small charge is made.

9 miles Heading north across Horsey Mere leads to Waxham Cut. It is a manmade channel which is very narrow in places. The limit of navigation is at Waxham Bridge. This is suggested to be a hidden corner of the Broads.

5 miles Back on the River Thurne there is a dyke leading south east to Martham, and there is a hire base here where canoes can be launched into the main river.

5½ miles There is boat access to Martham Broad via a marked navigation channel. Although the Broad is the head of the River Thurne, the navigable route travels straight across the middle from west to east and continues along a dyke to West Somerton.

6 miles At West Somerton there are moorings at the end of the dyke.

4.4.2 Locations for Campsites and Eco-rafts



0 miles Bureside Holiday Park is a large but quiet site situated on the River Bure at Thurne mouth. The site has moorings and a slipway for launching boats.



2½ miles There is Willowcroft Camping and Caravan Park on Staithe Road at Repps with Bastwick.



9 miles (by river) + 1¼ (by road) Waxham Sands Holiday Park at Warren Farm, Horsey offers camping facilities very close to the sea. It would be necessary to canoe to the limits of navigation and follow minor roads/tracks to the site. It is described as a simple, uncommercialised site.

Discussions have been held with Norfolk Wildlife Trust about the possibility of siting an Eco-raft on Hickling Broad. Nature conservation interests are obviously a priority and no agreement has been made as there are many issues to take into account, particularly relating to the design of the raft and practicalities such as waste disposal. However, if such an agreement could be made this could be a prime location to site an Eco-raft and could provide something special to promote for the holiday.

4.4.3 Links with Existing Attractions



Bureside Holiday Park has a private fishing lake and it is also possible to fish the River Bure at this site.



½ mile Thurne Dyke wind pump is half a mile north of Thurne Mouth and is open to the public at weekends. It contains a small exhibition of Broads windpumps.



½ mile Thurne's 13th Century church is suggested to be worth visiting.



1¾ miles The Norfolk Wherry Trust is situated on Womack Water and here restoration work to the wherry can be viewed.



2¼ miles Boat hire and cycle hire is available at Ludham.



2¼ miles + ¼ mile Ludham.

1½ miles to 3 miles Ludham Marshes National Reserve is on the north bank.



3¼ miles (by river) + ¾ mile (by road) Potter Heigham village is about half a mile north of the bridge.



Stretches of the River Thurne around Potter Heigham are good fishing areas



3¼ miles (by river) + ¾ mile (by road) There is a 4½ or 5½ mile circular walk around the Potter Heigham area, which takes in part of the Weavers Way long distance route and the borders of Hickling Broad. The walk goes through parts of a National Nature Reserve.

6¾ miles Hickling Broad National Nature Reserve is owned and managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Hickling Broad is one of the largest expanses of

open water in East Anglia. There are toilet and refreshment facilities on the Broad's northern shore and other facilities include a hide, a 1km nature trail, a board walk and a water trail. The last of these takes two hours and must be pre-booked.

- **6¾ miles** Hickling Broad has 400 acres of fishing accessible by boat¹⁴.
-  **8¼ miles** The village of Hickling has shops and public toilets.
-  **8¼ miles** Cycles can be hired from the Pleasure Boat Stores, Hickling.
-  **8¼ miles** From Hickling Broad it is possible to join the Weavers Way¹⁵.
-  **5 miles** There is fishing at Martham Pits, Martham Staith which is limited to 15 tickets per day⁵.
- 5½ miles** Martham Broad National Nature Reserve is owned and managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust¹⁶. In the summer, the public path is one of the best places in Broadland to see swallowtail butterflies. Public access is restricted to the public footpath and boat channel.
-  **5 miles** (by river) + **¾ miles** (by road) The nearest toilet and refreshment facilities are in Martham, a large village.
-  **5 miles** (by river) + **¾ miles** (by road) Martham is close to Route 30 (Norfolk Coast Cycle Way) of the Sustrans National Cycle Network
-  **7½ miles** Horsey Windpump is a National Trust property¹⁷. It is a fully restored historic drainage windpump and the estate is an internationally important wildlife site with many opportunities for birdwatching.
-  **7½ miles** The village of Horsey is home to All Saints Church, believed to date back to the 900s.
-  **7½ miles** There are footpaths to the coast from Horsey.

4.5 River Ant¹⁸

4.5.1 Canoe and Sailing Routes

Ant Mouth to Dilham Staith

The River Ant is narrower than the other main rivers and quieter, with lots of inlets and dykes. The route on the River Ant begins at Ant Mouth (the junction with the River Bure), to the east of Horning. The head of navigation is at Dilham, approximately 8 miles away from Ant Mouth. The following route is based on (approximate) distances from Ant Mouth. Canoe hire is available at Wayford Bridge, Stalham and Sutton, and those at Wayford Bridge and Sutton are members of the Canoe Hire Network.

¹⁴ www.norfolkbroads.com/water/fishing.htm

¹⁵ www.ramblers.org.uk

¹⁶ www.english-nature.org.uk

¹⁷ www.nationaltrust.org.uk

¹⁸ Based on the River Ant, *Canals & Waterways: Roots & Routes*, <http://www.canals.btinternet.co.uk>.

½ mile north of Ant Mouth is Hundred Dyke, which is unnavigable. This heads east for about a mile and then enters the River Thurne.

¾ mile (just past Hundred Dyke) is Ludham Bridge. Just before the bridge there is a boat yard on the east bank and there are public moorings. Canoes can launch from the south of the bridge near the layby or the staithes north of the bridge. There are toilets on the main road towards Ludham. Ludham village is 1½ miles east of the river.

3 miles The River Ant passes Turf Fen Wind Pump on west bank and How Hill is a few hundred yards further upstream on the east bank. There are moorings; however launching is not allowed.

4 miles The village of Irstead is on the west bank. There are moorings here but launching is not allowed

4½ miles The River Ant enters a narrow and quite shallow section as it passes Turkey Broad and then broadens out into Barton Broad. There are a number of navigable routes across Barton Broad but there are no moorings on the Broad.

5½ miles Travelling south west across Barton Broad, past the north side of Turkey Broad, leads to Lime Kiln Dyke, which heads west to Neatishead. Along the way there is a tiny inlet to the south leading to Gay's Staithes, where there are public moorings and launching is possible. There are also public moorings at Neatishead Staithes, where launching is free; there are no public toilets here. The last few hundred yards of the dyke are unnavigable.

5¼ miles At the north of Barton Broad there is a v-junction. The River Ant exits north, while a relatively wide dyke heads north west towards Barton Turf village.

5½ miles At the head of the dyke is a mooring point and launching point from Barton Turf Staithes (by arrangement). There are no toilet facilities here.

5¾ miles Another dyke heads east from Barton Turf to rejoin the main river. There are public moorings on the north bank of this dyke.

6 miles Stalham Dyke is on the east bank of the River Ant and runs for just over a mile to Stalham village.

7 miles At Stalham there are hire boats and moorings. Launching from the Parish Staithes is free.

6½ miles Half a mile along Stalham Dyke is an entrance to the remains of Sutton Broad. This runs for a mile to Sutton.

7½ miles At Sutton there is a staithes, boathouse, moorings and cycle hire facilities. Launching from Parish slipway incurs a small fee. Charge can be avoided if the canoes/kayaks are launched at Broads Authority's free 24-hour moorings.

7½ miles The River Ant carries on past Stalham Dyke to Wayford Bridge, where there are boatyards, moorings and launching from the Parish Staite (no launching for canoes over 12ft long).

8¾ miles Upstream of Wayford Bridge is a junction, where the navigable route heads north west towards Dilham. The village of Dilham is at the head of navigation and there are moorings at the staite alongside Brick Kiln Bridge.

4.5.2 Locations for Campsites and Eco-rafts

No camping facilities have been identified along the route of the River Ant; a site at Ludham is for caravans only. This suggests that an Eco-raft could be ideally placed around the Barton Broad area. Alternatively, the River Ant route could form an excursion from, say, an Eco-raft moored at Ranworth Marshes, or could form part of a through route along the River Bure and finishing at Dilham (or vice versa).

4.5.3 Links with Existing Attractions

-  **¾ mile** Cycle hire is available at Ludham Bridge Boat Services.
-  **¾ mile** At Ludham Bridge there is free fishing for 2¼ miles on the left hand bank both up and downstream the bank⁵.
-  **¾ mile** (by river) + **1½ miles** (by road) Ludham village.
¾ mile (by river) + **1½ miles** (by road) Ludham village has a 14th and 15th century church.
-  **3 miles** How Hill Nature Reserve is a 360 acre site which is maintained by the Broads Authority. It is possible to book a 50 minute trip on the Electric Eel, an Edwardian style electric boat, through the dykes and marshes. There are also walking trails and water trails. How Hill house provides educational activity courses, including holiday courses where you can learn about nature in Broadland¹⁹.
-  **3 miles** Boardman's Trestle Mill built in 1897 and now one of only two surviving trestle mills²⁰.
-  **3 miles** Toad Hole Cottage Museum provides an insight into the working life of an eel man and his family some 100 years ago.
-  **3 miles** Clayrack Drainage Mill.
-  **3 miles** (by river) + **1¼ miles** (by road) Grove Farm Gallery, Sharp Street near How Hill, displays and sells work by local artists.
-  **5 miles** Barton Broad has 100 acres of fishing by boat⁵.
-  **5½ miles** Neatishead village.

¹⁹

www.norfolkcoast.co.uk/articles/howhill.htm

²⁰

www.nofolkbroads.com/interest/mills.html

5½ miles (by river) + **1½ miles** (by road) Alderfen Broad is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust²¹ and appears to be accessible by footpath from Neatishead.



7½ miles Cycles can be hired from Sutton Staith boat yard.



7½ miles (by river) + **1 mile** (by road) Sutton windmill was built in 1789 and is the tallest mill in Britain, providing fantastic views over the Norfolk countryside. It is open daily from April to September.



7½ miles (by river) + **1 mile** (by road) The Broads Museum at Sutton was established in 1976 and provides collections relating to local and social history. It is open daily from April to September.



7 miles There is a 5 mile circular walk around Stalham and the surrounding countryside²².



7 miles Stalham is a busy town offering a range of shops and facilities.

7 miles St Mary's, a 15th church, in Stalham is suggested to be worth a visit.



7 miles The Museum of the Broads details the history of the Broads and is situated at Stalham Staith.



7 miles Stalham is popular for fishing, given that fishing here is free.

²¹

www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

²²

www.countrysideaccess.norfolk.gov.uk

5. MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF ECO-RAFTS

5.1 Introduction

It is well documented that the pattern and trends of tourism in the UK have changed over the past decade or so, and will continue to evolve in the future. The Broads currently attracts 10% of the tourism revenue for the East of England and it is important that the area caters for changes in holiday patterns. People are taking shorter breaks in the UK, and they want better value for money. The decline of the motor boat industry is partially linked to these emerging trends and the Broads will need to look to new ways of attracting tourists if it is going to maintain a healthy tourism industry.

The Phase I feasibility study suggested that eco-tourism is an up and coming tourism niche, with people attracted to holidays which have a low ‘ecological footprint’, do not harm the environment, help the local economy and allow them to experience nature up-close. There are an increasing number of people willing to pay ‘a bit extra’ to ensure they are experiencing a ‘sustainable holiday’. It is suggested that the Eco-raft project would provide the opportunity for the Broads to showcase its recreation potential and would exploit this niche market. The target customer base could vary from keen canoeists to families to wildlife enthusiasts to people looking for a way into accessing outdoor recreation in the East of England. It is suggested that if the project is built up from the beginning to be as widely accessible as possible in terms of age, ability, costings and interests there is a huge customer base that could be exploited (as well as a large funding base).

Initial consultation (undertaken by Ms Brockett) with the Norwich Area Tourism Agency, volunteers at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust information centres at the Malthouse Broad and Ranworth Broad, the Youth Hostel Association, numerous canoe clubs, canoe organisations and canoeists who use the Broads, and with tourists in Salhouse Broad has identified general support for the idea.

This Section provides evidence to support, or otherwise, the assertion that there is a market for an eco-tourism holiday package in the Broads, and considers the options available for marketing and promoting the package.

5.2 Evidence of a Market for the Eco-rafts Holiday Package

5.2.1 General Tourism Trends

Overview

It is well documented that tourism is a growing industry, but it must also be recognised that domestic tourism expenditure (expenditure in Britain by the British) is growing at a slower rate than international tourism expenditure. For many years, there has been a trend away from the long seaside holidays which used to dominate

the domestic holiday market, while there has been growth in business tourism, in short breaks and in activity-based holidays. The growth area in the domestic market is in day trips and short breaks, often based around cultural pursuits, heritage attractions or shopping, or themed around attractions and hobbies.

Types of Tourist

Research by DCMS (1999) and ETC (2000) provides a picture of the changing nature of tourists. Tourists of the future may well be:

- more affluent, but also more cautious with their money;
- consider value for time as important as value for money
- more likely than ever before to be travelling alone;
- likely to take more breaks of shorter duration, as they juggle demanding work schedules;
- short of time and therefore seeking leisure and business tourism experiences which require minimum effort to research and book;
- be keen to follow an approach which is tailored to individual needs, rather than buying a ‘package’;
- increasingly interested in spiritual and intellectual activity;
- increasingly searching for more ‘authentic’ products;
- more focused on nostalgia, roots, other cultures and identity;
- older but fitter, with disappearing gender and age stereotypes; and
- less likely to accept a sedentary lifestyle.

These trends look set to influence the development patterns of the tourism industry over the coming decade. These changing characteristics mean that the tourists of tomorrow will have quite different expectations of the tourism ‘product’ than those of a decade ago. Quality and value for money are particularly important to this travel-experienced market.

Activity Holidays

Half of those regularly taking short breaks in the UK do so mainly to explore the countryside, whilst the most significant activity that people enjoy on holiday is walking. After this, heritage, culture and sport (both participatory and spectator) are frequently practiced UK holiday activities. Research suggests that over the last decade, UK holidaymakers have increasingly chosen to undertake activities during their holidays (whether the activity be the main purpose of the holiday or not). The majority of activity holidays are taken within the UK and these holidays appeal to a minority of consumers drawn from certain lifestage groups.

There are over 3,000 sites in the UK offering activity-based holidays, and activity holidays account for just fewer than 17% of the domestic market. In absolute terms this means that 11 million activity holidays were taken within the UK. In the UK activity provision is concentrated in Wales, on the southern and south west coast of England, in the Lake District and Scottish Highlands. Activity holidays cost more than ordinary holidays and take a higher share of tourism value than of volume.

Mintel research suggested that 30% of adults have taken an activity holiday while almost half are interested in taking such a holiday. Young men, mainly in the 19 to 34 age group, are more likely to take activity holidays.

Sustainable Tourism

Stevens (2002) suggests there is increasing demand from consumers for destinations and products that respect the principles of environmental tourism and sustainable development. Stevens (2002) cites the following evidence:

- MORI 2000 ‘Attitudes of Package Makers’ for ABTA concluded that:
 - % 80% say it is important that their holiday does not damage the environment;
 - % 75% want to experience local culture and food;
 - % 55% would like more information about environmental and social issues affecting their holiday prior to departure;
 - % 80% are prepared to pay something towards local conservation projects;
 - % there is widespread evidence of environmentally conscious behaviour at home and on holiday amongst consumers.
- *Studienkreis Für Tourismus und Entwicklung 1997: A Survey of German Holidaymakers:*
 - % 80% stated that quality environmental conditions were important in selecting a destination;
 - % 55% wanted to experience nature at first hand;
 - % 67% wanted more environmental information about their destination before departure; and
 - % 40% were willing to pay extra to assist local conservation projects in their destination.

The Northern European markets demonstrate highest levels of demand for sustainable tourism destinations and products, particularly the German, Danish, Dutch, Swiss and Austrian markets.

Furthermore, *Responsible Travel* has published the survey results shown in Table 5.1 on its website. Although perhaps more relevant to foreign holidays, these results also suggest that tourists are looking for alternative types of holiday.

Table 5.1: Survey Results from Responsible Travel

	Agree	Disagree
<i>Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:</i>		
a) Mass market tour operators don't offer the most interesting holidays	52%	28%
b) I don't like the way mass tourism damages the environment and culture of the local resort	67%	19%
c) I've had enough of crowded beaches on resort type holidays	60%	19%
d) Too many holidays just offer chips and Sky football in the sun	57%	27%
e) I'm fed up with beer bellies and Union Jack t-shirts on holiday	63%	25%
f) I just want to have fun on holiday; I don't really care about the locals and their environment	15%	80%
g) Big tour companies just pump out superficial holidays and it is time they changed	60%	25%

Table 5.1: Survey Results from Responsible Travel		
	Agree	Disagree
h) I think tour operators should have a responsibility for preserving the local environment and culture and benefiting local people	88%	6%
i) I would be more likely to book a holiday with a company if they had a written policy to guarantee good working conditions for staff, protect the environment and support local charity destinations	80%	14%
<i>Question 2: I think my holiday would be more enjoyable if:</i>		
a) I could discover new and interesting places by using a tour guide from the local community	87%	9%
b) I could eat fresh locally produced food and discover local recipes	86%	9%
c) I could learn a little of the language and meet local people	89%	8%
d) I was given advice on local cultures and customs	88%	9%
e) My hotel had adequate water and sewerage treatment facilities	89%	3%
f) I could take short visits to local wildlife conservation and social projects	70%	24%
Source: www.responsibletravel.com . Summary of Responsible Travel ‘Had Enough?’ survey results. Telephone survey conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres among 1,002 British adults between 30 January and 1 February 2004		

5.2.2 Tourism in Norfolk and Suffolk

East of England Overview

The Regional Strategy for the East of England indicates that:

- the biggest markets are either in the region or close to it as opposed to people living abroad or far away in the UK;
- overseas visitors are however, very valuable and it is worth attracting them if that can be done cost effectively;
- a key challenge will be to lift the region up the regional league table of spend per visit;
- the product must appeal to the ABC1 socio-economic groups, who represent a large and growing majority of the population; and
- the region has got a strong rural recreational offer, with some brands such as the Norfolk Broads and the Suffolk and North Norfolk coasts that have exceptionally high public recognition.

It is noted that tourism is a key industry sector in Norfolk, accounting for 11% of employment in the county. The Broads is one of Norfolk’s ‘honey pots’ (the others being the north Norfolk coast, Great Yarmouth and Norwich) and there has been a year on year growth in day visitors, ‘visiting friends and relatives’ trips and short breaks due, in the main, to more leisure time and more disposable income available to visitors.

The Broads Perceptions Survey

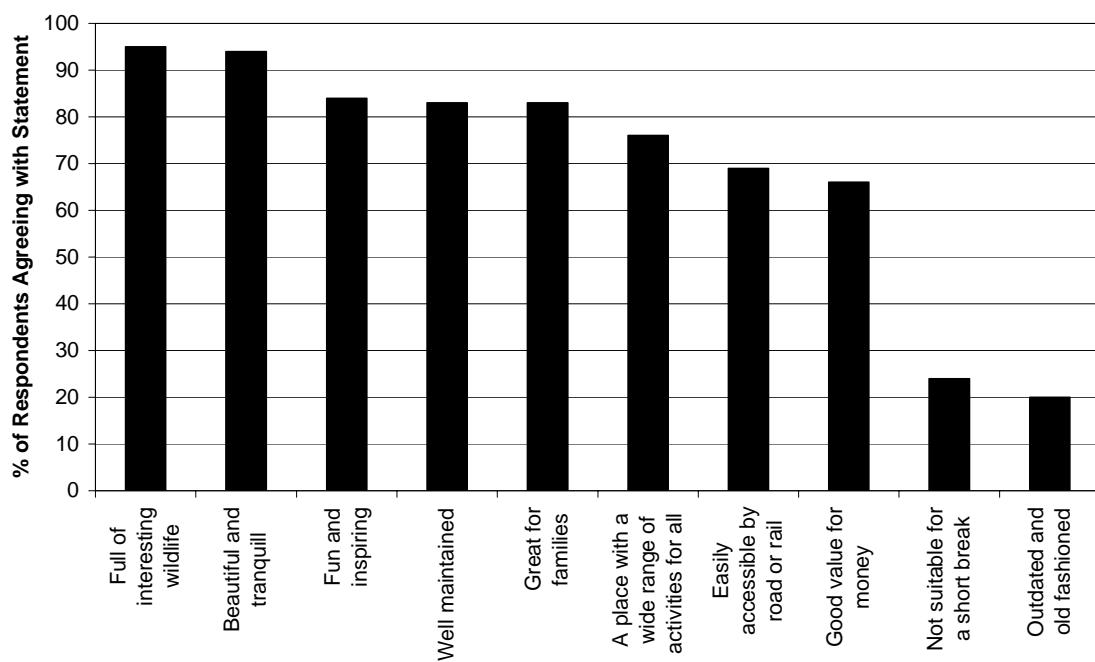
In 2005, the Broads Authority commissioned the East of England Tourist Board (EETB) to carry out a perceptions study. The central aim was to identify the ways in which both visitors and non-visitors to the Broads view the area. The study took the

form of a survey carried out at the International Boat Show in January 2005 and a total of 568 survey responses were analysed.

Awareness of the Norfolk Broads was generally high, amongst those who had previously visited the Broads and those who had not, and this was consistent across all age groups and socio-economic groups (although the C1 group had the lowest awareness).

Perceptions of the Broads included such words as tranquillity (cited by 37.7% of respondents) and beauty (37.5%). Other common perceptions relate to the wildlife in the area, its relaxing atmosphere, the water and the flat nature of the area. For example, Figure 5.1 shows that 95% of respondents agreed with the statement that “the Broads is full of interesting wildlife” and 94% agreed that “the Broads is beautiful and tranquil”. These perceptions are beneficial for the marketing of Eco-rafts. Indeed, EETB (2005) conclude that these perceptions provide ample scope for an emotive marketing campaign, appealing both to people’s desire for aesthetically pleasing landscapes and relaxing environments.

Figure 5.1: Perceptions of the Broads



However, fewer people agreed that the Broads was easily accessible by road or rail (69%) or that the Broads was good value for money (66%). EETB (2005) suggest that these are areas of the Broads image where further work is required.

Of more concern, is that a significant percentage of people did not view the Broads as suitable for a short break, which is the type of holiday most applicable to Eco-rafts. For example, 37.5% of 16 to 24 year olds agreed with the statement that “the Broads are not suitable for a short break”. EETB (2005) recognise that the Broads will have to compete for increasingly stretched leisure time, and notes the increasing trend to

take more short breaks, suggesting this is a market which could increase revenue for the area.

In terms of the frequency of visits, 16 to 24 year olds are least likely to have visited previously, and the 25 to 34 age group is most likely to have visited once or less. Table 5.2 shows the cross-tabulation between number of previous visits and socio-economic code. Those in groups C1 and C2 are more likely to have visited several times than those in group AB²³. The main reason for those who have never visited the Broads is lack of time. The 25 to 34 age group is most likely to return, with 87% of respondents in this group saying they would visit again (compared to 72% of the total sample).

Number of visits	Socio-economic Group		
	AB	C1	C2
Never	30.7%	28.6%	23.3%
One	23.8%	20.0%	16.7%
Two	9.4%	12.4%	10.0%
Three	9.9%	6.7%	11.7%
Four or more	26.2%	32.4%	38.3%
Sample size	202	105	60

Source: EETB (2005)

EETB (2005) concludes that people in socio-economic groups C1 and C2 provide the best potential market, given their propensity to take holidays in the Broads combined with their propensity to take holidays within the UK. However, trends in habits and perceptions are more obvious across age groups.

EETB (2005) suggest that the majority of previous visitors stayed on boats (58%), with only 3% staying at campsites. This response is likely to be skewed as the survey was undertaken at the International Boat Show. Similarly, boating and sailing were the most popular activities, but other activities, relevant to Eco-rafts are also popular, as shown in Table 5.3. This also suggests that activities such as cycling and canoeing are increasing in popularity, with more people expecting to undertake such activities in future visits.

Table 5.3: Participation in Relevant Activities During Visits to the Broads		
Activity	% of Respondents Participating in Activity on Previous Visits to the Broads	% of Respondents Expecting to Participate in Activity on Future Visits to the Broads
Cycling	8%	25%
Birdwatching	18%	20%
Canoeing/rowing	4%	13%
Walking	13%	11%

Source: EETB (2005)

²³ The results from code DE have been discounted due to the minimal sample size (five respondents).

Results from EETB (2005) also suggest that boating holidays on the Broads are mainly competing against other domestic, waterways or boating destinations.

5.2.3 Watersports Participation 2004

The purpose the watersports participation survey (which has been undertaken annually for three years) is to provide robust estimates of the level of participation in a range of watersports (Arkenford, 2005). The data are based on a nationally representative sample of almost 6,000 respondents across England, Scotland and Wales, designed to reflect the socio-economic make up of the British population.

There has been an overall increase in watersport participation, including an increase in sailing and canoeing activities. Participation in canoeing in 2004 was suggested to be about 2.7% of the total British population, approximately 1-1.4 million people. The participation rate has increased from 2.2% in 2003, and statistically, this is likely to reflect an overall rise in participation (rather than random fluctuation). Canoeing is undertaken by 2.5% of the population in the region 'London/East/South East', and is most popular in 'North West/North East/Yorkshire' where 3.2% participate.

Table 5.4 below shows the frequency of participation in canoeing activities. It is noted that the frequency of participation has remained the same for 2003 and 2004. One third of canoeists participate 2-5 times a year.

Table 5.4: Frequency of Participation in Canoeing Activities 2004	
Frequency of Participation	% of Respondents (N=123)
Abroad only	19.5
Once	31.3
2-5 times	33.3
6-12 times	4.5
13-25 times	4.0
More than 25 times	3.1
Average participation in 2004	3.6

Source: EETB (2005)

Socio-demographic information is only given for participation in the group 'manual sports' which includes canoeing, rowing and water-skiing, although canoeing accounts for about 50% of participants in this group of watersports. For manual sports, the following trends are observed:

- participants are twice as likely to be male than female;
- participants are most likely to be in the 16-34 age group (which is true for all watersports);
- participants are twice as likely to be in socio-economic group C1 than C2/DE, and twice as likely again to be in group AB; and
- participants are most likely live in a shared house (students or workers) or be part of a couple under 55.

5.3 Market Competitors

Examples of canoeing holidays are described in Section 2. These provide a range of international and domestic holidays; the costs of these holidays are summarised in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5: Cost Per Night of Canoe/Camping Holidays	
Location and Type of Holiday	Price per adult per night (2005 prices)
UK – guided holiday, 2 nights in hotel (equipment provided, some meals included)	£150
France – independent holiday, 8 nights in hotels half board (excludes flights)	£84
Turkey – guided holiday, 4 nights accommodation in basic hotels, 3 nights wild camping (equipment provided, some meals included, excludes flights)	£71
Sweden – independent holiday, 4 nights camping on raft (equipment provided, excludes food)	£69
UK – guided holiday, 7 nights in remote campsites	£68

Eco-tourism holidays in the Norfolk Broads appear to be generally working holidays. For example, *Responsible Travel* details working holidays with English Nature at Barton Turf Fen SSSI and Woodbastwick Marshes SSSI. For these holidays, accommodation ranges from simple (e.g. village hall, caravan, etc.) through standard (youth hostel or similar) to superior. The cost of these holidays are £60 for 7 days, or £10 per night (assumed to be a six-night holiday).

Other examples of eco-tourism holidays are provided by *Natural Discovery*. No canoeing holidays are currently offered; however, as indicated in Section 2, the company provides a range of eco-tourism holidays around the country. These range from approximately £28 per night per adult to stay in a remote Scottish eco-lodge (with no activities organised) to £42 - £98 per night for weekend breaks, with at least one organised activity (with a guide) and a variety of accommodation. More expensive holidays are also available, which stay in more luxurious accommodation.

5.4 The Eco-raft Holiday Package

The Eco-raft holiday package could include any number of variations selected from the routes set out in Section 4, and it is considered that this would best be decided on by the local stakeholders taking the project forward. However, there are a number of issues which need to be considered, and these are discussed below.

Transport of customers to the initial starting point and car parking provision needs to be addressed. In keeping with the environmentally sustainable aims of the project, tourists would be encouraged to travel by public transport or other sustainable means (cycle routes from Norwich, for example, could be advertised at point of booking). The sustainable transport option could be made more attractive by offering a discount

to those travelling sustainably (as the Centre for Alternative Technology and some youth hostels currently do). Train stations are available at Beccles (on the River Waveney), Wroxham (on the River Bure) and at Acle (near Thurne Mouth), however transport, such as a mini-bus, would be needed to take people to the canoe hire centres or campsites. In addition, the new Broadshopper bus has bike capacity and could be worked into some of the routes, and the project manager is open to suggestions of route changes.

Location of the canoe hire centres is also an issue, and may be a deciding factor in the route(s) chosen for the holiday package. However, canoe hire centres should consider the potential for one-way trips, which means that the canoes and equipment would either have to be taken to an alternative starting point or collected from the finishing point. The distance between the start/finish points of the routes in Section 4 are not generally more than 15 miles away from a canoe hire centre, thus it may be possible for visitors to book a one-way trip with a surcharge, perhaps £30, to cover the time and transport by a canoe hire centre to distribute or collect the equipment. However, it will be necessary for the canoe hire centres (and campsites) to have a working agreement for temporary storage of equipment to facilitate the development of the holiday package.

Other arrangements can be made with local attractions to produce themed breaks. A particularly strong theme emerging from the routes in Section 4 is, not surprisingly, a wildlife/nature conservation theme. This could enable some of the least accessible nature reserves to be linked up, and guided tours arranged to provide people with a unique experience.

Another issue relates to the various launching charges at different locations, which could cause problems and confusion for people unfamiliar with the area. It is suggested that a system of tokens could be used, with these issued to canoeists at the beginning of the holiday and returned to the Eco-raft organisation by those responsible for the various launching points; the Eco-raft organisation could then send payment to the launching points. This would enable canoeists to travel without worrying about having cash available for launching fees and would provide a way of recording the popularity of different launching points and routes, which would provide valuable information for developing the project further. The cost of these tokens would have to be added on to the holiday package to ensure that the Eco-raft organisation could cover the costs.

Discussions have been held with *Natural Discovery* regarding the potential market for the Eco-raft holiday package and likely costs. It was suggested that the ‘wow’ factor provided by staying on a floating raft in the wilderness of the Broads would attract a large market and would enable a premium to be charged (i.e. greater than the cost of staying at a campsite). It is necessary to charge a higher price than would be charged for a normal campsite in order to cover the cost of servicing the raft after each use. Therefore, a cost of £50 per raft night is suggested. Setting the cost at per raft night, as opposed to per person, is an effective way of costing the package as the cost of servicing is unlikely to vary by the number of people using the raft. This means that, if the raft were to be used by a group of six people it would cost around £8 per night

per person, or £12.50 per person for a group of four. These prices are more comparable with standard campsites and would provide good value for money for the ‘experience’ of sleeping on an Eco-raft.

Additional costs will obviously be incurred for hiring the canoes (£25 per day), which can hold two to three people, and the camping equipment which may be in the region of £10 per day for two people. For two people, the cost of hiring the eco-raft, canoes and camping equipment for two nights could be £170, or £42.50 per person per night. In comparison with the holiday prices given in Table 5.1, this suggests that the holiday provides good value for money, but would also enable additional costs, such as the tokens, surcharge for one-way trip and entrance prices for nature reserves (or other attractions/activities) to be added whilst maintaining the competitiveness of the holiday package.

5.5 Marketing and Promotion

The marketing and promotion of the Eco-rafts holiday package is key to the project’s success. The initial feasibility study identified a number of ideas, including:

- the project should make use of local media (the EDP, Radio Norfolk, Eco Echo, Look East etc.) for interviews, articles, competitions and advertisement sponsorship;
- several canoe clubs and organisations have suggested using their in-house magazines, websites and email lists to spread the word;
- Ecover will offer the project free use of their PR agency and would support the launch;
- the Youth Hostel Association has offered the use of its website, in-house magazine and other marketing resources;
- the project could ensure a presence at events such as the London International Boat Show, outdoor recreation events and exhibitions and local events;
- articles and adverts could be submitted to environmental magazines (e.g. The Ecologist), travel magazines and wildlife magazines;
- organisations who work in the Broads may be able to support the marketing of the project – especially if the project includes information on their work, encourages tourists to be sustainable, educates people about the unique nature of the Broads and how to care for it, and publicises other organisations’ event and facilities; and
- sustainable transport and tourism organisations such as Sustrans are willing to advocate the project.

In this second Phase of the study, discussions have been held with *Natural Discovery*, a company which is experienced in developing and marketing holiday packages similar to the Eco-rafts concept. It is felt that the existing customer base of the company, as well as its reputation and established website for taking bookings would provide the Eco-raft project with a strong marketing and promotional base, which could be supported by some of the ideas suggested above. In addition, it would be a means of keeping the costs low; Natural Discovery do not charge for the marketing

and booking process directly but would charge 10% commission on any bookings taken. This would be £5 per raft night, or more for the whole holiday package, however, the relatively low cost given above (£42.50 per person per night) suggests that the prices could be increased by 10% to cover this commission charge without adversely affecting the overall competitiveness of the package.

Based on the cost of £50 per raft night, the total cost of the commission at 40% occupancy rates would be £370 per raft (or £1,100 for three rafts), £460 per raft (£1,380 for three) at 50% occupancy and £550 per raft (£1,650 for three) at 60% occupancy. Obviously, the actual amount charged in commission would be higher for the whole holiday package, but these figures would tend to suggest a cost-effective approach for marketing and promoting the holiday package, and particularly for taking bookings. This would negate the need for a specially designed website for the Eco-rafts project, which may cost in the region of £1,000, as well as the salary of someone to manage the bookings. Whilst we note it would be preferable to create employment and manage the marketing and promotion of the project locally, the costs of doing so may considerably increase the costs of the holiday package, making it uncompetitive. This could be something that the Eco-raft organisation takes on in the future as experience and demand increases.

6. ESTABLISHING THE ECO-RAFT ORGANISATION

6.1 Introduction

The Eco-raft concept is to provide a low-impact holiday package which provides environmental and social benefits in the Broads area. However, the initial feasibility study concluded that the Eco-raft enterprise would not make a large profit. It was therefore suggested the best legal structure would be that of a social enterprise with a charitable or trust arm.

6.2 Analysis of the Social Enterprise Structure Options

6.2.1 Overview of Options

Any group of people may join together to pursue objectives in which they have an interest, providing these objectives are legal. An organisation may be profit-motivated e.g. a private business of some sort, or it may be motivated by social aims e.g. a voluntary or political organisation. Some groups will lie somewhere between these two in that they trade for profit but the profit is used for social purposes i.e. a social enterprise.

Within the social enterprise sector, there are 3 basic options open to the Eco-raft proposal. These are:

- a limited company;
- an Industrial and Provident Society; and
- a community interest company.

The features and characteristics of each are discussed below.

6.2.2 Limited companies

Limited companies are corporate bodies registered under the Companies Act 1985 and 1989; this legislation sets out detailed requirements for a limited company. There are three main types of company:

- **a public limited company (PLC)** issues shares to the public e.g. British Gas, the high street banks etc. These are only suitable for large capital-based ventures and are unlikely to be of interest to the voluntary and community sector although a model is being designed for the social enterprise sector (see CICs below);
- **a private company limited by share** also issues shares but only to people that it chooses. Generally inappropriate for social benefit bodies, but traditionally used for subsidiaries (although since 1989 it has been possible to form a subsidiary as a company limited by guarantee). Occasionally used for co-operative ventures in particular circumstances. It is a common vehicle for smaller commercial businesses; and

- **a private company limited by guarantee** is the most common form of incorporation for the voluntary and community sector, social enterprises and co-operatives. Instead of holding shares, each member guarantees a certain sum (usually £1) in the event of the company being wound up with outstanding debts.

While the company limited by guarantee is an acceptable legal form for not-for-profit organisations, and certain special provisions are made in the Companies Act for such companies, it will nevertheless find itself subject to stringent regulations, which are really intended to protect shareholders in conventional trading companies. This manifests mainly in the number and scope of records that have to be kept, the number of rules applying, the number of events about which Companies House must be informed, and the potentially high penalties for non-compliance. However, the Companies Act is also extremely flexible and thus almost any type of constitutional arrangement may be enshrined within a company limited by guarantee. This is not the case with an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) (discussed below).

It is relatively cheap, easy and quick to register a company limited by guarantee and one can be certain of achieving such registration. Apart from the initial filing fee (approximately £35) there are few additional charges payable to Companies House except if the name of the company is changed (£50). The use of ‘model rules’ for a limited company has no particular significance except that it can save costs and time involved in preparing the Memorandum and Articles of Association. It does not alter the actual costs of registration.

A minimum of two members is normally required to form a company although since 1992 it has been possible to form single-member companies. In this situation, certain additional regulations must be complied with.

6.2.3 Industrial and Provident Society (IPS)

Industrial and Provident Societies (IPS) are corporate bodies registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 – 78 and 2002. To qualify for registration a body must be either a ‘bone-fide co-operative’ or a ‘society for the benefit of the community’:

- The IPS *co-operative* format is common amongst housing, consumer and worker co-operatives and credit unions; and
- The IPS *society for the benefit of the community* format is common amongst housing associations but is gaining some popularity amongst other forms of voluntary activity and can be very appropriate for democratic, non-profit organisations. Its characteristics are similar to those of a co-operative, but profits and assets must not be distributable amongst members and the society must be able to show that “it will benefit persons other than its own members”

Administration of IPSs was moved to the Financial Services Authority in 2002. To qualify for registration under the IPS Acts a body should be carrying on “an industry, business or trade, whether retail or wholesale”. This requirement is not enforced for

societies for the benefit of community but is a requirement for the co-operative form. In general, an IPS must have one primary objective only, which is not so useful for multi-functional bodies.

The IPS Acts are generally more sympathetic to social benefit and co-operative organisations in that the administrative and statutory requirements are somewhat less demanding, although it is still necessary to keep accurate records of membership etc. IPS legislation is generally less complex and punitive, putting more trust in the directors to act ‘in good faith’.

There are several restrictions on the type of constitutional arrangement permitted within an IPS. For instance, all members must have equal rights; thus, it is unusual for an IPS to be registered where certain seats on the management committee are reserved or where management committee members are elected by electoral colleges (a common feature in the voluntary and community sector).

An IPS cannot register with the Charity Commission. If an IPS meets the usual charity criteria ('society for the benefit of community' only) it may apply to the Inland Revenue to be treated as a charity for taxation purposes, and effectively this gives the society full charitable status. These 'exempt' charities have no charity registration number, which may cause problems if someone seeks to check the charity's authenticity through the Charity Commission, although larger grant making trusts and government departments are more familiar with the legal situation.

It is relatively expensive and slow to register an IPS. The rules are scrutinised carefully by the FSA to ensure they comply with the Acts and they have absolute discretion over which societies may be registered. Using 'model rules' may reduce the cost and time taken to register but these can sometimes be too restrictive.

A minimum of seven members is required to register and maintain an IPS, unless all the members are themselves IPSs, in which case the minimum is two.

In summary, it is generally more difficult to register an IPS, and certain constitutional forms may be unacceptable altogether, but once registered the regulations are less stringent and the governing statute more sympathetic. On the other hand, it is relatively simple to register a company limited by guarantee, but once registered there are more legal requirements to meet and the regulations in the Companies Act can be quite intimidating.

6.2.4 Community Interest Company

Community Interest Companies ('CICs' for short) are a new type of company. They are companies established to trade for the community good. The Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004 ('the Act'), and The Community Interest Company Regulations 2005 made under the Act, establishes the legislative framework for CICs.

There are five 'models' available for registration:

- Company limited by guarantee with a small membership (only the Board members are members of the company);
- Company limited by guarantee with a large membership (members elect the Board at the AGM);
- Private company limited by shares with a small membership (only the Board members are members of the company);
- Private company limited by shares with a large membership (members elect the Board at the AGM); and
- Public limited company (PLC) – currently in preparation.

The two main features that distinguish CICs from ‘normal’ companies are the asset lock and the Community Interest Statement and Report. Under the asset lock provisions, the assets and profits must be permanently retained within the CIC, and used solely for community benefit, or transferred to another organisation which itself has an asset lock, such as a charity, or to another CIC. For instance, a charity could form a CIC to be its “trading arm” and this CIC could then transfer all its surpluses to the charity. Existing charities can convert to CICs, subject to regulatory permission, but they will lose their charitable status in doing so.

With every application to form a CIC, a Community Interest Statement must be lodged, with the usual documents, seeking company registration. This Community Interest Statement, signed by all the company’s intended or actual directors, must certify that the company is formed to serve the community rather than private profit motives. It must also describe the activities the CIC intends to engage in to further this community profit motive.

The full range of limited company forms is available to CICs, including that of a company limited by guarantee and also by shares.

It is anticipated that some CICs will want to raise equity, hence the provision for the issue of shares. However, the dividends on such shares are to be controlled by a cap on returns. Initially the Secretary of State will set the cap but powers will be given to the Regulator, following consultation on this issue, to set a new cap in the light of experience.

Who is ‘The Community’?

The Act, takes a pragmatic approach to this question, saying a company satisfies the community interest test if a reasonable person might consider the activities the CIC is undertaking are being carried out for the benefit of the community. The Regulator must decide whether applicants for CIC status satisfy this test.

‘Community’ for the purposes of a CIC must be wider than the members of the CIC. It must also be wider than the employees who work for the CIC; there has to be a wider community benefit than benefit to members and employees of the company.

The Regulations made under the Act provide that any group of individuals may constitute a section of the community if:

- (a) they share a readily identifiable characteristic; and
- (b) other members of the community of which this group forms part do not share that characteristic.

Who might form a CIC?

The CIC is flexible and with five different ‘models’ to choose from it may prove attractive to many different enterprises, of varying size and activity. But, there may be a delicate balancing act to perform, weighing up the possible advantages of forming a CIC against the disadvantage of failing to attract the tax concessions open to registered charities. There are no special tax advantages in being a CIC (though specific regional relief and access to Lottery and other funding **may** be open to CICs).

CICs are not just conceived as an adjunct to charities law. With their simplified regulatory regime, the asset lock to provide donor, investor and public confidence, and the yearly social reporting, CICs are expected to prove attractive to a new breed of social entrepreneurs. Under the CIC model, founders of CICs can keep operational control of what they create. CICs will also be able to pay directors; the Regulator has stated “*by being able to pay directors, CICs should be able to attract high quality wealth creators, paying them reasonable salaries, giving them immense job satisfaction, and the opportunity to put their talents to making profits for the public good*”.

6.2.5 Charity Considerations

Both the company limited by guarantee and the IPS ‘society for the benefit of community’ are eligible structures to apply for charity registration.

The company limited by share, the IPS Co-operative and the Community Interest Company models are not eligible.

Even where the structure is eligible, the activity of the organisation must meet strict requirements for charity status to be conferred. The organisation must be able to show that its activities will meet the requirements of at least one of the four Heads of Charity:

- advancement of religion;
- advancement of education;
- relief of poverty; or
- other purposes beneficial to the community.

It is likely that the Eco-raft project could be structured to meet the requirements of ‘the advancement of education’ and/or ‘other purposes beneficial to the community’. However, charities have restrictions on their ability to trade and it would be essential to ensure that what the organisation might lose in trading potential could be made up in opportunities for grant aid. In the current climate, this is not a likely scenario and, in fact, the organisation may well find that its charity status actually restricts the trading potential of the entire operation.

6.3 Possible Solutions for the Eco-raft Project

As can be seen from the above there are two types of questions that need to be asked:

- Q1. What type of organisation is it likely to be? (This relates to its objects and style of operation)
- Q2. What legal status will it require? (The position of the organisation and its members in law)

It is unlikely that there are straightforward answers to these questions as the project has several characteristics that need to be taken into account. However, in general terms we can make the following assumptions:

- A1. The Eco-rafts project has community benefit potential, it will be a trading body and could potentially register as a charity.
- A2. It is most likely to benefit from a limited by guarantee status (which could also enable charity registration if necessary) or a Community Interest Company.

Next, we would want to consider who would be participating in the governance of the company. Again, two scenarios should be considered:

- Q3. Who (or what organisations) need to be involved in order to ensure stakeholder involvement and ‘buy-in’ to the project’s success?
- Q 4. What skills should be made available at Board level in order to ensure the best possible chances of success?

During the Feasibility Study period, there were many contacts made and many contributors to the ideas and solutions devised. These contacts may be very useful to the project both at pre-start and during its first year(s) of operation, but they may not have the entrepreneurial skills to enable a trading operation of this type to gain its first foothold. There may need to be trade-offs of advantage in one area against advantage in another.

In addition, some organisations may not be in the position to join the company as a stakeholder, it may not be in their powers to do so, or it may not meet with the agreement of their own Directors or Trustees.

Consequently the solution may have to be vague rather than specific. It is suggested that the first Board should be made up of:

- stakeholder organisations (community, voluntary or statutory) who have a vested interest in seeing the Eco-raft project succeed i.e. those whose own situation would be improved by the success of the venture either financially or in terms of impact/influence;
- individuals from the business community who can bring skills and experience to the organisation particularly during the sensitive period of pre-start and start-up; and
- private sector organisations with a strong desire for visual, marketable, ‘corporate social responsibility’- type activity and appropriate knowledge, experience and contacts that can be used to the benefit of the Eco-raft project.

It should be a feature of the new organisation that its Board is designed to fit the activity required. This implies that following the pre-start and start-up phases the Board should reinvent itself and review its makeup and skills for the new challenges ahead. This is good governance and makes for a healthy and viable organisation. However, it does mean a lot of traffic of people and organisations through the Board.

Consequently, one of the responsibilities of the first Board members should be to implement succession planning so that when their task is complete their replacement Board members are already in the wings waiting to take on the next phase.

7. FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN

7.1 Introduction

The initial feasibility study set out a balance sheet which indicated that a small profit could be made. However, some of the costings were uncertain and it was suggested that further work was undertaken in this area.

This Section considers the grants available for funding the project initially, and sets out the capital and recurring costs and the likely income from the project.

7.2 Funding Options

7.2.1 Introduction

Three main programmes have been identified which could provide grant aid to the Eco-raft project. These are:

- the Leader+ Broads & Rivers Programme;
- the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund; and
- the Changing Spaces Programme.

Discussions have been held with the Leader+ representative and the work to date on the Eco-raft project has been funded Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund (with grant provided by Defra). Both organisations have been positive about the potential for future funding of the project. The Changing Spaces Programme is in the early stages of development and is expected to be available in late 2006. These programmes are described in more detail below.

7.2.2 Leader+ Broads and Rivers Programme

Leader+ is an initiative to assist rural communities to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of their local areas. It aims to support the development and implementation of community-led innovative and sustainable solutions to local rural development issues.

The Broads & Rivers Leader+ Programme is one scheme of 25 in England; it covers 128 parishes within parts of the four district councils of Broadland, Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk and South Norfolk²⁴. It recognises that the Broads is one of the finest wetland environments in Britain; however, traditional forms of land use and management are threatened by falling economic viability. The Programme therefore aims to develop new relationships that link the rural economy and the local environment, so that each supports the other.

²⁴

Projects supported by Leader+ may extend beyond these boundaries but they must provide benefit to the communities within the Programme area.

There are two main themes to the Programme:

- the use of know how and new technology to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive; and
- making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites designated under Natura 2000.

The second of these is most relevant to Eco-rafts, and examples of projects which may be covered by this theme are:

- to protect and enhance the local countryside and historic environment, including the restoration of community buildings and other facilities that provide tourism benefits, the creation of nature trails, cycle paths, increase the understanding of the countryside and skills in environmental management, including innovative approaches to water management, and activities which support the marketing of traditional skills/materials;
- to encourage sustainable resource management, including the use of renewable energy resources that act as a focus for community investment and enterprise, and eco-boating activities; and
- to increase local economic and environmental benefits from tourist and recreational activity, including activities that reduce pressure on the Broads by diversification, or that enhance the quality of attractions, or make them more accessible to disabled and disadvantaged people.

There is little doubt the Eco-rafts concept would be consistent with this theme. However, the project must also fulfil a number of other criteria and there are restrictions on what would be funded by the Programme.

Other criteria that the project should meet are:

- the Leader+ programme places emphasis on project **innovation** as the scheme is intended to provide a testing bed for new approaches to rural development;
- the project should be **sustainable** – it should be designed to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive benefits in terms of:
 - % economic sustainability – it should have financial strategy to ensure its longer term viability after the end of Leader+ funding;
 - % environmental sustainability – environmental damage should be minimised and environmental benefits realised;
 - % social sustainability – positive and negative impacts on the local community should be considered;
- the Broads & Rivers programme aims to focus its benefits in those who are **unemployed or underemployed** – applications will need to show how they will benefit people in this target group. It is necessary to distinguish between jobs created for the duration of the project (i.e. whilst grant funding is available) and

jobs that are created as a result of the project and which will be established/or on-going after the funding has ended; and

- projects under the Leader+ Programme should be **demand responsive**.

Project applicants should be one of the following:

- legal entities from the public, voluntary or community sectors;
- groupings of businesses (associations, co-operatives, etc.) can apply for projects that benefit a number of businesses (joint marketing, shared equipment and so on); and
- individual businesses can also apply for funding as long as they can demonstrate that there will be benefits spread to the wider community or flowing out to other businesses. Applications from individual businesses are likely to receive a lower rate of grant than other applicants.

For most projects, the maximum grant from Broads & Rivers Leader+ is likely to be in the region of £50,000-£60,000. Exceptional cases may be offered up to £250,000. In general, the amount of the grant will be influenced by the benefits that the project will produce and the extent to which the project outputs contribute towards the Broads & Rivers' aims and objectives. In exceptional cases, Broads & Rivers Leader+ can fund 100% of project costs. However, the application is more likely to be successful if other funding is secured for the project – as a general rule, the Programme suggests that 55% of the total project costs should be funded from other sources (this cannot be other European Union funds).

Approved grant commitments will not be increased to cover raised costs, and thus applicants should take into account anticipated price levels or increases due to inflation.

Project costs should be separated into capital costs (including fees) and revenue costs:

- **capital costs and associated fees:** Leader+ is not intended as a capital programme. However, some small-scale capital projects may be supported. Capital items include new building works and machinery; and architects' and planning consultants' fees. Planning application fees payable to local authorities are not eligible. The Leader+ Programme is unable to provide funds for capital items in advance, and thus successful applicants must be able to ensure that they have the necessary cash-flow to implement the project; and
- **revenue costs** include items which are classed as non-capital expenditure (e.g. salaries, rent, fuel costs). The Programme is able to fund some revenue costs in advance (up to 25% of the first yearly total though the exact amount depends on the nature of the project). Successful applicants are required to provide evidence of expenditure before more funds can be disbursed. After the first year payments by Leader+ will be made based on actual expenditure incurred.

The Programme is overseen by a Local Action Group; this includes representatives from local government, community and voluntary groups and key sectors of the local business community. Norfolk County Council coordinates administration on behalf of the Local Action Group. The Broads & Rivers Leader+ Officer is Huw Jones (01603 228960)

7.2.3 Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund

The Government has established a Sustainable Development Fund, which is shared equally between the seven national park authorities in England and the Broads Authority. The Broads Authority's share of the Fund is currently £200,000 per annum.

The purpose of the Fund is to enable local communities and other organisations to make a difference in national parks by promoting and achieving social, economic or environmental sustainability. It aims to encourage individuals, community groups and businesses to co-operate in developing practical sustainable and local projects.

Applicants must demonstrate that their project meets the necessary criteria and in particular that it will:

- promote sustainable development;
- support the Authority's purposes;
- have the support or involvement of communities;
- be complementary to key local and national strategies;
- not breach state aid rules; and
- provide some element of public benefit.

A key aim of the scheme is to change the attitude and behaviour of individuals and communities in ways that enhance understanding of sustainable development and the role of the Broads Authority, while promoting co-operation and social inclusion. The Broads Authority is particularly keen to encourage projects that support key areas of sustainable activity that are already being pursued, such as sustainable tourism.

The Authority has agreed that the bulk of the Fund should be devoted to a small number of relatively large projects so as to make a significant difference to sustainable development in the Broads. The level of grant support will not normally exceed 75% for the voluntary sector, including charities, and 50% for other organisations.

The contact for the Sustainable Development Fund is Nigel Dark (01379 668750).

7.2.4 Big Lottery Fund – Changing Spaces

The Changing Spaces programme aims to fund programmes that will result in the following outcomes:

- improved local environments, open spaces and countryside, accessible to all and relevant to people's needs;
- a greater sense of community ownership of the local environment, with better collaboration between communities and the voluntary and statutory sector; and
- improved social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The Programme aims to meet these outcomes by focussing on three priorities, including:

- access to the natural environment, for example, by:
 - % encouraging more people to enjoy the countryside and the natural environment;
 - % improving biodiversity and wildlife habitats;
 - % educating people about the natural environment and the countryside.

This Programme is in the early stages of development, and it is expected that funding schemes will be launched in late 2006. It is not yet known what value grants will be available, or what the requirements will be for match funding.

7.3 Financial Costs and Income

The financial costs and income for a single Eco-raft have been estimated, based on the following assumptions:

- capital costs (see Section 3):
 - % each Eco-raft will cost £21,100;
 - % canoes and camping equipment will be provided for each raft at a cost of £2,000;
- revenue costs:
 - % the planning application fee for each Eco-raft will be a one-off cost of £265;
 - % there will be an annual licence fee of £50 payable to the Broads Authority;
 - % there will be annual costs of £500 for winter mooring and maintenance;
 - % insurance will cost £1,000 per Eco-raft;
 - % each raft will be visited/serviced every other day, taking 1 hour, at a cost of £22 per hour, this is a total of £330 per month;
 - % replacement materials such as toilet rolls and water will cost £8 per raft night; and
 - % marketing and booking commission will be payable to another company at a rate of 10% of sales;
- income:
 - % Eco-rafts will be hireable between May to October, a total of 184 raft nights;
 - % each raft night will cost £50;
 - % occupancy in the first year of operation is assumed to be 40% (74 nights), 50% in the second year (92 nights) and 60% (110 nights) in the third and following years;

Table 7.1 overleaf shows the profit and loss account; this indicates that operating an Eco-raft only becomes profitable once 60% occupancy has been achieved (in year 3). In fact, the break-even point (when income equals expenditure) is 97 raft nights per year, based on revenue costs only.

If the capital costs and start-up costs (planning permission) are taken into account, Table 7.2 indicates that an Eco-raft will not become profitable in 5 years unless the capital costs are 100% grant funded. However, the Eco-raft is more likely to survive if the first year revenue costs are also grant funded, enabling its first year profits to support its second year and becoming profitable in its own right by year 3. This is particularly important given that the estimated scenarios in Table 7.2 do not account for interest charged on loans or overdrafts which will increase the losses incurred. Under the 100% Capital and Revenue Grant scenario, the only expenditure by the Eco-raft organisation will be on winter mooring and maintenance costs, which should be covered by the Eco-raft's income.

Table 7.2: Estimated Annual Capital and Revenue Costs and Income Per Eco-raft (based on assumptions stated above)					
Funding Scenario	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
No Grant	Expenditure	£26,939	£3,574	£3,574	£3,574
	Income	£2,738	£3,404	£4,070	£4,070
	Profit	-£24,201	-£24,371	-£23,875	-£23,379
80% Capital Grant	Expenditure	£8,459	£3,574	£3,574	£3,574
	Income	£2,738	£3,404	£4,070	£4,070
	Profit	-£5,721	-£5,891	-£5,395	-£4,899
100% Capital Grant	Expenditure	£3,839	£3,574	£3,574	£3,574
	Income	£2,738	£3,404	£4,070	£4,070
	Profit	-£1,101	-£1,271	-£775	-£279
100% Capital and 100% Revenue Grant (in Year 1)	Expenditure	£500	£3,574	£3,574	£3,574
	Income	£2,738	£3,404	£4,070	£4,070
	Profit	£2,238	£2,068	£2,564	£3,060
					£3,556

Key variables which may affect the estimated profits, and which should be considered when taking the project forward, include the following:

- the estimated capital costs include camping equipment and canoes for each raft. However, if the holiday package marketed included extra nights at campsites, then the equipment would not be available for someone else to use the Eco-raft, potentially reducing the occupancy rate. Therefore, further consideration should be given to the existing capacity of canoe hire centres wishing to participate in this project, and the expected number (and components) of holiday packages likely to be sold (as opposed to raft nights);

Table 7.1: Estimated Profit and Loss Account for an Eco-raft

	Month Nov	Month Dec	Month Jan	Month Feb	Month Mar	Month Apr	Month May	Month Jun	Month Jul	Month Aug	Month Sep	Month Oct	Year 2006/07	Year 2007/08	Year 2008/09
Sales							600	600	600	700	600	600	3,700	4,600	5,500
Cost of Consumables							96	96	96	112	96	96	592	736	880
Gross Profit							504	504	504	588	504	504	3,108	3,864	4,620
Administrative Expenses															
Maintenance Salary							330	330	352	352	330	330	2,024	2,024	2,024
Insurance	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	1,000	1,000	1,000
Planning Application Fee		265												265	
Licence Fee							50						50	50	50
Annual Maintenance (including Winter Mooring)													500	500	500
Total Administrative Expenses	348	83	83	83	83	83	463	413	435	435	413	913	3,839	3,574	3,574
Sales & Distribution Costs (10% of Sales)							60	60	60	70	60	60	370	460	550
Net Profit / (Loss)	-	348	-	83	-	83	-	83	-	19	31	9	83	31	-
													469	-	1,101
													-	170	496

- the staffing costs assume that an agreement could be made with local boatyards to service the Eco-rafts, thus an hourly rate of £22 has been taken as the rate for semi-skilled labour charged by local marinas. Boatyards may wish to charge an alternative rate and this should be negotiated. Furthermore, it is assumed that, on average, an Eco-raft is visited every other day, as it will be necessary for the raft to be checked during periods of non-use between May and October. The balance between long stays and short stays will have an influence on the actual level of servicing required;
- there may be possibilities to hire out the Eco-rafts from November to April, for example for bird watching, or bases for conservation groups. This may be day or night use, and could provide an additional source of income. However, it is believed that an Eco-raft should be financially viable by its primary use initially;
- the insurance costs have not been fully investigated and may vary from those indicated here. In addition, the cost per raft may be reduced if more than one raft is insured, but this is not certain; and
- all of these costs have been estimated on the basis of information obtained in 2005/06 and may vary over the period of development and operation of the rafts.

7.4 Potential Expansions

If the Eco-raft project was found to be profitable in its first few years of operation there are a number of ways in which the project could develop further. These include:

- more rafts along the identified routes;
- the development of new routes with additional rafts; and
- development of more luxurious rafts or themed rafts, maintaining the Eco-tourism concept and building on local influences, to cater for a broader market, for example by avoiding the need to sleep in tents²⁵.

7.5 Supporting Local Conservation

A key aim of the Eco-raft project, and sustainable tourism more generally, is that it should support nature conservation and the local environment on which the tourism industry depends.

Initially, it was suggested that the Eco-raft organisation could operate as a social enterprise, donating its profits to a charity (either existing or newly established) to support local projects. An alternative idea, which is widely promoted by the strategies considered in Section 2, is that of visitor payback schemes.

²⁵

It is understood that some local stakeholders may already be developing this idea.

The concept of visitor payback is centred on ‘valuing’ the destination. It seeks to convert the emotive value that visitors place on their destination area into a literal financial value, by connecting those charged with conserving the features that attract visitors to the visitors that enjoy them. Visitor payback is the term that is used to describe the connecting mechanism, traditionally focussing on visitors making voluntary donations to projects looking after the area they are visiting (Warren, 2001). Previous research, noted by TTC International (2004), has shown considerable willingness by visitors to make a contribution to the conservation of places they visit.

The majority of experience in setting up visitor payback schemes is in establishing groups of businesses to participate in a scheme, for example, the Invest in the Lakes scheme in the Lake District brings together over 100 members, predominantly tourism enterprises but also related businesses such as shops. Problems with establishing visitor payback schemes tend to relate to the reluctance of tourism enterprises to request more money from their customers for fear of appearing uncompetitive, rather than reluctance on the part of the customer to contribute to local conservation. In this respect, it is likely that, if established from the beginning, and taken into account in costing the holiday package, it would be possible to establish a visitor payback scheme for the Eco-rafts project.

Essentially, there are two important issues to consider in establishing a visitor payback scheme:

- the method of collecting the donation; and
- identifying a strong link between the customer, and their holiday experience, and the beneficiary conservation causes in the area.

There are a number of methods of approaching and collecting visitor contributions, including:

- donations, using boxes or other means;
- sponsorship, seeking larger sums, with donor recognition;
- voluntary supplements or levies at the point of paying for a service: either as a request ('opt in') or added automatically with an option not to pay ('opt out');
- membership schemes, whereby visitors pay to join a local club;
- merchandising, with a 'conservation' mark up on the sales price; and
- practical participation by visitors in conservation activity.

Opt out levy schemes have been by far the most lucrative and where practiced has involved little administration centrally or within the enterprise. It would seem that this would be appropriate for the Eco-raft project, except that payment is likely to be made in full before the holiday is taken, thus people may be less willing to contribute to conservation before they visit the area. Alternatively, if the holiday package was to include visits to local nature reserves, there could be some form of payment for this which would effectively relate to a donation to the local Wildlife Trust.

This leads to the second point, which requires strong links to be made between the customer and the beneficiary of the donation. It would appear that the local Wildlife

Trusts would be the obvious beneficiaries of any such donation, particularly if the donation was linked to a specific visit. Some schemes found that participating enterprises, and visitors, are equally happy to support conservation within the area as a whole as opposed to one specific theme or project, although there has been no research into this. However, it is suggested to be valuable to have at least one high profile and tangible project with measurable results which can be used to publicise the scheme and provide feedback to visitors.

Furthermore, it would appear that visitors' perception of whether they are receiving value for money during their stay has a significant impact on their willingness to make a voluntary donation (Warren, 2001).

7.6 Conclusions

As suggested by the initial feasibility study, the profit margin of the Eco-raft project is quite low. However, if the start-up, capital and first year revenue costs could be grant funded then each Eco-raft could be profitable by its third year of operation, provided that 60% occupancy rates are achieved. This is considered to be an achievable target.

If the project aims to build three Eco-rafts in its first year, this provides a total capital cost of £63,300, with an additional £6,000 for canoes and camping equipment (this may need to increase depending on the capacity of existing canoe hire companies). This provides a total of nearly £70,000 capital costs.

Start-up costs generally relate to planning application fees at £265 per Eco-raft, or £795 for three Eco-rafts.

Revenue costs are £3,574 per Eco-raft, or £10,722 for three Eco-rafts, and cover insurance, staff costs for servicing the Eco-rafts, licensing fees and winter mooring and maintenance fees. The last of these is estimated to cost £500 per Eco-raft per year, and it is assumed that this could be met in the first year by the income generated. Therefore, the total revenue costs which would require funding are £9,222 for three Eco-rafts.

The total amount for which funding should be sought is therefore in the region of £80,000. This also assumes that another company takes on the marketing and booking aspects of the project for 10% commission on sales.

It is then necessary to consider the funding available from the sources identified in section 7.2, and the associated restrictions on which costs are covered and the requirements for match funding. If it is assumed that 45% can be obtained from Leader+ funding, this accounts for approximately £36,000 which would cover the revenue costs and some capital costs. It would be necessary to discuss this further with the Leader+ officer as there are some restrictions on funding capital costs and it should be noted that the funds for these cannot be provided in advance.

A remaining £44,000 could be sought from the Sustainable Development Fund. It should be noted that the planning application fees should be requested from this Fund as they are not eligible for funding by Leader+.

The Changing Spaces Lottery fund remains a possibility for funding, but, as no details are currently available, it is not considered further. However, depending on the timing of future phases of the Eco-raft project it may be a possibility in the future.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Findings of Stakeholder Workshop

8.1.1 Overview

A stakeholder workshop was held on 24 October 2006 at Whitlingham Visitor Centre, and was attended by 12 people, including landowners, canoeists, representatives of the Broads Authority, and the Sustainable Development Fund (a list of attendees is included in Annex 3). Attendees had received a short summary of the project with their invitation, and some had requested the full draft report, before the meeting, so stakeholders were relatively informed of the study and its findings to date.

Bruce Hanson of the Broads Authority gave a short presentation of what sustainable tourism meant within the Broads, and this was followed by a more detailed presentation from RPA on Phase II of the Eco-rafts project. The stakeholder discussions which followed the presentation are summarised below, and can be divided into the key issues of feasibility and location issues, as well as more general conclusions.

8.1.2 Feasibility

Although there was some suggestion that the Eco-rafts project would provide basic facilities that were not consistent with the East of England's Sustainable Tourism strategy (requiring high value tourism), this was countered by Eco-rafts providing a 'wilderness' experience in a rapidly growing market.

It was noted that if the tourism industry is to attract people from abroad then it must provide a high value product. However, it was also suggested that there was a large local market to cater for, and the focus should not be solely on attracting international visitors. The example was given of the 400-500 local paddlers on the River Waveney who cannot pull up and camp on the riverbank overnight as sites are not available. This local market, it was suggested, would welcome a scheme such as Eco-rafts.

Therefore, two markets were identified at the workshop; one providing a basic facility that would be relatively cheap and would attract canoeists looking for a low cost overnight stop and the second providing a higher degree of luxury perhaps for longer stays of two to three nights.

The question of security of the rafts in remote locations was raised and this would require careful consideration in the final design. Servicing of rafts and campsites would need to be carefully considered to ensure that all sites were clean and tidy.

8.1.3 Location

It was highlighted at the meeting that there had been no formal approaches to land owners regarding potential sites in the Broads. Sites would need to be identified if the project was taken forward and the suggestion was that they would need to be in places

that were attractive to users and remote but accessible. There were suggestions that there should be access from the land to allow links to the cycle network and use by cyclists. Land access was also seen as advantage for servicing the rafts. The example was given of the River Wyre where basic campsites are provided on river banks. The campsites only provided a tap and toilet with all other equipment carried in the canoes.

It was generally agreed that a combination of Eco-rafts and campsites would be the best way forward as it gave more flexibility, could be set up at a lower cost than just Eco-rafts and addressed the concern of suitable locations in the broads and rivers.

8.1.4 Conclusions of Stakeholder Workshop

The successful implementation of the Eco-raft project to provide not only overnight accommodation but a ‘wilderness’ experience, whether using rafts or a combination of campsites and rafts, relies very heavily on external funding. The initial set up costs are relatively high and the draft business plan clearly shows the need for capital funding for the rafts and also the need for some funding of running costs, at least initially.

The project should be implemented in phases, with the initial phase comprising of fixed campsites linked to water trails to prove the demand and then followed by a secondary phase, which would see the introduction of Eco-rafts. This would have the advantages of being able to include rivers such as the Waveney and the non-tidal Bure and could also include ‘source to sea journeys’ which were considered to be appealing by workshop attendees.

Setting up small campsites may attract private funding and the mix of campsites and Eco-rafts rafts for accommodation, and canoes and cycles for transport would give a more flexible and therefore potentially more successful approach.

Eco-rafts were seen as a marketing opportunity and conservation organisations would need to be persuaded that this form of tourism was in their overall interests. Potential conflicts should be able to be addressed by agreeing suitable locations and time of year for use.

The success of Eco-rafts is dependent on support from many organisations including the Broads Authority, conservation organisations, tourism bodies and local landowners. Against a background of declining visitor numbers to the Broads, and the associated effects on the local economy, Eco-rafts had great potential.

8.2 Conclusions of Phase II

This Report has built on the work undertaken in Phase I to develop the Eco-raft concept further. In order to be consistent with international, national and local tourism strategies and plans, the aims of the Eco-raft project have been refined as follows:

- to provide an innovative, sustainable tourism project in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads;
- to enhance the image of the Broads as a tourism destination and as a place for active and environmentally-friendly recreation;
- to support existing businesses in the Broads area;
- to provide a high ‘value-added’ experience for visitors, which aids discovery and understanding of the Broads area; and
- to support conservation in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.

The innovative feature of the project, and the ‘wow’ factor for marketing purposes, is to provide floating rafts which allow individuals, or groups of up to 6 people, to camp in secluded areas of the Broads. These Eco-rafts will be accessible by canoe (and potentially half-deckers or sailing dinghies). Examples of canoe/camping holidays have been found elsewhere in the UK and Europe, but the only example of camping overnight on a floating raft has been identified in Sweden, which requires people to build their own raft before floating down the river on it. It is therefore believed that the Eco-raft concept is unique not only to the UK but also to Europe.

This Report has developed a specification for an Eco-raft that will provide basic facilities for a short stay (i.e. 1-3 nights). Preliminary cost estimates have been provided, which suggest that the raft structure and associated equipment will cost in the region of £21,100 per raft. It is recognised that the specification is likely to be modified in the process of commissioning the raft, but there are a number of key elements which should be maintained, as identified in Section 3. Furthermore, it should be recognised that it may not be possible to source all materials locally, even though this would be desirable, but that the construction should be undertaken by a local boatyard. An additional issue is that it has not been possible to identify an alternative to using a chemical toilet. Whilst this may not be considered environmentally-friendly, it is not possible to use a compostable toilet, which requires drainage outlets. The use of compostable toilets should, however, be considered for any land-based campsites.

By providing such a unique feature, it is believed that the project, and thus the Broads, will receive a considerable amount of publicity, which will raise the profile of the Broads as a tourism destination. A key feature of this project is to link up existing businesses and tourism attractions to provide an active and sustainable holiday package. Therefore, as well as using a local boatyard to construct the Eco-rafts, the project will provide direct and on-going support to:

- local canoe and boat hire companies by using their facilities to provide a key feature of the holiday package;
- local campsites by linking them with the Eco-rafts along recommended routes;
- local boatyards in the form of payment for servicing the Eco-rafts; and
- local attractions which will be promoted as part of the holiday package(s).

This Report has identified routes along the rivers Waveney, Bure, Ant and Thurne. The River Waveney is not considered as a suitable location for an Eco-raft as it does not provide secluded inlets in which an Eco-raft could be moored to provide a

wilderness experience. However, interest has been expressed by two canoe hire centres on the River Waveney and the river is a popular destination for canoeists. Therefore, it is recommended that the whole of the River Waveney is included in the project, linked initially to land based camping.

The other rivers provide suitable locations for the Eco-rafts to be moored, if agreements can be reached with the landowners. There are also a number of canoe and boat hire centres on the rivers Bure and Ant which could provide suitable facilities; however, there are none on the River Thurne and alternative arrangements would have to be made. Perhaps the Thurne route could be marketed as part of a route starting at a location with a canoe hire centre, or an agreement could be made to take the canoes to a local campsite. Cycle hire and other attractions (such as nature reserves, churches, windmills, etc.) could also form part of the holiday package to provide a range of experiences for visitors.

There is general agreement that the nature of the tourism market is changing and that more people are seeking short, active breaks, which provide value for time as well as money, and which allow visitors to have new experiences. Sustainable tourism is also a growing market. A key issue, though, is that holidays should provide a high ‘value-added’ experience, by providing something unique and of good quality. For example, the raft should be well-built and sympathetic to its surroundings, as well as providing quality facilities. The fact that it is providing a ‘basic’ facility does not mean it can be of poor quality. The holiday package should also provide added value, for example, in the form of an information pack to provide people with ideas of what is available to them. Guided tours of nature reserves which are not generally open to the public could add to the unique, wilderness experience and provide for a donation to the Wildlife Trust.

This study has concluded that the Eco-rafts project is feasible, unique and meets a demand in the tourism market. It could support local businesses and provide considerable publicity for the Broads as a sustainable tourism destination. The key issue is to find the right people to take the project forward to the next Phase, which should see the construction and operation of the Eco-rafts. Whilst there are local stakeholders and companies who support the idea and would be interested to participate, it is difficult to identify a single individual or company with the relevant expertise who would be willing to take on the risk and work required to develop the whole Eco-raft holiday package.

It is therefore suggested that serious consideration is given to involving the company *Natural Discovery* which has expressed considerable enthusiasm for the idea. Natural Discovery has the tourism and marketing expertise to be able to take on the co-ordination of local stakeholders to develop a holiday package which can then be promoted and booked through the company’s website. This means that, in order to take the Eco-rafts idea forward, it is only necessary to form an organisation to develop and manage the Eco-rafts themselves.

This Report has identified the different forms of organisation available, which could be operated as a social enterprise if desired. The initial idea was that the company

would operate as a social enterprise as it would make only minimal profits and, by donating profits to a charitable cause, the project would support local conservation. This Report supports the initial findings that the profits would be minimal, perhaps in the region of £500 per year per Eco-raft if 60% occupancy is achieved. Therefore, although the Eco-raft project can be operated at a profit, it perhaps has greater value in providing a key attraction within a network of existing businesses, which will also benefit from the project. This would suggest that the people taking on the Eco-raft project should be those that would benefit from it in other ways, such as canoe hire, rather than expecting to make money from the project itself.

Given the minimal expected profit, compared to the estimated (fixed) annual operating costs of £3,500, it could be suggested that the Eco-raft organisation would be better off retaining its annual profits to provide funds for years when occupancy rates fall below 60% for whatever reason. It can be assumed that the value of the Eco-rafts to the local economy would be greater than £500 per year, thus if the Eco-rafts were to fail because of lack of funds in the future, this would have a greater negative impact than the positive impact of donating £500 to local charities for a few years. Instead, it is suggested that a visitor payback scheme could be introduced. This could provide an opt-out levy for hiring an Eco-raft of £4.50 a night, which could be donated to the local Wildlife Trust, or alternatively a direct donation could be made to the Wildlife Trust in return for a guided tour of the more secluded nature reserves. This would help to support conservation in the Broads and provide £500 per year per raft at 60% occupancy rate (and 0% opt-out).

This Report has concluded that, in order for the Eco-raft project to be viable, it will need to obtain 100% capital grants and 100% revenue grants for the first year. Leader+ funding and the Broads Authority's Sustainable Development Fund are possible sources of such funding, with an estimated total of £80,000 required. Funding applications have not yet been prepared as this will need to be submitted by the organisation which will take the project forward.

Finally, this Report contains many suggestions and ideas for the Eco-raft project, which in some cases, have not been discussed or agreed with the stakeholders concerned (such as landowners). However, the aim of this Report was to pull together all the threads of ideas to give stakeholders an idea of how the project may work. Only then can people be expected to make a firmer commitment to the project.

8.3 Recommendations for Phase III

Phase III of the Eco-raft project will involve suitable individuals or an organisation implementing an Eco-raft package. In order for the package to be implemented, a number of outstanding issues will need further action and negotiations. These have not been undertaken in Phase II due to the level of detail and involvement of Eco-raft operators and third parties required. These issues include:

- funding;

- locations – including detailed discussions with landowners and conservation organisations such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Broads Authority and Natural England;
- planning permission – including the potential need for an environmental impact assessment;
- finalising the specification for an Eco-raft (which may depend on location and the requirements of the landowner; and
- links with established campsites and/or development of new campsites.

9. REFERENCES

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- Stevens T (2002): **Sustainable Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas: An Overview**, report prepared for Scottish Natural Heritage.
- Warren N (2001): **Visitor Payback – Looking at the Realities Behind the Success Stories**, *Countryside Recreation*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 2001.

ANNEX 1:

**LETTER FROM THE BROADS AUTHORITY RE PLANNING
PERMISSION**



John R V Ash,
RPA Ltd.
Farthing Green House,
1 Beccles Road,
Loddon,
Norfolk.
NR14 6LT

18 Colegate Norwich Norfolk NR3 1BQ
Telephone (01603) 610734
Fax (01603) 765710
Email broads@broads-authority.gov.uk
Web www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Date 19th December 2005

Our ref

Your ref

Dear Mr Ash,

Re : Eco Raft Sustainable Tourism

I write further to your letter and to our telephone conversations regarding the proposals to establish a raft based canoe holiday use in a variety of locations in the Broads System.

The proposals would certainly create a very different form of tourism use within the Broads and could represent a sustainable tourist proposal. Whilst, the general principle of the proposal would result in a form of tourism which the Authority would be likely to encourage, there could however be a number of more practical difficulties which would need to be addressed in the submission of the planning applications and I have set those out below.

You have stated that the rafts would be moored permanently in different locations for the duration of the holiday season. Whilst, these rafts would be moveable structures I assume that they would be permanently anchored in each location for many months and only removed for storage off the water at the end of each holiday season. I would consider therefore the structures to be permanent structures for which planning permission would be required. It would present potential difficulties if only one planning application were to be submitted for the whole project, as the rafts may well be moored in a wide variety of locations in different District Council areas within the Broads Authority Executive boundary and give rise to different issues. I would therefore consider that separate planning applications would be required to be submitted for each of the individual locations, the individual applications could be for more than one raft, if it was the intention to create a small group of rafts at some of the locations.

The design and materials of the raft and the tent, toilet and cooking shelter structures would need to be very carefully designed so as to be sympathetic with the environment in which they are to be located. These may require more specific individual design for each of the locations, otherwise the rafts could be very intrusive and possibly be visually alien structures in the wider landscape, for example if mobile toilet structures normally associated with construction sites were proposed to be used.

The planning applications would need to be also accompanied by detailed supporting information setting out how the rafts would be serviced in relation to the bringing to the rafts of



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

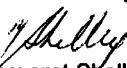
Chair: Professor R K Turner
Chief Executive: John Packman

water, provisions and any other equipment which may be required and the removal of waste and effluent from the rafts. Also, whether it would be the intention for any of the servicing to be undertaken by means of road access and then by boat, this would be necessary in order that any highway implications could be assessed. Clearly, as a sustainable tourist proposal it would be necessary for the Authority to ensure that effluent and general waste was not discharged directly into the Broads River system which could have a very damaging effect on the ecology of the area. This could be a very difficult issue for the Authority to enforce and would to a large extent rely on the credibility of the operator to undertake the proposal in accordance with the information set out in the planning application.

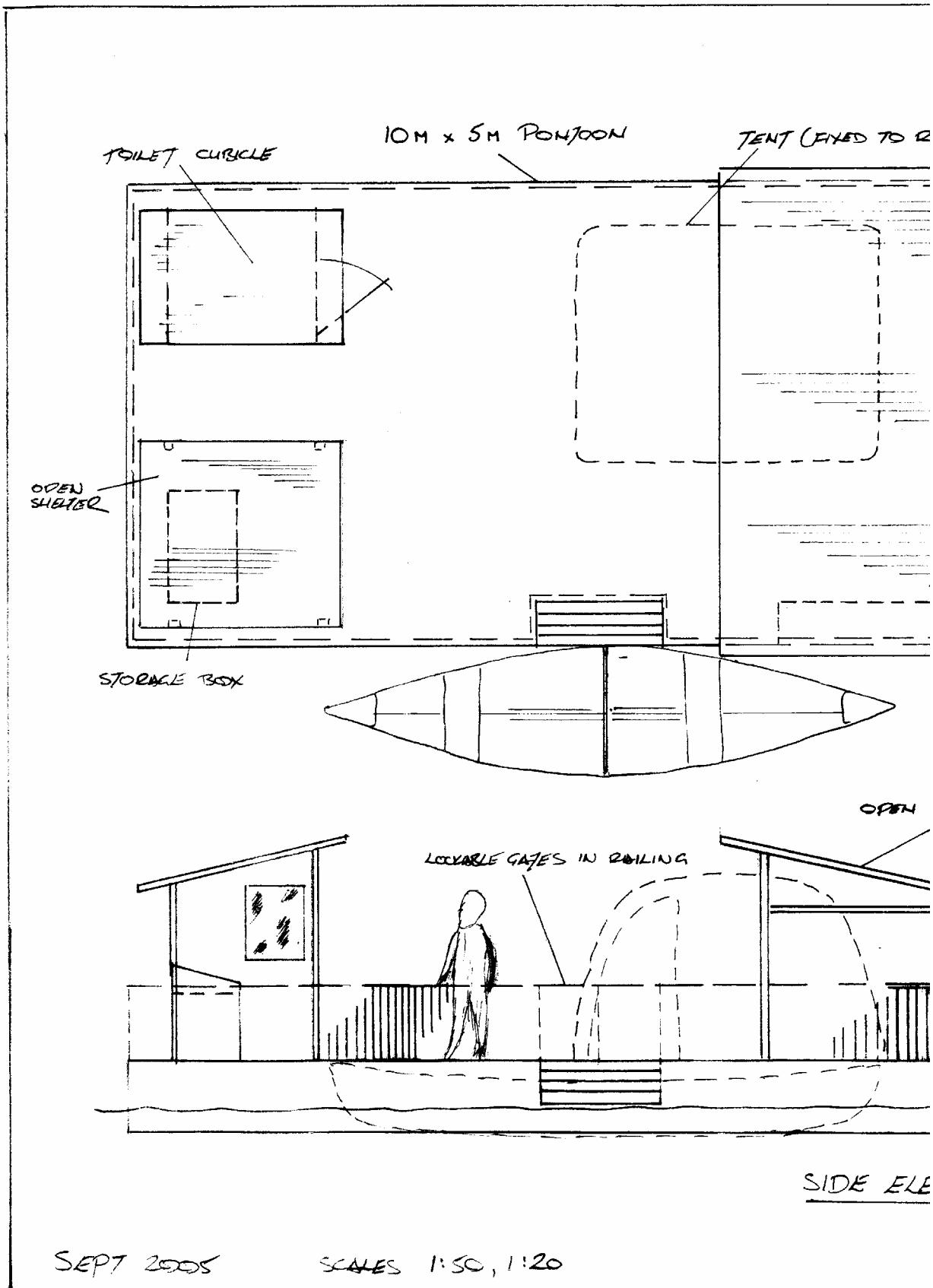
I consider that an assessment of the ecological impact of the proposed siting of rafts at each of the locations should also be submitted, as the Authority would also have to ensure that the introduction of human tourist activity into some of the more remote and inaccessible areas of the Broads system did not result in a detrimental impact on the ecology and wildlife of the area.

It is difficult to be precise in the advice that is given at this stage of the proposal without knowing more information on the individual locations and the factors which could affect each specific location. I would therefore advise you to contact the Broads Authority planning team before submitting any planning applications. As you are aware I have provided planning service to the Broads Authority on a temporary basis and Cally Smith is now in post as the permanent Head of Planning and Regeneration and will be able to provide further advice to you in the future. You will of course appreciate that the advice given in this letter represents an officer view only and does not prejudice the views of the Authority in the determination of any subsequent planning application.

Yours sincerely,


Margaret Shelley
Interim Planning Co-ordinator

ANNEX 2:
ECO-RAFT: PRELIMINARY DESIGN



RINGS ON PONTOON)

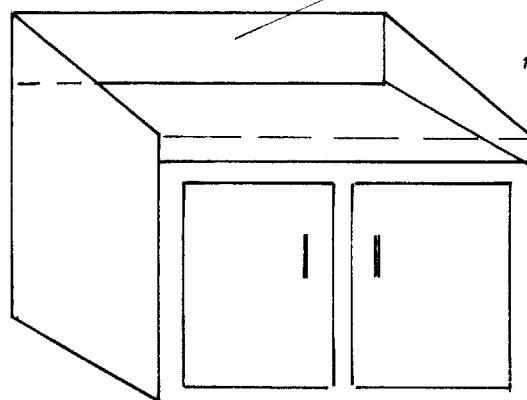


TOILET & SHELTER OF TIMBER
CONSTRUCTION WITH COATED METAL
ROOF SHEETS

TOILET TO BE PORTA-POTTI WITH
CASSETTE.

NON SLIP SURFACE TO PONTOON
AND HOLDING DOWN RINGS FOR TENT.

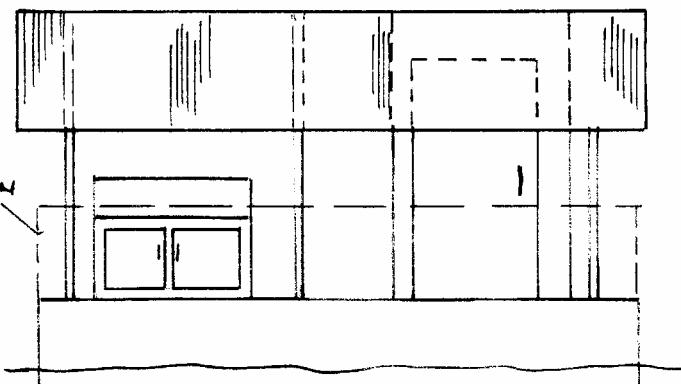
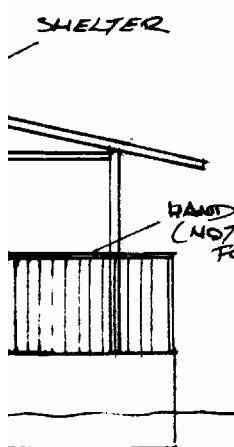
REMOVABLE COVER



STORAGE BOX / COOKING AREA.

GAS, WATER, COOKING RINGS
POTS & PANS STORED
IN STORAGE BOX

PLAN



ELEVATION

END ELEVATION.

ECO-RAFT: PRELIMINARY DESIGN

ANNEX 3:
LIST OF WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

A3. WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

John Ash
RPA

Henry Cator
Local Land and Broad Owner
With an interest in tourism

Stephen Ellingham
Plantscape (Exterior) Ltd

Mark Elson
Horstead Centre

Carolyn George
RPA

Bruce Hanson
Broads Authority

Ben Hogg
Broads Authority

Peter Howe
Norfolk Cycle Hire Association

Andrew Ing
Canoe Liner

Charlie Middleton
Waterways Team, Broads Authority

Gavin Plant
Canoeist

Mark Wilkinson
Activ-8

Anthony Wright
Sustainable Development Fund

Chris Wright
British Canoe Union/Eagle Canoe Club

