

CONSULTATION

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WATER RELATED RECREATION IN EAST OF ENGLAND

Date:

School of Environment and Technology
University of Brighton
Cockcroft Building
Lewes Rd
Brighton
BN2 4GJ

Introduction

This draft strategic plan for water related recreation¹ in East of England has been prepared for a Steering Group comprising of British Waterways, Environment Agency, Government Office for the East of England (GO-East), Sport England, Natural England in consultation with the East of England Regional Development Agency (EEDA) and Government Office of the East of England (EERA). The draft strategic plan takes account of current plans and policies, as well as the outcomes of extensive consultation with groups and individuals throughout the region. It is designed to provide a strategic framework for the development of water related recreation in the East of England that will address current shortfalls in provision and offer exciting new opportunities for the future.

How to Respond

This consultation is being undertaken by the University of Brighton on behalf of the Environment Agency and the steering group. We have already engaged with key interested groups and will continue to do so as part of this consultation. It is important, however, that all individuals and groups have the opportunity to comment on the recommendations. We will therefore consider all information provided in developing the final strategic plan.

Your comments should be sent to:

Becky Taylor
University of Brighton
Plumpton College
Ditchling Rd
Plumpton
East Sussex
BN7 3AE

Email: B.Taylor@bton.ac.uk

(please entitle your email 'EE consultation')

Any responses to this consultation should be returned by **28 October 2008**.

When commenting please make clear in what capacity you are responding and whether you represent an organisation or group. It would also be of benefit if you could answer the specific questions contained in this paper and where appropriate refer to specific paragraphs in the draft plan.

¹ By 'water related recreation' we mean any leisure, sport or recreational activity that takes place in, on or in association with water (coastal and inland, moving and still waters). We therefore include all water sports, all forms of angling and all activities that take place adjacent to water (beach sports, for example). While we are not directly concerned with activities such as walking, riding and cycling next to water, we make reference to them in the context of the multiple use of resources that include land and water.

Please note that responses may be made available for public inspection. We will assume that you do not object to this approach to openness unless notified otherwise. If you reply by e-mail, any confidentiality clause automatically generated by your provider will not be taken into account unless you specifically request confidentiality. Consultation responses may also be included in a statistical summary and a summary of responses may subsequently be published on our website.

We would welcome your answers to the 8 questions below on the draft strategic plan for **water related recreation** in East of England. Please answer all 8 questions if possible to help us implement the plan in future.

<p>1 The strategic plan emphasises the need to provide access to water related recreation for all people who wish to take part.</p>		
<p>Do you feel that its plan has the potential to achieve this?</p>		
Yes (x)	No ()	Don't Know ()
<p>What additional provisions would improve this aspect of the strategic plan?</p>		
<p>Information and encouragement to raise awareness of the benefits of the water environment to include confidence building to overcome any fear it might have for individuals.</p>		

<p>2 Do you think that this strategic plan will lead to improvements in the provision of water related recreation?</p>		
Yes (x)*	No ()	Don't Know ()
<p>* Unsure in some respects would be more appropriate</p>		
<p>Please explain your answer</p>		
<p>The plan is long term and largely dependent on funding. Elements of the plan for a regional impact of importance are large scale. Planners will be governed by the economy and where there are constraints there will be uncertainty over delivery. Smaller scale schemes should still be undertaken to deliver the maximum benefit and contribute to the whole – access/egress locations/steps, canoe trails.</p>		
<p>Accessibility is a main thrust in this plan. Extending public access to inland waters would give a more robust base for improvements and confidence in a strategic plan.</p>		
<p>The provisions for Coastal Access (including estuaries) set out in the draft Marine Bill should support improvements</p>		

<p>3 The strategic plan discusses key 'gaps' in provision for water related recreation. Please indicate the importance of each gap in the table below.</p>			
Gaps in provision	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant
G1. Need to upgrade existing facilities and resources	X		
G2. Poor distribution of facilities	X		

British Canoe Union
 18 Market Place
 Bingham
 Notts
 NG13 8AP

What role would your organisation be willing to play? (e.g. being part of a local initiative, developing a major project, working in a regional or national partnership)

Contributing to a local initiative and working in a regional or national partnership to promote canoeing.

Please list any other organisations that should be involved in implementing the plan?

RYA, ARA, IWA, AINA, National Trust, Forestry Commission

7 The strategic plan outlines key priorities and opportunities for water related recreation. Please indicate the importance of each of these in the table below.

Priority	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant
SP1. Improving existing provision	x		
SP2. Addressing gaps in the provision for some water sports	x		
SP3. Developing a network of water related recreation hubs	x		
SP4: Integrating water related recreation into 'green infrastructure' planning in urban and peri-urban areas	x		
SP5: Developing demonstration sites for piloting and testing a range of approaches to improving the quality and availability of water related recreation in the region	X See 8 for comment		
SP6. Better provision of information to improve understanding and use	x see 8 for comment		
SP7. Improved estuary and coastal management	x		
Opportunity	x		
SO1: 'Access East'	x		
SO2: The development of sports villages	x		
SO3: A network of health villages developed as part of the planned residential expansion of the East of England	x		
SO4: A necklace of local green 'gateway' sites along the waterway network	x		
SO5: The development of a public transport network linking major recreation facilities in the region	x		
SO6: Wild water parks	x		
SO7: Best practice in environmentally friendly recreation	x		
SO8: Development of 'Hydrocentres'	x		

8 Please provide any additional comments on the plan:

The plan provides a balanced overview for providing access to and improvements in the provision of water related sports and recreation.

From SP6 the plan will require extensive work in the community to generate interest and participation. This is particularly challenging if the plan is to reach out to residents that are expected to have modest increases in demand and engage with younger people – para 1.3.4 .

The plan is strong on the management of activities. The promotion of independent/informal activity and personal development in responsibility and skills etc that goes with it must not be lost in the plan.

As mentioned in 2, accessibility to activities is the thrust in this plan. This should include opportunities to extend public access to inland waters to contribute to the vision of the strategy.

The informal and accepted use of local waters (1.4.5) can be the basis for extending access to stimulate participation and opportunities.

From Table 1.2. BCU information indicates a growth rather than a decline in canoe participation. Whilst some smaller canoe clubs have disbanded, their members have often transferred to other clubs. Some clubs are also oversubscribed. The canoe retail trade report vibrant equipment sales through the summer to many new people entering the activity.

From 1.4.5, 2.1 point 7, SO1, SO6, SO 7 , SP6
– a point well made for conservation to recognise the scope for water recreation, particularly canoeing – the canoe is the traditional craft used for wildlife watching and exploring wilderness areas. It causes no erosion, noise or pollution and leaves no trace of its passing. The BCU promotes good environmental canoeing practices for any restrictions or zoning arrangements to be minimal or not required.

The BCU is also fully aware of the underuse of rivers in the region (1.4.2) and the problematic prevention of access by riparian owners (1.4.4). There is clearly scope for the fuller use of this physical resource and addressing resistance to access.

From 2.1 (Gaps 3) and SP1- improving and providing access would support doorstep opportunities and the creation of recreational linear routes/canoe trails network, plus contribute to SO 4 and a necklace of gateway sites. Zonal arrangements that interrupted a linear route would be unwelcome. The BCU is receiving an increasing number of enquiries for canoe trail information that is now a dedicated project as an addition to the members Rivers Information Service.

NB. the Sheffield Hallam paper on Liability makes interesting reading

From 1.4.5 and 3.1 BCU has also identified sluices, old mills etc that may have scope to produce Grade 2 water conditions. .

Other gaps from 2.1 are very pertinent to canoeing – sprint courses and canoe touring. Although good canoe touring is noted in Table 1.5, this is the exception and the overall provision is lacking. There is informal canoe touring but this can have uncertainty for access. Away from the navigations, only the R Waveney has a certainty for canoe touring.

From SP 5 information is required if new forms of river basin canoe access agreements are being considered. There has been a series of canoe access feasibility studies to include the Rivers Waveney and Mersey and we query the need for further research work. The BCU believes the resulting Waveney and Mersey agreements are the benchmark for a standard all year canoe access arrangement that incorporates environmental protection and applicable to all rivers. The BCU has difficulty with the view that an agreement could be when the river is not attractive to anglers. It conflicts with the Waveney and Mersey arrangements and is not inclusive. This comment also applies to 3.1 and SP1 and improving existing provision.

From 3.1

Physical facilities - a minimum or no facilities are required for some canoeing opportunities. The Cut Off channel is an example and where the EA have agreed in principle it is a suitable linear canoe route.

Access improvements to rivers – comment from SP5 refers, and the BCU agrees and is pleased to see that the Rivers Lark, Gipping, Thet, and Little Ouse are identified as suitable for canoeing. All these rivers are on record as being used and the BCU understands the latter is a navigation from Thetford; and acts apply to the Rivers Gipping and Ivel where access is challenged.

The BCU would be pleased to discuss the plan and this comment in more detail.