A good day out - and a look to the future of tourism

Norfolk’s key industry, and a major influence on the coast’s landscape and communities, was under the spotlight at this year’s partnership conference.

Over 75 participants from local businesses, organisations and communities took an in-depth look at visitor experience management on the Norfolk coast. The conference is to be used to inform a major funding bid to increase sustainable tourism on the coast – the kind of visiting that protects and enhances the asset.

Presentations were followed by a ‘Question Time’ session, with a panel of tourism representatives. Participants came up with over 30 ideas, and 40 questions regarding sustainable tourism development in the area.

Key issues identified for future work included: the far-reaching effects of climate change; a lack of shared working between organisations and different sectors and undervaluing or insufficient understanding of the environmental assets of the area which are the basis of its attraction.

Key opportunities and priorities put forward included: mentoring young people into paid employment in the tourism/ environment sector; development of increased sustainable transport options on the coast including an off road cycle network; development of a new visitor management strategy; research into the behavioural economics of visitors; the potential of the maritime economy and the health benefits of sustainable tourism.

Estelle Hook, policy and partnership officer said: “Tourism is key to the economy of the Norfolk coast. But like any business it depends on its raw material – in this case the beauty and health of the environment. This project will more than safeguard – it will actually enhance the asset for the long term future of the area. The many ideas put forward give us a flying start to deliver protection and profit.”

Website survey

Development of a funding bid is being discussed with Norfolk ponds project partners; we aim to submit an expression of interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund soon.

Meanwhile, a trial of a ponds survey methodology is underway, based on that used for the national PondNet project. Once this is finalised, we hope there will still be time this year for volunteers to start collecting information on ponds in the area, to be added to our database.

Together with Norfolk Monuments Mapping Project, we’re also looking for volunteers to help with researching the historic provenance of ponds, using the on-line Norfolk Heritage Environment Record – see here for further details.

The Norfolk Coast Partnership works to protect the special qualities of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Sustainable development fund update

With projects worth over £38,000, 2015 saw another successful year for the Sustainable Development Fund. £15,000 of grants supported exciting initiatives from West Runton and South Wootton parish councils, RSPB, Norfolk Rivers Trust and Hunstanton & District Civic Society.

Special congratulations to South Wootton parish council which, in recognition of their strong partnership working and biodiversity efforts, won at the 2016 Community Biodiversity Awards.

In 2016, the SDF is supporting five projects. Aylmerton Pond Restoration group is planning a boardwalk and interpretation panel and four schools are improving their outdoor space. Northrepps Primary is working closely with their parish council to create a ‘community wild space’, while Sidestrand Hall School has plans to create a sensory garden that will have wide-ranging benefits for their students.

For an informal discussion about the 2017-18 fund, contact Kate Dougan.

The AONB dark skies project got under way earlier in the year with an enthusiastic initial meeting involving North Norfolk Astronomy Society, CPRE, North Norfolk District Council and Kelling Heath Holiday Park. The project aims to promote public understanding and appreciation of the Norfolk coast’s dark skies, and enhance them by improving light pollution.

The group will be joined at the next meeting in September by King’s Lynn Borough Council, RSPB and representatives from Deepdale Farms and the Holkham Estate. It is exciting to see such a range of interested parties wishing to be involved so there will be a strong focus on developing key actions for the next 1-2 years in order to raise the profile and condition of our amazing night skies.

More information about the project can be found here. If you or your organisation would like to be involved we would love to hear from you. We are especially interested to hear from AONB parish councils who would like to reduce their lighting. Please contact Kate Dougan.

Election of new representatives

Enormous thanks to our community representatives for their contributions over the last five years. They have been invaluable in their involvement in a variety of activities, such as participating in projects, raising AONB community-related issues and advising on planning applications.

Thanks also to those AONB parish councils who voted in this year’s community representatives’ election which saw Ian Shepherd, Keith Harrison and Mike Wade return for a further term. And a very warm welcome to Clive Wakes-Miller and Terry Brown who join the team this time. As with all our representatives they bring a wealth of experience and knowledge regarding the coast’s communities and we look forward to working with them all over the next five years.

For more information about the community representatives click here.

For community issues in the AONB email Kate Dougan.