Green Shoots of Recovery

The contribution of the natural environment to the Norfolk economy

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How important is Norfolk’s natural environment to the Norfolk economy?
The Norfolk Coast

- RSPB study in 2000 Rayment et al. Conducted visitor surveys between the towns of Weybourne and Snettisham.

- Concluded that visits to this area provides turnover of £111 million for tourism related business.

- This spending supports some 2,700 jobs directly and a further 504 indirectly.

- 34% of visitors came for the nature and wildlife, 77% came for the walks, 60% for the bird watching, 48% for the beach.
The Brecks

a landscape of tranquil forest, open heathland and agricultural land, the Brecks is home to many unique or distinctive birds, plants and animals.

The total expenditure associated with tourism trips to the area is £176,969,000.

This calculates as 1,769 Full-time jobs that are supported through tourism.

Thetford forest itself has up to 1.5 million visitors a year and generates an annual income of £17.1 million.

This income supports 305 jobs annually.
The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path

The amount of visitor spend that can be attributed to purely the natural environment is estimated at just over £1 million.

The total economic benefit of the National Trail is calculated as £2,034,348. This supports 104 FTE jobs.
Value of natural assets in the Broads in terms of visitor revenue is £320million.

Value in terms of drinking water is £17million.

Of day visits to the Broads 679,000 were to the countryside, 29,500 were to the coast and 55,200 were to urban areas.
Health

“Exposure to nature makes us feel good. Nature is free therapy with no side effects. Contact with natural surroundings offers a restorative environment which allows us to relax, unwind and re-charge our batteries, improving our happiness and reducing our stress levels.”

- Obesity and Diabetes in the UK costs the NHS £5 billion per year

- The cost of mental health problems to the economy is estimated at around £23 billion a year.

- Stress, anxiety and depression account for the loss of around 60 million working days each year.

- In 2005, £27.7 million antidepressants prescriptions were written in England, at a cost of £338 million to the NHS.

- The Department of Health estimated that a 10% increase in adult physical activity would save £500 million per year and save 6000 lives.
The Department of Health commissioned the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group to prepare results of how much inactivity costs the NHS.

The result for Norfolk was £13,267,480.

This figure could be greatly reduced if we recognise the benefits of our surrounding natural environment on mental and physical health.
Norfolk as a county has a rich biodiversity, landscape and archaeology; for this reason we attract a disproportionately large amount of agri-environment spend.

Environmental Stewardship total spend in Norfolk in 09/10 was £12,677,535.54.
‘Fantastic, really good work/life balance, because we spend all our out of work time on the Broads, fantastic place to live.’ (Liz Chettleburgh, Aviva).

‘Fantastic quality of life… I like to go to the beach, I like to go to the countryside and it’s all on my doorstep, so I can work hard and play hard.’ (Jeanette Wheeler, Birketts Solicitors).

Inward investors, particularly in high tech sectors, often seek locations that offer a ‘quality’ lifestyle. The region’s good image, combined with an attractive environment, is a major regional selling point.

Many large multi national companies such as Aviva have major offices here, naming the beautiful environment and the quality of life that goes with it as a reason for choosing this location.
Costs to the Economy

Support for the environment can reduce costs as well as contributing revenue.

- In Britain alone, the spread of invasive non-native species have been estimated to cost our economy in the region £2 billion a year.

Rampant growth of floating pennywort could destroy the Broads boating industry.
Concluding Thoughts

- It is easy to overlook the natural environment when times are difficult and priorities are conflicted.
- It's essential that we recognise that the natural environment is an important foundation for Norfolk’s economic recovery.
- The wildlife and landscape of the county is our USP. It should not merely be seen as a constraint to growth.
- Total contribution per annum of the natural environment to the Norfolk economy is £900,000,000.