

Green Shoots of Recovery

The contribution of the natural environment to the Norfolk economy.

Norfolk as a county is known for its biodiversity and natural landscape. It boasts a wide variety of habitats and species, which act as a powerful draw for visitors to the region, as well as providing a healthy and pleasant environment in which to live and work. Greater recognition is needed of the contribution that the natural environment makes to the economy of the county. This leaflet sets out some of the highlights of that contribution, drawing on studies by many individuals and organisations.

Norfolk's Coast

The largely unspoilt coastline of Norfolk is an internationally significant area for wildlife. Bitterns and terns, oyster catchers, avocets and marsh harriers together with the passage of migrant visitors, make the north Norfolk coast one of the leading UK sites for bird watching.

- Tourism in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) between Weybourne and Snettisham provides turnover of **£111** million for tourism-related business and an income of **£18** million for local producers and suppliers;
- This spending supports some **2,700 jobs** directly and a further **504** indirectly.

National Trail

The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail contributes to the delivery of **£2.5million** visitor spend each year. Of that, around £500,000 is attributable to the trail itself.



The Brecks

The Brecks spans 370 sq. miles/940 sq. kilometres across Norfolk and Suffolk. One of the driest parts of Britain, this landscape of tranquil forest, open heathland and agricultural land 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 equates to **1,769 FTE jobs** that are supported through tourism.

A Woodland Wealth Appraisal by the Forestry Commission examined the status of and wealth associated with the woodlands in the East of England (including Thetford Forest itself), using an ecosystem services approach. It concluded that woodlands in the region are worth **£1.276 billion** per annum.



Thetford Forest

...is the largest pine forest in the lowlands of Britain and covers over 18,500 hectares, some 9.8% of the land in the Brecks. It offers a wide range of activities for visitors, such as nature walking, horse riding, picnicking and adventure sites such as 'Go Ape'.

Thetford forest has up to **1.5 million** visitors a year and generates an annual income of **£17.1 million**, through tourism alone. This income creates **305 jobs** annually.



The Broads

The east of the county is home to much of the Norfolk Broads - over 200kms of navigable waterways and internationally important wildlife. The value of natural assets in the Broads in terms of visitor revenue and drinking water is **£320 million and £17 million per year respectively.**

- 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;
- In terms of visitor spend, these account for **£19,781,500** from visits made to the countryside, **£971,000** from visits to the coast and **£2,323,000** to urban areas;

“
Contact with the natural environment helps safeguard health and well-being, which can build a greater understanding of the value of nature and help reduce environmentally damaging behaviour, which in turn benefits health and therefore reduces pressure on health services, which impacts on the NHS.”

(SDC, Healthy Futures, 2007)

Other aspects related to the environment that provide local income

Health

The natural environment - everything from parks to open countryside - can play an important part in promoting and maintaining good health and well-being. Nationally:

- The cost of mental health problems to the economy in terms of loss of output from people being unable to work 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 antidepressant 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 6,000 lives;
- Obesity and diabetes in the UK cost the NHS £5 billion per year. Studies have shown that taking part in some form of 'green exercise' can lead to a plethora of physical health benefits, such as reduced blood pressure and weight loss.

The Department of Health commissioned the British Heart Foundation to investigate how much physical inactivity costs the NHS. The result for the Norfolk PCT was **£13,267,480**. This figure could be greatly reduced if people took advantage of the surrounding natural environment for healthy exercise and recreation.

Farming

Norfolk as a county is rich in biodiversity, landscape and archaeology; for this reason, we attract a disproportionately large amount of national agri-environment spend.

- Since 1987, there have been a number of Government conservation programmes to encourage and reward farmers for their countryside management where they go beyond 'good agricultural practice'. In recent years in Norfolk, agreements with local farmers have attracted an average investment of **£12 million** annually.



Business Investment

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 in Norfolk, and cite the beautiful environment and the quality of life that goes with it as a real bonus for their work force.

'Fantastic, really good work/ life balance, because we spend all our out of work time on the Broads' (**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**).

Taking Costs out of the Economy

It is important to note that as well as bringing in a positive amount of revenue to the local economy, support for the natural environment can also take costs out of the local economy.

Timely control of invasive non-native species, for example, could potentially save hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum. Allowed to grow unchecked, invasive non-native plants lead to a loss of biodiversity and can cause widespread environmental damage. Rampant growth of floating pennywort, for example, can choke waterways. This plant is already in the river Waveney. If allowed to spread unchecked, it could destroy the Broads boating industry.



Concluding Thoughts

It is easy to overlook the natural environment when times are difficult and priorities are conflicted, when other sections of society seem to claim a higher importance than the environment. However, the natural environment represents an important foundation for local economic recovery.

Based on the secondary analysis of a variety of work contained in this report, the natural environment can be said to add an estimated **£900,000,000** per annum to the Norfolk economy.

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Further copies of this document may be downloaded from
www.norfolkbiodiversity.org

This report was written by Anne Pickering on behalf of Norfolk County Council, June 2010.

For information about the global study of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) see www.teebweb.org

