

Strategic Priorities for Water Related Recreation in the East of England

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The preparation of this plan was managed by a steering group comprising representatives from British Waterways, Environment Agency, Natural England, Sport England, GO-East in consultation with East of England Regional Development Agency and East of England Regional Assembly

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Purpose and Vision

The purpose of these Strategic Priorities is to provide a set of clear and succinct initiatives that will contribute to the protection and development of water related recreation in the East of England, within the context of the current legislation. The vision can be summarised as:

Subject to the UK Framework for Sustainable Development, everyone who wishes to participate should be given the opportunity to enjoy safely, responsibly, sustainably and with confidence, the full range of legal water related recreation on inland and coastal waters in the East of England

Scope

Water related recreation activities are defined as those that make direct use of natural and artificial outdoor water resources (coastal and inland). Therefore we have not set out to assess or provide priorities for meeting the demands of a range of land based activities, such as walking, cycling and bird watching, where water is used as a backdrop. However, we do recognise the joint opportunities that exist for extending the benefits of waterways and watercourses to meet the wider needs of society. In addition, the plan does not include activities conventionally practiced in swimming pools, such as competitive swimming and water polo.

It is important to note, particularly in respect of any specific sites or areas cited in this report as examples, that the development or promotion of recreational activities will be subject to the appropriate planning regulations, environmental assessments and legislation. Furthermore, the citing of such examples does not represent any commitment on behalf of the partners to develop these further. We firmly hold that all new recreational developments, or indeed any extensions to existing activities, should enhance biodiversity and mitigate any potential negative impacts on nature conservation.

For the purposes of these strategic priorities, the East of England region is considered to be that covered by the East of England Plan (2008), which covers the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Consistent with the East of England Plan (2008), reference is also made to the eastern edge of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (2005).

The Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities have been developed through a procedure that explored: the **demand** for water related recreation, informed by a range of evidence including projections about economic, environmental and social change in the East of England, the economic, social and health benefits of water related recreation, and relevant national and regional policy drivers; the **supply** of water and facilities for water related recreation, based on an inventory of the water resources that exist in the East of England and their current and proposed recreational uses; the **gaps** between the **demand** for water related recreation and the existing and proposed **supply** of resources and facilities; and the **strategic priorities** required to address the gaps in provision. These have been divided between **high priorities** [those that will have an immediate impact on provision] and **medium priorities** [those that have the capacity to enhance or improve provision]. The division between high and medium was informed by consultation responses to the draft report.

Following a summary of the strategic priorities that have been identified, the report will set out the evidence available on demand and supply, and will identify the gaps in provision that currently exist. A full description of the strategic priorities and related initiatives that will address these gaps is provided, followed by an indication of who should be involved in delivery.

Summary of Strategic Priorities

<p>High Priorities [those initiatives that will have an immediate impact on provision]</p>
<p>HP1: Improving existing provision. There are a number of initiatives to be undertaken to improve the existing stock of resources available for water related recreation. These include: a review of public provision and management; opportunities to deliver smarter investment and strategic provision through a number of mechanisms; improvements to access and infrastructure, such as slipways and car parking, to improve the quality and range of doorstep and local recreation opportunities.</p>
<p>HP2: Addressing gaps in the provision for some water sports. The audit conducted for this plan has endorsed and widened the scope of the regional sports facilities plan, to cover the need for new provision for most sports in at least some parts of the region.</p>
<p>HP3: A necklace of green, local gateway sites along the water network. The water network provides the opportunity to develop a network of local green spaces or gateway sites to serve local towns and rural communities, with shared facilities such as parking, toilet & shower facilities, starting points for health walks & cycle rides, canoe trails, fishing, bird watching, picnic & barbeque areas etc. A 'necklace' of regularly spaced sites could help increase participation in healthier lifestyles and outdoor recreation, tackling people's concerns and lack of confidence in using linear outdoor resources.</p>
<p>HP4: Best practice in environmentally friendly recreation. There is a need to develop and disseminate good practice in environmentally sensitive and sustainable recreation management. This can best be achieved by initiating a number of demonstration and pilot projects that can allow stakeholders and recreational users to learn from good practice.</p>
<p>HP5: Influencing the regional policy agenda: There is a need to ensure that the full benefits of water related recreation are recognised within the regional policy framework. This includes developing specific guidance on the planning and use of water resources for recreation and promoting the amenity of water environments more generally. There is also potential to cater more fully for water recreation as an integral part of 'home life' in new and expanding settlements throughout the region.</p>
<p>HP6: Better provision of information to improve understanding and use: Not all current opportunities for water related recreation are well used or understood, resulting in congestion at popular locations and under-use elsewhere. An information system is required (either stand alone or linked to current local authority and tourism information systems), to raise awareness of the water related recreation opportunities available and encourage more effective and responsible use of these resources.</p>
<p>HP7: 'Access East'. A significant proportion of the region's water network has additional capacity for leisure and commercial boating. Major investments in relatively short links to connect to the national waterway network are key to stimulating regeneration, growth and commercial investment across much of the region. Such investment could also provide major green infrastructure opportunities for healthy living and sustainable transport to serve growth areas.</p>
<p>Medium Priorities [those initiatives that have the capacity to enhance or improve provision]</p>
<p>MP1: The development of 'wild water parks' as havens for wildlife that are accessible, under certain conditions, to water craft and for water-related activities. There are particular opportunities to provide sustainable transport links for visitors to some of the most important wetland sites in the region via the water network (water taxis, moorings, cycle routes etc)</p>
<p>MP2: To develop demonstration sites to pilot and test a range of approaches to improve the quality, range and benefits of water related recreation in the region. Examples include: a tourism-based voluntary payment scheme for environmental improvements; new forms of river basin canoe agreement; demonstrating the potential benefits of widening access to many water activities to tackle social inclusion and anti-social behaviour; and establishing climate change monitoring sites.</p>
<p>MP3: Developing a network of water related recreation hubs. There is a need for a range of large scale facilities and opportunities to be made accessible to large numbers of people, throughout the region. This can be addressed through developing hubs in each of the region's Growth Areas, each capable of offering a range of opportunities, and each having the facility to host national and regional events in specific activities.</p>
<p>MP4: To encourage greater participation in inland and coastal activities through the public transport network, including fast light rail, to encourage people out of urban settlements to participate in a range of recreation activities. This could be linked to potential green tourism developments at key locations, such as new holiday accommodation with access to a range of water recreation activities.</p>
<p>MP5: Improved estuary and coastal management: Consistent with the regional Coastal Initiative, there is a need to address a range of management issues related to estuaries and the coast. Estuary management involves regulating conflicting uses often in highly significant ecological environments. Current management approaches vary, meaning that there is a need for more integrated and environmentally aware approaches, informed by best practice.</p>

1. Demand and Supply

1.1 The Value of Water Related Recreation

The provision of water related recreation opportunities has a number of positive outcomes, including health benefits, social inclusion, environmental protection and economic benefits.

1.1.1 Health benefits

Physical activity is one of the most undervalued interventions in improving public health¹. It is closely associated with better physical and mental health and reduced mortality. There are also psychological and personal development benefits, including improved self-esteem and lower risk of depression. Most of the potential health benefits in adults can be achieved through a total of 30 minutes of moderate activity on at least five days per week (Department of Health, 2002²). Water related recreation activities are an ideal way of achieving this target, especially swimming, rowing, canoeing, dinghy sailing and other activities that require sustained physical exertion³. For example, the Start Up Exercise Referral Scheme in Cambridge includes referrals to the local rowing club (nearly 300 referrals were made in the year commencing April 2006)⁴.

1.1.2 Social inclusion and quality of life

The social benefits of participation in outdoor recreational activity have now been clearly established (Policy Action Team 10, 1999⁵). Social benefits for the individual include having fun, developing social networks, acquiring knowledge and skills, and gaining a sense of achievement. These benefits contribute to social inclusion. Communities also reap rewards as people take part in common activities and some individuals are diverted from crime and antisocial behaviour. Many single water sports have developed social inclusion programmes, such as Canoe Paddability and 'Get Hooked on Fishing', although little has been done in the past to monitor or assess the benefits of these schemes. There may be a particular opportunity to develop and assess a broader initiative for a number of water sports, with the intention of providing a cost-benefit argument to widen an application of this approach at a number of inland and coastal locations where tackling deprivation and social inclusion is a high priority.

¹ Sport England (1999) *Best value through sport. The value of sport to the health of the nation*. London: Sport England.

² Department of Health (2002) *Addressing the health agenda: a new role for sports activity – health*. London: Department of Health.

³ Department of Health, SPRITO & Fitness Industry Association (2001) *National Quality Assurance Framework for Fitness Referral Schemes*. London: DoH.

⁴ See Cambridge City Council (2007) *Start up exercise referral scheme annual report*.

⁵ PAT 10 (1999) *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal: Policy Action Team Audit: Report of the Policy Action Team 10: The contribution of Sport and the Arts*. DCMS. London.

1.1.3 Environmental protection and reducing the region's carbon footprint

The natural environment, and water in particular, is central to the character of the region. The region includes the Broads, with status equivalent to a National Park, four AONBs (Norfolk Coast, Suffolk Coast & Heaths, Dedham Vale and part of the Chilterns) which account for 6% of the region's land area, over 500 SSSIs (more than 10% of the total for England), and nearly 50 National Nature Reserves (over 20% of the total for England) including the Blackwater and Colne Estuaries, the Wash, a number of broads and substantial sections of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast. The region also has 14 European Marine Sites (SACs and SPAs) and 26 RAMSAR sites, which include most of the Essex estuaries and large sections of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast. The majority of land is below 60m Above Ordnance Datum, with much of the fens and central lowlands being at or below sea level. The coast and lowest lying areas are under serious threat from imminent sea level rise⁶. There is recognition that climate change is likely to have profound impacts on the region's coastal and inland water resources, and that steps need to be taken now to protect these environments⁷, particularly from inappropriate recreation and other developments⁸. In many parts of the region, local authorities, the Broads Authority and other organisations successfully manage a high level of water related recreation activity in very sensitive environmental sites using a wide range of tools such as permits, short closures and codes of conduct. Well managed water related recreation can contribute to significant environmental improvements. For example, angling organisations, landowners and private sector operators have all worked in partnership with the Environment Agency to contribute to a significant increase in the availability and quality of riverine coarse and game fish habitat⁹.

The potentially negative impacts of water related recreation on vulnerable habitats and species has led many sport governing bodies to develop stewardship initiatives and environmental strategies. One example is the Royal Yachting Association's *Boating for Life strategy*, which has now been supplemented by an environmental code of practice¹⁰. The RYA is working in partnership with the British Marine Federation to deliver the Green Blue¹¹, a major environmental programme aimed at the recreational boating community and industry, which is raising awareness of environmental best practice, conducting research and carrying out practical demonstration projects.

1.1.4 Economic benefits

Sport related economic activity in the region generated £ 1.9bn in 2005, equivalent to 1.8% of total value added. Consumer spending on sport-related goods and services is equivalent to 2.5% of consumer spending in the region, with £136 million of this spent on boats. Some 56,500 people were employed in sport-related jobs in the region in 2005, which corresponds to 2.1% of total employment in the region. 77% of employees were employed in the commercial sector, 12% in the voluntary

⁶ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/docs/eastchapter/east11/default.htm>

⁷ See, for example, the Broadlands Flood Alleviation Project

⁸ HM Government (2005) *One future – different paths. The UK's shared framework for sustainable development*. London: Defra.

⁹ See, for example, work on the River Wensum, as part of the pilot Fisheries Action Plan (<http://www.nafac.co.uk/nonmembers/fap-folder/anglian-faps.html>)

¹⁰ www.ecop.org.uk

¹¹ www.thegreenblue.org.uk

sector and 11% in the public sector (These figures do not include the self-employed)¹². There are no data for water-related recreation alone. Nationally, there are over 500m visits a year to inland waterways, while the national leisure and small commercial marine industry generates around £3bn of revenue per annum, with inland marinas and boat hire contributing a further £142m per year¹³. There are also data about the value of inland waterways, especially those operated by British Waterways, where the main beneficiaries of these waterways are 'boaters, walkers, dog walkers and those using towpaths for travel and sightseeing'¹⁴. Navigable waterways are also valuable as a focus for regeneration. For example, a recent study of a proposed waterway extension suggested that, for a capital investment of £52m at 2007 prices, the canal would raise local property values by 18% and would inject more than £6m per annum into the local economy.¹⁵ (see Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Regeneration and Development & Director of Planning, 2007). A study of the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway found that in return for construction costs of £80-£150m, the waterway should generate up to 1.6m visitors per annum, of whom 100,000 would be boaters. These visitors would contribute between £7.5m and £8.5m to the local economy, which would result in up to 530 new permanent jobs¹⁶. Other studies have yielded similar results¹⁷, indicating that investment in inland waterways can lead to a range of benefits being achieved.

Tourism in the East of England contributes approximately 8% to the regional economy¹⁸ (the size of the regional economy is approximately £89 billion – the region contributes over 8% to the national economy). Tourism employs approximately 167,000 in the region. In addition, there is a range of organisations that are dependent upon the environmental assets of the region; these include the RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology, the Wildlife Trusts, the National Trust and environmental sciences at the University of East Anglia. These organisations contribute primary and secondary economic benefits to the regional economy.

¹² For more information, see East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

¹³ Patrick McMillan & Associates (1999) *Navigating the future: extending navigation within the Great Ouse River system*. Pre-feasibility study report, prepared for the Great Ouse Boating Association. Cambridge: Patrick McMillan and Associates (see <http://www.goba.org.uk/medialibrary/NavigatingTheFuture.pdf>); Defra (2000) *Waterways for tomorrow*. London: Defra;

¹⁴ Environment Agency (no date) *Economic valuation of navigable waterways: literature review*. Unpublished report, Economics Team, Environment Agency.

¹⁵ Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Regeneration and Development & Director of Planning (2007) *Canal feasibility study – review*. Cabinet Paper, 23rd January 2007, Swindon Borough Council. It should be noted that the 18% increase in property prices had not been tested, and that earlier hedonic price research in London and the Midlands found much lower increases, of between 3 and 5% (see Garrod, G. and Willis, K. (1994) An economic estimate of the effect of a waterside location on property values. *Environmental and Resource Economics* 4(2): 209-217).

¹⁶ Halcrow (2001) *Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway 2010: executive summary of stage one feasibility report*. Milton Keynes: Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterways Trust.

¹⁷ ECOTEC (2007) *Waterways in Wales: Economic Costs and Benefits of the Welsh Canal Network*. A Final Report to British Waterways. Report C3383 / June 2007. London: Ecotec. ECOTEC (2007) *The Cotswold Canal Restoration: Appraisal of Economic Impacts*. A Report to British Waterways. ECOTEC (2007) *The Economic Impact of Restoring the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale Canals*. A Report to British Waterways. ECOTEC (2003) *The Economic Impact of the Restoration of the Kennet and Avon Canal*. British Waterways. Price Waterhouse Coopers in association with Tourism Development International (2006) *Waterways Ireland: Socio Economic Summary Report for the NE and SW Sections of the Ulster Canal*. Final Report.

¹⁸ Visit Britain (2006) *UK Tourism survey 2006*. London: Visit Britain.

1.2 Policy Priorities

1.2.1 National Policy

The key policy drivers influencing this strategic plan at the national level revolve around the core values of water related recreation set out above. The recognition of the physical and mental health benefits of sport are given particular prominence by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport,¹⁹ which has set a target that 50% of the population will be reasonably active by 2011, and 70% by 2020. This is supported by Sport England's *Framework for Sport*²⁰ and *Strategy 2008-2011*,²¹ which set out an agenda to get people to start, stay and succeed in sport at every level. Swimming, canoeing, sailing and rowing are identified as UK-wide priority sports. A further priority is to deliver better access to the countryside, through partnership work with Defra and Natural England. The Environment Agency's strategic plans for water-based recreation²² and for angling²³, offer a similar focus, on improving access for all sectors of society, promoting the outdoors, and making recreation sustainable. The UK's Framework for Sustainable Development²⁴ makes it clear that all provision for recreation should be sustainable and should not take place at the expense of the environment.

In addition to this agenda, there is a national priority to promote sport and recreation as a means of improving people's quality of life. This is reflected in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's focus on liveability²⁵, the creation of greener communities through improvements in the quality of planning and design, and in the management of public spaces. This has more recently been articulated by a group of agencies led by Arts Council England²⁶, which aims to make cultural and sporting activity and infrastructure a larger part of people's lives. This emphasis is reflected in national planning guidance, with *PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable development* requiring development plans to take account of the needs of the whole community, to promote health and well being by making provisions for physical activity, and to provide land and improved access for leisure and recreation.

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill, which was announced in the Queen's Speech of 3rd December 2008, is likely to have a significant impact on the coastal areas of the region. The Bill will enable the creation of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast, together with areas of 'spreading room', for example beaches, dunes and cliffs. The practical details of how the access elements of the legislation will be implemented are being developed by Natural England²⁷. In addition to the access provisions, the Bill will seek to develop a more coherent approach to coastal zone management, covering marine conservation as well as recreation and commercial shipping activities. The Water Framework Directive, with its requirement

¹⁹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Strategy Unit (2002) *Game Plan*. London: DCMS.

²⁰ Sport England (2004). *Framework for sport in England*. London: Sport England.

²¹ Sport England (2008) *Sport England Strategy 2008-2011*. London: Sport England.

²² Environment Agency (2005) *A better place to play: a strategy for water-based recreation*. Bristol: Environment Agency.

²³ Environment Agency (2006) *Fishing for the future: angling in 2015*. Bristol: Environment Agency.

²⁴ HM Government (2005) *One future – different paths. The UK's shared framework for sustainable development*. London: Defra

²⁵ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) *Liveability: cleaner, safer, greener*. London: ODPM.

²⁶ Arts Council England, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, English Heritage, Museums, Libraries and Archives, The Regional Cultural Consortiums, Sport England, DCLG, DCMS (2007) *Living Places: stronger communities through culture*. London: Arts Council England.

²⁷ Natural England (2008) *Coastal access: Natural England's draft scheme*. Peterborough: Natural England.

for a River Basin Planning system²⁸, will similarly foster a more holistic approach to water management, and could provide new opportunities to develop environmentally friendly recreation provision.

1.2.2 Regional Policy

The two key regional policy documents are the East of England Plan,²⁹ which contains the revised spatial strategy for the region, and the Regional Economic Strategy.³⁰ Both strategies were revised in 2008. The overall spatial vision for the region is that:

“By 2021, the East of England will be realising its economic potential and providing a high quality of life for its people, including by meeting their housing needs in sustainable inclusive communities. At the same time it will reduce its impact on climate change and the environment, including through savings in energy and water use and by strengthening its stock of environmental assets”³¹.

To realise its economic potential, the vision is that:

“By 2031 the East of England will be:

- Internationally competitive with a global reputation for innovation and business growth;
- A region that harnesses and develops the talents and creativity of all;
- At the forefront of the low-carbon and resource-efficient economy.

It will be known for:

- Exceptional landscapes, vibrant places and quality of life;
- Being a confident, outward-looking region with strong leadership and where communities actively shape their future”³².

These strategies make a strong connection between the quality of the environment, people’s quality of life and the success of the regional economy. High quality cultural provision, including sport and recreation, is viewed as an essential ingredient in people’s quality of life (policy C1 of the spatial strategy). New cultural provision is to be supported, provided it compliments existing provision, enhances the environment, minimises the use of energy and natural resources, and maximises opportunities to use public transport (policy C2 of the spatial strategy).

The spatial strategy directs most strategically significant new development to the major urban areas where strategic networks connect and public transport is at its best and has potential for expansion (policy SS2). New development will therefore be expected to contribute to sustainable communities (in terms of supporting strategic

²⁸ See Defra (2006) *River basin planning guidance*. London: Defra.

²⁹ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan: the Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy* (May 2008). Norwich: TSO.

³⁰ East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

³¹ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan: the Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy* (May 2008). Norwich: TSO, para 2.2.

³² East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency, section 2.1 ‘Vision’.

networks and the effective use of public transport), particularly in terms of improving quality of life, community cohesion and social inclusion. There is also a target that 60% of new development will be on land that had previously been subject to development.

The key drivers that inform these strategic priorities for water-related recreation are³³:

1. *Economic Development.* Economic development is very much a cornerstone of regional policy, with specific emphasis on harnessing the region's economic strengths in areas such as science and R&D allied to an objective of improving the skills base of the population. As the economic strategy makes clear, the success of the region, in economic terms, is about creating an economic, social and cultural environment that will attract highly skilled and motivated workers, allied to high quality leadership that is able to retain those workers in the region.³⁴ Success in achieving economic growth, relative to this plan, will be measured in terms of:

- A better balance between housing and employment opportunities contributing to effective and affordable places;
- Increased business investment in the identified engines of growth;
- Enhanced profile for the region through its places, natural, heritage and cultural assets;
- Reinforced roles for market towns as sub-regional centres;
- Sustainability of the vitality of rural areas; and
- Renaissance of the major coastal towns.³⁵

The sustainable development agenda is significant, with the economic strategy seeking to position the region as an exemplar of sustainable economic growth, in particular by decoupling economic growth from increases in the use of natural resources such as energy and water, and a broader desire to move towards sustainable consumption and production. Water-related initiatives such as green infrastructure planning, green tourism and the development of the coastal economies can clearly contribute towards the achievement of this driver.³⁶ The Olympics and Paralympics 2012 represent a major opportunity here, both in terms of the economic impact of the games themselves, and in terms of their legacy. The region will host two venues (including a water-based one for canoeing and kayaking) and the potential value of the Games to the East of England

³³ Appendices A & B map the priorities identified in this report against the region's spatial and economic strategy policies.

³⁴ East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

³⁵ East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

³⁶ See, in particular, the East of England Coastal Initiative, a multi-agency project initiated by the Government Office, to address a number of interrelated issues including: economic and social deprivation; challenges associated with climate change; a fragile, changing coastline; and significant areas of high value agricultural land and rare habitats vulnerable to flooding and salting. The socio-economic context is reported in Globe Regeneration Ltd, Delta Simons and Glyn Owen Associates (2008) *08-011 Coastal Initiative socio economic research*. Final Report to the East of England Cultural Observatory. Lincoln: Globe Regeneration Ltd.

economy could exceed £600 million³⁷. The East of England 2012 Business Plan³⁸ defines success for the East of England across tourism, business, skills, sport, health, culture, infrastructure and volunteering with delivery structures in place to ensure that the region can capitalise fully on legacy benefits. It is also claimed that better linkage with the national waterway network could bring a higher level of boating visits to the region³⁹, adding to current demand for moorings and facilities and providing a catalyst for the growth of the boating industry and related service sectors across the Great Ouse and Middle Level systems. More generally, the East of England Plan seeks to promote 'realistic and sustainable investment' in tourism, recognising that much tourist interest is in specific, often fragile, places (the coast and some major cities in the region). There is particular support for tourism initiatives that will regenerate coastal economies and provide employment outside the normal holiday season (policy E6).

2. *An active and healthy population.* The cornerstone of this objective in the East of England is to promote wellbeing through economic growth, community cohesion and social capital. This is allied to measures to achieve health and income equality, and to promote sustainable lifestyles. This is central to the regional economic vision, about healthy lifestyles being based on good jobs, good homes, good schools, vibrant communities and access to high quality open spaces. This is reinforced in the Sport England Strategy 2008-2011⁴⁰ and the regional Sports Facilities Strategy⁴¹, both of which make a clear connection between encouraging physical activity and addressing health issues such as obesity and heart disease⁴². In accordance with the Sport England Strategy 2008-2011, Whole Sport Plans (WSPs) have been developed by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to direct their development and investment for the period 2009-2013. Those relevant to water sports in the East of England (principally canoeing, rowing, water skiing and sailing) will be finalised in 2009, and will include priorities for facility development at both national and regional level, as well as overall plans for increasing participation. Support for the implementation of the WSPs is thus a key mechanism for delivering increased participation in water sports within the East of England.⁴³
3. *Social inclusion.* The key objectives in the East of England in this regard are to reduce levels of poverty and exclusion through the provision of a range of interventions including effective social infrastructure and services, and

³⁷ East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

³⁸ Nations and Regions East (2008) *Rising to the challenge: East of England Regional Business Plan for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

³⁹ Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust and Environment Agency (Fens Waterway Link)

⁴⁰ Sport England (2008) *Sport England Strategy 2008-2011*. London: Sport England

⁴¹ Sport England, Eastern Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁴² Appendix C maps the sports facility proposals in this report against those contained in the regional sports facilities strategy.

⁴³ For more information, contact Sport England (East), 19 The Crescent, Bedford MK40 2QP (www.sportengland.org). See also Sport England (2008) *Spatial planning for sport: the policy context*. London: Sport England.

decent and affordable homes for all⁴⁴. Provision for outdoor recreation and sport is referred to, with water-related activities able to contribute towards the provision of effective services. This is recognised, for example, in the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, which sets out a strategy for accommodating the development of 47,500 new homes in the Cambridge Sub Region, including the provision for enhanced sport and recreation facility provision⁴⁵.

4. *Accessibility*. In accordance with the sustainable development agenda at the core of the East of England Plan, there is an emphasis on reducing greenhouse gases and minimising transport growth (although ensuring that the economic benefits of the international gateways to the region are captured). One of the ways of achieving this is to create, conserve and enhance distinctive local communities where there is good access to a range of local recreation and sport facilities, including provision for water-related sport and recreation. In particular, the East of England Plan and the regional economic strategy aim to promote an effective and sustainable transport system. One example of this is the strategy for the Thames Estuary East⁴⁶, which has a vision of “Creating a high quality, multi-functional well-connected network of river-related spaces that are accessible to all, and are managed and maintained to the highest standards for people and wildlife.” However, it should be noted that the East of England currently lags behind other regions in taking steps to improve its public rights of way system, with relatively few Rights of Way Improvement Plans yet published, and very few of these being considered acceptable by Natural England⁴⁷.
5. *Environmental protection*. This objective relates to a mix of social interventions, such as encouraging better use of natural resources, the minimisation of waste and improved recycling, and broader policies relating to the protection of the East of England’s natural and built heritage and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. An example of this is the planned strategic use of the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway for surface water management⁴⁸, as a means of creating green travel options and as a significant part of a series of measures to create carbon neutral communities. The recently announced Rural Development Programme for England⁴⁹ also contains a range of environmental protection measures, such as financial support for the development of high water flow abstraction irrigation reservoirs (which could also have recreation and conservation benefits).

⁴⁴ See, for example, ODPM (2005) *Creating Sustainable Communities in the East of England* and Cultural Consortium for the East of England (2006) *A Better Life. The Role of Culture in the Sustainable Development of the East of England*.

⁴⁵ Cambridge Horizons (2007) *Cambridge Sub-Region Long Term Delivery Plan* and Cambridge Horizons (2006) *A Major Sports Facilities Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-region*

⁴⁶ Thames Estuary Partnership (2005) *The state of the Thames*. See also the proposals in the Regional Economic Strategy relating to the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region as a national regeneration priority and a powerhouse and playground for London.

⁴⁷ Natural England (2008) *Rights of Way Improvement Plan evaluation. Regional report for the East of England region*. Peterborough: Natural England

⁴⁸ Bedfordshire County Council (2006) *Marston Vale Surface Waters Plan*

⁴⁹ EEDA (2007) *Rural Development Programme for England [RDPE] 2007-2013: Prospectus and guidance on the use of Axis 1 and 3 in the East of England*. Histon, Cambs: EEDA (www.eeda.org.uk/rdpe)

1.3 Participation and demand

1.3.1 Participation and demand by residents

Over a quarter of the UK adult population (13.8m) now spend some of their leisure time in ways closely linked to coasts and inland waterways and watercourses⁵⁰. The participation rates for adults are 12.2% for coastal walking, 11.3% for general leisure time at the beach, 10.3% for outdoor swimming and 6.7% for 'any boating activity'. Coastal walking, sea angling, outdoor swimming, general leisure time at the beach, canal boating, motor boating/cruising, surfing and kite surfing, are increasing in popularity. For most other activities in the UK, the number of participants is static or has declined slightly. For some activities, this decline in participant numbers is accompanied by a significant increase in the average number of times each year people are participating. Examples include canoeing, rowing, waterskiing and windsurfing. For most water related recreation activities, participation rates are higher for men compared to women, younger age groups compared to older ones and AB groups compared to the other socio-economic groups. Although there is a regional dimension to these data, the East of England is included with London, and the South and South East of England, with no possibility of disaggregation.

The Active People Survey⁵¹ provides participation data on a number of the main water related sports, as well as overall participation rates for those active in sport. The proportion of the East of England population who participate in sport or physical activity for at least 30 minutes, at least 3 times per week, is 20.5%, which is slightly under the national average of 21% (interestingly, East of England women are slightly more active than the national average, whereas East of England men are slightly less active). Table 1.1 gives the participation rates for those sports covered by the Active People Survey (noting here that angling, one of the most popular water related activities, is not included in the survey):

Table 1.1 Participation by Sport⁵²

Sport	Regional participation (%age of population) of	National participation (%age of population) of	Regional v national
Swimming	14.40%	14.18%	+0.22%
Yachting and sailing	0.30%	0.34%	- 0.04%
Canoeing	0.30%	0.27%	+ 0.03%
Rowing	0.20%	0.20%	0.00%

⁵⁰ BMF, MCA, RNLI, WYA (2006) *Watersports and leisure participation survey 2006*. Guildford: Arkenford Market Research; see also East of England Development Agency (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Cambridge: EEDA, for a good overview of regional sports participation.

⁵¹ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Active People Survey: East Region Bulletin*, March 2007. Bedford: Sport England.

⁵² Source: Sport England, East Region (2007) *Active People Survey: East Region Bulletin*, March 2007. Bedford: Sport England.

Using a number of sources, not all from the East of England, it is possible to postulate some trends in water related recreation participation. These are summarised in Table 1.2

Table 1.2 Current and/or predicted participation in selected activities⁵³

Activity	Trends
Canoeing	Slow overall growth predicted (with some disciplines such as sprinting and polo increasing more rapidly), with successful clubs becoming over-subscribed. Equipment sales have also been rising through to Summer 2008
Open Swimming	Open swimming, particularly in rivers, has long been a popular activity, especially in the East of England (the Cam and the Waveney are two examples where this continues to be so). Participation has tended to decline in recent decades, largely as land owners and local authorities have sought to prevent open swimming. It is now enjoying a resurgence, although this is constrained by a lack of available sites
Inland coarse and game angling	Static, with signs that the popularity of coarse angling may be growing, with a shift in demand from rivers to lakes, reservoirs and commercial fisheries. Environment Agency coaching programmes for young and disadvantaged anglers has contributed to a 7% increase in the sale of rod licences for junior anglers (this is the highest increase nationally)
Sub-aqua diving	Growing fast, from a small base, especially in the East of England and London area
Personal watercraft	following a period of growth, participation is static and expected to decline
Kite surfing	Steady growth
Rowing	Rapid growth
Dinghy sailing	Static but likely to increase
Sea angling	Static, with recent decline in clubs and members; however, angling from the beach is continuing to grow in popularity
Surfing	Steady growth in the UK; not a major activity in the East of England. NW Norfolk coast does attract some interest regionally and nationally when conditions are right.
Wind surfing	Modest future increase
Inland motor cruising & narrow boating	The structure of motor cruising is changing, with a decline in the number of hire craft offset by a shift to the ownership of larger and more luxurious craft, with different mooring requirements. Some of these craft are home to their owners, for all or part of the year, and therefore demand fairly extensive bank-side facilities. However, few privately owned craft spend as long cruising as the hire craft used to, which has led – in part - to long waiting lists for off-line marina berths throughout the region, as well as increased demand for visitor moorings. However, most of the navigations, particularly the Middle Level and Nene, have capacity for more visiting craft, particularly if improvements are made to visitor moorings and locks.
Water skiing and wakeboarding	Following a period of decline, waterskiing is now becoming more popular, especially when complemented by wakeboarding (there is a possibility that wakeboarding using cable tows could be an Olympic sport by 2016)
Sailing cruising	Following several years of slight declines in popularity, sailing cruising has become more popular in the last two years. It seems unlikely that this relative stability will change in the near future

⁵³ Sources include: BMF, MCA, RNLI, WYA (2006) *Watersports and leisure participation survey 2006*. Guildford: Arkenford Market Research; Sport England, East Region (2007) *Active People Survey: East Region Bulletin*, March 2007. Bedford: Sport England; Patrick McMillan & Associates (1999) *Navigating the future: extending navigation within the Great Ouse River system*. Pre-feasibility study report, prepared for the Great Ouse Boating Association. Cambridge: Patrick McMillan and Associates (see <http://www.goba.org.uk/medialibrary/NavigatingTheFuture.pdf>); Defra (2000) *Waterways for tomorrow*. London: Defra; Inland Waterways Association (2008) *Submission to Government on the revised Waterways for Tomorrow*. Chesham: IWA; Hyder Consulting (2006) *Welsh Coastal Tourism Strategy*: technical data.

1.3.2 Tourism demand

Tourists also create demand for water sport and recreation activities. In 2007, there were nearly 133m visits to the region, which generated spending of over £5,000m. It is estimated that some 166,000 people work in tourism in the region⁵⁴. Of these visitors, approximately 20% visited the seaside, with a further 26% visiting the countryside or a village. There are no data available on the number of day visits for water related recreation made by those living outside the region. Tourism is particularly important to Norfolk, generating £1.3bn visitor expenditure per annum and 41,000 jobs. Of this, about £150m per annum and 4,400 jobs are related directly to the Broads hire boat industry.⁵⁵

1.3.3 Potential Drivers of Change in Outdoor Recreation

There are some significant demographic drivers that will affect future demand for outdoor recreation in the East of England. These are well articulated in the East of England Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy, the East of England 2012 Business Plan, the Framework for Sport in England and the Henley Centre work for Natural England⁵⁶. They have been distilled into six major drivers that will affect the East of England:

1. *High population densities in some areas, with further housing development planned.* Traditionally, much of the East of England has had a low population density, comprised largely of small market towns and rural settlements. However, the proximity of the region to London has led to rising demand for new homes, particularly in the three national Growth Areas (Essex Thames Gateway; London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough; Milton Keynes-South Midlands) and the newly identified growth points (Haven Gateway, Norwich and Thetford). Spatial strategy policy H1 suggests that at least 402,540 new homes are required in the region by 2021. This will increase population densities in the growth areas and points, as well as the demand for recreation opportunities, particularly from the young families and single households that will take up the bulk of the new houses. It should be noted that many of those living in urban areas currently have low rates of participation in sport and physical activity⁵⁷.
2. *Age polarisation and reconfiguration.* The existing resident population is ageing, with more 65 year olds than 16 year olds predicted by 2014. In contrast to traditional views of ageing, this population demonstrates an

⁵⁴ East of England Tourism (2007) *Compendium of tourism statistics*. Bury St Edmunds: East of England Tourism.

⁵⁵ Norfolk County Council Economic Development Review Panel (2001) *Broads boat hire industry study*. Norwich: Norfolk County Council.

⁵⁶ See Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO; East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency. Sport England (2004) *The framework for sport in England*. London. Sport England, and Henley Centre (2005) *Potential Drivers of Change in Outdoor Recreation to 2020: A Report for Natural England's Outdoor Recreation Strategy*

⁵⁷ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

- increasing interest in wellbeing, associated with both physical activity and mental health, along with a psychologically enriching connection with nature ('retuned to nature')⁵⁸. In contrast, many of the in-migrants to the new housing will be younger, less affluent and – critically – time constrained and less inclined to participate in active sport and recreation, especially outside the home. This implies a growing polarisation around issues of physical activity, health and wellbeing, as set out in the Sports Facilities Strategy for the region⁵⁹.
3. *Absolute and relative deprivation.* Notwithstanding the current financial crisis and economic recession, England's population is generally becoming increasingly affluent, with a greater focus on the 'experience economy' where people will pay for services and experiences rather than material goods. However, this affluence is unlikely to spread to all areas of the East of England, with absolute and relative deprivation affecting many of the coastal towns and the Essex Thames Gateway Growth Area. Some of these people will find work in the 'experience economy', but it will predominantly be low skilled and low paid, while the cost of living – especially housing and transport – will be governed by the affluence of other parts of the region.
 4. *Variations in access.* With 43% of its population living in rural areas, the East of England remains one of the most 'rural' regions in England. It will continue to have a substantial rural population, even allowing for the new housing provision. However, this rural population will increasingly be an ageing one that is dependent on private transport and has relatively poor access to health, sport and other services, which will increasingly be concentrated in areas with good public transport. In contrast, the newer residents are likely to live in accessible but relatively congested suburban locations, or 'rural' locations with strong commuter ties to London, Cambridge, Peterborough and the other major employment centres (recognising here that the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies seek to align housing growth with employment opportunities, to ensure that planned growth is sustainable)⁶⁰. The rural population is thus likely to be time rich but income and access poor, in contrast to the urban and suburban population, which will be time poor and not necessarily income or access rich. As the *Framework for Sport in England* identifies, one of the keys here will be unlocking the potential of local facilities, such as those connected to schools and colleges.
 5. *Changing education and employment patterns.* Rural areas such as the East of England have traditionally enjoyed a relatively high level of employment in primary and secondary industries (particularly farming and food processing in the case of the East of England). However, this is declining as the economy restructures towards the service sector. This affords new job opportunities to incomers in the accessible urban and suburban parts of the region, while EEDA has invested in broadband technology, innovation centres and small

⁵⁸ For example, the Great Ouse Boating Association claims that the average age of inland motor boaters is increasing as is their use of their boats (see www.goba.org.uk).

⁵⁹ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁶⁰ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan: the Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy* (May 2008). London: TSO. EEDA (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The regional economic strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: EEDA.

business units in the more remote parts of the region, to support the development of the service economy across the region. With the general shift towards service employment, there is likely to be an influx of better-educated people, with a greater predisposition towards sport and physical activity⁶¹. However, time and other pressures mean that fewer of these people are likely to be tempted into volunteering in sport, which could compromise the capacity of the sector to deliver a full range of opportunities, particularly in the more remote rural parts of the region. In addition, career routes into sport as a profession remain 'under-sold', adding further to the potential constraints on expanding sports provision to meet the changing needs of the region's residents.

6. *The potential impacts of climate change.* It is becoming increasingly accepted that climate change will have a profound impact on the East of England and its water resources. A detailed study on the potential impacts of climate was conducted for the East of England Regional Assembly and the East of England Sustainable Development Roundtable by Land Use Consultants in 2003. This qualitative study predicts that 'longer summers with less rain could make the East of England a much more attractive destination for main break holidays, and the warmer weather may see domestic holidays substituted for overseas trips... some schemes designed to adapt to climate change (such as realignment of coastal flood defences, creation of wetlands for flood risk management) may offer significant tourism attractions. Watercourses with significant tourism or leisure value may be increasingly prone to winter flooding (e.g. the Broads) or low summer flows (e.g. the Cam).' (Land Use Consultants 2003). There could also be other indirect impacts leading to increasing demand for water recreation, such as potential rises in the cost of flying thus encouraging people to holiday 'at home' within the UK.

These changes could benefit the East of England due to increased visits as some areas experience a longer summer season and regularly achieve temperatures of 29C which is considered to be the optimum temperature for tourism activities in Mediterranean regions. Equally the UK Climate Change Impacts Programme (UKCIP) notes that generally in the UK changes in visitor patterns could lead to overcrowding in some locations or increased competition from other resorts in the UK or Scandinavia. At inland locations in the East of England reductions in water supply during summer months could affect the use of rivers for recreation but it may also lead farmers to build new storage reservoirs which might provide new recreational spaces.

A further study was conducted by Atkins in 2007, for the East of England Climate Change Partnership, which indicated that climate change will have uneven geographical impacts on the East of England. Changes in sea level will have greatest impacts on vulnerable coastal, fenland and estuarine areas but temperature increases are predicted to be higher in the eastern parts of the region. Identifying climate change adaptation options for water-related recreation will need to take account of the uneven geographical impacts of climate change. The regional environmental strategy⁶² recognises these

⁶¹ This point is made in the Framework for Sport in England. Providing these incomers with a high quality of life, including access to good cultural provision, is a cornerstone of the regional spatial and economic strategies, to ensure that sufficient high calibre workers are attracted to the region.

⁶² East of England Regional Assembly (2003) *Our environment, our future: the regional environmental strategy for the East of England*. Bury St Edmunds: East of England Regional Assembly.

challenges, and informs a series of environmental policies contained in the regional spatial strategy that cover: green infrastructure planning; landscape conservation; biodiversity; agriculture and soils; woodlands; and the built environment.

1.3.4 Overall participation and demand trends

Overall, the participation data and trends suggest that, whilst some activities have static levels of participation, others have experienced recent growth that is likely to continue in the future. Demand for water related activities from residents is likely to show modest increases in the future. Demand for 'doorstep' opportunities will be greatest where there are concentrations of population and where specific new housing development is planned. However, there is a need to consider how to engage the young and increasingly hard-to-reach members of society, to ensure that they experience the benefits of water related recreation⁶³.

1.4 The supply side: water bodies and current use

1.4.1 The physical resource

Table 1.3 and Map 1 indicate that the region is well supplied with water resources, although there is a south west-north east 'spine' where there are few major rivers or other waters. The Broads, Brecks and North Norfolk Coast dominate the north eastern part of the region (with the North Norfolk Coast and Broadland enjoying SPA, SAC and Ramsar designation). The Essex estuaries are a dominant feature further south. The physical environment means that there are few fast flowing waters in the region, although there are many major rivers flowing out into the key estuaries. There are few canals (included in Table 1.3 with artificial water courses) in the region, although the Grand Union Canal cuts through Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, in the south west corner of the region, and remains close to the regional boundary until Milton Keynes, where there are plans to link it to the region's navigations, via the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway. After this the canal runs through rural Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, to reach the suburbs of Birmingham. Further north in the region, the planned Fens Waterways Link will make further connections with the Grand Union Canal, via the River Trent to Nottingham. There are natural lakes and broads, ex-mineral workings and some reservoirs, mainly in a north-south corridor on the western boundary to the region.

⁶³ See Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

Table 1.3 Water Bodies in the East of England

Coastal Waters	
Coast length	483 km ⁶⁴
Estuary area	58,646 ha
Inland waters	
Artificial water courses, including canals	238 km
River lengths (rivers are main rivers defined by Environment Agency)	3,576 km
Enclosed waters area (inc. lakes, reservoirs, gravel pits 0.1ha or greater outside urban areas or of any size within urban areas)	6,243 ha
Enclosed waters (number)	1064

1.4.2 Water related recreation activities on East of England waters

Although coastal waters can be difficult for a number of activities⁶⁵, nearly 90% of this resource is used for at least one water related recreation activity. The main issue encountered by many users is access to the water. Many slipways are in poor condition and are unsuited to contemporary uses; many access points on the coast are controlled by commercial marinas and boatyards, which are often congested and can charge high fees; and there are often limited parking opportunities for vehicles and trailers close to access facilities. In contrast to the use of coastal waters, only a little over half the area of the estuaries and lakes is used for water related recreation, and just less than half of the artificial water courses. The data indicate that rivers have the lowest usage, with just over a third of the total length being used for at least one activity.

Some 19 activities take place on coastal waters, of which the most popular are swimming, sea angling, sailing, motor cruising and canoeing. More activities take place on the estuaries (24), with sailing, motor cruising, angling and canoeing being the most popular. The most popular resource, in terms of the number of activities catered for, are lakes and reservoirs, which are used for 29 different activities. The most popular of these are coarse angling, sailing, windsurfing and canoeing. Coarse angling is also the most popular activity on rivers and artificial water courses, with motor cruising being popular on the navigations and canals. Canoeing does not occur that frequently on rivers, but is a major use of the artificial water courses. It should be recognised here that walking and cycling next to inland waters, waterways and watercourses is extremely popular.

1.4.3 The supply of strategic waters and resources

Consistent with policy in the East of England Plan on the provision and location of cultural facilities and the requirement to concentrate new development in certain locations, a number of current waters in the region have such strategic significance that their recreational and conservation value needs to be recognised. This is

⁶⁴ It should be noted that the East of England Plan states that there is 723km of coast in the region. The discrepancy between these figures is likely to be due to the treatment of estuary lengths: the audit used for this report treated estuaries as an area of water rather than as part of the sea. This inevitably gives a shorter length of coastline.

⁶⁵ Much of the East of England coast is particularly difficult for smaller craft, with shifting sandbanks, strong currents and, in Essex and Suffolk, a lot of commercial shipping traffic.

particularly to ensure that, subject to the imperatives of environmental assessments and planning regulations, they are incorporated in any planned changes or development of provision for water related recreation activities. These strategic waters are shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Strategic Waters⁶⁶

Note: * = Key centres for development and change (Policy SS3); ** = priority areas for regeneration (Policy SS5)⁶⁷

The Broads **	SPA, SAC and Ramsar designated; a number of broads and marshes are SSSIs and NNRs; significant tourism, navigation and recreation resource
King's Lynn and West Norfolk* **	SAC designated; significant sea activity resource, for powered and unpowered craft. Also provides coastal access to major river navigations (the King's Lynn Waterfront Regeneration programme will improve this). Growing popularity for wind based activities, particularly kite surfing, windsurfing and sailing around Hunstanton (the only east coast resort that faces west). There is concern that recreation activity may impact negatively on features in the European Marine Site and the statutory obligations to safeguard them, and that initiatives are in place to assess and mitigate the impacts, if appropriate.
Lowestoft* **	Power boating & sea angling (note also the Great Yarmouth North Denes SPA)
Ipswich* ** and the Suffolk Coast	Environmental designations (most of the coast and major estuaries have SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar designations); major international gateway; significant tourism and recreation resource. The Blyth, Ore/Alde, Deben, Orwell and Stour are all significant for sailing.
Colchester* and the Essex estuaries	Environmental designations; significant and heavy recreation use, particularly for motor cruisers and sailing; the Crouch is significant for water skiing and for all forms of sailing.
Wicken, Great Fen & other major wildlife sites**	Environmental designations (Wicken Fen is an NNR, SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site); contribution to eco-tourism and healthier lifestyles; potential to create major informal recreation and conservation areas close to large centres of population.
Lee Valley SPA/Ramsar site* **	Provision for a range of water related activities close to London; Broxbourne is the site for the Olympic white water course. Potential for open swimming (not currently allowed). The River Lee Navigation is an important resource for motor cruising, angling, ecology and towpath walking. Any proposed change in recreation activity should take account of the Lee Valley SPA/Ramsar status.
Bedford* **	Strategic significance for most water related recreation activities, centred on the Bedford River Valley Park, including angling, rowing, canoeing (including increasing white water potential), sailing, motor boating and cruising (the Great Ouse navigation and, potentially, the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway). Negotiations are taking place to allow swimming and to create a beach within the Bedford River Valley Park. Water skiing and wakeboarding are provided on the eastern edge of Milton Keynes (WakeMK) and at Box End Park, south of Bedford, which currently has the only cable tow in the region. Note the provision for angling and boating at Bedford Priory Park.
Peterborough* **	A major town on the Nene navigation. Ferry Meadows Watersports Centre offers windsurfing, sailing, canoeing and cycling. There is rowing on an 1100m purpose built course at Thorpe Meadows. Coarse angling is available at Overton and Gunwade Lakes in Ferry Meadows and on the Nene at Nene

⁶⁶ Note that inclusion in this Table does not mean that the waters are necessarily suitable for further recreational development; any proposed development should always be subject to appropriate strategic environmental assessment.

⁶⁷ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO.

	Park.
The Middle Level**	The Middle Level is the central and largest section of the Great Level of the Fens. Its river system consists of over 120 miles (190 kilometres) of watercourses most of which are also navigations. It offers extensive opportunities for navigation and coarse angling. The Middle Level waters connect the Nene and Ouse Navigations, as well as offering access to the Great Fen and NNRs at Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen (Woodwalton Fen also has SAC and Ramsar designation). The Middle Level occupies an area of considerable social deprivation (western Peterborough and Fenland).
Norwich* **	Canoeing, rowing, triathlon, angling, sailing & outdoor swimming. Whitlingham Country Park provides best practice example of multi-use site for inland water. Some stretches of River Wensum have SAC and SSSI designations
Cambridge*	Rowing, sailing, canoeing, punting, motor boating, swimming on the Cam above Cambridge
River Waveney**	Canoeing, angling, limited swimming near Bungay
Grafham Water	Sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, powerboating, game angling. The nature reserve at Grafham Water is designated as a SSSI
Basildon*, Southend on Sea* & Canvey Island	Sailing, windsurfing, motor cruising, personal watercraft, power boating, training and taster centre for many coastal watersports; pleasure cruisers
Great Ouse and Nene river systems	Motor boating and cruising, angling, canoeing, open swimming
Chelmsford*	Canal boating, motor cruising, canoeing, angling
Essex Thames Gateway* ** and reservoirs	The Thames is a major international commercial gateway, as well as supporting a wide range of water and land-related activities. Much of the Essex Thames gateway enjoys high levels of environmental protection. Angling & nature conservation are significant at Hanningfield Reservoir, one of the few substantial inland waters in the area. Abberton Reservoir has SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designations.
Grand Union Canal	Although outside the region for most of its length, the Grand Union Canal does include significant stretches in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, and is regionally important as the potential link from the Eastern region navigations to the national waterway network.

1.4.4 The supply of water bodies and travel accessibility

The supply of inland and coastal water available for residents and tourists wishing to take part in water related recreation activities is also determined by travel accessibility, which is a measure of the travel time to water bodies from residential locations. Long journeys are undesirable environmentally and will limit the use of water bodies as people will not be willing to travel to use existing opportunities, although it is widely claimed that people living in the Eastern region are used to travelling to access any service⁶⁸. As the maps in Appendix C indicate, access to the coast is a function of how far west people live; despite having a relatively short coast, just over 90% of the region's population can get to an estuary or the coast within one hour. In terms of access to inland water resources, most people can reach a major water body, water course or river within 20-30 minutes travel. The exception to this is a south west – north east spine of land where rivers rise, but

⁶⁸ It should be noted here that those interested in motor boating and cruising regularly travel long distances (London and the Midlands) to the Broads and the Great Ouse river system (see www.goba.org.uk)

where there is little availability of resources suitable for recreation. In addition, throughout the region access to some rivers and water bodies is prevented through restrictions imposed by land and riparian owners.

An analysis of the accessibility for selected activities of current water bodies has been completed. This suggests that most parts of the region have relatively easy travel access to coastal or inland angling opportunities where the inland waters are open to all by payment to a private or public body. For some other activities travel accessibility is more problematic and the results of the accessibility analysis for these activities are shown on the maps in Appendix C. The maps have been generated using network analysis based on car travel times. In some parts of the region and in certain conditions travel times will be slower than the norms assumed (see Appendix A). Also in many locations journey times will be much longer by public transport. The maps also show the proportion of the population in the region and in the most deprived wards in the region that are within certain travel time intervals. The key conclusions that can be drawn from the maps are shown in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Access to Different Activities

Activity	Evidence
Canoeing & kayaking	There is a shortage of white water due to topography (no white water sites in the centre of the region). There is reasonable access to canoeing along the coast, in estuaries and on the Broads, although not along the North Norfolk coast. There are some good touring opportunities available in the north west of the region - e.g Great Ouse & Nene navigations, although these are shared with larger motorised craft (there is potential on these navigations to create circular routes using backwaters that would not share use with larger craft) and the east (the River Waveney). Apart from the Stour Navigation, access to any canoe activity in the centre of the region (around Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket) is poor. While provision for non-touring canoe disciplines is poor, the region is ideally suited to canoe safari (nature watching from canoes), which is gaining in popularity. More use could also be made of coastal locations, for 'white water' activities and for sprints, for example.
Sailing	There is extensive use of the coast and most of the estuaries for sailing. There is also a range of inland provision, from large scale opportunities on The Broads and Grafham Water (and Rutland Water in neighbouring East Midlands), to smaller clubs – located on mineral pits and reservoirs around the region, as well as on navigation sections of many of the rivers. There are no major gaps, although there is a need for better provision to assist access (e.g slipways).
Sub-aqua diving And snorkelling	Sub-aqua training takes place in swimming pools around the region. Outdoor diving takes place along the coast, although in many cases there is a lack of facilities to support the sport (e.g. changing facilities, somewhere to eat, tractor to get diving boat out beyond the mud flats). The only large scale inland water facility that is at all close to the region is the National Diving Centre at Stoney Cove in Leicestershire, with Gildenburgh Water, another smaller facility also outside the region, near Peterborough. There is a need for greater inland provision, particularly as the latest statistics reveal participation in sub-aqua in the region is growing significantly. There is a specific demand from commercial operators for inland sites around the Thames gateway.
Angling	Sea angling is widespread along the coast and estuaries. There are no major areas of coast or estuary that are not used for sea angling. Coarse angling takes place on most of the major rivers and inland waterways in the region, including the Middle Level, where extensive work has been undertaken to improve access for coarse anglers. There is a comparative lack of coarse fishing in central parts of the region, particularly around Saffron Walden and Newmarket. Physical access to river banks is poor throughout the region,

	<p>often because of the spread of reeds. Despite the region's topography there is widespread game angling throughout most of the region. Most of the game angling opportunities occur inland where the rivers rise (e.g. around Saffron Walden and east of Cambridge, around Fakenham and the upper reaches of the Broads Rivers – including the Nar and Wensum). There are also game fisheries on some of the major water bodies, including Grafham Water, Hanningfield and Abberton Reservoirs in S. Essex and Costessey Lakes outside Norwich. There are fewer game angling opportunities in the north west of the region around Peterborough, and in the east of the region from Diss south to Ipswich and Sudbury. It should be noted that new game fisheries are being created in the North West Thames area, as a result of improvements to the quality of rivers such as the Rib, Beane and Mimram.</p>
Power-boating and PWCs	<p>Power boating and jet ski-ing take place along the North Norfolk coast, especially at Sea Palling; on the river near Basildon and around Canvey Island. There is good provision outside of the region near Boston, at Tallington Lakes, which is well-used by those from the north western part of the region⁶⁹. One of the main issues here is that many of the key sites for these activities are those with European Marine designations (the Essex estuaries, for example), meaning that there is likely to be a need to find new locations to alleviate existing conflict and meet demand in the future.</p>
Rowing	<p>There are a number of rowing venues in the region, with major sites in Bedford and Cambridge, and a 'sub-regional' rowing lake in Peterborough. There are also smaller club locations in a number of towns including Broxbourne, Ely, Norwich, Woodbridge and Lowestoft. However, there is a lack of multi-lane training facilities across the region. This is being addressed by current mineral extraction developments at Bedford (Willington), Norwich (Whitlingham) and possibly in the future by commercial operators in Cambridge. The Bedford development is the regional priority project for the Amateur Rowing Association. In addition, more provision for smaller rowing courses could be made on many of the former mineral workings that are being released for recreation activities. There is Gig rowing on the Thames, near Canvey Island, but the club does not currently have facilities or a base. Depending upon the future management regime for the waters at Canvey Island, there is potential to develop a gig rowing club there. Other opportunities exist at several other coastal towns, if sufficient interest can be generated.</p>
Motor Cruising	<p>There is good access for motor cruisers and other craft in the region, on the Broads and on the major navigations. Connection to the National waterway network remains a big issue limiting expansion and development, with the Great Ouse and Nene currently accommodating most of the cruising use on the region (although a significant level of narrowboat cruising takes place on the Grand Union Canal). With the exception of the Lee & the Stort, there is a lack of suitable waterways in the south and east of the region, which limits water-related access to these areas. Better connections have the potential to stimulate a significant increase in use, but improvement of infrastructure and facilities are required at towns across the Ouse and Middle Level systems (especially St. Neots, Huntingdon, St. Ives and Ely), to enable increasing numbers of boaters to visit. The same is true for the coast where, often, limited visitor moorings and facilities restrict longer trips around the region.</p>
Powerboats, Water skiing & Wakeboarding	<p>Water skiing and wakeboarding currently occur on a number of estuaries and navigations, including sites on the Broads. However, increasing regulation appears to be discouraging these uses. There is a modest range of opportunities in the north, south and east of the region, with the west of the region able to access venues outside the region, such as Tallington Lakes in Lincolnshire. Cable technology allows both sports to be concentrated into reasonable small areas of water, with easy access for beginners through to</p>

⁶⁹ Natural England has raised concerns about the future recreational development of Tallington Lakes

	international competition. However, the only cable tow site in the region is on the western boundary, south of Bedford. Hunstanton has an active powerboat club which is recognised as a national venue for waterski racing (the 2005 world championships were held there).
Surfing and Windsurfing	When the atmospheric conditions are appropriate, surfing takes place off the Norfolk and Suffolk coast, particularly at Hunstanton, which hosts national sailing and kiteboarding events. Windsurfing is well catered for, both at the coast and inland (there is a dedicated 220 acre windsurfing lake at Brogborough Lake, close to the M1 in Bedfordshire. The central area of the region is least well provided for, but this is a matter of topography, with few suitable resources available.

1.4.5 Synthesis

Based on the analysis of policy drivers, supply and demand, there are six key resource drivers that will affect the capacity of the region to meet future demand for outdoor recreation:

1. *There are many opportunities for water related recreation, but too many of these are poor quality or in poor repair.* The East of England is widely identified as a water recreation environment; many of its long term residents have grown up with water related recreation (principally boating and angling) and commonly make informal use of the local waters. Yet, the population active in water related recreation is (just) below the national average, while the quality and quantity of facilities available for water recreation activities are poor. In particular, there are limited (and congested) access points in estuaries and on the coast; there are insufficient coastal and inland marina berths to accommodate demand and the shift from hire cruisers to private ownership; there are insufficient visitor moorings on inland waterways to support the growth in demand for touring; there are large gaps in the formal provision for some sports, particularly in the south east of the region; there is a need to improve the provision and quality of associated facilities such as platforms, parking, pathways, toilets etc; and only one non-navigation river has a canoe access agreement. Prior to major investment in new infrastructure, there is clearly a need to address these quality issues. The potential impacts of climate change (see below) could further impact on this, particularly as water levels rise (possibly rendering some current resources unusable).
2. *Protected areas and the impacts of climate change will limit resource capacity.* The East of England has a number of green infrastructure assets of international, national and regional significance, including: the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads; the North Norfolk Coast; the Suffolk Coast and Heaths; Heritage Coasts; Dedham Vale; and the Chilterns AONB. There are also areas of landscape, ecological and recreational importance, including: the Community Forests; the Brecks; Epping Forest; Hatfield Forest; Lee Valley Regional Park; and the Stour Estuary. And there are strategically significant green infrastructure projects and proposals, including: the Great Fen Project; Wicken Fen Vision; the Milton Keynes to Bedford Waterway Park; and the London fringes⁷⁰. Green belt policies have maintained some semi-natural

⁷⁰ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy ENV1.

areas close to conurbations (although it should be recognised that the spatial strategy recommends that these be reviewed in the light of development pressures – including the Olympic site at Broxbourne⁷¹). However, much of the region has been subject to centuries of drainage and intensive farming, which has damaged its biodiversity. The Water Framework Directive is likely to have an impact here, and organisations such as the RYA are maintaining a close watch on how this may affect water related recreation. Initiatives, such as the Great Fen project, Wicken Fen and Wallasea Island, for example, aim to return large tracts of land to their former salt and fresh water marsh status. These schemes offer some potential for informal land-based recreation such as walking and birdwatching, as well as water related activities such as boat trips. A question remains about whether they can support additional activities such as canoeing and open swimming, and how far more environmentally friendly forms of boating – especially electric boats – could address some of the issues. Added to this is the managed re-alignment being contemplated along much of the region's coastline, in the face of rising sea levels. Rising water levels in the estuaries could render much current recreation provision redundant. This is likely to be compounded by the fact that many changes are likely to enhance and extend opportunities for conservation interests, which could further marginalise water-based recreation, particularly for motorised craft. There are also questions about how far regulation of the water environment (especially the European Marine designations and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive) will allow artificial structures – such as moorings, platforms and jetties – to be placed in or near moving waters. In terms of addressing environmental requirements, therefore, stress must be placed on managing recreation within environmental limits, by using a range of options such as zoning by time and space to reduce the potential for friction, disturbance and environmental deterioration⁷².

3. *There is a limited diversity of topographic features in the region.* Much of the region is flat or gently undulating. While this has offered unrivalled inland sailing and cruising on the Broads, and good cycling terrain throughout the region, it does limit the potential of the region to meet all demands for water-related recreation from its natural resources. In particular, there is little natural white or fast flowing water available, which limits the potential for game angling and some paddle and raft sports. There is scope for addressing the angling deficiency, particularly in the North East Thames area, where brown trout and grayling are found in the Ash, Upper Stort, Rib, Beane and Mimram. With the possible exception of the Mimram, these rivers are not fully suitable for game angling, due to a combination of artificial structures, poor/unsympathetic management, water quality and/or low flows. The Environment Agency is addressing these issues and, in partnership with other stakeholders, feels that significant game fisheries could be created on these rivers. Similarly, and depending on the availability of sufficient water - and subject to the consideration of flood risk, water level management and ecological impacts - some artificial provision may be made for paddle sports,

⁷¹ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy SS7.

⁷² Note here that Natural England has published guidance about its expected input to regional and local planning issues (Natural England, 2008, *Defra statutory guidance for Natural England on regional planning and associated matters*. Peterborough: Natural England, East of England Region).

through the managed release of water at weirs, mills and sluices owned by the Environment Agency (an example of this is the recent weir replacement at Hartham Common on the River Lee, which has improved the site for paddling and ecology)⁷³. Where there are topographic variations, such as at Brogborough Hill, near Bedford, the potential exists to consider developing pumped white water facilities, although the economic viability of this approach requires further consideration, especially in the light of the proposed Olympic facility at Broxbourne.

4. *Urban and peri-urban land is at a premium for built development.* Although many Eastern region towns and cities have rivers and other waters within their administrative areas, the need for 'doorstep' recreation opportunities means that steps will have to be taken to protect these resources from non-recreation development. Planning agreements will be an important tool and new planned developments may create new blue spaces e.g. flood balancing lakes. Green Infrastructure Planning - in the case of the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan, for example - is helping to identify environmental assets and opportunities that can be brought together to create a network of multi-functional green spaces that provide environmental, social and economic benefits. However there is currently little guidance on water space requirements, meaning that local planning authorities have little information upon which to base development plan and control decisions. Along with large scale growth in the region comes a requirement for more water resources and new aggregate sites. Where these resources are planned (including reservoirs for irrigation, expansion of water drinking supplies or new aggregate sites) early consideration of potential strategic recreational or conservation value is needed to ensure that the highest added value is derived from public investment in these new resources. In contrast to the predominantly localised and opportunist approaches currently used, this may actually lead, for example, to the provision of a major sub-regional hub for motorised and non-motorised water activities to serve urban centres, or to the designation of a significant conservation resource in close proximity to protected areas.
5. *The region has a large land area, concentrated areas of population and poor transport infrastructure.* With congestion, overcrowding and fierce competition for land in urban and peri-urban locations, there is a need to provide green transport solutions to get people to a mix of sport and recreation resources and places⁷⁴. However, the region has poor public transport infrastructure away from urban centres and commuter routes, while its road system is already congested by the number of private cars using it. In planning new water-related recreation schemes, planners should therefore be aware of the need to provide innovative transport solutions that can link people and recreation places without the need for private transport. Combining green and blue infrastructure planning in new developments is a key part of this process. Existing waterways, watercourses, coast and inland

⁷³ It should be recognised here that there are tensions between river restoration and provision for paddle sports. While providing recreation opportunities, the use of weirs needs to be addressed as part of river restoration strategies, to ensure that their primary water management functions are not undermined, to the detriment of the riverine environment.

⁷⁴ This is recognised in Policy T1 of the regional spatial strategy, which contains the regional transport strategy (Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO)

water also provide a basic resource on which new sustainable links can be developed, including for example, water taxis to avoid congestion in urban areas, commuter cycleways etc.

6. *Tourism offers potential for economic development of remote and deprived areas of the region, but this may conflict with broader environmental and conservation aims.* Great Yarmouth could develop opportunities to receive large sea cruisers (that cannot be easily accommodated elsewhere along the East Coast) and is due to open a ferry port. With the Harwich port already successful, the region therefore welcomes a lot of foreign tourists in addition to being a popular destination for domestic tourism. While many tourists head for the Broads, or the cities of Cambridge and Norwich, there is potential to develop a new rural tourism offer that might attract people to stay in the region for longer, as well as diffusing current tourism pressure⁷⁵. However, development of suitable facilities – particularly near the coast – may conflict with environmental protection policies, as well as introducing another factor into decisions about the managed re-alignment of the coast.

⁷⁵ See Policy E6 of the regional spatial strategy (Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO)

2: Gaps in Provision

2.1 Gaps

1. *Poor facilities and regulatory provisions restrict the use of some waters.* It is necessary to put into good repair many of the facilities and services currently provided for water related recreation. This includes modifying slipways to meet current and anticipated health & safety requirements, improving moorings where possible and identifying locations where additional accesses can be made to waters with existing uses. It is currently the case that around half the estuary area in the region is not used for recreation activity. While allowing space for nature, an assessment is required to establish whether there is additional capacity for recreation and, if so, what forms of recreation are compatible with the environmental requirements of the estuaries⁷⁶. There are also regulatory issues, with increasingly ineffective estuary bylaws constraining the work of harbourmasters. The demands made on estuaries are clearly changing, with faster craft now being built, more craft remaining static, causing congestion in key areas, and new uses (especially jet skis) adding new management issues. Against this background, harbour and estuary bylaws – for smaller estuaries like the Crouch and Blackwater – have not changed sufficiently to allow harbour masters to carry out their jobs effectively. This is largely with respect to the difficulties encountered in regulating and policing speeding and access to restricted areas (often associated with conservation designations). The Port of London Authority, Thames Estuary and other partners are working to improve the management and self regulation of personal watercraft, particularly near areas of high conservation value. As new approaches are developed these should be shared more widely with other estuarine locations in Essex.
2. *A shortage of good quality major regional water-related sport recreation facilities.* There are some good resources and facilities for water-related sport and recreation in or very close to the boundary of the region; examples include Grafham Water, Alton Water, Hanningfield Reservoir (angling and nature conservation) and the rivers Great Ouse, Crouch, Blackwater, Stour, Orwell, Deben, Ore/Alde and Blyth (sailing), the Nene (with good quality white water canoeing and rafting), the River Waveney (touring canoeing), and a number of Broads rivers (water skiing), Whitlingham, Norwich (canoeing, angling and rowing). However, not all sports and recreation activities have even one established centre, while the size of the region means that many residents are too far from centres to benefit from them⁷⁷. This is particularly the case in activities including diving, coastal sail cruising, rowing, some canoe disciplines and jet skiing, and is contrary to the transport policies contained in the regional spatial strategy. Gaps in provision thus occur in the following areas:

- Outdoor swimming and canoe touring routes on inland waters;
- Grade 2+ white water sites for slalom and other canoe disciplines;

⁷⁶ This is recognised in the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, with proposals for new approaches to estuary management, and in Policy SS9 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO).

⁷⁷ This is corroborated by the sports facilities strategy (Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England), which notes shortfalls in the provision for canoeing and rowing.

- Dive sites, particularly to serve high demand in south Essex/Thames Gateway;
 - Inland water provision for water skiing and wakeboarding (both cable and boat tows), power boating and jet skiing;
 - Inland water for sail sports in the western areas of the region;
 - Transit marina and harbour facilities for sail and motor cruising between the Crouch estuary and Great Yarmouth, Great Yarmouth and Wells, and possibly Wells and Kings Lynn (a sea lock at the lower end of the Denver to King's Lynn relief channel could create a major new marina, for example);
 - Inland navigation links: there are gaps in the inland waterways network, between the Middle Level and the Lincolnshire waterways, and between the Great Ouse Navigation and the Grand Union Canal. There are also gaps in the provision of visitor moorings and off-line marina berths throughout the system. Gravel pits and quarries adjacent to rivers in the Great Ouse system could be used to provide additional capacity for off-line marinas;
 - Provision for rowing (including gigs), particularly in Suffolk and Essex. The regional sports facilities strategy⁷⁸ also notes a lack of provision for rowing in a corridor from Peterborough to Thurrock;
 - Provision for canoe sprint and training in Essex, Suffolk and South Bedfordshire⁷⁹;
3. *Gaps in doorstep opportunities and recreational routes.* There is a lot of inland water in many of the urban areas in the East of England, but beyond angling, there is relatively little provision for or encouragement of other water-related activities. Policy ENV1 of the regional spatial strategy highlights the significance of high quality green spaces in creating healthy environments that can contribute to a range of policy objectives. The spatial strategy encourages local authorities and others to identify, create and protect areas and networks of green infrastructure⁸⁰. This could be addressed by the development of supplementary planning guidance to help local planning authorities make more informed resource allocation decisions.

The lack of provision also reflects a risk aversion in which local authorities (and other resource owners and managers) are increasingly unwilling to encourage activities that are potentially dangerous and could lead to liability issues in the event of accidents. This risk aversion is compounded by the emergency services, which are wary of activities that take place in inaccessible or dangerous locations, or which encourage young people, in particular, to take unacceptable risks when not under adequate or appropriate supervision⁸¹.

The navigation network and many rivers have the potential to combine the needs of water-based interests (boaters, canoeists, anglers) with local aspirations for healthier lifestyles through the development of regular safe and well maintained green spaces and gateway sites, with shared facilities such as parking, toilet & showers, circular walks & cycle rides, health walks, canoe trails,

⁷⁸ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁷⁹ See Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁸⁰ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy ENV1.

⁸¹ This is despite the guidance and apparent safeguards offered by the case of *Tomlinson v Congleton BC*. See Counsel's opinion at www.piba.org.uk/assets/docs/tomlinson.doc (accessed 18th Dec 2008)

fishing facilities, picnic & barbeque areas etc. With some exceptions, such as the Fen Rivers Way and the Black Fen Waterway Trail, waterways and watercourses in the region are also under-exploited in providing public infrastructure on which to provide major long-distance walks and rides or cycle routes between towns and villages.

- 4 *Gaps in the provision for easily accessible multi-sport opportunities:* It is apparent that, while the rural and coastal populations have some access – often of variable quality - to water-related resources, few people in the western and southern urban areas have access to good facilities that offer the potential for a range of uses. It is not just a lack of availability, but in some key areas of deprivation, a lack of participation can often be attributed to cost, competition or lack of confidence. In many instances those resources that do exist are congested at peak times or when the tide is right for boating activity. Consistent with Policy C2 of the spatial strategy⁸², there is scope for a number of sub-regional facilities that can cater for a range of activities, either through additional activities being provided at existing waters, or by new provision⁸³. There are particular shortages in the following areas:

- *Thames Estuary:* there is limited provision for a range of marine activities at Wat Tyler Country Park (Basildon), Benfleet, Canvey Island, Leigh and Southend. However, most of this provision is congested, with conflict evident between different users competing for limited space (both on the water and at launch sites). There is also a general lack of ancillary facilities which limits the potential utility of the area. It should also be noted that environmental designations are likely to limit future dredging operations to maintain even this level of provision;
- *Cambridge:* there is a lot of water in and around Cambridge, but the River Cam downstream of the city is congested, particularly during the university terms, when the demand for rowing exceeds the instantaneous capacity for performance training. The Amateur Rowing Association has identified the camToo Project as the sub-regional priority project that will increase the capacity of the existing stretch of water without needing new supporting infrastructure such as boathouses;
- *Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft:* there are some lower-grade facilities here, particularly connected to the wide range of tourism opportunities found locally. However, relatively few activities are specifically catered for, while the quality of provision is currently too low. There is a particular need for canoe and rowing provision here⁸⁴;
- *Bedford:* there is a lack of connectivity and accessibility to local watercourses and national waterways, which prevents them being utilised to their full potential. The proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and Waterway Park, allied to appropriate developer led economic and housing development, will create a more accessible and better developed range of water based activities with associated development of green

⁸² Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO.

⁸³ It should be noted here that the regional spatial strategy supports the concept of 'clusters' (Policy E4), but those currently identified do not include any relating to cultural clusters (Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO).

⁸⁴ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

space and corridors to serve growth in the area. There are also specific shortages of provision for canoeing (white water) and rowing that will be addressed by proposed developments at Cardington, while plans for an angling participation and fisheries enhancement project are being developed within the Bedford River Valley Park;

- *Norwich*: the riverside in Norwich is well-used for a number of activities, particularly angling, cruising (and mooring) and canoeing. A lack of bankside facilities, such as car parks, toilets and changing rooms for anglers and paddlers, constrains use, while in-river improvements could add to the canoe experience;
- *North and east London commuter belt*: the Lee & Stort Valleys are important water resources, and will become more significant with the development of the Olympic White Water centre at Broxbourne. However, there is a need for more and better facilities to entice boaters to navigate both spurs from London. Swimmers would also like to be able to swim at the Lee Valley Regional Park. Initiatives are also required to develop and meet rowing, canoeing and open swimming demands in towns such as Leighton Buzzard, Welwyn, Harlow and Bishops Stortford, where a more vibrant use of the water environment could provide a positive focus for regeneration and a catalyst for outdoor activities close to people's homes⁸⁵.
- *Peterborough*: There are good facilities in Peterborough, where the Development Corporation endeavoured to provide for as many sports as possible within the constraints of the Nene Valley and the requirements for flood prevention. The Nene Valley Park contains provision for sailing and there are limited facilities for white water canoeing at Orton Staunton. Peterborough City Rowing Club, one of the largest in the region, is based at a flood relief balance lake that was designed to offer 1,000 metre multi-lane racing. This is seen by the Amateur Rowing Association as a template for new sub-regional multi-lane training facilities. Demand current exceeds supply for the two weekend double regattas held at the lake. It is also noted by Sustrans that the path beside the rowing lake is very popular with walkers.

- 5 *Insufficient understanding of the health and therapeutic benefits of water related recreation*: The regional economic strategy makes a strong case for the benefits to the region of promoting public health and welfare⁸⁶. The national priority is to tackle growing obesity levels (especially amongst children) and other health issues, with a target of raising participation levels in sport and physical activity by 1% per annum. The priorities in the East of England, as set out by the Regional Public Health Group, are health inequalities, obesity and encouraging physical activity⁸⁷. Yet 1 in 2 adults take

⁸⁵ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁸⁶ East of England Development Agency (2008) *Inventing our future: collective action for a sustainable economy. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031*. Cambridge: East of England Development Agency.

⁸⁷ See Government Office for the East of England (n.d.) *Equitable East: The Government Office for the East of England's action plan to tackle health inequalities*. Cambridge: Government Office for the East of England; Regional Public Health Group, East of England (n.d.) *Active East: a physical activity framework for the East of England*. Cambridge: Department of Health; Government Office for the East of England (2005) *Leaner East: an obesity framework for the East of England 2006-2011*. Cambridge: Government Office for the East of England.

no part whatsoever in any form of sport or physical activity⁸⁸. While water related recreation activities form a minor part of the participation that does take place, they have the potential to attract those who are not currently active, particularly younger and older people, and those living in rural communities⁸⁹. Angling is a particularly good example here, where the health benefits of participation are well understood. As the regional sports facilities strategy makes clear, whilst the provision of facilities is not a single solution, suitable facilities – and a clear progression through levels of facility - are important elements of a portfolio of interventions that can stimulate and facilitate greater participation. In addition, there is a need for better and more targeted information about where people can go, what they can do and what health benefits they will gain from participation.

- 6 *Insufficient appreciation of wider social benefits of access and opportunities to participate:* 'Get Hooked' and other water-related sports have provided a focus for targeting and tackling social inclusion in deprived communities and in some instances anti-social behaviour (Birmingham & Durham), engendering confidence, a sense of self worth and developing life skills and more positive attitudes towards others and the environment. Unfortunately participation programmes to date in the East of England have been developed upon targets of numbers of participants rather than quality, often located in places that only the socially mobile can access. There is therefore an urgent need to take work undertaken in other parts of the country a step further by developing, monitoring and providing evidence of how such programmes can positively contribute towards changing the lives of participants, particularly in areas of deprivation and in tackling anti-social behaviour. The work of the Environment Agency (Anglian Central) should be noted in this respect, particularly for the installation of all-ability angling platforms on the River Great Ouse and the Middle Level catchments. Future plans include installing all-ability platforms at a fishery specifically for coaching anglers of all needs and abilities. This type of initiative could be appropriate for pilot programmes around inland and coastal resources in areas scoring highly on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (e.g. parts of Peterborough, Lowestoft, Clacton & Southend on Sea, Bedford etc). Through sufficient pilots it may be possible to provide a cost benefit analysis of public investment in this approach.
- 7 *Uneven approach to managing fragile environments for sustainable water-related recreation.* There is considerable demand for access to informal activities in environmentally sensitive areas. This can be for bird watching, for angling in the best managed fisheries or for quiet recreation (walking and cycling). In some cases angling, guided canoeing or even moorings for visiting craft or water taxis from local urban areas could provide very sustainable and powerful ways of providing high quality visitor experiences in areas of high conservation value, if developed and managed at an appropriate scale and under specific thresholds and timings (e.g. self-guided canoe routes developed on estuaries in Northern Ireland could provide a template for some estuaries in the East of England). In the management and development of its waterways, British Waterways has embedded the principles of sustainable development in three ways: sustainable social development, through

⁸⁸ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

⁸⁹ East of England Regional Public Health Group *Business Plan, 2005/6*. Cambridge: Government Office for the East of England.

education and local community work; sustainable environment, through the management of habitat and biodiversity; and urban and rural regeneration⁹⁰. While there are good practice examples of some opportunities being made available (the Essex Wildlife Trust centre at Hanningfield Reservoir, for example), management practice is variable and there is little dissemination of good practice⁹¹. As a result, there are gaps in provision that could be addressed at relatively minor cost.

- 8 *Limited response to the changing nature of marine tourism:* the shift away from hire boats on the Broads has been noted. It may be part of a wider trend towards fewer people participating in marine touring, although limited access and mooring capacity could mean that there is no room for growth and that participants with access are just spending less time on the water. Certainly the increasing ownership of luxurious and expensive craft has contributed towards a trend where the status of owning a boat is often more important than regular participation, with more craft spending much longer periods in marinas and on moorings. This is resulting in a growing physical capacity on the water and the demand for moorings has thus changed, from swing and bank moorings to marina berths (where most of these craft remain for most of the time). In addition to permanent marina berths, there is also a demand for transit berths along the coast and up major estuaries, to allow passage for these craft. In addition to this trend, there are also trends towards the ownership of smaller – but powerful - power boats (again used sparingly for estuarine and off-shore outings). In all cases there is currently a gap in the provision of suitable berths, docks and other types of storage. This has the effect of driving custom away from the region (for the larger craft), or enforcing participants to trail their craft to the coast (where there are few accessible public slipways) whenever they want to use them. There are similar issues on inland water, where a lack of confidence in reaching suitable moorings, refuelling, water points and other boating facilities is a major factor in deterring wider exploration of the waterway network by boaters already within the system, who rarely venture beyond known local waters where they are confident of finding the resources that they need. This is compounded in some areas by tidal influence, where navigation is dependant on small windows during the day, and where high levels of sediment can often reduce this time even further.
- 9 *Insufficient is known about the potential impacts of climate change on water related recreation:* It is apparent that climate change could have a profound impact on water related recreation resources and activities, throughout the area. Studies have been conducted into what some of the impacts of climate change might be, and where they will be felt, but there has been no work specific to water related recreation. There is currently therefore a very uneven and partial approach to preparing for change in terms of planning new leisure and recreation facilities and managing public perceptions of the future. The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) suggests that identifying adaptation options and scenarios are an important element in planning for climate change and has developed the Base for Research, Adaptation, Impacts and News (the BRAIN) to bring together intelligence on climate

⁹⁰ See British Waterway's commitment to corporate social responsibility (<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/our-work/delivering-public-benefit/corporate-social-responsibility>)

⁹¹ This point is made in the Marine and Coastal Access Bill

change impacts, responses and adaptations. Developing an information base on the options and scenarios for water recreation in the East of England will need to be linked to a process that is relevant to the whole leisure and tourism sector in the region. Options and scenarios will also need to take account of the geographically uneven impacts of climate change on the region. This is recognised in the regional environment strategy⁹², which has informed the environmental policies set out in the spatial strategy. There is particular concern, in the spatial strategy, that new development at the coast is compatible with shoreline management and other longer term flood management plans, so as to avoid constraining effective future flood management or increasing the need for new sea defences⁹³.

- 10 *A failure to engage effectively with regional strategic planning:* As a number of these gaps have illustrated, provision for water related recreation can address a range of spatial and economic policies, as well as underpinning the core thrust of the regional economic strategy, in terms of delivering a high quality, sustainable environment and quality of life that can attract and retain high calibre workers. This is not happening consistently at present, although there are examples across the region of water environments being used to address simultaneously a number of policy priorities. It should be noted here that Natural England is addressing this, following Defra guidance, by issuing a list of regional planning and associated matters in which it will offer guidance. These matters include the regional spatial and economic strategies, the regional climate change action plan, a number of local development frameworks, local area agreements and settlement plans.⁹⁴ The key to ensuring that such actions occur more comprehensively, and ensuring that the value of water related recreation is recognised in all relevant policy areas, is to identify one or more 'champions' who are sufficiently engaged in the policy process to be able to collect and present evidence that demonstrates the value of water related recreation.

2.2 Current Proposals and Initiatives to Address the Gaps

1 *Poor facilities and regulatory provisions restrict the use of some waters*

As part of the 20-year Broadlands Flood Alleviation Programme, the public/private partnership developed by the Environment Agency is working with the Broads Authority to replace and upgrade facilities such as slipways and moorings⁹⁵. The Environment Agency is similarly undertaking improvements to the main navigations⁹⁶, while also developing catchment flood management plans⁹⁷. As part of its development of the capacity of the Abberton Reservoir at Colchester, Essex and Suffolk Water will, in line with the Habitats Directive, improve the provision for

⁹² East of England Regional Assembly (2003) *Our environment, our future: the regional environmental strategy for the East of England*. Bury St Edmunds: East of England Regional Assembly.

⁹³ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy SS9.

⁹⁴ Natural England (2008) *Defra statutory guidance for Natural England on regional planning and associated matters*. Peterborough: Natural England, East of England Region.

⁹⁵ Broadland Environmental Services Ltd (2005) *Broadland flood alleviation project update*. Norwich: BESL.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Environment Agency (nd) *River Great Ouse Waterway Plan*.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Environment Agency (nd) *River Great Ouse catchment flood management plan*.

suitable water related recreation activities, particularly coarse angling and bird watching. Consideration could also be given here to dinghy sailing⁹⁸.

2 *A shortage of good quality major regional water-related sport and recreation facilities*

There are a number of proposals for developing major facilities in the region. In infrastructure terms, the two most significant are the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and the Fens Waterways Link. Together, these proposed links will provide the only inland waterway link between the national inland waterway network and the navigations of Eastern England. The proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway (joining the River Great Ouse at Bedford to the national inland waterway network near Milton Keynes) will not only provide the first major new build of a waterway for generations, but it will also fulfil an ambition first mooted in 1810 to link the Grand Union and eastern waterways. Furthermore, it will also link together and develop a range of water sports venues stretching from Willen Lake in Milton Keynes (powered water sports) through Brogborough and Stewartby Lakes (sailing, canoeing and the potential for white water provision), rowing on the River Great Ouse at Bedford, to a potential new rowing lake north east of Bedford. There would also be major provision for land-based activities, through 24km of non-motorised shared use routes running alongside the Waterway. In planning these activities, it is important to take into account the wetland County Wildlife sites at Brogborough and Stewartby Lakes, to ensure that the Waterway enhances, rather than detracts from, biodiversity interest in the area. This should be achieved through linking the Waterway scheme to partners in the area, such as the Forest of Marston Vale, The Wildlife Trust and The Woodland Trust, all of whom carry out good work in the vicinity.

The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway proposal enjoys high level support, including recently a DCLG secondment and interventions by Ministers to help secure the route. It will mitigate the further housing development inevitable in the area⁹⁹, has the potential to create and regenerate a range of water based sports and travel options, and could fundamentally transform the character of Bedford and many other market towns along the Ouse (St Neots, St Ives etc). In addition it now finds itself at the centre of ambitious, but deliverable, plans to develop the Marston Vale and is already a key component in the further growth of Milton Keynes. The fact that it will tie in with the potential creation of a world leading freshwater research centre and visitor attraction (the National Institute for Research into Aquatic Habitats, south of Bedford) sited in an area with existing water sports activity and untapped potential only serves to emphasise this further.

The proposed Fens Waterways Link, connecting the cities of Lincoln, Peterborough and Ely and a number of market towns such as Boston, Crowland and Kings Lynn, has the potential to open up 240 km of waterway (80 km of new waterway and increased access to 160 km of existing waterway). The proposed Link will create a new circular waterway for recreation and tourism throughout the Fens. The new waterway will be able to accommodate 5000 additional motor cruiser movements per

⁹⁸ It should be recognised here that Natural England has registered its view with the Local Planning Authority and third parties that there should not be any waterborne recreational activity at Abberton Reservoir.

⁹⁹ The waterway passes through the shelved Marston Vale Ecotown area, which is likely to be put forward as a major growth point in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, so there may be new enhancement opportunities here.

annum and sustain at least 600 new cruise boats, bringing a tenfold increase in the number of cruising boats and hire craft in the region. This fits well with the regional sports facilities strategy, which identifies the area around Kings Lynn as in need of new water sports provision, particularly for rowing (this is in addition to the proposed Nar-Ouse Link near King's Lynn). However, this link will increase pressure on the Great Ouse and Middle Level systems, both of which will need additional visitor moorings and other facilities to cope. The King's Lynn Waterfront Regeneration scheme will add further touring and marina capacity, while the current proposals to develop moorings at other locations in Cambridgeshire could further increase capacity while also providing good examples of sensitive recreation development within a nature conservation context.

There are also plans to develop regional-level water recreation facilities in Cambridge, as part of the sub-regional plan for Cambridgeshire. These plans include the privately-funded Cambridge Sports Lakes, to the north of Cambridge, which will include provision for rowing, canoe sprinting and training, and for triathlon. The lakes may connect to the River Cam, and could provide additional visitor moorings for those wishing to visit Cambridge, facilitate touring canoeing and, potentially, cater for outdoor swimming. The camToo Project will improve the facilities for the established and prospective city community and for college rowing and canoeing. It will also offer a much-needed dedicated public transport link across the River Cam, as well as new cycleways. The camToo Project will add one mile to the existing river system, increasing the capacity of the river for performance training along two miles of waterway by 100%. The project will also reduce flood risks in Cambridge and help manage recreational congestion on the Cam.

Further south, the Broxbourne Olympic white water venue will create a major new paddlesports site which, in conjunction with the existing provision in the Lee Valley, will provide for a range of water related sport and recreation activities. In the north, developments in Norwich – specifically at Whitlingham Broad – provide for a range of sports including canoeing, sailing, rowing and triathlon. Proposals to develop a white water venue at New Mills in the centre of the city could enhance this provision.

3 *Gaps in doorstep opportunities*

Natural England has been the lead organisation in promoting green infrastructure planning in urban and peri-urban locations¹⁰⁰, following the development of accessible greenspace standards¹⁰¹. These initiatives have been utilised in a pilot study of green infrastructure planning in the region, based on the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area.¹⁰² All the approaches to green infrastructure planning have included water resources as a form of green infrastructure. However, reference to water as a resource is largely limited to its aesthetic potential as a backdrop for land based recreation, or as part of a green corridor for wildlife and biodiversity¹⁰³. There thus remains a gap for guidance that informs planners and others about the recreation potential of water resources and sites.

¹⁰⁰ Natural England, 2007, *Green infrastructure and the urban fringe: learning lessons from the Countryside In and Around Towns programme*. Cheltenham: Natural England.

¹⁰¹ English Nature, 2003, *Accessible natural green space standards in towns and cities: a review and toolkit for their implementation*. Report No 526. Peterborough: English Nature.

¹⁰² The Milton Keynes & South Midlands Environment & Quality of Life (EQOL) Sub Group, *Planning sustainable communities: a green infrastructure guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands*. Available from the Environment Agency, Trentside Region

¹⁰³ See, for example, Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy ENV1.

4 *Gaps in the provision for easily accessible multi-sport opportunities*

The examples given above, of the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway, the Cambridge Sports Lakes and the Broxbourne Olympic site all qualify as multi-sport opportunities. However, there are few similar proposals elsewhere in the region, a point recognised in the spatial strategy, with respect to the siting and development of new cultural facilities¹⁰⁴.

5 *Insufficient understanding of the health and therapeutic benefits of water related recreation*

Sport England and the East of England Development Agency have been taking steps to improve the flow of information on the benefits of sport and physical activity, particularly through the recent publication of the sports facilities strategy for the region. The local sports partnerships are also getting involved in encouraging people to get active. There are also good referral schemes in Cambridge and elsewhere. An interesting development in this regard is the new settlement scheme at Cambourne, near Cambridge, where there is a focus on securing excellent sport, leisure and health facilities, together with a broad range of housing options, as a core part of the development plan¹⁰⁵.

6 *Insufficient appreciation of wider social benefits of access and opportunities to participate:*

The Environment Agency is piloting a 'Get Hooked' approach to targeting quality participation in free angling programmes by all groups in areas of high deprivation and social exclusion. A Get Hooked scheme has already been initiated in Peterborough and once evaluated, it is proposed to extend the programme to other inland and coastal communities with the most to gain from participating in water-related sports. The programmes should be developed so that the difference to individuals through these schemes can be tracked and the range of activities widened to include opportunities such as canoeing, sea fishing, rowing, sailing, windsurfing, wakeboarding etc.

7 *Approaches to managing fragile environments for sustainable water-related recreation*

The Great Fen Project is one of the largest and most comprehensive proposals in the region. When complete, in the next century, it will provide a huge area of fen, with provision for a range of small scale informal recreation opportunities (largely related to land based activities such as walking, cycling and bird watching). Some discussions have taken place to consider a solar powered water taxi to ferry large numbers of visitors sustainably between the site and Peterborough, although many other opportunities may be possible to aid visits from water users, with touring canoe routes and moorings for a limited number of boaters. These types of solutions

¹⁰⁴ Government Office for the East of England (2008) *East of England Plan. The revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England*. Norwich: TSO, Policy C2.

¹⁰⁵ See http://www.cambourne-uk.com/what_is_cambourne.html

could not only add to the sustainability of reaching these type of sites, but may offer great enhancements to the quality of visitor experiences on offer. The RSPB has recently announced a new management initiative for Wallasea Island in Essex.

8 *Limited response to the changing nature of marine tourism*

The Broads Authority scheme and Environment Agency proposals outlined above address some of the gaps in marine tourism. The Port of London Authority has undertaken some work on the Thames Estuary to support local sailing clubs. However, changing management practices to address environmental designations may mean a reduction or cessation in dredging small channels and creeks, which could constrain some forms water related recreation provision in the estuary. There are proposals at Grays and Greenhythe (outside the region) to develop new marinas suitable for large motor cruisers seeking to travel up the Thames to St Catherine's Docks. These are strategically important proposals given the limited ability for the eastern end of the river and its estuary to support new and improved access arrangements for powered and unpowered craft.

9 *Adapting to climate change*

Already the potential effects on the coast are being considered, with re-alignment proposals for many sections of the region's coastline. However, monitoring of changes to water levels and the frequency of storm events (high flows), increased drought, more weed growth and other potential effects should continue to be monitored and modelled to provide support for those who manage water resources, operate their businesses on or by the waterways and watercourses with more accurate information from which to plan for changing patterns of use and conditions across the region's waters.

10 *A failure to engage effectively with regional strategic planning*

One of the more effective cases in which water resources and recreation have been used effectively to address a range of policy priorities is in the case of the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway. While primarily being a waterway link between the East of England and the national inland waterway network, the Trust that has championed the waterway has been able to show that it will have a number of beneficial impacts: on biodiversity, by creating a green corridor between Bedford and Milton Keynes; on health, by creating non-motorised walking and cycling routes; on housing, by providing the underpinning for a green environmental approach to housing and new settlements; to tourism, by opening up the possibility for boaters to pass from the Grand Union Canal into the River Great Ouse navigation; and to the economy, by creating new jobs and added value into the local and sub-regional economy. The initiative by Natural England, to publish a list of all the regional planning and associated matters in which it expects to participate, is another example of good practice in this respect¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ Natural England (2008) *Defra statutory guidance for Natural England on regional planning and associated matters*. Peterborough: Natural England, East of England Region.

2.3 Synthesis of Gaps in Provision

There are a number of initiatives to develop water related recreation already underway in the East of England. Taking these into account, strategic gaps in provision still remain, as outlined in Table 2.1. These are consistent with the gaps in rowing and canoeing provision identified in the regional sports facilities strategy¹⁰⁷ and with the broader strategic development agenda for the region.

Table 2.1 Gaps in the provision for water related recreation activities that need to be addressed in this strategic plan

G1	Need to upgrade existing facilities and resources There is a need to upgrade many existing facilities and resources to ensure that they can provide for more participants and more and better activities
G2	Poor distribution of facilities There is a poor distribution of facilities for some water related sport and recreation activities, and a general shortage of regional level provision, meaning that progression routes are uneven and inaccessible to many
G3	Shortage of large scale multi-activity centres There is a shortage of large scale multi-activity centres that are accessible to large numbers of people, which undermines the national and regional sustainable development agendas
G4	Doorstep opportunities, green infrastructure planning and engagement in the policy process There are gaps in the provision of doorstep opportunities that can widen access to existing and proposed waters for target communities; there is also a general lack of awareness of the potential and value of water resources in green infrastructure planning and, more broadly, the regional strategic policy arena
G5	Insufficient understanding of environmental issues Despite an expanding evidence base and much good practice, there remains in some sectors an insufficient understanding of the carrying capacity, and variable management practices, of environmentally sensitive and designated waters
G6	Insufficient public understanding of the benefits of water related recreation There is insufficient public understanding of the benefits of water related recreation and an under-developed approach to communicating what activities can be undertaken where and when. The requirements for rowing are a good example here. It should also be noted that representatives of a number of activities feel that their activities are not understood by public servants and others who are in decision-making roles.
G7	Insufficient development of marine recreation and tourism The management of marine recreation and tourism is insufficiently developed to meet the changing needs of participants, particularly in the light of the potential impacts of climate change

¹⁰⁷ Sport England, East Region (2007) *Creating active places – sports facilities strategy for the East of England*. Bedford: Sport England.

3: Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities for the region have been divided into high and medium priorities, to reflect the extent to which they address gaps directly (high priorities), or enhance provision once the gaps have been addressed (medium priorities). However, the division of the priorities into these categories should not mask the need to address them all.

3.1 High Priorities: Initiatives to meet current 'gaps' in provision

HP1: Improving Existing Provision (Gaps G1, G4)

Many water resources could be opened up to a wider range of activities and people through simple steps to make better use of existing provision and to facilitate improved access for those of all abilities and ages. Initiatives including:

Investment in physical facilities across the region. This includes improvements to existing slipways, for coastal access in Suffolk and south Norfolk, for example, and for inland waters across the region, particularly in urban areas and in the Broads, where the provisions of the Broads Plan and Angling Strategy have yet to be implemented with respect to slipways, car parks and other facilities. The provision of parking adjacent to slipways could enhance access to canals, lakes, rivers in urban and rural areas, as well as to the coast. Small scale improvements, such as provision of fishing platforms and access and egress around locks, could open up more waters to a range of activities (the work of the Environment Agency [Anglian Central], in building all-ability fishing platforms on the Great Ouse and Middle Level, should be recognised here as an example of good practice). More visitor facilities are needed across the water network and along the coast to aid opportunities for craft to travel further afield and tour other parts of the region. On inland waterways and watercourses, visitor moorings are required wherever there is a settlement. Most of these do not need to comprise anything other than moorings, although in larger settlements there could be opportunities to provide infrastructure for other water and waterside users (parking, showers, picnic areas, starting points for health walks, cycle routes, canoe trails, fishing etc). For example, the banks of the 'Cut-Off' channel between Denver and the River Lark have the potential to provide a long distance walking, cycling and horse riding route, to provide local cycleway commuting routes e.g. linking USAF Lakenheath Airbase with Mildenhall, an off-road cycle and walking route for visitors between the railway station and the RSPB's relatively new reserve at Lakenheath Fen; in addition, three large circular canoe routes could be developed if canoeing were to be allowed in the channel. In areas where greater access opportunities can be provided, the provision of local facilities should also be incorporated into local planning proposals, or required as a condition of consent in appropriate applications near water. An example here is the Middle Level, where more visitor moorings and access platforms for canoeists and rowers, allied to small scale camping sites and other local services, could open up new green tourism potential for water and land-based visitors. More should also be done to encourage, and sometimes require applicants to provide wider access opportunities to water resources as part of larger applications to public and non-public funding programmes (e.g. WREN, Lottery, Rural Development Programme for England, etc). One example of this is the use, by South Cambridgeshire DC, of Growth Area Funding to improve access for canoeists and swimmers to the Cam at Trumpington Meadows.

Access to reservoirs: There are not many water supply reservoirs in the region, although there are a number in the East Midlands, close to the regional boundary (eg Rutland Water). Despite environmental designations on many of the region's reservoirs, there is some scope for offering a broader range of uses than is currently the case. This is particularly important in Essex, which has few lakes or other enclosed waters. A review should be undertaken by water companies in close liaison with other stakeholders of existing and future resources, with greater consideration given to including a range of opportunities needed strategically (such as outdoor swimming, scuba diving and additional water for dinghy sailing). Notwithstanding its conservation designations, Hanningfield Reservoir is ideally placed for such a review. Future

provision of drinking water and irrigation reservoirs in the region provides a significant opportunity to consider how strategic regional or sub-regional demands for a wider and growing range of recreational demands can be met or maximum conservation benefit obtained. Often there has been a lack of strategic consideration and compromise in accommodating various interests, resulting in the provision of resources that only provide or meet minor or moderate local needs and expectations.

Access improvements to rivers: The creation by the Environment Agency and others of new game fisheries on rivers in the North Thames area illustrates what can be achieved by improving rivers that have become degraded. It should be a priority to replicate this approach at other degraded rivers close to major population centres. Touring canoe routes and open swimming are growing in popularity and lend themselves towards the gently flowing waters found in most places in the region, providing sustainable and enjoyable ways for people to gain greater appreciation and enjoyment of the landscapes and nature conservation interests of the region. More routes should be promoted on a wider scale beyond the Broads, particularly on the Nene, Great Ouse and Middle Level navigations and in some estuaries (the promotion of the Bedford River Valley Park as a model destination for paddlesports should be noted here). As the canoe agreement on the River Waveney has demonstrated, access for non powered craft can also be negotiated on rivers which do not have a proven public right of navigation. There are strategic links that would add considerably to the value of the region's rivers as a recreational resource without causing undue disturbance to other users. Examples would include rivers around Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and Thetford (rivers such as the Little Ouse, Lark, Gipping and Thet), where access is currently constrained (it should be noted here that the Cut, a linear route from the Lark to the Denver Sluice - with links to the Little Ouse and Wissey - is largely in Environment Agency ownership and could provide the basis for a number of circular canoe routes). There is also the potential, subject to a suitable risk assessment, to extend local canoe opportunities during spate conditions in one or two rivers in Essex, such as the Chelmer and Blackwater. Where any new access is negotiated, a minimum level of investment in facilities is required to ensure that these resources are responsibly used and suitable to enable participation by everyone (beginners under supervision through to the more experienced canoeist). Such facilities include signage, water level web cam, portage points, access to parking etc).

Some rivers and other waterbodies in the region have sluices, weirs and other water management devices that can often be modified to create small scale white water and play sites close to urban areas (examples include the Hartham Common weir on the River Lee). Provision of white water slalom and play sites of this nature should be made across at least 6 new sites in the region, over the course of the plan. Final selection of the sites will be reliant on issues such as sufficient water, technical feasibility and local arrangements over management and safety. The New Mills site on the River Wensum in Norwich has been identified by the British Canoe Union, but there are other sites (in Bedford, Peterborough, the Denver sluice on the River Cam and other locations) that could also offer useful local opportunities. In identifying weirs and other structures as potential locations for paddlesport sites, particularly on Norfolk chalk streams, consideration should be given to the impact of such development on the overall ecology of the river; there is undoubtedly a tension between the river management function of weirs and their modification for recreational use. In addition, Natural England has stated that it will not support further recreational development of the Wensum.

Access to coastal & estuarine resource: As coastal re-alignment takes place, the needs of recreation should continue to be considered alongside conservation. Although an appropriate balance between conservation and recreation is often planned, there is powerful international environmental protection legislation that can work against this balance being achieved (particularly where there is requirement to replace habitat that is lost to the sea). All opportunities must therefore be taken to plan for recreation and habitat/species conservation to co-exist where possible.

Doorstep opportunities: While the value of water related recreation applies to all of society, it is apparent that those in deprived communities often have the poorest access to water

resources, even for informal activities such as walking or open swimming. There is a need, in urban communities, to review what waterspaces are available and to what uses they are suited. There are a variety of schemes available from many national governing bodies of sport to provide equipment and coaching in such situations, once access to water has been secured. One of the most popular initiatives is likely to be angling, with the Angling Development Board (ADB) now in a position to support the development of all three angling disciplines. Supporting the development of ADB centres throughout the region could encourage a range of people to take up a water related recreational activity (note here that extending the availability of 'free fishing' areas in urban centres could also help more people gain access to this activity). Similarly, provision for small scale canoeing and sailing, by the British Canoe Union and the Royal Yachting Association respectively, could further add to the utility of this initiative. A 'Get Hooked' initiative should be tested in Peterborough before widening this approach to include a number of water-activities on which it is based and spreading the benefits to other targeted communities in the region, both inland and on the coast (i.e. Great Yarmouth, Harwich, Clacton, Colchester, Bedford etc). Opportunities for the reuse of mineral workings that are located close to urban areas should be considered in this regard, particularly for providing accessible open swimming opportunities and beach facilities. Finally, it should be recognized that many water environments are attractive to walkers and cyclists, and that non-motorised shared use routes next to waterways and watercourses, and around lakes and reservoirs, can add greatly to the overall recreational value of the environment, especially where this is close to people's homes.

It should be noted that any programme aimed at encouraging informal activity in or near water needs to be linked to an active safety campaign, to inform and remind people about the risks associated with water, and to help them become more proficient at helping themselves, particularly by ensuring that they can swim and that they know emergency procedures and drills. There is a major role here for the National Governing Bodies of sport and for the local education services.

HP2: Addressing gaps in the provision for some watersports (Gap G2)

(note: this priority needs to be read in conjunction with the regional sports facilities strategy)

Canoeing/kayaking: There is a general requirement for more and better access to rivers, particularly in the centre of the region. White water provision is required where arrangements for managed release can be made, (sites could include Norwich, Bedford, Broxbourne, Denver Sluice and Dobbs Weir on the Lee)¹⁰⁸. There is a need for better sprint and training provision in a number of areas, including Leighton Buzzard and Cambridge. There is also a need for new provision for sprint and training in Lowestoft and possibly at Harlow, on the River Lea. There is also a need to provide and promote a wider range of touring routes, both on inland waters and around appropriate estuaries across the region (see SP1).

Rowing: There is a general need for more inland rowing courses similar in size to that at Peterborough, and for improvements to navigation and facilities for existing clubs. New provision at Bedford and Cambridge will meet needs in the west of the region. Opportunities for new provision have been identified in King's Lynn, Welwyn, Lowestoft and Harlow (note that these can be combined with provision for canoeing). There remains a need for new provision in the Thetford/Mildenhall/Bury St Edmunds area. There is a further need to ensure that rowing is considered in all new developments that involve the creation of new water, either through mineral extraction or flood relief/balance lakes that may be associated with existing and new settlements (Northstowe, outside Cambridge, is a good example of the latter).

Swimming: There is a need to establish opportunities for outdoor swimming on inland waters, in particular to consider the potential for developing new open air sites at lakes and reservoirs, especially in the western part of the region (this is important in the Bedford area, where negotiations are taking place with respect to providing for swimming at the Bedford River Valley Park). There is also a case for including swimming as a potential after-use for worked-out mineral sites, where issues of safety and liability can be addressed.

Divng: Despite its growing popularity, there are few inland dive sites in the region. A feasibility study should be undertaken to assess the potential of a number of reservoirs, including Hanningfield, Costessey and Abberton (recognising that both Hanningfield and Abberton have extensive environmental protection, and that Natural England have reservations about additional recreational uses at Hanningfield and do not believe that there should be any waterborne recreational activity at Abberton Reservoir when it reopens after its capacity has been increased).

Waterskiing and wakeboarding: The principal requirement is for a network of cable tow facilities around the region, to supplement the existing inland and coastal boat tow sites. In addition to Box End Park near Bedford, there is potential at the following locations: Paxton Pits, near St Neots; Whitlingham Little Broad, near Norwich; Saffron Walden, Essex (Essex County Council are currently seeking to open a new outdoor centre in this area, to include water recreation); Runham Broad, Great Yarmouth; and, possibly, the Lafarge Aggregates site near Bungay, which has permission for recreational use once aggregate extraction has finished. There may also be commercial potential at an outdoor centre near Upminster, Essex, and at other mineral workings in south Essex. It should be noted that Natural England is unable to endorse further development of a number of these potential locations.

Angling: There is good access to all angling disciplines in the region (but not always good physical access to river banks). Much more could be done to bring degraded rivers up to a standard suitable for game and coarse fishing. This can be linked to addressing the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. In addition to physical access to suitable waters, there is a lack of overall training structure. Where taster opportunities are provided there is a focus on providing high quantity opportunities for people to get into the sport, rather than quality in targeting the opportunities to areas of the region and communities who may benefit most (an exception to this is the proposed angling participation centre in the Bedford River Valley Park and the coaching programme developed by the Anglian Central region of the Environment Agency). Provision should be made for a number of Angling Development

¹⁰⁸ Research is required to establish the potential ecological impacts of the recreational use of weirs and other river structures, and how these impacts can be mitigated.

Centres and similar coaching centres to be established, with the first ones – capable of addressing all three disciplines – at Peterborough, Norwich (a suitable site, owned by the Environment Agency, has been identified¹⁰⁹) and, potentially, at Alton Water, between Ipswich and Colchester. Similar centres could also be established north of London – possibly at Panshangar Parkland in Welwyn Garden City (also identified for canoeing and rowing in the regional sports facilities strategy) or at the old Splashlands site in Stanborough Park, Welwyn Garden City. It should be noted that the Wensum is one of the most important angling rivers in Norfolk, and is the location of one of the four national pilot Fisheries Action Plans (FAP). Another of the pilot FAPs is on the Broads. The Wensum FAP could be a particularly good location for managing and monitoring a fisheries and canoe agreement.

Inland motor boating: there is a high demand for additional marina berths on the Great Ouse, Middle Level and Nene navigations. However, the capacity of these rivers is constrained by poor facilities, especially many of the locks, which are old and narrow, as well as by a lack of visitor moorings. If the link to the Grand Union Canal is to be opened, there will be a need for major investment in lock replacement and refurbishment, and in new visitor moorings. The Fens Waterways Link will generate a similar requirement in the Middle Level, also relating to the need to raise some low bridges.

Personal powered craft: new sites need to be found as regulation and growing environmental pressures continue to restrict current inland, sea and estuary sites.

¹⁰⁹ We note here the work of Dennis Willis and colleagues, and their Envirofish initiative to bring together angling and environmental conservation education at what they hope will be a Satellite Training Centre recognised by the Angling Development Board and Sport England.

HP3: A necklace of local green 'gateway' sites along the water network

The navigation network and many rivers have the potential to combine the needs of water-based interests, boaters, canoeists, anglers with local aspirations for healthier lifestyles through the development of regular safe and well maintained green gateway & hub sites, with shared facilities such as parking, toilet & shower facilities, starting points for circular walks & cycle rides, health walks, canoe trails, fishing facilities, picnic & barbeque areas etc. A necklace of regular sites could help increase participation in healthier lifestyles and outdoor recreation, tackling people's concerns and lack of confidence in using linear resources.

More local walks, long distance paths, cycle links and possibly bridleway routes should be provided using the public infrastructure (banks) of much of the waterway network (e.g. cut off channel) to support and stimulate rural tourism, encourage active lifestyles and provide sustainable opportunities to commute between settlements linked by water.

Improved access to and alongside watersides is a major issue for anglers, particularly in the Broads. The Broads Angling Strategy Group has identified, through the Broads Fisheries Action Plan, areas that require improvement in this respect. If improved, these areas would benefit all walkers.

A pilot project could be undertaken by one or more of the Local Access Forums in the region (there are 10 in the region, including the Broads National Park authority), to develop a strategy and implementation plan for improving non-motorised access to and along watersides. There are already good projects on the Cam, connecting Cambridge with its rural hinterland, in Peterborough, and proposals for a Waterway Park adjacent to the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway (with its potential linkage to the Grand Union Canal). Sustrans would like to see similar provision on the Wensum outside Norwich, while there is much opportunity to propose new mixed use routes in the Thames Gateway/South Essex area. Where appropriate, new inland routes alongside watersides could provide inland 'spurs and loops' to the coastal routes potentially being developed by Natural England, as part of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill.

HP4: Best practice in environmentally friendly recreation

There is a need to develop and disseminate good practice in environmentally sensitive and sustainable recreation management. It should be a priority to ensure that the initiative is taken by the Broads or a similarly appropriate authority to provide the lead on how recreation and conservation can be co-ordinated to produce 'the best of both worlds' especially in locations such as Peterborough and Bedford, where new regionally important open spaces that contain water for recreation may be developed. River basin planning, under the Water Framework Directive, could provide an opportunity here, particularly in encouraging water recreation users to get involved in the delivery of water quality goals.

The Green Blue education initiative established by the Royal Yachting Association and the British Marine Federation (www.greenblue.org) is a good example to build upon in this context. Launched in 2005, the Green Blue seeks to raise awareness and promote good environmental practice on the part of all coastal and inland boaters, whether recreational or commercial. At the core of the initiative is the recognition that all boating is highly dependent on good quality environments that require care and management. Further dissemination of the Green Blue, particularly with respect to the maintenance of boats, could have major positive impacts on the environment in the East of England. Work by British Waterways should also be recognised here, particularly in the development and implementation of its environmental code of practice and its biodiversity action plan. Through its waterscape website, it also encourages people to find local opportunities for water related recreation.

In addition, elements of the Green Blue could be brought into new codes of conduct and environmental policies for a range of water related activities that are becoming more popular in the East of England. One example of this is the growing popularity of long distance canoe safari, where groups of paddlers under the guidance of instructors or group leaders, travel for several days, carrying all their supplies with them. There are currently no specific environmental codes covering such activities, Although the installation in appropriate places of measuring equipment on rivers to monitor height and flow levels, with these measurements being made widely available to all potential river users, is one example of good practice that could be adopted more widely. Environmental codes of conduct need to be further addressed.

There is also a need to consider specific initiatives, such as a shift away from boats powered by mineral fuels. For example, the Environment Agency has been active in promoting the use of electric boats, with reduced tariffs charged for their use. It has also been involved in a project running a fleet of electric water taxis. The results of this initiative should be used to promote similar schemes in other navigation authority jurisdictions.

More generally, there is a need to undertake a region-wide study into the relationship between tourism and climate change. This study should take a number of perspectives, including the impacts that tourism can have on the environment, and what adaptations can be implemented to mitigate the impacts; and how can 'green' tourism initiatives impact positively on the environment and on local communities.

HP5: Influencing the regional policy agenda (Gaps G4, G6, G7)

Although the East of England has a substantial water resource, both coastal and inland, the potential of water related recreation to address a number of key policy agendas is poorly developed. The East of England Plan makes little reference to water related recreation, even in the policies for culture and tourism, and its potential is not recognised in relation to urban and rural regeneration. Similarly, the Rights of Way Improvement Plans do not make many connections to water resources, let alone consider them as part of the sustainable transport network. Even small bodies of water or short stretches of river can provide considerable opportunities for sustainable recreational participation. In particular, such waters provide the opportunity for community ownership and management systems to develop, thus allowing such initiatives to make a contribution to more general policies of community empowerment and cohesion. But there is no mechanism currently available for ensuring that water bodies are considered as potential recreation resources in strategic planning and development control functions. The significance of green infrastructure planning has been recognised by the Regional Assembly, in its 2007 response to the Government's Housing Green Paper, while the Regional Assembly has also been involved in the pilot green infrastructure guidance developed for the Milton Keynes/South Midlands Growth Area. However, while 'green infrastructure' is taken to include water resources, there is little guidance on what different water resources are capable of providing, or contributing in terms of recreation opportunities. Adoption of the notion of 'blue space' guidance, as an adjunct to green infrastructure, provides a means of enhancing wildlife, providing for recreation and improving quality of life in urban and rural areas. In addition, there is a priority here to ensure that all new developments incorporate, where available, 'Blue Infrastructure', and that all existing opportunities to develop blue infrastructure are explored. This would apply to urban regeneration schemes as much as new Greenfield developments (for example, the regional sports facilities strategy notes the potential value of new drainage lakes constructed to support new housing developments). The following initiatives are required to assess the value of blue infrastructure guidance:

Pilot projects on the integration of 'blue space' guidance into green infrastructure planning: Building on the work of the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium, pilot work can be undertaken with Natural England to assess the potential value of specific guidance on the use of water resources for recreation. The Bedford-Marston Vale-Milton Keynes corridor would be an excellent study, building on the green infrastructure guidance that has already been developed. Particular consideration here could be given to the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park and the Bedford River Valley Park. Another good pilot would be to develop new guidance for the Haven Gateway growth area, to examine the potential of green/blue infrastructure planning in an international gateway community that is also in need of considerable local and sub-regional regeneration. In addition, these pilots could be used to assess the potential impact of the Water Framework Directive on urban and peri-urban settlements. Funding for this work could be secured by levying a region-wide Developer Contribution Scheme (or by encouraging local authorities, within their Local Development Frameworks, to include specific water related schemes within their list of developer contributions).

Support for the Marine Industry Sector: The recreation and small commercial marine sector is a significant employer and income generator in the East of England, especially on the Broads and the Great Ouse river system. Support for this sector, particularly in terms of working with local authorities, could release capacity and increase the recreational and economic impact of this sector. A major problem with current waterfront development schemes that do not consider water based activities is the loss of access to water, not just for recreationalists, but also for associated services such as engine and boat repairs, boat hire, maintenance, and supplies (fuel, water, food). This applies on development around inland waters, particularly canals and navigations, and along the coast. Pilot projects could be undertaken in Great Yarmouth (potential to link with the marine hub), The Broads (potential to contribute to the flood alleviation programme and the reorientation of Broads tourism towards privately owned craft), King's Lynn (considering the Nar-Ouse link, new marina development

and relationship to the Wash), Ipswich (potential development of integrated marina and mixed residential and industrial development in the docks area) and the Great Ouse (a programme of lock and infrastructure improvements, in anticipation of the link to the Grand Union Canal being opened).

HP6: Better provision of information to improve understanding and use (Gaps G4, G6)

Not all current opportunities for water related recreation are well known about, used or understood, resulting in overcrowding and conflict at popular locations and under-use at other similar resources. This has the potential for ecological damage, as well as reducing people's enjoyment of water related recreation.

A long-term awareness raising programme is required to improve the level of information about opportunities available and ecological impacts of activities, using electronic means, on-site provision, and through clubs and associations of users. Electronic sources of information can be linked in to a range of existing national and regional information sources (e.g. tourism sites, weather and tide conditions, and national governing body and activity based web sites). In addition, there is a need for a much clearer inventory of the water related sport and recreation resource, so that people know which resources are (and are not) available in the region, enabling them to participate with confidence.

An opportunity exists to build upon British Waterways' excellent Waterscape.com - "Britain's official guide to canals, rivers and lakes" The current emphasis of Waterscape.com is on days out and holidays, pointing people towards walks along canals, good pubs nearby, and resources for people touring by motor boat (there are good river guides, although not all rivers are covered). Some sports are covered, including: boating (mostly cruisers, although some on canoeing), fishing, cycling and walking.

What is now required is an additional layer of information, quite possibly linked to Waterscape.com, covering:

- raising awareness of the high quality environment and increasing understanding of responsible use of water space and ecological systems among water users;
- provision of information on opportunities, both electronically and in a range of other formats, including links to local clubs and national governing bodies, and leaflets and notice boards at key locations. It is understood that the Environment Agency is currently developing a suite of websites to promote water related recreation opportunities on those rivers (and neighbouring rivers) where it has statutory navigation authority responsibilities. It may be that these sites, and links to them, can form the basis of a new information system.

Priority requirements for the new system include:

- Broad coverage to include inland (canals, lakes, rivers) and coastal waters;
- Provision of information on restrictions and zonings;
- Information on points of access, slipways (including costs and availability), codes of conduct.

The forms of provision that the information might take include:

- Electronically accessibly on the internet, with frequent updates;
- Available at public spaces such as tourist information centres, motorway services, rail stations, etc., to guide people as to where to go at particular points in time;
- Linked into water recreation multi-activity sites, utilising clubs and associations to raise awareness;
- To include links to sources of weather forecasts, water conditions, congestion points and other relevant information.

The appointment of dedicated officers, such as the proposed Angling Officer for the Broads, could further help to provide information on specific activities. There is also an emerging role here for Local Access Forums, particularly in promoting all forms of access to natural and semi-natural resources.

HP7: 'Access East' (Gaps G2, G4, G7)

It has been widely mooted that the East of England should seek to exploit its inland and coastal water resources to establish itself as a centre for a range of water-based sport and recreation activities. This it could achieve – on an international scale - by setting a goal of making all its main waters publicly navigable, certainly by unpowered craft, by developing linkages to the national waterway network, and by developing coastal infrastructure suitable for encouraging small scale touring by sail and paddle. Allied to a 'green' tourism offer, this could create a major water-based sport and recreation destination.

Connection to the national waterway network

Opening the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and the Fens Waterways Link could provide the ultimate expression of this concept, by providing the crucial 'missing link' between east and west in terms of navigation, while also linking up and enhancing a wide range of water based sport and activity. It is considered likely that opening these routes could lead to a significant increase in water-borne visitor traffic to the Ouse and Middle Level systems (especially Ely and Cambridge). There is also potential commercial demand for visitor and permanent moorings in Bedford and the lower Ouse system, given that the Thames will only be a day or so away, via the Grand Union Canal. There is also potential for the east-west transfer of freight (mainly aggregate), while the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Link also has the potential to unlock significant land-based regeneration and green infrastructure improvements. Moreover, the position of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway, at the heart of the England in terms of accessibility, the potentially high profile of the Brogborough Hill crossing – spectacularly visible to the east of the M1 - and the high concentration of water within the local area, makes the Bedford and Milton Keynes area well positioned to brand itself in the future as a major water sports and water based recreational centre for the south and east. In order to gain the full potential of the links into the national waterway network, it is clear that much improvement work needs to be done to the locks and other facilities on the Great Ouse, Middle Level and Nene river systems. This will need to include a substantial number of new visitor moorings and marina berths, some catering for craft that are used year-round. Considerable additional utility could be added to the system by the following initiatives:

Creation of the Cambridgeshire Broads, by joining a number of former gravel pits and quarries adjacent to the Great Ouse, Nene and Cam into the main waterways to create a series of links and more open waters, as well as space for new moorings and marinas. Apart from motor boating, this would create new opportunities in a crowded water system for a number of activities, including sailing, canoeing and rowing.

Creation of a new access to the sea, large marina and white water canoe facility on the Denver to King's Lynn relief channel: the relief channel is already used for motor boats and pleasure craft to travel downstream from Cambridge, past the Denver Sluice. The addition of a sea lock could allow sea-going craft onto the channel at King's Lynn, while there is much potential to create many new moorings on the relief channel itself. Work by the Environment Agency at Denver Sluice could also create a new play facility for canoes and kayaks. It is recognised that creating links of this type could have a number of adverse impacts, particularly in terms of the potential spread of alien species, water quality and hydromorphology. It is therefore recommended that a full environmental impact assessment be carried out to establish the feasibility of these proposals.

3.2 Medium Priorities

MP1: The development of wild water parks

One of the unique features of the Eastern region is the opportunities it offers for people to explore and enjoy wild parks and nature reserves, for example, The Great Fen project, Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire, the Broads, nature reserves which include water (owned by the RSPB or the wildlife trusts), and the recently announced RSPB Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project. Links can also be made here to the potential for creating new 'wild water parks' through minerals planning. One example is the potential offered by the planned after use of minerals sites, such as those identified in the Earith Mepel Area Action Plan (in the Cambridge and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan).

At present many of these "wild parks" offer opportunities both for nature-related activities such as bird watching or walking, in combination with opportunities for water based recreation such as boating, angling, and cycling (often in designated areas). Developing the region as a centre for Green / conservation-related recreation and tourism would create new resources for quiet recreation pursuits such as angling, canoeing and swimming, would create employment opportunities, would offer green / blue "lungs" for those living in the growing urban conurbations, and would make the most of the opportunities offered by managed re-alignment.

MP2: Developing demonstration sites for piloting and testing a range of approaches to improving the quality and availability of water related recreation in the region (Gaps G2, G4, G5, G6, G7)

Several proposed approaches to improving opportunities for water related recreation require testing before being implemented across the region. Although some of these concepts and techniques have been utilised elsewhere they may need adapting to the particular conditions or characteristics in the region. Partnership work by organisations such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and local authorities, could explore the potential for adopting a range of approaches, including:

A tourism based voluntary 'green' payment scheme. Examples include: an additional voluntary payment for each night in a hotel, or an addition to a restaurant meal, or an addition to a parking or mooring charge. The money collected is used directly for local area environmental improvements. This could be linked to the management and regulation of estuaries or The Broads. It is important here that Local Access Forums get involved in pilot schemes in order to create the most effective and reasonable schemes for all people.

Development of a new 'river basin' approach to access agreements. Other than estuaries, canals and public navigations, canoe access in the region is limited to the River Waveney (this agreement is considered by the British Canoe Union to be the benchmark for 365 days per year agreements that support paddling, subject to environmental protection and the multifunctional use of waters). The Waveney agreement can be replicated on other rivers, but the need now is to extend it to establish an agreement that will cover all activities on all suitable waters in the region, to allow all users flexibility about which waters they use, depending upon local water conditions and environmental considerations. Allied to this is a need to examine the future management and sustainability of the agreement. Such an agreement could involve height or flow measurements to determine when there is enough water to make particular activities possible without damaging the river bed. Such a scheme could be piloted on the Great Ouse river basin, or by extending the Waveney agreement to cover all waters in the catchment.

Targeted research on understanding the carrying capacities of designated bodies of water. A number of boating and yachting organisations are concerned that there is insufficient evidence available to determine how much recreational activity can take place on waters that have conservation designations. Without this evidence, local and conservation authorities are inclined to adopt the precautionary principle and limit or ban water-related recreational activities. Research into the potential to provide for recreation in different nature conservation settings, especially restored mineral workings where there is limited scope for mitigation or compensation, could yield such information.

Integration of recreation into mineral or water storage permissions (irrigation & drinking water). The potential for the creation of new inland water bodies occurs on a regular basis from mineral working and various forms of construction activity. Integration of local recreational needs (such as coarse angling) at the planning stage where potential new water bodies might be created as a result of mineral workings (e.g. gravel extraction) could provide win-win situations for local communities and the private sector. In relation to larger opportunities near urban areas, a more strategic view may be required of the level and range of uses that are considered to bring benefits to a larger amount of people (multi-use motorised and non-motorised); this could act to relieve pressure on estuarine resources and many rural locations that lack the physical or ecological capacity to meet the growing demands for many watersports, particular in areas of the region where significant growth is planned.

Expansion of climate change monitoring work throughout the region. A range of bodies and agencies are undertaking monitoring activities on water resources throughout the region in relation to assessing the impact of climate change. This work should be widened to help plan for changes to the use and provision of water for sport and recreation. In particular, an early indication of issues and areas affected (longer periods of drought, shorter more severe high flow events, greater weed and algae growth etc) would help many plan for future management and adaptation, both managers of the resource and businesses who rely on it (boat hire firms etc).

Integrating recreational and ecological values. Subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, potential exists for providing enhanced integration of water based recreation with ecological protection. This could be implemented and accessed through identification of areas such as ecological water parks or reserves. This would allow people to identify specific areas where the aquatic ecology is significant and where non-powered craft have access (understanding here that, used inappropriately, unpowered craft can have negative impacts on the environment). This has the potential to raise awareness of ecological values, as well as potentially provide funding and better management of protected areas. Developing the region as a centre for 'green' or conservation-related recreation and tourism would create employment opportunities, provide 'green/blue lungs' for those living in the growth areas, and make the most of the opportunities offered by managed realignment. Potential for integrating recreation and ecological protection could be piloted across the Fens and Broads, where there is potential to develop canoe and camping tourism, and on the North Norfolk Coast AONB, where there is strong demand for sailing, windsurfing and some other marine activities (it should be noted that, in the latter case, any proposals that could impact on the European Marine Site require detailed assessment and consultation with Natural England). Natural England is also unable to endorse new recreation development at Upper Thurne and Trinity Broads.

MP3: Developing a Network of Water Related Recreation Hubs

Developing the priorities set out in HP1 and HP2, there is a need to develop some major centres capable of providing for a range of water related recreation activities that are accessible to large numbers of people. This is consistent with policy E4 of the East of England Plan, which proposes a number of clusters within the region, and with the Sport England facilities strategy, which suggests that, wherever possible, sports facilities should be grouped together in a 'hub' or 'village', and that existing natural provision of a national/regional status should be enhanced in cases where greater benefits can be delivered. It is thus proposed that the centres identified in this proposal should correspond with some of the priority areas for regeneration identified in Policy SS5 the East of England Plan. In addition to providing for a range of water related activities, these hubs should also be developed to offer equipment hire and sale, coaching and training, and provision for progression through sports and recreation activities. The potential hubs are:

Greater Norwich Sports Hub: This is an area with significant deprivation, which requires good access to a range of water related recreation facilities. Provision should thus be made for local and regional level development in sailing, rowing, canoeing (all major disciplines), triathlon and angling, using Whitlingham Broad (noting that it is not currently available for angling), New Mills and other potential sites on the Wensum, and North Walsham. This is consistent with the Broads Angling Strategy Group and the Wensum Fisheries Action Plan Pilot, which wish to see the development of angling on the River Wensum between Norwich and Whitlingham. Note here that Sustrans have identified a walking and cycling link from Norwich to Whitlingham Country Park as one of the 79 Connect2 projects supported by The People's £50m lottery allocation. It should be noted that stretches of the Wensum have high levels of environmental protection, and English Nature is concerned about the potential impacts of the recreational use of weirs and other river structures; it will not endorse any further development of the Wensum.

Haven Gateway Marine Hub: This is an area with significant deprivation, which requires new industrial development as well as good access to a range of water related recreation facilities. Provision in this case should be made for the leisure and small commercial marine sector, including motor cruising, dinghy and keel boat sailing, power boating, personal watercraft and water skiing/wakeboarding (cable and boat tow). The main venues for this provision should be the Orwell in Ipswich, with new marina and residential accommodation to encourage people to use sustainable forms of transport to access the hub, and Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, where the concentration will be on marine engineering and powered craft, to provide new forms of employment as well as a new motor for local and sub-regional regeneration.

Thames Gateway/South Essex Outdoor Recreation hub: This is an area with a weak economic performance and significant deprivation. The need here is to provide new sources of employment and to encourage more people to become physically active. Employment is likely to come from large scale commercial shipping in the major Thames ports. Encouraging physical activity will centre on the provision of access to the countryside, using green corridors, and introducing people to a range of activities, including land and water related opportunities. Work with reservoir and lake owners, angling clubs and others will be required to develop an integrated range of recreation uses that are accessible to all. Within this, there should be provision – in old mineral workings - for diving, given its local popularity, cable tow water skiing and wakeboarding, and for rowing on one of the principal estuaries (the ARA would like to see proper storage and club facilities for gig rowing on the Thames, at Canvey Island).

London Arc Paddlesports Hub: the Olympic white water site at Broxbourne forms the core of this hub, with a need to provide for all paddlesport disciplines through to regional and national level. There will be a particular need to consider provision for the canoe marathon, utilising the waters already available in the Lee Valley Park. This will provide new high class facilities in an area of deprivation, while also reinvigorating the Lee Valley Park as a place to visit. It should

be noted that the Lee Valley SPA/Ramsar designation will need to be taken into account in developing the recreational use of this area.

Bedford/South Midlands Multi-Sports Hub: Bedford and Milton Keynes have the potential to become a major national and international venue for a wide range of water related recreation activities. The key to achieving this potential is the connection of the River Great Ouse to the Grand Union Canal via the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway , to create a green/blue corridor capable of providing for all major paddlesport disciplines, angling, rowing, sailing, triathlon and powered sports, in addition to canal and motor cruising. The work of the Marston Vale Trust should be noted here with respect to the development of the Bedford Rowing Lake.

Greater Peterborough Multi-Sports Hub: a number of facilities are already available in Peterborough, including provision for rowing and canoeing. Development of the Fens Waterway Link will open up the Greater Peterborough area for canal and motor cruising, bringing in places such as King's Lynn, as well as offering considerable potential for canoe touring. New inland facilities for waterskiing and wakeboarding are also a priority, possibly in Peterborough itself or in a neighbouring town, such as St Ives.

Greater Cambridge Rowing Hub: with the development of the camToo project, Cambridge will cement its role as a local, regional and national rowing centre, while the Cambridge Sport Lakes would add an international sized facility. This could be further enhanced by improving access to the Great Ouse at Ely, to provide additional training and competition space. In addition to rowing, the hub can also offer international facilities for sprint canoeing, as well as waters suitable for activities such as dragon boats, model boats and the like. It should be noted that Cambridge is not a priority area for regeneration. However, its significance for water related recreation is such that it cannot be excluded from this strategic priority.

MP4: To encourage greater participation in inland and coastal water related recreation activities through the public transport network

The development of a new transport network is a major undertaking. However, as the region gets more congested, access to outdoor recreation opportunities will become an increasing challenge, particularly for the increasing number of urban dwellers who will not own or possess a car. The Cambridge Guided Bus route, which is currently under construction, will link centres of population with lakes and rivers between Cambridge and Huntingdon. Policy T5 of the East of England Plan introduces the idea of Regional Transport Nodes, which should be linked by inter-urban public transport, and should facilitate transfer to local sustainable transport networks. Most of the urban centres identified for water related recreation priorities are identified as Regional Transport Nodes. A priority is thus to ensure that all relevant Nodes include access to water sites as part of their transport strategy. This could range from inter-urban bus and train routes from the centre of the region (Bury St Edmunds) to recreation hubs at Haven Gateway, Cambridge, Bedford, Peterborough and Norwich, to local network links from mainline railway stations to water recreation resources (Norwich station to Whitlingham Broad, for example).

The provision of better access infrastructure and storage facilities will allow people to leave craft and equipment close to water (rather than having to trail it in each time). This provides the possibility for using public transport. There are already good train services to some locations (such as along parts of the Thames Estuary), although they tend to run inland, closer to the urban centres. It may be possible to develop good link services to water sides. Equally, there is potential to create a new rapid transit link to major recreation and leisure sites (water based and others), to ensure that the increasingly urban populations of the East of England have good access to a range of sport and recreation activities in the countryside and related to waterspaces.

In addition, there is potential to introduce more water taxis, particularly onto rivers with limited crossings, while there is certainly potential to consider freight transport use of some waterways, particularly for aggregates and waste.

MP5: Improved estuary and coastal management

According to the East of England Coastal Initiative, the coast of the East of England is among the most environmentally rich, most scenic and economically diverse landscapes in the country, while also being home to some of the most deprived communities in the region. Coastal communities and economies face changes and pressures that, although different in character, are as challenging and far reaching as those facing communities directly affected by growth. The provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, the Water Framework Directive and the Bathing Water Directive all impact on this zone, necessitating a complex and integrated approach to coastal zone management, including the following priorities:

Managed re-alignment of the Suffolk coastline to provide semi-enclosed water resources for a range of water recreation activities. Although the full impacts of climate change may not yet be known, certain low-lying areas of the Suffolk and Norfolk coast may prove suitable for the creation of new areas of salt marsh with, potentially, new water-related recreation opportunities. This could be realised through the Environment Agency undertaking re-alignment to address coastal squeeze in estuaries. In tandem with the need to secure new areas for habitat conservation, the land around Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth could add value to the development of these towns as a marine hub, particularly if new forms of marine tourism can be developed. This could be further extended to create linear water parks along the lower reaches of major rivers such as the Waveney. However, it is likely that there will be a loss of provision in these areas for deep keel boats (especially in the Blyth Estuary and Southwold Harbour), meaning that an investigation should be undertaken to establish how and where new provision could be planned elsewhere to compensate for the loss.

Pilot shoreline management plans to be undertaken at a number of locations on the coast, with the aim of addressing better management of and access to good beaches (achieving blue flag status where appropriate, to offer new and better open swimming environments), the implementation of coastal access, better provision for a range of water related recreation activities and the management of areas designated under the Habitat Directive and other designations.

Addressing the role of recreation in the Anglian and Thames river basin management plans. Under the Water Framework Directive, draft river basin management plans have to be prepared by the end of 2009. There is thus an opportunity to develop a comprehensive approach to planning for recreation, as a key potential benefit of water quality improvements.

Pilot estuary management plans at a number of estuaries. Estuary management involves reconciling recreational and commercial uses often in highly valued ecological sites. Current management approaches vary across the region and there is scope for more integrated estuary management through public/private/voluntary sector partnership approaches and better management of the resources available. There is also a need to establish sites to monitor the impacts of climate change, particularly in terms of the use of estuaries for specific types of water related recreation activity.

Key issues in estuaries include:

- Conflicting uses – high ecological values, commercial fishing, commercial traffic (e.g. ferries), powered and un-powered recreational craft (particularly use of jet skis); requirements for zoning activities;
- Pressure for moorings in limited space – resulting in crowding and reduction in aesthetic appeal; moorings not always managed effectively;
- Limited access – limited numbers of slipways and lack of parking restrict access to the water and cause congestion both on and off the water. Lack of slipways can be used as a means to restrict access;
- Development pressures force out marine service industries required for supporting commercial and recreational craft.

- There are also regulatory issues, with increasingly ineffective estuary bylaws constraining the work of harbourmasters. This is largely with respect to the difficulties encountered in regulating and policing speeding and access to restricted areas (often associated with conservation designations).

There is a need to learn from good practice and explore alternative approaches to increased demand for access and moorings.

Therefore, harbour masters, the Thames Estuary Project and Port of London Authority (covering the Thames, Crouch and Blackwater estuaries) should work together to develop model approaches to regulating the use of the estuaries to ensure sustainable multiple use of the waters that is consistent with their environmental values and designations, and with the potential impacts of climate change and new regulatory frameworks such as the Water Framework Directive and the Marine and Coastal Access Bill.

4 Delivery

4.1 Delivery Options

Table 4.1 illustrates that partnerships will be required in order to achieve many of the priorities that have been identified. These might be partnerships between public sector bodies, between private and voluntary sector bodies, or a mixture. Effective delivery of the priorities will require closer working relationships and more consideration of how to link different policy areas in order to achieve multiple objectives. Key issues to be addressed include:

- Key agencies in the region need to agree on the strategic priorities and create a united front and vision to regional government and funding bodies. This will require the development of stronger partnerships and closer collaboration to identify and achieve common policy objectives;
- The lead partners in the development of the strategic priorities will need to champion their relevance to delivering regional strategic priorities;
- One body will need to be designated as the lead partner to take the strategic priorities forward to implementation stage;
- Mutual benefits need to be identified early in the process to explore the most effective forms of cooperation and encourage closer working relationships;
- Strategic partners will need to develop closer links to a range of key stakeholders including the national governing bodies, local authorities, and land/water management organisations such as river and lake trusts, and the Broads Authority;
- Resources need to be targeted at those agencies, authorities and stakeholders that are directly involved in delivering regional and national targets, especially increasing participation in outdoor recreation;
- The voluntary sector must be integrated more effectively into the delivery process; voluntary organisations offer effective and sometimes the only means of delivering key priorities;
- The key agencies need to develop a collective approach to funding, including seed funding for demonstration sites and pilot projects, to enable delivery partners to be flexible and pro-active in securing the infrastructure requirements necessary to implement the strategic priorities;
- Working groups should be developed to lead the specific priority initiatives;
- Delivery models should be developed that are able to combine multiple agency funding streams, property rationalisation, purchasing and sale, co-responsibility (planning agreements, for example) and co-location.
- The successful implementation of NGB Whole Sport Plans (2009-2013) will be a key opportunity to deliver the strategic priorities, in terms of increasing participation in water sports through targeted investment. This

will require effective partnership working with other key organisations such as Sport England, relevant local authorities and other regional agencies.

Table 4.1 Delivery options and partners

Priority	Delivery Options	Key Partners
<i>HP1: Improving existing provision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local contracts using private funding Public funding and delivery Voluntary agreements Codes of conduct 	Navigation Authorities Local authorities NGBs Sport England NE, EA, British Waterways Landowners Local clubs
<i>HP2: Addressing gaps in the provision for some water sport and recreation activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local contracts using private funding Public funding and delivery Public ownership and management Voluntary sector management 	NGBs Voluntary clubs Local authorities Sport England British Waterways
<i>HP3: A necklace of local green 'gateway' sites along the water network</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public funding Planning agreements 	Local authorities Environment Agency National governing bodies The marine trade
<i>HP4: Best practice in environmentally friendly recreation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public funding Voluntary sector contributions Developer contributions 	Local authorities Natural England British Waterways Sport England National Trust NGBs Harbour authorities RYA/BMF The marine trade
<i>HP5: Influencing the regional policy agenda</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public planning requirements Public funding and delivery Public funding and private delivery Private initiative 	EERA EEDA GO-East Sport England Local authorities Navigation Authorities NE, EA, British Waterways NGBs
<i>HP6: Better provision of information to improve understanding and use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public funding and delivery Public funding and private delivery Private or voluntary initiative Cross-sector public partnership Integrated partnership of NGBs providing funding and delivery 	RDA (tourism/culture) EA, NE, British Waterways Sport England Local authorities Private owners NGBs and clubs Public landowners
<i>MP1: The development of 'Wild Water' Parks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public funding Voluntary sector funding Lottery funding 	National Trust RSPB NGBs Local authorities Harbour authorities

		Natural England Forestry Commission
<i>MP2: Developing demonstration sites for piloting and testing a range of options</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding • Designations • Voluntary contribution schemes 	Local authorities Developers East of England Tourism EA, NE, British Waterways NGBs Private sector Landowners
<i>MP3: Developing a network of water-related recreation hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding and private delivery • Private/voluntary/trust initiative • PFI and other private finance • Co-location of provision • Cross-sector NGB Partnerships 	Sport England Local authorities NGBs Local clubs Water companies The marine trade
<i>MP4: 'Access East'</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding and private delivery • Private/voluntary/trust initiative • Cross-sector NGB Partnerships 	Navigation Authorities Sport England Local authorities NGBs Local clubs Private landowners
<i>MP5: To encourage greater participation in inland and coastal activities through the public transport network</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding • PFI • Cross sector funding • Developer contributions 	RDA Local authorities Network Rail Passenger Transport Companies The marine trade
<i>MP6: Improved estuary and coastal management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership delivery • Private sector initiatives • Local charging regimes 	E of E Coastal initiative Harbour authorities Estuary management partnerships NE Local authorities Local clubs

4.2 Looking forward

These strategic priorities provide a broad direction for the delivery of more and better recreation opportunities in the region, outline the scope of what can be achieved, and should promote engagement and collaboration with current and potential partners. The strategic priorities must be seen as part of a 'living' document reflecting activities and initiatives which will evolve and change over time. Initially it covers a five year period (2009-14), with continual review as priorities are completed. Overall success depends on:

- The identification or appointment of a lead development officer with responsibility for guiding the implementation of the strategic priorities. It should be noted here that the Environment Agency has appointed a Regional Recreation Officer, who will seek to fulfil this role;
- One of the key roles of the development officer will be to continue the consultation process out of which the strategic priorities have been identified, to ensure that all agencies, organisations and others are fully involved in, and committed to, implementing the proposals. This could include, depending on future consultations, re-allocating some of the medium priorities to high priority status;
- Key regional agencies working together to take forward this strategy, encourage its implementation and help identify and target resources;
- Key regional agencies also working with groups directly involved in the provision of water based recreation, especially those encouraging participation in outdoor recreation activities;
- The Environment Agency is taking the lead for the steering group in co-ordinating and monitoring the delivery of the strategic priorities;
- New ways of working, guidance and best practice being developed to lead the way forward;
- The recognition that projects and initiatives, whether cited in the strategic priorities or subsequently, do not impose any commitment on the partners at this stage, and will be based on case by case justification to assess how they deliver against the overall strategy and criteria set by others (eg funders, environmental impact assessments, local planning authorities and other interested groups).