

Appendix 1:

What is Sustainability?

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1 Background

'One reason for the growing importance of the environment as a political issue - albeit not the only or even the principal one - is the existence and recognition of severe environmental problems'. (Garner, 1996)

The radical, ecocentric approaches to environmentalism emerged in the 1970s (Garner, 1996). The rise of sustainable development grew concurrently with the greater environmental awareness. Through more extensive media coverage, society was becoming aware of the degradation being caused to the environment. From a combination of literature and publicity stunts from Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' to Greenpeace's constant pressure on organisations tarnishing the environment, there became a need for somebody to address the matter.

The initial policy impetus came from the UN conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in June 1972 (Winter, 1996). There followed in 1987 the Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future', commissioned by the EU promoting the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable Development was defined in this report as development 'which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' (Garner, 1996) This definition has since become one of the most widely used definitions. In consequence sustainability has become an integral part of recent policy (Blowers, 1993).

'The concept of sustainability is built on the fundamental interdependence of development and environmental conservation at all scales of analysis and the requirement for new norms of behaviour within institutions across all spheres of human activity.' (Elliot, 1994)

Brundtland's description of sustainable development has been criticised for being too vague and not looking at the holistic picture. Despite this, it has made a substantial impression on the interpretations of the environment by Government, organisations and society in general. Following on from 'Our Common Future' was the 1992 UNCED Rio Earth Summit which instigated Agenda 21. Agenda 21 has become an integral part of recent environmental legislation promoting sustainable development in a variety of policies and other legislation. Agenda 21 and the additional Local Agenda 21 have been central in conferring sustainable development to general society.

2 Defining Sustainability

There are numerous definitions of sustainable development. These alter dependent on externalities affecting an individual or organisation. 'The major dichotomy in environmental thought (and therefore the perceived meaning of sustainability) can be crudely defined as being between radical and reformist' (Garner, 1996). Furthermore, it is vital to understand that this is not the case of a simple dichotomy, but two discourses at either ends of a scale. In general, in today's business industry, sustainable development is perceived from a view positioned in the middle of the scale tending towards reformist and a technocentric discourse. Described as Ecological Modernisation, this discourse allows sustainable development to occur alongside economic growth (Garner, 1996). Ecological Modernisation is a concept that emerged particularly from Brundtland's 1987 report and is widely accepted in western societies today (Connelly et al, 1999).

'The modern sustainable development debate has tended to shift the focus away from growth versus the environment to one of the potential complementarity of growth and environment' (Pearce et al, 1989)

The concept of sustainable development has risen concurrently with increased environmental awareness, most notably since the 1970s. Sustainable development is widely acknowledged in western societies and became a 'buzz word' of the 80s and 90s. It remains ingrained in government policy after the initial impetus of the 1987 European Brundtland report 'Our Common Future'.

3 Sustainability in the Context of the Broads

The Broads Authority perceives sustainability in a local context to mean 'using and enjoying the Broads in a way which maintains, and where possible enhances, the special quality of the area with its blend of landscapes, natural resources, culture, history and traditions' (Broads Authority, 1997).

The majority of problems that face the Broads are brought about because of the conflicting uses and views different stakeholders express (Ewans, 1992). The activities often take place in confined areas demanding diverse qualities from the surrounding environment. Boats and the connected industry are perceived by some to cause degradation to the environmental quality of the Broads area. By designing and creating a sustainable boat a compromise is being reached between stakeholders. In addition to promoting sustainable development, the team behind the ecoboat initiative are taking a lead in promoting the harmonious use of the Broads without causing damage to the environment, society or the economy.

There are however, numerous areas to be examined besides the environmental issues. It is imperative that in addition to the environmental factors the issues listed below are taken into consideration.

- Stakeholders Pressure & Influences
- Trading Partners
- Community
- Employees
- Investors
- Insurers
- Media
- Pressure Groups
- Customers

Only by taking into account every environmental, social and economic aspect can truly sustainable boating be realised.

4 References

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