

THE BROADS

All's quiet as new craft take to the Broads

Two new passenger boats are set to bring the tranquillity of the Broads to a new generation of schoolchildren – and help a Norfolk firm silently beat the recession.

The electrically powered craft, a £75,000 investment by Norfolk Wildlife Trust, were launched at Ranworth Broad yesterday.

The education boats, named Damsel and Swallowtail in an EDP competition – reader Susan Wright of Norwich winning a family trip – will ply the waters of Ranworth and Hickling Broad, enabling 3,000 schoolchildren a year to explore the back dykes, bird hides and waterways. They will also be available for public trips.

NWT's two previous boats were taken out of service in 2007 when stringent new stability regulations were introduced.

NWT chief executive Brendan Joyce said: "Educational activities for children and adults form an important part of our work. The boats enable us to bring people into closer contact with the fragile natural environment and its wildlife while at the same time providing a memorable experience."

The boats have been designed by Andrew Wolstenholme, of Coltishall, to retain the old reedlighter shape. Construction has been undertaken by Goodchild Marine, of Burgh Castle, near Yarmouth.

Guests of honour Jacquetta Cator from the Ranworth Trust and Elisabeth Watling from the Geoffrey Watling Charity officially named the boats. The £75,000 was raised with donations from the Geoffrey Watling Charity, the Ranworth Trust, HSBC bank, Essex and Suffolk Water, Ivy Child Charitable Trust and GE International.