# Government net zero plans threaten the future of electric boating and traditional skills on the Broads



The Broads, the second largest boating area in the UK, faces significant changes under government plans aimed at decarbonising the maritime industry to achieve net zero emissions across all sectors by 2050. Central to these proposals is a move requiring all new boats to be entirely electric, alongside planned tax increases on marine fuel.

These changes have sparked concern among key figures in the boating industry, particularly boat sales yard executives around the Broads. James Fraser, managing director of Norfolk Yacht Agency, which operates from Brundall, Horning, and Great Yarmouth and recently acquired St Olaves Marina for £2 million, described the proposals as potentially devastating. Speaking to the Eastern Daily Press, Fraser said, "We’re staring down the barrel of net zero and Ed Miliband is turning his guns on the boating industry by talking about electrification." He expressed doubts about the readiness of electric boat technology, saying, “People have been trying to get traction in the market for electric boats on the Broads here and elsewhere for years. The problem in the industry is that the technology isn’t there to make it a sensible option for buyers.”

Fraser highlighted practical challenges related to electric power for certain types of vessels, stating, “Technology has improved and batteries are getting better, but if you’re talking about seagoing performance power cruisers it’s hard to imagine how they are going to produce something off electric power that’s going to make its way to Holland at 20 knots and keep going for five or six hours. You can’t just pull over to charge up in the North Sea.”

The proposals mirror policies already in place in the automotive sector, where the sale of new petrol and diesel cars is set to be banned from 2030. Companies such as Norfolk-based Lotus have already invested heavily in adapting manufacturing to electric vehicle production.

In addition to technological and regulatory challenges, the Broads' boating industry is experiencing a decline in skilled labour. Historically, East Anglia was a hub of boatbuilding, with over 100 yards operating on the Broads in the 1960s. However, the industry has seen a marked reduction in the number of boatbuilders and traditional craftsmen. The International Boatbuilding Training College (IBTC) in Lowestoft closed last year after nearly 50 years of operation, a notable loss for the industry. Traditional wooden boatbuilding has also been recognised as endangered, with its inclusion on the Heritage Crafts Association’s 'Red List of Endangered Crafts' in 2023.

James Fraser remarked on the scarcity of skilled apprentices, saying, “The industry isn’t getting enough young blood in and there doesn’t seem to be that next generation of boat builders, engineers and skilled people coming through. We’ve had a few apprentices here, but they are not easy to find. There’s no proper official boat building training in the east anymore. Boat building apprenticeships which used to exist in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft are no longer here. To find courses for our marine engineer apprentices locally is impossible.” Fraser further commented on the decline of local boatbuilding companies, listing former notable businesses such as Broom, Moonraker, Falcon, Bounty, and Alpha Craft that no longer operate. He added, “There’s nowhere near the number of boats being produced in the east as there were even a decade ago."

The Labour government’s broader net zero strategy also includes an ambitious timetable to decarbonise the UK’s electricity grid by 2030. This plan involves accelerating renewable energy projects, including doubling onshore wind capacity, tripling solar power, and quadrupling offshore wind. These projects have been designated as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), enabling them to bypass traditional local planning controls with approval resting ultimately with Energy Secretary Ed Miliband.

The Eastern Daily Press is reporting that while these plans highlight a commitment to transitioning away from fossil fuels, they are accompanied by significant uncertainty and concern within the boating community regarding technological feasibility and the survival of long-standing marine industry skills and businesses around the Broads.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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