



More than 500 tourist boats in Ha Long Bay will be decorated with white details instead of being repainted white totally to “renovate” the site’s tourism sector, the VnExpress newswire quoted a local official as saying Saturday.

Vu Thi Thu Thuy, vice chairwoman of the People’s Committee in the northern province of Quang Ninh made the statement about one week after the committee announced that all the boats will have to be painted white as of this April 30, an order objected to by local businesses, tourists and the public.

According to Thuy, changing the color of the bay’s tourist boats into white was one of the necessary moves to improve local tourism and create a “new face” for Ha Long Bay.

However, the province didn’t mean to set white as a uniform color for local tourist boats, so it didn’t regulate how much white the boats need to be, she said, adding that local businesses can devise their own styles.

Doan Van Dung, chief the Association for Ha Long Tourist Boats, which previously sent a letter to the provincial authorities to express its disagreement on the decision, told VnExpress that the new decision has relieved local businesses from difficulties.

They are now not facing the financial burden of following the authorities’ order, because it would have cost them tens of millions of dong to repaint their boats and been a time consuming process as well, Dung said.

It is not as difficult to repaint just a few details, in terms of cost and time, according to Dung.

“Brown is still the main color; white is only added as a decoration,” he said.

But, Dung also said that since the color of Ha Long Bay’s boats is the image of tourism and the country so every change needs to be considered.

To create a synchronized brand name for the boats, local authorities need to consider more carefully what percentage of a boat needs to be in white, Dung said.

On January 5, the Quang Ninh People’s Committee asked all boats in the bay to be painted white, saying failure to follow the order by April 30 will result in revocation of operating licenses.

Authorities said the move was aimed to tighten government control over tourist transport, and to renovate the image of local tourist boats after the bay was named on the preliminary list of seven new natural wonders of the world by the Switzerland-based New7Wonders Foundation last November.

However, soon after the order was made, local businesses objected to it saying it would cost them too much, while tourists said local authorities should focus on improving services instead of changing the unique brown color of local boats.

*Thanh Nien News*