

## Vine Conference: Final Panel Discussion

### Delegates asked the following questions of the Panel.

Panel members in alphabetical order: AP = Adrian Phillips; AM = Alastair McIntosh; JL-J = John Lloyd-Jones; JR = John Rodwell; SH = Stephan Harding;

#### **Question: Who should Ramblin' Vine be aimed at?**

- There is insufficient space (in people's lives and in this crowded island) for people to be able to engage easily with the natural world. There is also too much (factual) interpretation in the countryside (JR).
- We should allow landscape to interpret (and influence) us (SH).

#### **Question: Concerning the future & aims of VINE.**

- The floor felt that VINE can highlight important issues that are currently off the mainstream nature conservation agenda, and discuss them in a shared space.
- The floor also raised the importance of VINE for networking.
- Some people felt that VINE should be about helping other people to engage with nature (and that nature conservationists should not need to reinforce their own individual passions).
- VINE should use a different language than that of biodiversity and targets (AP).
- VINE needs to be effective and infecting, and make a difference in the outer world (JR).
- AM drew a distinction between VINE itself and the political structure trellis up which it needs to grow (and which it needs to envelop).
- VINE is about uncovering and encouraging deep personal relationships with nature (SH).

#### **Question: Has the nature conservation movement spent so much effort developing systems and gaining political credence that activists have lost sight of their inspiration, and become obsessed with the nature conservation systems?**

- The problems start when the passions become overwhelmed by the political system (JL-J).
- Nature conservationists may be trying to do too much, but remember that nature isn't just beauty etc, it's also nasty (JR).
- An organisation in which people do not maintain their passion is a dead one (JL-J).

- All: emphasised the importance of organisations ring-fencing time for wonder...

**Question: Where should the emphasis on beauty etc be (given the shift of consciousness outlined in the preceding question)?**

- It is very hard to share personal feelings within an organisational structure, but there is also a danger of individuals being too self-indulgent with their own emotions, and turning others off (AP).
- To a fair extent aesthetics = fashion (JL-J).
- Aesthetics are interpreted in diverse ways, but there needs to be a relationship between how we relate to nature and how we relate to ourselves. My own relationship is a place where wonder and personal needs collide (JR).
- We live in the divide between nature and aesthetics: we put the beauty into nature, it is an intellectual construct. But if we enter the psyche of the world, the beauty is real. We are still searching for our rightful place in nature. We should see nature as a culture rather than an area of responsibilities (SH).
- There is a separation between man and nature, and with it does responsibilities but not domination (JR).
- Passion involves suffering (JR).

**Question: To what extent can people, especially children, access nature via TV and computer screens?**

- There is a real danger in modern western culture of people substituting the real experience for the virtual (AP). This was strongly if not unanimously agreed.

**Question: Should VINE link with the local food movement?**

- We need a more sensible attitude to food, which is related to the landscape (JR).
- JL-J warned about the damage about to be done to local meat production by the FSA charges to small abattoirs...

**Question: How do we inspire others, set up the next generation?**

- There has been a closing down of the inner life (in modern western society) – AM.
- The interface between nature and culture is a complex place, and is not merely the domain of nature conservation (JR).
- Nature is cultural; it has its own culture and our culture (of nature) is a sub-set of that – so in one sense we're not separated (SH).

*Notes taken and transcribed by Matthew Oates. 12 April 2008.*