

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** **for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.**

### **OVER-VIEW:**

The year started off with a bang as we held VINE's 1<sup>st</sup> national conference – "Inspirational nature: harnessing passion inspiration and creativity for nature conservation" at Lancaster University from 1-3 April 08. It was attended by over 60 people who spent three very busy days taking part in the conference activities and informal debate. Although the venue itself it has to be said was not at all inspirational the event certainly was and the feedback was really encouraging. The Conference Report is available on the VINE website:

[www.vineproject.org.uk/conference.html](http://www.vineproject.org.uk/conference.html) (See below for fuller report).

Following the Conference there was a bit of a lull as we recovered filled mainly by activity on the website and by periodic flurries on the e-discussion group. However, during this time we were also preparing for the 'VINE 3 Year Review' that was held at Hawkwood College on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008. This proved to be just the start of an essential forward look and re-targeting of our resources which was finally endorsed by the Membership in July 2009. By the end of the reporting period we were heavily involved in planning for three events in late summer/autumn 2009 in cooperation with other organisations, something identified as beneficial during our review. The other main decision to come out of the Review was to seek the services of a fund-raiser to secure funds for a part-time Project Officer to help with organising future VINE events.

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### **2<sup>nd</sup> AGM – 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008:**

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM was held at Hawkwood College on 12<sup>th</sup> August during the VINE Review gathering. Business transacted was of a routine nature. The AGM minutes were circulated and can be viewed on:

[www.vineproject.org.uk/notes\\_of\\_meetings.html](http://www.vineproject.org.uk/notes_of_meetings.html)

### **EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETINGS:**

Full meeting records can be found on the website at: [www.vineproject.org.uk/notes\\_of\\_meetings.html](http://www.vineproject.org.uk/notes_of_meetings.html)

- 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008:
  - Review of the 'Review Meeting'; and discussion to ensure taking forward of the action points.
  - Proposals for a research questionnaire project.
  - Mike Alexander's contribution to VINE acknowledged and his resignation (reluctantly) accepted. Lovisa Hagberg and Charles Morgan resignations as ex-officio members accepted.
- 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008 (telephone conference):
  - Hawkwood Review meeting - actions progressed.
  - Proposal for a SpeyGrian/SDNH/VINE event accepted.
  - Bill Grayson joined the Committee as an ex-officio member.
- 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009 (telephone conference):
  - Objectives and Activities review progressed to next stage.
  - Research Questionnaire project progressed.
  - SpeyGrian/SDNH/VINE event progressed.
  - Philip Goodwin elected as 'strategy' ex-officio member.
  - 'Inspirational Leadership training' event proposed.
  - Farm/NNR visit proposed in association with IOTA/NE/GAP.
  - Finance reviewed.
- 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009 [telephone conference]:
  - Planning of 3 proposed events progressed.
  - Research Questionnaire project progressed; two MSc students appointed.
  - AGM options discussed.
  - Fund raiser/Project Officer proposal developed.

## **WEBSITE:**

This facility was managed and updated by Sophie Lake, assisted by Pat Vincent.

- Website use statistics are supplied periodically by PV. (*E.g. 554 visitors in July 09; with average of 2 visits/visitor; mainly on weekdays; topping the list was Sweden, the GB, then USA then Russia; most people are searching for VINE Project; since Jan 09 number of visits have dipped uniformly and then increased uniformly to the July level of visits, back to the same level as in Jan 09*).
- New website pages were added as required.

## **DISCUSSION GROUP:**

This forum was managed by Sophie Lake.

- This e-forum had spells of intense activity on a wide range of topics. At other times it was quiet!
- Discussion group had 176 members on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2009
- Further guidance for contributors on the Discussion Group – a ‘Voluntary Code of Conduct’ - was provided in September 2008.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES:**

A review commenced at the Hawkwood meeting in August 2008 and continued through the winter of 08/09. They were endorsed by the Membership in July 2009. (*NB. These effectively replaced the Theme Groups*).

## **LIASION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS:**

Direct contacts occurred with:

- CCW and NE as funders. (John B, Judith H)
- ECOS (Sophie L, John B).
- Conservation Land Management quarterly magazine (John B, Sophie L).
- The Executive Group Members and VINE Members provided informal links too many organisations - but with unknown effect.
- (July 09 – ‘Events’ and ‘Inspirational Leaders course’ – flyers sent to senior managers and staff training departments in a large number of nature conservation organisations).

## **FINANCE:**

Reference is made to the Treasurers report and audited accounts. Simply to say here that VINE remained solvent throughout the period. Grants from NE enabled activities to continue. The underwriting of the national Conference by CCW (and NE) was really important.

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### ***NATIONAL CONFERENCE April 1-3 2008: “Harnessing passion, inspiration and creativity for nature conservation”.***

*Though this event actually fell into the start of the next financial year it had occupied so much of our time in 2007/8 that it is appropriate to mention a few points here:*

- *60 people attended. (This was less than originally hoped for but was affected by cut backs to training budgets in many of the key organisations after December 2007).*
  - *Feedback from delegates was excellent (Ref - Lancaster Conf 2008 feedback report).*
  - *The ‘Wandering Vine’ trial was a success leading to many helpful proposals for national/regional role-out of similar events. (Previously Ramblin Vine).*
  - *The ‘Ramblin Vine’ video and Pen Mendonca’s cartoon-formatted report proved to be particularly popular as media for passing on the essence of the Conference to those unable to attend.*
  - *The Conference Report has been placed on the VINE website. This contains the conference presentations, summaries of the delegate feedback, workshop feedback, Pen Mendonca’s Report as 7 cartoons and the Ramblin Vine video, etc.*
  - *Many delegates expressed appreciation the artistic presentations of pictures, poetry and stories.*
  - *Finance: thanks to the CCW/NE sponsorship of the event the net deficit against VINE funds amounted to only c £750.*
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