



Project brief 2007

VINE

(Values In Nature and the Environment)

“COMMUNICATING VISIONS AND VALUES IN NATURE CONSERVATION.”

VINE is a forum for nature conservation professionals, land managers and all people who care about nature. We aim to promote a broad spectrum of ideas, values and emotions generated by people's engagement with nature. We believe that the process of thinking deeply about what we do and why we do it will help conservationists to be more creative and effective in their working lives, but we also celebrate the natural environment for its own intrinsic value.

BACKGROUND:

The philosophical basis for nature conservation needs to be kept under review to ensure it is up to-date and relevant. People coming new to nature conservation need to be provided with opportunities to consider and develop these underpinning values; even long-standing conservationists may benefit from refreshing the beliefs that initially led them into their profession. FACT has become aware of a lack of opportunity and facilities for such discussions and debate, and has been working to develop a resource that is accessible to nature conservation professionals, land managers and all people involved in nature conservation. This initiative, in common with all other FACT projects, is aimed at helping to deliver effective practical nature conservation.

VINE functions under the principle that people with an interest in nature will often share a great deal of common ground. VINE does, though, recognise that views in specific areas may differ, sometimes significantly, and that people's views may change over time. Indeed, VINE hopes that its work may help the development of diverse thinking and practice. VINE is not promoting any single set of views, but wishes to celebrate, through positive discussion, the broad spectrum of thinking, values and emotions generated by engagement in nature conservation.

RATIONALE:

Key issues identified so far are as follows:

- The thinking on which UK nature conservation is based needs to be reviewed and updated to provide an ethical basis for decision-making in all areas of conservation work.

- There needs to be a balance between scientific and intuitive approaches to facilitate nature conservation in the 21st Century.
- The current outcome-defined approach to conservation management needs to be reviewed and updated to ensure that it delivers a secure future for nature conservation. There is a particular need for the further development of management approaches that seek to maintain, or enable, natural processes.
- The above need to be seen in the context of increasing levels of environmental damage, including climate change and related disruption to ecosystems.
- Individuals working in nature conservation will find it helpful to acknowledge the values that inspire them, and they can help others by sharing their ideals and motivations.
- There is a barrier developing between the professional jargon used by conservationists and the language needed for communicating outside the profession. This barrier needs to be removed to allow effective communication with the wider public.

From this assessment we have developed the following project brief:

PROJECT AIMS:

- To help nurture and share values within nature conservation practice.
- To help communicate the belief within the nature conservation profession that intuition, senses, feelings and ethics should balance and support the necessary scientific foundations of our work.
- To help build a greater awareness amongst the nature conservation profession of the feelings and ethics that motivate land managers and local communities in relation to nature conservation.
- To help the development of an approach to managing the environment for nature in which the values and beliefs outlined above are embodied in practical action.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- **To help develop an ethical basis for decision-making that will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and which will complement, scientific approaches.**
- **To encourage individuals involved with nature to more fully understand and develop their personal motivations.**
- **To promote ideas and inspirations of an ethical approach to nature that are accessible to everyone.**

ACTIVITIES:

We encourage involvement in one or more of the ‘themes’ set out below as may be appropriate to each individual’s interests.

THEME 1. Overall to help the development of a philosophical framework for nature conservation in the early 21st Century

Theme 1.1. Help the development of the philosophical framework:

- Research current thinking and earlier work in order to help establish a values-base for practical nature conservation management in the early 21st Century.
- Link and work with those developing current thinking to help refine and develop it so that it will continue to be relevant to future circumstances.
- Provide a forum in which these ideas can be discussed (discussion group, website).

Contact: Pat Vincent

Theme 1.2. Help to develop thinking on practical issues acting globally e.g.:

- The nature of site designations within the context of a changing climate.
- Working with partners at a landscape-scale.
- Giving further consideration to 'past/present/future natural' concepts.

Contact: Mike Alexander

Theme 1.3. Production of a land managers' short 'guide/handbook' on practical issues acting locally. E.g. the pros and cons to be weighed up when considering:

- Maximisation of biodiversity, or managing for less rich but more valued habitats?
- Plant trees or cut them down?
- Choosing 'managed' or 'wild' landscapes locally?
- Introduced species – eradication or acceptance?
- Rare species – conserve or allow local extinctions?

Contact: John Bacon

THEME 2. Overall to communicate and nurture the belief within the nature conservation profession that intuition, senses, feelings and ethics should balance and support the scientific foundations of our work

Theme 2.1. Provide a forum for the expression and development of values and ethics (especially for those recently taking up the profession), including:

- The psychology of achieving support for wildlife
- The relationship between nature and the human spirit/psyche

Contact: Sophie Lake

Theme 2.2. Provide a facility for the expression for the arts linked to nature conservation (e.g. poetry, literature, music, painting etc.).

Contact: Peter Phillipson

Theme 2.3. Help to encourage the use of plain/accessible language, including:

- The provision of definitions for commonly used concepts.

Contact:

PROPOSED OUTPUTS:

1 By Individuals

- 1.1 Individuals will be provided with opportunities to develop personal philosophies of nature conservation to help provide answers to the questions raised above.
- 1.2 Individuals will be provided with opportunities to develop the confidence and conviction which will enable them to discuss ideas and share feelings with colleagues

2 Support to Individuals and Organisations

- 2.1 Set up an e-mail/web-based discussion forum
- 2.2 Set up a website with inspirational writing, photographs, references, links etc.
- 2.3 Develop a flyer as an advertisement for the website
- 2.4 Set up seminars, workshops and conferences, for example, workshops on developing our own nature conservation philosophies. The biennial FACT conference will include opportunities for people to share the personal philosophies that underpin their work.
- 2.5 Write articles for magazines and journals, e.g. British Wildlife, ECOS, IEEM
- 2.6 Make use of opportunities to refer to VINE Project information within organisations
- 2.7 Seek appropriate publicity for the group
- 2.8 Network with other groups, organisations, funding bodies and institutions, e.g. staff in Government/non-Government organisations who are responsible for developing nature conservation philosophies, Wildlands Network, BANC, Schumacher College, Centre for Human Ecology, Eurosite

3. Research & Investigation

- 3.1 Research the nature conservation philosophies of organisations elsewhere in the world
- 3.2 Start networking with these to learn from their experience
- 3.3 Consider how the variety of personal philosophies that land manager's hold and established environmental philosophical disciplines can be applied to nature conservation management.
- 3.4 Explore whether differences in approach attributable to gender, socio-economic group or ethnicity are adequately represented in the practice of nature conservation, and how a more balanced approach could contribute to more effective conservation.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NETWORK:

Open to all who are interested in furthering the objectives above.

ORGANISATION:

In February 2007 VINE became a 'not for profit' organisation. The Steering Group has accepted a 'constitution' which will be presented for adoption along with election of officers at an inaugural AGM to be notified to members shortly.

February 2007. (Document subject to revision).