



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.

Many professionals working in conservation are motivated by a deep belief in what they do. They will have gained valuable insights, but may never have had the opportunity to discuss these thoughts properly with colleagues. VINE, which was developed as a FACT project, recognises the need for people to share their ideas and try to define some of the values that support their work. We believe that a clear and focused understanding of our motivations can be translated into more effective conservation practices. Our aim is to help develop an ethical basis for decision-making that will integrate with, and complement, the scientific approach.

VINE is relevant to anyone involved in conservation, and provides a forum that will unite long-established professionals with those who are new and still trying to find their way. It is important to remember that everyone still has something to learn. Even the most committed individuals can become jaded by the practicalities of their work, and need to be reminded occasionally of the things that really matter to them. While it is natural that many conservationists share common beliefs, VINE does not support a single viewpoint. As an organisation that promotes discussion we welcome the introduction of new ideas, and see this as a way of developing and moving forward.

VINE will draw on many sources to create an ethical framework for nature conservation that will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant. We will try to be as inclusive and wide-ranging as possible, working with partner organisations, taking account of the development of issues and ideas globally, and considering how the views of people from differing backgrounds can be properly represented.

While valuing our inspirations, past and present, VINE will be forward looking, adapting to the changes and challenges of the future. We will develop our thinking on conservation management, considering, for example, how the current outcome-defined approach may have to evolve in order to place more emphasis on the need maintain or enable natural processes. All this must be set in the context of growing levels of environmental damage and the disruption to ecosystems threatened by climate change.

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. We want to acknowledge the indefinable qualities of wild places and their deep emotional impact. VINE will encourage individuals to develop a philosophy for conservation, which may be drawn from literature and the visual arts, as well as the more conventional sources. We will provide a range of opportunities for the exchange of information, including seminars, workshops, conferences and a website. This will allow us to compile a set of reference material, both practical and inspirational, which will be a valuable resource.

We hope that through discussion people will gain the confidence to share their enthusiasm with colleagues and help others to develop their ideas. If we learn to communicate in ways that are not based on technical jargon but carry more true meaning it will be much easier to engage with a wider public beyond the purely professional audience.

'It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value.'

Aldo Leopold (1949)

For anyone involved in conservation a love of the natural environment is almost an unacknowledged qualification. We take it so much for granted that we often forget to speak about it, and this silence can become inhibiting. It is not always easy to break through these hidden barriers and talk about feelings when the scientific realities are so much safer and easier to quantify. VINE was created as a way of opening up that discussion and reminding ourselves why we cared enough to become involved in the first place. We want to discover our true values, define the things that have inspired us and find ways of sharing those thoughts with others. Through this we hope to develop a philosophy that will provide an ethical basis for the decisions we make about conservation issues.

Sometimes we hide behind the anonymity of scientific jargon because we have no words for our own emotions, and so we will be looking at ways in which art and literature can convey those universal feelings. While our inspirations may be timeless, our vision is very much for the future. VINE will be constantly evolving, exploring current thinking globally, to develop a dynamic strategy for conservation management that will not lose sight of our underlying principles.

*'O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew –
Hack and rack the growing green!'*

Binsey Poplars *Felled 1879*

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844 – 1889)