

# Reponses to VINE questionnaire, May 2016

Results are presented in black text, with responses from the VINE steering group in blue.

41 responses were received from the membership of 260 members – around a 15% response rate.  
*A bit low but probably fairly normal for surveys.*

## **Q1. “Does VINE still have a role to play in providing a safe space for topics which may be difficult to raise in the workspace?”**

41 responses; 35 yes; 6 not sure.

*A pretty positive response!*

## **Q2. Do you find the following interesting and useful?**

	Yes –	A little –	No –	Not sure –	Don't subscribe/follow –	Total –
VINE google groups discussion forum	65.85% 27	14.63% 6	2.44% 1	2.44% 1	14.63% 6	41
Twitter	8.33% 3	16.67% 6	2.78% 1	2.78% 1	69.44% 25	36

*Pretty positive for the Discussion Forum.*

*Less so for Twitter - though this has always been about reaching out to the younger generation/other audiences (there are nearly 500 VINE followers on twitter, most of whom are not members)*

## **Q3. Should VINE continue to:**

–	Yes	No	Not sure	Total	Weighted Average
Provide news of forthcoming events held by other organisations?	90% 36	0% 0	10% 4	40	1.20
Circulate petitions/campaigns that may be of interest to Members?	85.37% 35	7.32% 3	7.32% 3	41	1.22
Collect, synthesise and submit members views on Government (or other) consultations?	80.49% 33	7.32% 3	12.20% 5	41	1.32

*Pretty positive on all sections.*

## **Q4. Should VINE continue to organise regional meetings/workshops/work parties:**

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	62.5% 25
No	0% 0
Not sure	37.5% 15

I could help (please add email address below)	5
Detailed responses from 5 individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am one of the silent members of VINE. Although I would very much like to contribute to discussions, e.g. the referendum on the EU, I am unable to as I am bound by the Civil Servant Code of Conduct. There are other issues which it is difficult to comment on because of workplace policies. However I very much value and find of great interest the...</li> <li>Rewilding issue always a hot topic; beavers</li> <li>Although I have never made it to one, mainly due to work/family pressures - would like to one day though...</li> <li>More conservation tasks</li> </ul>	

Two thirds support more events. SG needs help to initiate and organise these.

**Q 5. When did you last visit the VINE website ([www.vineproject.org.uk](http://www.vineproject.org.uk))? Within the last:**

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Week	12.20% 5
Month	24.39% 10
Year	53.66% 22
Never	9.76% 4
Total	41

Very variable. The website is mostly used by first time visitors. We need to review the relevance of the content for members.

**Q 6. What sort of website content would you like to see?**

	Responses
Events	77.14% 27
Links to petitions/campaigns	65.71% 23
Reports and publications	97.14% 34
Blogs	60.00% 21
Total Respondents: 35	

Top are Reports followed by Events, Petitions and Blogs. VINE relies on its members to provide comments on reports, publications etc. and circulate these on the discussion forum.

9 comments on website (not all relate directly to the website).

- research/study/employment opportunities
- Reviews and comment on reports and pubs. not likely to be reviewed by e.g. Ecologist, Ecos, or Brit. Wildlife, or by academic journals - esp ones from Official bodies.
- I just view the emails in my email box
- 'Safe space' discussion
- Less chat that is only relevant to the two people engaging in it.
- all of the above as appropriate/available.
- Not sure. The basic problem is lack of time. I don't mind that I may see the same event/campaign/website etc being promoted on different websites, it's just making time (at lunchtimes) to view the VINE (or other website). I've found some discussions interesting but really just don't have time to read the website regularly.
- More international focus, to put UK conservation into perspective. Many in the sector seem v parochial
- The SEEDS project was fascinating - an area for new ideas and thinking

**Q7. Do you still feel the need for a place to discuss the issues that sparked the formation of VINE 10 years ago?**

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
• Issues surrounding the concepts of free nature/rewilding	92.68% 38	0% 0	7.32% 3	41
• The roles of science and intuition/the arts in nature conservation	95.12% 39	2.44% 1	2.44% 1	41
• Sharing deeper values and motivations with those working in conservation	95% 38	0% 0	5% 2	40
• Are you interested in more global issue?	78.05% 32	7.32% 3	14.63% 6	41
• Are there other issues you would like VINE to discuss?	33.33% 8	8.33% 2	58.33% 14	24

Strong interest remaining in issues identified when VINE was formed.

13 Respondents suggestions of issues for discussion

- World population. Climate change
- health & well-being / monetisation and commodification of nature - how can 'nature' compete against development

- Population - the elephant in the room - STILL!
- Nat. cons. organisation and success / failure in other countries. Language in which cons. is discussed / propagated. Global issues in British context.
- House building
- The impact of the economy on nature. Healthy debate/critique about the Natural Capital approach (already beginning to be embedded in policy whether we like it or not)
- Engaging a wider range of people with nature
- Is Natural Capital agenda eroding our connection with nature?
- Difficulties of connecting non-naturalists with nature,
- Evolving trends and strategies in nature conservation
- religion & attitudes to nature; rights of species other than H.sapiens; application of the concepts ecosystem services, carbon credits, natural capital etc
- We had a debate on the taboo, overpopulation, not v informed, and predictably fractious, so expect it will be avoided for some time!
- How about ambassadors / members from other fields? E.g. Health sector, education sector?

This provides a starting point for targeted discussion, say once a month. It requires individual members (including those on VINE steering group) to be willing to start discussions. Suggest to forum members.

Ambassadors is a good idea, but need to identify individuals from those sectors interested in contributing. Suggest to forum members, ask SG.

**Q8. Should VINE work more closely with other like-minded organisation?**

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	56.10% 23
No	2.44% 1
Not sure	41.46% 17
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

Majority “yes” but by small amount. No changes currently anticipated.

**Q9. Regarding topical issues (such as Brexit), should VINE:**

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Take a position	21.05% 8	55.26% 21	23.68% 9	38
Function as a discussion space and focus on providing info	97.50% 39	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	40
Allow the VINE Exec group to take a majority voting decision on relevant action (as currently provided by our constitution)	57.50% 23	17.50% 7	25.00% 10	40

Clear preference that VINE should function as a discussion space and focus on providing info, with mixed view on Exec Group voting on relevant action.

Six comments on taking a position:

- Taking a position depends on the issue, how unanimous are members' views as discussed on the forum, and how unanimous are the views of the Exec Cmtd.
- I think VINE execs have enough to do! Plus, one might assume that VINers have the intelligence to work out for themselves which way their fellow contributors might vote. no contributor should feel pressured, either way
- VINE members do seem very ready to take positions - but surely VINE exists to bring to light/discuss evidence rationally. The position society takes will depend on its perspective on values and the weighting of those regarding the natural environment with those regarding other things - such as material wealth etc.
- Not on Brexit - but other issues directly relevant to nature conservation with good consensus yes.
- If VINE takes a position on political issues it will no longer provide a safe space for free thinking, will alienate some members and become a much "smaller" and less important organisation. No doubt.
- I'd like to think that VINE could adopt a position on re EU membership but am wary that it could be then used as a mechanism to criticise the actions of various conservation NGO/voluntary groups.

Plan to continue to request members' views, responding to consultations where these are appropriate, but not taking a position on party-political issues or national referendums.

***Q10. Is there anything else you think VINE should be doing? Any other comments?***

**18 comments.**

- Taking a global perspective is essential in our currently joined up world.
- There has been occasional discussion about the potential for a VINE facebook page. It might be worth taking a vote? Some object because they can't use facebook at work and so don't 'do' facebook. Well, some of us don't 'do' twitter!
- I think VINE discussions should be much less emotional (and one-sided) than they usually are - it's a massive turn-off to those of us who just want calm, measured discussion of facts! In fact I thought refraining from judgement was a guiding principle of VINE - if I've got that wrong I'll be happy to remove my name from the group.
- Work with other orgs. but keep clear separate identity. Try to encourage 'peripheral' members (like me) to contribute more; and to restrain the more frequent contributors (however good they are).
- Not take sides - allow a free platform for people to express radical views. There are so few spaces left for free speech.
- VINE is fine
- I think the VINE discussions are excellent and I wish that I was able to contribute more but feel constantly hampered by workplace policies and any activity, including on-line, which could call into question my political impartiality. Thank you for all you and others do to keep the conversations going.
- Thanks for all you do!

- It's great you are there and you have reminded me to check your website as haven't been for a while. Emails help those of us with absent-minded brains to go to website.
- Facilitation discussion on solving issues differently
- Keep up the great work
- Given that the current UK government (and the Welsh Govt / Natural Resources Wales in my particular neck of the woods) seem only to be interested in exploitation of the natural environment, awareness raising should ideally be right up there as a priority.
- Don't know. Sorry. Have found some of the VINE comments very interesting but, as with other websites/blogs, they are often dominated by just a few individuals and probably read by far more. It's lack of time not lack of interest that prevents me visiting the website more often.
- The danger is the apparent homogeneity of its membership reinforcing each others views - middle class, UK-born and parochial in outlook, place undue regard on Guardian journalists. I guess nature conservation sector is dominated by these, but those with other backgrounds likely to go elsewhere.
- VINE is too top-down!
- I haven't had much opportunity to engage with VINE but have valued the discussion. It is easier to discuss values in Nature conservation in the work place but I think VINE still provides a useful way of widening these discussions across the sector.

Generally pretty supportive but some suggestions and warnings to consider. Action to include circulating discussion forum ground rules more regularly, encouraging members to start discussion topics of interest, exploring ways to get more grass-roots involvement in VINE - steering group would be delighted by this!