

Switching on the Missing Community Contribution to Biodiversity

In heavily populated Britain the vital importance of community access to nature and involvement in biodiversity must rise up the agenda. If the nature conservation sector turns in towards itself to accomplish the task, the battle is truly lost. We must switch off environmental damage through lack of awareness, and switch on the missing contribution of vast numbers of people. In particular disadvantaged groups, through the experience of deprivation, have more to gain and can respond positively with a passion. Involvement in nature conservation directly improves people's lives and their local environment. It has a role in social regeneration.

Recognition of the power of the basic human process

We come to love what we know and enjoy

We fight for what we love

Build the connections between people and nature

- Enable access to enjoyment of nature where people are (Home, offices, factories, private gardens, backyards, street trees, council estate flower beds, window boxes, pot plants on balconies, community centres, community greenhouses, bird feeding, school grounds, pockets of unused land, allotments, green spaces and parkland)
- Initiate projects which link in with everyday themes which connect with nature conservation (Learn about nature's processes through garden plants and house plants - don't make these plants second class citizens of the plant world)
- Take on the multi-cultural interpretation of the environment. The term multi-cultural is used here to cover the range of social classes and other mini-cultures, not just ethnic cultures.
- Link social, cultural and environmental themes for a broad base for motivation
- Promote understanding of nature conservation as part of people-centred events, from Guy Fawkes night to Diwali
- Provide opportunities to for people to consistently deepen knowledge and gain practical skills, priming new candidates from every sector of society towards taking part in representation and decision-making
- Recognise and reward participation and contribution

Twin pillars of sustainable development

Relationship of people to people

Relationship of people to nature

Address organisational barriers

- Senior commitment (awareness raising training for trustees / senior management on the vital role of community participation and processes of engagement) - put community participation and representation on the agenda at policy level to enable the release of personnel time and resources to reach out and develop involvement and address issues of representation
- Attend to staff development needs in terms of training for awareness and skills and provision of ongoing developmental support - do not send people out to fail
- Maximise local partnership work - adopt an inter-agency, cross sectoral approach to project work to involve the community.

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