

*BGEN Annual Conference 2007, 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
National Botanic Garden of Wales: Biodiversity or Bust*

## **Objective 4 of the GSPC**

### **Promoting education and awareness about plant diversity**

**Jayne Manley**  
Plantlife International

Back to basics, developing a communication strategy, we need to think about the why, what and how of communicating about plant diversity and the needs for its conservation

#### **Rationale of Target 14 within the GPSC**

Clearly laid out the scale of target 14 within its description

- communication, education and awareness is necessary and important for plant conservation
- it should cover informal and formal education
- wide range of audiences, specifically including children, policymakers and the public
- develop special indicators to monitor programmes for specific target audiences

Any strategies developed need to include

- messages
- audience
- mechanisms
- indicators

#### **1) Messages**

Simple messages are needed, they might include:

- the UK has a plant conservation strategy
- UK relies on charities, societies and local groups supported by volunteers, therefore we need to ensure that resources are available to support volunteer organisations
- participation is key – botanists here and abroad, those who collect and use data, conservationists and educators
- we depend on plants – we have to support research into sustainable use and understanding the drivers and impacts of plant use and plant harvesting beyond the UK also includes use within the UK e.g. over harvesting of fungi and the purchasing power of UK consumers

#### **2) Audiences**

Each target audience has a key role to play

*Children and young people*

- ensure young people have experience of plants and fungi in the wild, when they are learning about the natural world

*Policy makers*

- review which conservation mechanisms are actually good for plants, then promote them
- promote support to enable landscape initiatives that include plants to take place i.e. investigate what is and what is not working for plants conservation – comparing different methods such as designated sites (SSSI's), vs. set aside etc.
- There has been suggestions that nature reserves are not the ideal conditions to conserve plant diversity that they were once thought to be as reserves tend to 'lose' species – plants do not stay still, they change location
- need to use issues that are important to them, for example, climate change, flooding, health and well being to bring it on their agenda

*General public*

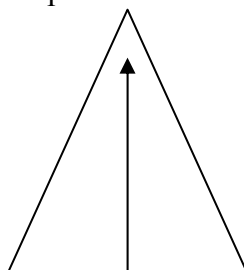
BBC worldwide conducted a survey in 2002 – they found that 30 million people are interested or very interested in nature and wildlife. This number is broken down into several key demographics

- over 2 million are concerned campaigners who are already actively involved with conservation and conservation issues
- 5 million are nature enthusiast, interested in experiences and activities that make a difference
- 8 million are child led and pester power has an influence on them
- 5.6m are armchair enthusiasts, for whom any change in behaviour must be made very easy for them
- 3.5 million are passive preservationists, they are interested in the local, what they can directly see and connect with

The most powerful ways on entry to the largest numbers within these groups therefore is via children (pester power) and the idea of localness.

### 3) Mechanism

Web community – new technologies being rolled out every day, look at ipods, DVDs, mobile phones, people are choosing new ways of learning. Participation proceeds upwards as skills and confidence grows



County rare plants register  
Local change survey  
Common plants survey  
Single species survey, for example, bluebells for Britain

In 2004, 14% of the people who were involved in the common plants survey had initially taken part in the single species survey.

#### **4) Indicators**

We have to be careful about indicators that they show what we believe they show. For example, the farmland bird indicator was believed to be a good indicator for environmental health and plant diversity as they occupy a wide range of habitats and are at the top of the food chain. But, agri-environment schemes have been focusing on increasing the numbers of farmland birds, they are going up, but through farmers sowing quinoa or pollen / nectar crops to encourage insects – these are good for providing birds with food but mean that there is not necessarily any benefit for plant diversity.

#### **Challenge**

- The numbers of organisations involved is very large, so it is hard to coordinate them all
- Conservation strategy may help to bring them together

We need to make sure we are using topics that are applicable and relevant to people to make sure we grab their interest.

Write up by Sarah Kneebone, BGCI