

Towards infinity

Like Buzz Lightyear, the Toy Story hero, BANC is hopeful and daring. Now after 35 years, we can see there have been flights of fancy and some real successes amongst BANC's career, all with meagre resources. Creating a digital *ECOS* was an agonising decision and while we expected a mixed reaction, the positive feedback has been a morale boost. Meanwhile amidst the undergrowth of conservation activity a new organisation has emerged – Rewilding Britain. Its blurb promotes an agenda of “wonder and excitement”. This is naturally good news to BANC, which drove debate on rewilding for nearly two decades, with scores of *ECOS* articles, two BANC sponsored books, nurturing of the Wildland Network, and several ground-breaking events.

BANC's imprint is often missing from the work and projects it helps spark, but no matter, our role is to scrutinise, ginger things along, and release creative energy. The Woodland Edge for instance, was a true flight of fancy which became a mind-blowing event, communing with an ancient landscape, while in earlier times, *ECOS* articles prompted the Habitats Directive, now being defended by NGOs against ideological attack. Another landmark was BANC's scene setting work for what became IEEM, the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, now the trade body for many practitioners. These days there is much fragmentation as conservation spans many sub-sectors, but BANC remains a critical friend and commentator while the conservation community evolves.

Describing BANC at 35, one of its trustees recently remarked: “We are a positive force... in networking the power of other creative minds, getting people to talk to each other, drop their formal boundaries - and escape from all those conference formats with their posturing and fundable position statements.” These words were uttered amongst debate on how BANC's new ‘revitalising conservation’ campaign could take shape. Is revitalising conservation actually a mission impossible, given the conservation sector's dramatic dip in funds and the present hostile political vibes? There are different takes on the matter in this edition. Peter Shirley urges us to steer around austerity and work with nature, in whatever situation we find ourselves. Mike Townsend explains how to embrace concepts of natural capital if we want to occupy political ground that recognises ‘environmental goods’ – a necessary evil for some organisations. Meanwhile beyond the Westminster village, wildlife is doing its own thing anyway, as Mark Elliot's briefing on the clandestine Devon beavers reminds us.

So, onwards for BANC, with we hope, some mid-life vigour. Conservation is an infinite game, a process to continually guide and to learn from as nature transforms. We welcome your ideas on events and writing to bring to BANC's revitalising conservation agenda, to keep spirits up, and to create more buzz.