

success: as acceptance of environmental problems spreads, the scientists' message will need to be grasped by more and more lay persons. It will probably usually be grasped in translation. Its logical structures, quantification, and other features can underpin the "fast and loose" making of art (and Jo's "doom and gloom" reaction), and it offers reassurance that we share the same reasons for feeling as we do. And yet – witness *ECOS* – words are crucial. We are interpreters, we are translators, and we should struggle to use appropriate ones; and they should flow like water.

One source – let's for the moment call it mind-understanding – is our knowledge and the intellectual processes by which we categorise and think through to an understanding of what we know about something new to us, so that we can pigeonhole it, and tell others about it – though the paradigm you accept may not be able to accommodate it.

Another source – let's call it heart-understanding – is our feelings, and the 'flashes' in which we recognize something new to us, and out of which come the story, the picture, the experience we want to give to you – though (as Jo now knows) you may be tuned to a different wavelength.

"Never till Time is done / Will the fire of the heart and the fire of the mind be one" claims English poet Edith Sitwell. Well – maybe, or maybe not. But we keep warmer from having both. And whether it's answers or questions, truth or belief, we're looking for, the search ought to be easier if we can walk on two legs, not hop on one - whichever one that is.

Martin Spray is at spraypludds@hotmail.com

This article is adapted from an earlier version published at Greenmuseum.

Flood resilience in Cumbria? Woody debris along the River Liza in the rewilding valley of Ennerdale. This area escaped the severe December 2015 floods, but the natural and unconstrained course of the River Liza has been able to help buffer the effects of previous flood episodes.

Photo: Rachel Oakley



Plotting in the Woods

Revitalising conservation was at the heart of debate at the BANC annual event in October 2015. This article reviews the main conclusions from the day and looks ahead to BANC's next steps on the topic.

EMILY ADAMS

BANC's meetings are typically held at unconventional venues. In 2015, we visited the community-owned Neroche Woodlanders site in Somerset (<http://www.youngwood.org.uk/>), complete with musical installations, a round house, fire pits and, luckily, lots of sunshine. Around 30 people participated, including non-members, from many different backgrounds in conservation. The intention was to 'start a conversation' about three things:

- Celebrating what the conservation sector has achieved;
- Reflecting on what we need to change as we move forwards with nature conservation; and
- Ideals about the future of conservation, and of our society more broadly.

The focus of the event was on looking to the positive aspects of conservation as a counterpoint to the current gloomy situation of ongoing cuts and low morale. We wanted to think broadly, to spark ideas for *ECOS* and for future events, and to help refine BANC's role in conservation activity. The main conclusions are summarised under four headings below.

Conservation successes

The professionalisation of conservation, and its consequent recognition by others.

Raising awareness of the natural world and how we as a society interact with it. This is an achievement to be proud of but there is more to be done.

The creation of legislation targeting nature and co-existence with other land uses (e.g. in farmland) has been a huge success both nationally and internationally. A big part of this is also the creation of protected areas, particularly the SSSI network which helps maintain high-quality habitats while surrounding areas have been degraded.

Improved access opportunities including long-distance paths, National Trails, cycle networks, open access, increased coastal access, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

What we should leave behind

The low political profile of nature: The decline in political support for environmental protection in the last decade is a major concern. This trend needs to be reversed if we are to see any future gains in wildlife protection, funding or political support for conservation actions.

Negative and doom-laden language. We should focus more on the positives that come from nature conservation.

Simple assumptions of public or private land management. The increasing interest in community land projects and sustainable land use models suggests an appetite for communal approaches to caring for nature and managing land.

The growth goal: The idea that continual growth is either realistic or desirable in a world of finite resources.

Globalisation and the out-sourcing of environmental damage from the UK to other countries. Linked to this is the need to reduce consumerism, notably around products such as bottled water and clothing which have high hidden environmental costs;

Complex bureaucracy, both within and outside conservation, that obscures the need for a society-wide, joined up approach to protecting and using the environment and its natural resources.

Short-termism in funding, management plans, policies and other areas – which do not match the long time-scales of many environmental processes.

What the future should include

Greater communication and collaboration between the diverse range of people and groups encompassed by 'conservation'.

Less active management and less tidiness, where nature is left to manage itself to a greater extent.

Strong regulation and use of environmental legislation.

Be risk aware, not risk-averse. Linked to this is a need for greater focus on resilience – in all areas of society and the environment. This will involve embracing change e.g. being flexible in considering alien species and in considering the possible effects of climate change.

Moving away from a dependency on grants to enterprising activity that allow organisations to make a surplus (not necessarily profit) which in turn drives viability and creates momentum.

Emily Adams is BANC's Development Officer. emilyadams13@gmail.com

