

People Engagement Group Project: Insights Report

Ben Connor, Bristol Natural History Consortium¹

Introduction

This report forms one of the final outputs of the People Engagement Group Project, and aims to summarise the insights arising from the project as to **how the environmental engagement sector could be supported to more effectively engage a public audience in biodiversity issues**, thus contributing towards the delivery of Outcome 4 of [Biodiversity 2020](#), the Government's biodiversity strategy for England, that "by 2020 significantly more people are engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking action".

1. About the Project

The People Engagement Group Project (PEG Project) was developed by members of the People Engagement Group (PEG), a voluntary group of experts from across the environmental engagement sector supported by Defra to contribute to Outcome 4 of *Biodiversity 2020*. The group met regularly over two years from February 2012. The project was delivered by [Bristol Natural History Consortium](#)² (BNHC), under the [Communicate](#) brand³ in collaboration with Simon Christmas (Simon Christmas Ltd) and members of the PEG.

The project had two overarching aims:

- **To build capacity within the environmental engagement sector by enabling it to make best use of the latest evidence available in the Defra commissioned report [Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues](#);**
- **To gain further insights into the issues that the wider engagement sector needs support to build capacity in.**

The project consisted of three main elements designed to achieve these aims:

- i. Three free half-day workshops on *Framing Biodiversity* held during Autumn 2013 at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; University of Exeter; and Natural England's Sheffield Office. These workshops were open to practitioners from the environmental engagement sector, and were attended by a total of 87 participants from 40 different organisations. Each workshop included a presentation of the key

¹ This report was written by Ben Connor, Bristol Natural History Consortium (BNHC) as part of a project funded by Defra and delivered by BNHC in collaboration with Simon Christmas and members of the People Engagement Group

² BNHC is a cross-sector collaboration between twelve organisations working on events and projects to engage people with the natural world through collaborative action. See www.bnhc.org.uk

³ Communicate is the UK's leading conference for environmental communicators, produced annually by BNHC. See www.communicatenow.org

findings of *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues* by lead author Simon Christmas, focusing on five key recommendations for reframing biodiversity issues, group discussion and exercises (See Appendix A).

- ii. A plenary presentation and two shorter workshops led by Simon Christmas at *Communicate 2013: Stories for Change*. 150 delegates attended the plenary presentation, with 62 also attending a workshop.
- iii. The creation and publication of an online resource highlighting and developing the recommendations of *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues*, presenting them in an accessible format that can be used by practitioners within the sector.

This report aims to address the second aim of the project by synthesising the learning and insights gathered during the course of these project activities. This is based on workshop outputs, post-event evaluation and discussion with workshop participants and conference delegates, and consultation with PEG members throughout the project. This report is designed to inform the development of further activity to support the environmental engagement sector in engaging people in biodiversity and related issues.

The report contains four sections:

- i. Barriers to being able to effectively engage public audiences in biodiversity issues;
- ii. Learning from the PEG Project as to how the sector could be supported to overcome some of these barriers;
- iii. Potential additional areas of support that could be provided through future projects;
- iv. Summary conclusions.

2. Barriers to being able to engage people effectively in biodiversity issues

As part of the “Framing Biodiversity” workshops, participants were asked to identify what they perceived as the most significant barriers to being able to engage public audiences effectively in biodiversity issues.

These self-identified barriers can be divided into two categories. First, there are the barriers that are preventing *the public* from engaging in biodiversity issues. (Figure 1.) These are the barriers, both individual (e.g. motivations, values) and contextual (e.g. lack of access to nature, societal priorities) that engagement work itself is seeking to overcome, and should inform *how* the sector carries out that work. These are the barriers to engagement examined in *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues*, which the report recommendations seek to address.

However, this report will focus on the second set of barriers, those which relate to the *environmental engagement sector's* ability to engage people more effectively in biodiversity issues. These are not barriers preventing people from engaging in biodiversity issues, but issues preventing the sector from engaging people as effectively as they could. These barriers can be grouped according to four themes: confidence, knowledge, skills and resources (Figure 2.). It should be recognised that these themes are closely related, and that there is a degree of overlap between them, but they do provide a useful framework that could inform future activities seeking to build capacity within the sector.

Barriers to people’s engagement in biodiversity issues	
Individual	Perceived lack of relevance to people’s everyday lives Terminology e.g. “biodiversity” General apathy Motivation – people not looking to engage with nature, but for a “nice day out” Nature perceived as removed and remote – “Attenborough Effect” Entrenched views and prejudices Sense of powerlessness Lack of trust
Contextual	Barriers in formal education Lack of access to local green space Society disconnected from nature Prevailing political and economic climate Negative media coverage Competing priorities – nature “a whisper in a storm of noise”

Figure 1 Barriers to people’s engagement in biodiversity issues

Barriers to the environmental engagement sector’s ability to engage people in biodiversity issues	
Confidence	Doom and gloom attitude Obsession with getting messages 100% right before communicating “Tree-huggers” image
Knowledge	Lack of knowledge as to how best to engage people Difficulty of tailoring knowledge to different audiences Assumptions that people think like us Difficulty of measuring success
Skills	Lack of practical ideas for engaging people Lack of skill at targeting community influencers
Resources	The lack of time and resources for engagement activity

Figure 2 Barriers to the environmental engagement sector’s ability to engage people in biodiversity issues

3. Building confidence and knowledge: outcomes from the PEG project

While relatively small in size, the PEG Project has demonstrated a successful model through which the sector can be supported to begin to overcome some of the barriers identified above, whilst also suggesting where future activity could build on this work. Specifically the project helped to build participants’ **confidence** by providing an opportunity to come together with other practitioners to share best practice and common challenges, whilst also improving **knowledge** by giving practitioners access to the latest research on engaging people in biodiversity issues.

i. Building Confidence

Evaluation of the project workshops showed that aside from any specific aspects of the content of the sessions or the research presented, participants placed a high value on the opportunity afforded to come together with other professionals to share ideas and best practice, make new connections and discuss common challenges. Similarly, when asked what the PEG or others could do to support the sector further, by far the most frequent response was to facilitate more opportunities that allowed environmental engagement practitioners to come together in a similar way.

“The meeting on Thursday was incredibly useful so perhaps is simply a case of facilitating these sort of workshops on a regular basis so we can share with colleagues in the sector?”

“Highlights were the chance to talk to other sector professionals in an informal environment to swap ideas”

“Provide more opportunities to get together and share ideas, progress and network to make the appropriate links”

“It would be great if there was a way that the group could facilitate the sharing of best practice amongst organisations”

By enabling a focused opportunity for practitioners to come together to access new research and discuss a particular aspect of their work, the PEG Project was also able to open up a space for wider sharing and discussion, allowing participants to feel embedded within a supportive community of practice. The project therefore provided an example of how the sector could be enabled to better support itself, building practitioners’ *confidence* and helping to overcome the identified barrier of “doom and gloom” – the feeling of frustration that can result from working in relative isolation within the context of seemingly intractable environmental problems.

The strongly expressed appetite for more opportunities to come together as a sector to share ideas and common concerns, and build professional relationships, also highlights the fact that these opportunities are currently relatively scarce. The *Communicate* conference is an existing initiative within the sector that aims to meet this need, but as a ticketed, annual event its reach is limited. The PEG Project demonstrated the success of a programme of smaller, free, regionally distributed workshops, and this model could inform future activities.

ii. Enhancing Knowledge

A primary aim of the PEG Project was to build the capacity of the environmental engagement sector by enabling practitioners to make best use of the latest evidence available in *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues*; directly addressing the identified barrier of gaps in *knowledge* within the sector by disseminating and developing the research findings through workshops and conference sessions, and producing an online resource to continue this work.

The positive response to the project workshops, both in terms of attendance and post-event evaluation, demonstrated that practitioners valued the opportunity to improve their knowledge base through accessing new research and recommendations for improving public engagement in biodiversity issues.

“I think this sort of market research is really valuable and the sort of thing that organisations like ours find it difficult to justify, so more of this sort of work would be very welcome”

“I enjoyed the workshop very much. It reinforced what we had learnt from experience in [our organisation] and was very useful as it provided a simple, rational framework that we could apply to our thinking”

While further evaluation over a longer timeframe would be required to fully assess the impact of the project in terms of enhancing knowledge and building capacity within the sector, the majority of participants reported actions that they intended to take both in terms of their individual practice and organisational engagement strategies, and a number of participants have begun to put the recommendations of the research into practice.

“The session I presented around this work was extremely well received by my colleagues here. I used the work as a stimulus to question how we present biodiversity and to ask about ways in which we might incorporate some of the key messages from the work. From there I used it as a way of getting the team to consider how we frame our own work, to reflect on some of the market research we've done with our own supporters and to get them to think again about how well we are implementing that knowledge. We had a really good discussion about it all and I have been asked by our CEO to present a similar piece to our whole staff team and Council at its meeting later this year.”

“I have discussed with our team about how we communicate our messages, particularly to new audiences. We have developed our 2014 events programme with this in mind trying to run activities that stimulate the awe and wonder of nature. We are also focusing on positive messages and not discounting common species and habitat that may have low conservation value, but high communication value.”

While a broad range of organisations were represented at the workshops, primarily NGOs operating at scales from international to local, the research was particularly well-received by small to medium-sized organisations who lack the capacity available to Government or larger NGOs to conduct or fund their own studies. Furthermore, it is these organisations within which the research recommendations appear to have had most immediate impact, possibly because within smaller organisations changes are easier to implement.

The particular impact of the project in terms of enhancing knowledge and building capacity within smaller organisations highlights the importance of independent audience research that is freely available and well disseminated, without the constraints of commercial sensitivity or potential perceptions of bias associated with research conducted by individual organisations. Future capacity building projects could be targeted specifically at this audience of smaller organisations, supporting a segment of the environmental engagement sector where there is both a need and potential for significant impact.

Commissioning or conducting further audience research to fill ongoing gaps in knowledge – with the implication that this research would be disseminated in a similar

manner – was a frequent suggestion in the workshops as to how the sector could be supported in the future.

“It would be valuable to undertake some research that identifies specific ways to engage hard-to-reach audiences - we struggle to communicate the value of nature outside of white middle-classes.”

“It could be that another stage looks more closely at those already engaged in nature e.g. conservation/nature volunteers and examines their motivations”

“Perhaps it is simply a case of facilitating these sort of workshops on a regular basis...or sharing other research on a semi-regular basis”

The most common suggestion for further research was for a more focused study concentrating on a particular audience, for example “hard-to-reach” groups or the already engaged. Combined with the recommendations for additional research contained within the *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues* report, these suggestions could provide a starting point for any further research and dissemination projects focused on addressing barriers concerning the sector’s lack of knowledge of how to effectively engage people.

4. Facilitating not directing: The PEG Project as a model for increasing capacity within the sector

While relatively small scale, the PEG Project offers a model for supporting the environmental engagement sector to build its capacity to engage people in biodiversity issues that could be developed further. Specifically the project was able to address the barriers of lack of *confidence* and lack of *knowledge* identified by workshop participants. Part of the success of the project was that it addressed these two issues in tandem: providing access to new research as a focal point around which people could come together to share ideas and concerns, building confidence by supporting one another.

Importantly, the PEG Project demonstrated how the sector might be supported to build its capacity to engage people effectively through an emphasis on facilitating and enabling – giving practitioners the opportunity to share ideas and use the research in their own way – rather than directing through presenting a predetermined approach to engagement or a specific campaign.

The extent to which building capacity within the sector should be a top-down or bottom-up process was a topic of debate within the workshops. Some delegates felt that the PEG or a similar group could support the sector by co-ordinating a collaboration communications campaign, or seek to generate a common response to the research recommendations across different organisations. However, others felt that such a prescriptive approach would be difficult to implement and less constructive than allowing organisations to implement the learning from the workshops in a manner most appropriate to their own working context. The positive feedback from the project and its initial impacts demonstrate the effectiveness of this bottom-up approach focused on enabling the sector to support itself.

5. How else could the sector be better supported?

While the PEG Project offered a potential model as to how the sector could be supported to overcome some of the barriers to effectively engaging people in biodiversity issues, through the workshops it was also able to identify a number of additional suggestions for support that the project did not directly address. These suggestions can be categorised according to the barriers identified above (Figure 3.)

Barrier	Support suggested
Confidence	Facilitating further sharing of best practice through an online hub or community; Expert advice or mentoring service for smaller organisations; Sharing between the sector of best practice; successful case studies
Knowledge	Synthesising/collating the multiple research projects and reports that exist in this area; Workshops exploring/introducing ideas from cognate fields e.g. heritage interpretation
Skills	Targeted skills sessions e.g. social media, working with journalists; A project to create, identify and support local heroes to build community engagement in biodiversity issues
Resources	Additional funding for engagement projects

Figure 3. Further suggestions for supporting the environmental engagement sector

The desire for further opportunities for sharing and networking across the sector, and in particular building links between smaller and larger organisations, reinforces the learning from the project workshops of the important role that facilitating this type of peer-to-peer support could have in building confidence within the sector. Similarly, the model demonstrated through the PEG Project could be adapted to focus on sharing and developing some of the specific skills identified above. While tackling the barrier of limited resources through the provision of additional funding is more challenging, support in accessing existing funding streams and developing fundraising strategies could help the sector to build its capacity to overcome this ongoing issue.

6. Summary Conclusions

The insights gathered from the PEG Project allow for a number of conclusions to be drawn that could inform the development of future activity to support the environmental engagement sector in building its capacity to effectively engage people in biodiversity and related issues.

- **Future activity to support the environmental engagement sector to build its capacity to engage people in biodiversity issues should be focused on addressing four barriers: confidence, knowledge, skills and resources.**
- **The PEG Project demonstrated a successful model for building confidence and improving knowledge by bringing practitioners together to focus on a specific element of their work; this model could form a starting point for future activity.**
- **Future activity could build on the success of the PEG Project by:**

- **Facilitating more opportunities for practitioners to come together to share best practice and common challenges and form professional networks;**
 - **Providing opportunities for practitioners to access and help develop new research focused on filling current knowledge gaps;**
 - **Adapting the project model to address additional areas for support identified by project participants, for example developing specific skills within the sector.**
-
- **Small to medium sized organisations are a possible target audience for more focused activity, where both need and the potential for significant impact are high.**

 - **The PEG Project demonstrated the value of the PEG and similar groups in playing a facilitating and enabling role in supporting capacity building within the sector rather than making prescriptive recommendations.**

Appendix A:

Framing Biodiversity Workshops Report

1. Introduction

i. About the project

“Framing Biodiversity” consisted of a series of workshops hosted by [Communicate](#) and Defra’s People Engagement Group (PEG) in collaboration with [Simon Christmas Ltd.](#), aiming to develop original research published in the Defra commissioned report [Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues](#) and disseminate the research findings to the wider environmental engagement sector.

These workshops will inform the development of a wider project to build capacity in the sector by enabling practitioners to make best use of the latest evidence on biodiversity engagement, and to enable PEG to gather additional insights into the how the sector can be best supported to meet their engagement aims.

This project forms part of PEG’s work of contributing towards Outcome 4 of *Biodiversity 2020*, the government’s biodiversity strategy for England, that “significantly more people are engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking action” by the end of the decade.

iii. Workshops summary

Three half-day workshops were held during Autumn 2013 at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; University of Exeter and Natural England’s Sheffield office, attended by a total of 87 participants representing 44 different organisations (see below for participant list) Two additional shorter workshops were held at *Communicate 2013: Stories for Change*, attended by a further 62 participants.

Each workshop included a presentation by Simon Christmas of key findings of the *Engaging People in Biodiversity Issues* report, focusing primarily on the qualitative aspects of the research that sought to understand the existing stories that people tell about our relationship with nature, and concluded with five recommendations for reframing biodiversity issues that might resonate with these stories, namely:

- Invoke both stories about nature (“Nature finds a way” and “Nature can’t keep up”), but stick to the human timeframes of “Nature can’t keep up”
- Tap into awe and wonder at nature’s capacity to grow, adapt and recover; and position living things as the products and agents of this process
- Focus on the imbalance between the negative and positive impacts of human actions, celebrate the positive – and don’t focus exclusively on the negative
- Show people how nature works for them – don’t just *tell* them that nature matters or how much it is worth

- Draw on the idea of nature as a place where one reconnects – with nature, with each other, across generations, with what really matters, with oneself

The workshops also included discussion and exercises inviting participants to respond to the research and consider its application. This report is based on participants' comments during the workshops; the responses to exercises exploring the application of these recommendations to a communication project, suggesting day-to-day rules for communicating biodiversity, and ideas of what to stop, start and continue doing in light of the research; as well as follow up questions on the workshops and how PEG might offer further support. All quotes are from workshop participants.

2. Working with the sector: How did you respond to the project?

Overall, the response to the workshops has been highly positive, and clearly demonstrates recognition within the sector of the importance of evidence-based audience research, and the value that practitioners place on this work.

"I think this sort of market research is really valuable and the sort of thing that organisations like ours find it difficult to justify, so more of this sort of work would be very welcome"

Typically, the initial response to the research presented has been one of **recognition and validation**; overall this research resonates with what organisations and individuals within the sector are already doing, and **provides a supportive evidence base**.

"It reinforced what we had learned from experience in [our organisation] and was very useful as it provided a simple rational framework that we could apply to our thinking."

Over and above any of the specific recommendations of the research, the most commonly expressed take home points from the workshops related to the **importance of 'knowing your audience'**, of which there were three aspects: the value of underpinning engagement activity with quality audience research, targeting and tailoring messages appropriately, and working with people's existing understandings of our relationship with the natural world.

"Taking time to listen and build understanding of your audience and then frame your language and message in what makes them tick, i.e. farming community and public goals and benefits - let them decide how they want to talk about it"

Similarly, aside from the specific content of the sessions, participants **valued the opportunity to meet with other professionals in the sector to share ideas and best practice**, as well as simply having the opportunity to reflect on their practice and engage with new ideas.

"Highlights were the chance to talk to other sector professionals in an informal environment to swap ideas; the chance to think about how I might do things differently at my charity with a different approach in mind"

3. Testing the research: what did you take from the findings?

i. Key take home points

Several major themes emerged in terms of specific points that participants took from the recommendations for reframing biodiversity made in the research.

The importance of language was the most frequently recorded take home point, specifically using appropriate language for engagement which is accessible and resonates with your audience. Most often, this came down to avoiding using the term 'biodiversity' for a general public audience.

"In terms of media output, we need to recognise that the terminology of 'biodiversity' does not always resonate. Perhaps use other language like nature, webs of life which are informed by the science of biodiversity but apply to people on a personal scale"

Whilst there is widespread recognition that 'biodiversity' is not a term that resonates with a broad public audience, the frequency with which participants recorded this as something they should *stop* doing points to the ongoing difficulty of finding appropriate framings that carry equivalent meaning.

Two related recommendations that were most commonly seen to be reinforcing what practitioners already recognise as a successful approach were the **power of tapping into the feelings of joy, awe and wonder** that nature can provoke, and the importance of **offering a positive message**.

"Remain positive about biodiversity and the positive impacts people can have armed with the know how and support to do so"

"Continue making communications exciting and giving people a sense of awe and wonder"

While several participants emphasised the need to *balance* positive and negative messages as recommended in the research, many more simply recorded the need to focus on the positive. Likewise, few participants highlighted the research recommendation of specifically celebrating nature's capacity to 'grow, adapt and recover' as against the simple wonder of nature.

The **importance of focusing on the local context**, and therefore making biodiversity issues tangible and relevant to people's everyday lives, and the associated need to **empower audiences to take positive action for themselves** also emerged as take away points that cut across several of the research recommendations.

"Play up the local focus of our work and be relevant to people's day-to-day life and interests"

"Relating 'biodiversity issues' to something much more tangible to the public, either explicitly or by creating awareness of how they can help with a simple action."

Finally, the recommendation to **show people how nature works for them**, as opposed to merely *telling* people about the services nature provides, was highlighted

as a particularly strong recommendation, offering a slightly different approach to communicating common themes around ecosystem services and the value of nature.

“Showing how nature works for us through really tangible ecosystem services topics in our education resources”

Other themes that occurred less frequently included the importance of keeping messages simple and accessible, giving people the opportunity to *experience* nature first hand, paying more attention to the timeframes used in messages, using story and narrative in communications, and emphasising the idea of connection and reconnection.

ii. Questions raised by the research

While on the whole participants felt that the research resonated with their experience and provided valuable insights, a number of challenges to the research also recurred across the workshops, namely:

- The subtle but substantial difference between engagement with *nature* and engagement with *biodiversity issues*, and the extent to which it matters whether people value the quantitative diversity of living things as opposed to simply caring about “*beautiful and luxuriant nature*.”
- Whether the recommendations reinforce the dominant and overarching existing story that people and nature are fundamentally separate, rather than finding a way to change this story.
- Was the research question the right one to ask? Should we be directing resources towards understanding engagement, or should we focus on elucidating motivations for and drivers of behaviour.
- The potential problems of falling into an instrumental, economic view of nature provoked by concepts such as showing how nature *works for us*

4. Building capacity: how might you use the research?

A clear simple action taken by most respondents was to share the work with colleagues within their organisation in order to consider how it might be applied to their work.

“The session that I presented around this work was extremely well received by my colleagues here...and I have been asked by our CEO to present a similar piece to our whole staff team and to the organisation’s Council”

Further to sharing the research, three main potential uses of the research emerged:

First, the five clear recommendations as to how to reframe biodiversity were seen to provide a **simple, practical framework against which to reference day to day communications** activities; a checklist reinforcing and giving structure to existing approaches.

“The workshop and the research have given a good idea of points to address in communications so we activate the right responses, and don’t get caught out by residual complacency - helping to recognise those “4 stories” is a useful device to help frame press releases etc.”

Second, the research was seen as something that could **inform organisational approaches to engaging people with biodiversity issues on a more strategic level**. This response was primarily from representatives of small to medium sized organisations that may lack the capacity to do their own audience research, for whom this research provided a valuable resource.

“I used the work as a stimulus to question how we present biodiversity and to ask about the ways in which we might incorporate some of the key messages from the work. From there I used it as a way of getting the team to consider how we frame our own work”

Third, while as a whole the research has acted to reinforce participants’ existing approaches rather than offer something completely novel, in many cases people found **specific points of resonance that stimulated them to reflect on particular areas of their practice** and consider adopting new approaches.

“The research has caused to question current approach trying to engage farmers, where I’m currently emphasising the financial benefits....it could be better to show how nature works, talk about the processes and empower farmers to show how ecosystem services work for them”

Finally, some participants recorded that while the research was enlightening and engaging, they felt that it was not yet developed enough to enable them to take any action on the findings, and that an important additional step was required to develop the research into a set of tools that could lead to co-ordinated action, rather than simply offering another suite of evidence to sit alongside previous studies.

“For me, a bit more on the ‘what this means’, ‘what we need to do differently’ is needed. This may be coming. To ask me what I will do differently when I don’t know the tools I need seemed a bit early”

“We have lots of good evidence (this, Common Cause, Futerra), but what has it changed? We need evidence of successful use to give confidence - that is the real challenge, there is no use just sitting on new knowledge.”

5. Gathering insights: what are the barriers to engagement and how might the sector be supported to overcome them?

An important element of the workshops has been the gathering of insights from professionals within the environmental engagement sector as to what they perceive as the most significant barriers to being able to engage people with biodiversity issues, and how they feel the sector could be better supported to overcome these barriers.

i. Barriers to engagement

A wide range of barriers to engagement were identified, but three recurred at each workshop:

- **The perceived lack of relevance of biodiversity issues to people’s everyday lives**

- **Lack of time and resources for engagement activity**
- **The terminology “biodiversity”**

The other barriers identified can be categorised as relating to the capacity of the sector; audience perceptions; and wider society.

Sector capacity:

- Lack of skill at targeting community influencers
- Obsession with getting messages 100% right before communicating
- The difficulty of measuring success
- Lack of confidence
- Image – “tree-huggers”
- Lack of knowledge
- Difficulty of tailoring knowledge to different audiences
- Doom and gloom
- Lack of practical ideas
- Assumptions that people think like us

Audiences:

- General apathy
- Motivation – people not looking to engage with nature, but for a “nice day out”
- Nature seen as something removed and remote – “The Attenborough Effect”
- Entrenched views and prejudices
- Sense of powerlessness
- Lack of trust
- Nature “a whisper in a storm of noise”

Society:

- Barriers in formal education
- Lack of quality of local green space
- Society disconnected from nature
- Prevailing political and economic climate
- Negative media coverage
- Competing societal priorities

ii. What support could help the sector?

By far the most frequent response to the question of what the People Engagement Group or others might do to support the sector was **to facilitate more opportunities for practitioners to come together to share knowledge and best practice.**

“It would be great if there was a way that the group could facilitate the sharing of best practice amongst organisations”

“Provide more opportunities to get together and share ideas, progress and network to make the appropriate links”

There were three other recurring suggestions for how PEG could support the sector, namely:

Further audience research investigating particular issues in greater depth, for instance engaging “hard-to-reach” groups or the motivations of those who are already engaged with biodiversity issues.

“It would be valuable to undertake some research that identifies specific ways to engage hard-to-reach audiences - we struggle to communicate the value of nature outside of white middle-classes.”

Taking a lead on a collaborative communications project, and developing a common approach. This could be developing a specific campaign that organisations sign up to, or bringing organisations together to develop common messaging based on this research. It is worth noting that there was debate amongst participants as to the extent to which a common approach could be directed, or whether this should be a bottom up process.

“It would be valuable to see if a collaborative communication project could be agreed upon. Something that a number of our organisations could sign up to be a part of, with the aim of communicating biodiversity....PEG could help by coordinating the campaign, setting the objectives, and measuring the success”

Synthesising this research with other similar studies such as Futerra’s Branding Biodiversity and Common Cause for Nature, to draw together practical recommendations.

“Help deliver a toolkit to make sense of applying this research, Futerra and Common Cause...something that ties them all together and offers good practice as to when one route is likely to work more than another might help people who are already busy and not steeped in the detail”

There were a number of additional suggestions for how PEG could support the sector, often relating to ideas for specific projects, which included:

- An expert advice or mentoring service for smaller organisations
- Spending more time visiting and talking to organisations to gather ideas and discuss their needs
- Further research or case studies looking at engagement projects that have worked and why
- A project to create, identify and support “local heroes” to build engagement with biodiversity issues on a community level

6. Workshop Participant List

Kew, 3rd October		
Abigail McLouglin	Press and Communications Officer	Bat Conservation Trust
Angela Jones	Community Adviser Networking Nature	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Angela McFarlane	Author	Independent
Bucy McDonald	Senior Producer	Natural History Museum
Carol Griffiths	Director	Corporate Responsibility Consulting
Charlotte Coales	Science Communicator	Natural History Museum
Claire Wyld	Nene Valley Campaigns Officer	Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire
Debra Royal	Events and Communications Officer	Nature After Minerals
Ellen Softley	Senior Press Officer (Landscape and Biodiversity)	Natural England
Estelle Robinson	Policy and Public Affairs Officer	Field Studies Council
Frances Hagger	Community and Outdoor Learning Assistant	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Gareth Parry	Head of Community Programmes	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Hannah Cook	Manager	Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre
Heather McFarlane	Director of Communications and Fundraising	Bat Conservation Trust
Ieuan Evans	Head of Membership and Volunteer Engagement	BTO
Jane Houghton	Senior Adviser, Accessible Natural Environment	Natural England
Jo Fowler	Communications Manager	Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

Judith Church	Support Officer	Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre
Julia Minnear	Local Food Project Officer	Women's Environmental Network
Kay Clark	Development Manager	Wildscreen
Louise Print-Lyons	Catchment Development Officer	Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
Neil Gunn	Digital Strategy Advisor	WWF-UK
Nick White	Senior Advisor, Biodiversity 2020 Programme Team	Natural England
Richard Harrington	Communications Manager	Marine Conservation Society
Sally Weale	Executive Producer, Film Unit	Natural History Museum
Sarah Wright	Advisor for Landscape-scale Delivery	Natural England
Victoria Collins	Author	Independent
Exeter, 23rd October		
Andrew Whitehouse	South West Manager	Buglife
Ben McCarthy	Principal Adviser (Biodiversity 2020)	Natural England
Bryony Wilde	Sustainability Projects Officer	University of Exeter
Cathy Horsley	Conservation Assistant	Buglife
Charlie Wild		University of Exeter Students' Guild
Chloe Garland	Senior Presenter	Living Coasts
Dan Smith	Communications Officer	Devon Wildlife Trust
David Dixon	National Collaboration and Learning Manager	National Association of AONBs
David Hetherington	Area Business Planning & Performance Advisor	Environment Agency
Ed Gillespie	Director	Futerra Sustainability Communications
Eddie Mole	Head of Horticulture	Bristol Zoo Gardens
Fen Gerry	Media and Communications Officer	RSPB

Jane Hart	Project Officer	The Silvanus Trust
Jim Walker	Director	The Outdoor Trust
Jo Stewart Smith	Freelance Writer and Storyteller	Independent
Kate Smith	Development Assistant	Bristol Zoo Gardens
Katie Cole	Volunteer Co-ordinator, Natural Connections	Plymouth University
Laura Buchanan		University of Exeter Students' Guild
Maddie Gower	Assistant Press Officer	National Trust
Mark Jefferys	Freelance Environmental Educator	Independent
Matilda Bark	Dorset Beach Care Officer	Dorset Coast Forum
Matt Postles	Project Manager	Bristol Natural History Consortium
Matthew Low	Advisor - Landscape Delivery Team South	Natural England
Michelle Walker	Head of GIS and Data Management	The Rivers Trust
Naomi Brookes	Senior Advisor - Landscape Delivery Team South	Natural England
Nick Paling	Head of GIS, Evidence and Communications	West Country Rivers Trust
Rachael Bice	CIOS Local Nature Partnership	Cornwall Council
Rebecca Jefferson	Research Fellow	Plymouth University
Rupert Goddard	Plymouth's Buzzing Officer	Buglife
Rupert Lloyd	Climate Change Adaptation Officer	Dorset County Council
Sally King	Jurassic Coast Visitor Manager	Dorset County Council
Siri Frost	Biodiversity Technical Officer	Environment Agency
Steven Henry	Visitor Experience Manager - Devon	RSPB
Thomas Bell	Conservation Campaigns Manager	Marine Conservation Society
Sheffield, 21st November		
Adam Cormack	Senior Communications Manager	The Wildlife Trusts

Alan Wright	Communications Officer	Wildlife Trust of Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Alison Kirkman	PR Officer	Woodland Trust
Anna Hormigo	England Education Manager	John Muir Award
Chris Hickman	PR Officer	Woodland Trust
Darren Moorcroft	Head of Species & Habitat Conservation	RSPB
Doug Hulyer		Independent
Duncan Mackay	Principal Adviser, Reconnecting People and Nature Team	Natural England
Hollie Ferris	Ranger	National Trust
Ivan Nethercoat	Training Manager	RSPB
James McConnell	Communications and Development Manager	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Jill Smith		National Association for AONBs
Jo Burgon	Freelance Outdoor Consultant	Independent
Joanna Richards	Communications Officer	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Julian Woolford	External Affairs Director	Natural England
Kay Haw	Conservation Team	Woodland Trust
Liz O'Brien	Senior Social Scientist	Forest Research
Nigel Doar	Director of Strategy	The Wildlife Trusts
Rachel Coombe	Year in Industry Student	Defra
Ruth Gaskell	Fundraising Officer	Wildlife Trust of Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Simon Maxwell	Social Research Adviser	Defra
Steve Tilling	Director of Communications	Field Studies Council
Tamsin Constable	Freelance Writer	Wildlife Photographer of the Year
Tayo Adebawale		Independent

Mary Jeavans	Policy Officer	Defra
Savita Custead	Chief Executive	Bristol Natural History Consortium
Ben Connor	Project Manager	Bristol Natural History Consortium