

BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

Decision Makers

Who are they?

A range of people and organisations take decisions or offer advice affecting biodiversity. These include:

- Farmers; landowners; crofters
- Policy makers from public bodies eg: the Scottish Government; Forestry Commission Scotland; Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Local Authority staff including teachers, planners, transport managers etc
- Elected representatives like MSPs and Local Authority Councillors

Decision makers all have a key role in looking after and improving Scotland's biodiversity. Some organisations, such as local authorities and other public bodies, have a legal obligation to protect and communicate biodiversity.

Encouraging these people to incorporate biodiversity issues in their future decisions and actions is key.

You'll find a brief overview of decision makers and the part they have to play in promoting biodiversity in the You and Biodiversity section of the Toolkit.

What messages work?

Farmers and others who work at the sharp end of biodiversity should see biodiversity promotion as an opportunity rather than a threat. Healthy biodiversity is good for business; improving the quality of produce and opportunities for profit and business growth. This group of people may see themselves as custodians of the land, and that is something to bear in mind.

Policy makers and elected representatives should all be aware of the increasing importance of biodiversity issues.

Public bodies that have a legal obligation to conserve biodiversity will require messages that remind them of their duty, but that also highlight the benefits to the organisation of doing so. This is important because we want individuals and organisations to understand why biodiversity is important and to change their attitude and behaviour for the right reasons.

Messages to this group could focus on the strong link between a healthy natural heritage and the economic, social and health benefits it brings.

In the case of elected representatives, the importance of biodiversity to constituents and future generations could be communicated.

Messages to consider include:

- We are all part of Scotland's incredible variety of living things – the animals and plants that exist everywhere around us. This is our biodiversity. It is fragile and shrinking but we can all help to protect it.
- Our diverse range of species and habitats contribute to the economic, health and quality of life of people in Scotland.
- The survival of Scotland's natural environment is affected by the actions and decisions of individuals and organisations.
- Everyone has a responsibility to consider the impact their decisions have on our wildlife and plantlife and to take positive steps to ensure the protection and growth of biodiversity in Scotland.

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How do you reach them?

There is a wide range of people and organisations who in some way affect biodiversity. For an extensive list, please refer to the You and Biodiversity section of your Toolkit.

One size does not fit all but here are some suggestions for effective communication:

- Reach your target audience through advisory and support groups they trust, for example, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). Where there are already communication channels use them to your benefit rather than spending time creating new ones.
- Businesses cover a broad spectrum so you need to have a clear objective. What will make them listen? For example, fishing industries – the effect of businesses on marine life. Contact trade and business governing bodies and use their communication channels to reach their members. Complement this communication with features in relevant trade and business publications.
- Work with policy makers and professional staff. Keep up to date with each other's planned communications. Build awareness of your campaign through your own internal communications and channels at other relevant public bodies, local authorities etc.
- Get your local councillor, MSP and regional MSP on board from the beginning. Contact them through their website or constituency office. Send them an email or letter initially, clearly stating your aims and objectives and why their support will help your activity and the local community.