

BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

Communicating biodiversity: 3 steps

Implementing successful communications

This section offers quick, practical guidance on how to communicate biodiversity messages in the most straightforward way possible.

Biodiversity communications should be based on engaging people in a three-step process:

- **1. Enjoy** – engaging with people and encouraging them to make the most of nature and the natural world. This is the starting point for the core audience (carers and non-doers) who know relatively little about biodiversity, but who instinctively understand what nature and the natural world represent. An important element of encouraging people to get actively involved is to engage with them more generally on the subject first.
- **2. Enhance** – taking steps to make their local and national environment better.
- **3. Protect** – appealing to a deeper sense of responsibility and ownership.

The cycle recognises that people are part of the solution and invites responsibility through involvement, rather than giving instructions.

It is important to communicate the concept of biodiversity by appealing to emotions. Helping people to experience nature can be a very effective way of communicating biodiversity in a deep emotional sense.

Places like zoos, natural history museums and environmental NGOs, which provide opportunities for personal experiences, play an important role.

Using individual species to tackle complex biodiversity issues can be an effective 'hook', but you have to be selective, ensuring it is a species people can relate to.

For example, the salmon, eagle and heather are also Scottish emblems that will appeal on an emotional level to people's national pride. When people are 'hooked' you can then begin to communicate about other less familiar species and habitats.

For local campaigns try concentrating on a species that is found in the local area and will be recognised by the community.

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You may like to consider the following general guidance when developing what you want to say:

Make it personal. Communicating biodiversity as an issue that affects people personally is one tactic proven to work. Challenge people to see biodiversity as a tangible concern – something that impinges on their lives, and crucially the lives of their children. The suggestion that parents can set an example for their children is a strong proposition to consider.

Make it 'me'. Lose any perceived associations with green wellies and tree hugging. The aim here is to communicate the message that concern for biodiversity issues is everyone's business – not something that's exclusive to environmental enthusiasts.

Make it local. Biodiversity isn't just a big field miles out of the city. Or a loch on a postcard. It's your local park, your garden, your window box.

Make it easy. Doing your bit doesn't need to be a drag. For example, emphasising that small actions make a big difference could be an effective base for your communications. Challenge the idea that doing something for our natural heritage means joining a club or making some other formal commitment.

Make it immediate. Build on the need to do something now rather than later, which can motivate people into action. For example, helping maintain or preserve a local beauty spot or the habitat of a local endangered species.

More detailed guidance on communicating with individual audiences is found in the Your Audiences section of your Toolkit.