

# GLASSHOUSE PARTNERSHIP

## 'Assuring Biodiversity'

### A brand-building approach

#### PART I CONTEXT

##### A. Background

This discussion paper has been created as a follow-up to the RSPB/RIIA meeting on 'Communicating Biodiversity', held on 16 December 2003 at Chatham House in London. It has been commissioned by the RSPB and sponsored by UNEP-WCMC.

The paper identifies strategies that could be taken to communicate the importance and urgency of conserving biodiversity - by using a 'brand-building' approach.

Its aim is not to prescribe any particular solution, but to explore options, based upon brand insights, rather than formally researched stakeholder auditing.

Research for the paper has not been rigorous and has been conducted entirely in the English language. The views expressed are those of the author alone, and in no way imply the endorsement of the commissioning organization nor the sponsoring organization.

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##### B. Introduction

The trouble with biodiversity... is that it is inert. Go into your local bar, coffee-shop or supermarket, or your kitchen. Stop somebody at random - your husband or wife, say - and ask:

- "What do you think about biodiversity?"
- "What benefit do you get from biodiversity?"
- "What are you doing to conserve biodiversity?"

The chances are you will receive a blank stare.

After trying this out in many pubs, and cafes, and kitchens, a pessimist would argue that biodiversity is too broad, too purposeless, too scientific, too generic, and too static a concept to be helpful in motivating stakeholder conservation activities.

It should be abandoned forthwith.

However, this is not the whole truth. For those who care about biodiversity conservation, there are also genuine grounds for optimism. This paper will challenge the assumption that biodiversity is destined to remain inert and irrelevant to the mass of its stakeholders. It will explore what might be done to make biodiversity a catalyst to conservational action, rather than a barrier to it – by building understanding of Biodiversity as a concept. As a brand.

### C. Objective

The aim of this paper is therefore to suggest how a *brand-building approach* to biodiversity communication might break down the barriers to global concerted action around biodiversity.

### D. A brief discussion on branding

#### What do we mean by a brand-building approach?

In all spheres of life - from religion, through politics and commerce, to everyday social interaction - we attempt to communicate with one another so as to bring about changes in behaviour. We strive to learn, but also to influence others towards particular outcomes that we have in mind.

At an interpersonal level, and at a societal level, we make use of shared meaning to break through apathy, and get our points across. Our meaning is conveyed not just through dictionary definitions, but in the personal associations that our words carry to the listener and those they add from their own personal context. The more emotional richness we can squeeze into a word, the better, as long as that meaning is commonly shared. Branding is the art of squeezing meaning into a word, and then squeezing meaning out of that word into stakeholders' minds. Brands are the sponges of social meaning.

If biodiversity (the 'thing') is to be protected, then Biodiversity the brand (henceforth referred to as Biodiversity, with a capital 'B' - for the sake of clarity) must evolve. If it is to remain meaningful and motivating, then key stakeholders must come to acknowledge their duty as brand custodians, as well as conservationists.

The challenge of this paper is to explore ways to increase the value of 'Biodiversity' to those stakeholders.

To adopt the terminology of David Aaker a leading 'brand academic', these custodians should be striving to grow 'brand equity'. This takes several forms:

- *Brand Awareness* – the extent and richness of public understanding of the brand
  - o By developing articulations and campaigns which make Biodiversity resonant and memorable as a brand.
- *Brand Quality* – the distinct and proven reasons to engage with the brand
  - o By clearly explaining its impact and importance in our lives
- *Brand Associations* – the collection of positive attitudes and feelings towards the brand
  - o By personalizing the meaning of biodiversity to different groups.
- *Brand Loyalty* – its ability to attract and retain the attention of its users
  - o By expanding the meaning of biodiversity and creating mechanisms to get involved – and feel involved
- *Brand Assets* - sources of advantage that no other brand can gain access to
  - o By leveraging, (rather than rejecting) its unique status as the subject of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

### Is Biodiversity really a brand?

While Aaker's model is instantly revealing about the challenges for safeguarding biodiversity, it does hark back to simpler times and simpler brands.

It implicitly assumes that someone (usually a company) can control a brand's image in order to drive brand equity. If this was ever true, which is questionable, then it is certainly not true in the information age, and certainly not true of concept brands, which must adopt a much more systemic approach. Today's brand must be managed through open dialogue, facilitating a community of influencers, rather than merely broadcasting a set of brand messages.

'Coca Cola', 'England', 'Islam', 'Volkswagen', 'CSR', 'New Labour'. These are just concepts in people's heads - just brands. But they all exert a powerful influence on certain behaviours. They are all used by stakeholders to elicit different responses. No single person or organization actually owns any of these brands, nor shapes it in isolation – even if they think they do.

The meaning of each brand is in constant evolution for each individual. It stays relevant, or becomes irrelevant. It evolves, or fails to evolve, based on the ability of stakeholders to reinvent its meaning over time.

Every brand has 'stewards' among its stakeholders, whether official or unofficial. Some stakeholders, of course have more influence over brand meaning than others. Coca Cola's marketing department spends billions of dollars to ensure we have a fairly common global appreciation of what Coca Cola means. Volkswagen likewise invests, but accepts that customer experience is more critical to brand image, than the admittedly clever articulation of its advertising promise or the media reviews of its products.

In the UK, the New Labour party successfully defined itself in apposition to 'Old' Labour, and effectively allowed the hard left to create the meaning of the new brand, by default. Now that the hard left has changed, the brand has become more or less meaningless and is being abandoned by its creators. Islam has been redefined overnight by the activities of Osama bin Laden and the 'western coalition' (itself a brand designed to moderate perspectives of US dominance).

Finally, England's brand image is being aggressively and unwittingly remoulded by the few flag wavers and flag-wearers of whatever political hue. In the minds of the English, England is defined against the attributes of local adversaries: Wales, Scotland, Ireland and France.

Just like these other concepts, Biodiversity too, is a brand.

Just like them, its meaning is being both moulded and interpreted by its stakeholders. It is becoming more or less relevant, more or less inspiring, more or less engaging and inspiring, day by day. Its survival is under constant threat.

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## PART II      BIODIVERSITY ANALYSIS

This section draws on a variety of data from on-line and off-lines sources in order to present an impressionistic picture of the health of Biodiversity today.

The *11 Questions* that follow are the backbone of the 'Contextual Frameworks' approach, developed by the transatlantic strategy consultancy Group Partners\* and pioneered by The Glasshouse Partnership for use in strategic branding and communications planning applications.

In order to uncover the communications challenges for biodiversity, we will consider these 11 questions:

- Q1. What human needs is Biodiversity addressing?
- Q2. Who are the 'end users' of Biodiversity and how can we segment them in terms of usage and attitude?
- Q3. Which issues and trends are impacting the delivery of Biodiversity - both positively and negatively?
- Q4. What are the channels for delivering Biodiversity?
- Q5. What is the Biodiversity 'product'?
- Q6. What value can be added to Biodiversity to differentiate it from competing ideas?
- Q7. What is the big idea/brand story behind Biodiversity?
- Q8. What is the best strategy for investing in Biodiversity?
- Q9. How do you take 'your' communities with you?
- Q10. How can biodiversity be communicated?
- Q11. What are the goals of Biodiversity?

These questions are closely interconnected. They are the value-chain for biodiversity. They form a logical sequence of value-creation, from the needs of the end-user to the final systemic outcome. If Biodiversity is to tell a coherent story to the world, it must be able to provide clear and consistent answers to these questions. What follows are not answers to these questions, but observations and suggestions.

We will discuss them here in reverse order:

### A.    Situation Assessment

#### **Q11. What are the goals of Biodiversity?**

A number of different goals are sought by those who value biodiversity and campaign for its preservation. While biodiversity is merely a description of the world, Biodiversity has an avowed, or certainly an implied aim:

The qualitative aims of Biodiversity can be summarised as follows:

The need for Conservation

The conservation of existing species.  
The conservation of existing habitats.  
The conservation of existing ecosystems.

The need for Resource Management

The effective management of existing ecosystems.  
The replenishment and resuscitation of damaged ecosystems.

The need for Sustainability

The sustainable exploitation of existing resources.

**Q10. How can Biodiversity be communicated?**

At present, Biodiversity is sporadically and spasmodically communicated by a variety of stakeholders with very different agendas. What follows is a quick impressionistic tour of existing efforts. Several trends are apparent:

Light-touch co-ordination

Despite the fact that biodiversity is a global issue, demanding international collaboration, global collaboration efforts have been few and poorly funded. There is no publicly visible global effort to create a consistent understanding of Biodiversity. There are many legitimate explanations for this in the light of the UN's governance and political mandate, but exploring them is not within the purview of this paper.

The efforts of the Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) programme, designed to execute public communication around the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have been devolved to national policy owners and the programme's own efforts now appear to focus on gathering and disseminating best practice, and also on efficiently connecting work undertaken to the objectives of the CBD.

This leaves execution of public (and special interest group) understanding devolved to concerned organisations at a national level, or to a select group of trans-national charities and NGOs, who inevitably have other pressures on fund-raising and conservation and may not see communicating the value of biodiversity as a priority for their own survival.

Among a variety of national communications efforts, most effort seems to be placed behind communicating the content of individual micro-projects, rather than on communicating the context, purpose and human payback for such efforts. Once again, given the agents' shortage of funds, and justified focus on visible results, this is understandable.

### Education not Edification

Given what has been said above, it is not surprising that most biodiversity communication is educational (i.e. geared towards imparting knowledge), rather than edifying (seeking to build insight). There is also very little persuasive or motivational intent, despite the clear agenda of the CBD to halt the decline of biodiversity erosion. There is rarely any call to action, and often no personal commitment or final outcome is envisaged – or even sought - from the reader, participant, viewer or member in response to these communications.

### A wide variety of definitions

A review of the internet reveals a variety of interpretations and explanations of biodiversity:

*Descriptive*: e.g. 'The variety of life' [UK Biodiversity Partnership] 'The fabric of life' [[www.peopleandplanet.net](http://www.peopleandplanet.net)]

*Emotive*: e.g. 'Things that live' [World Resources Institute] or "The spectacular array of life on earth" [US Consultative Group on Biodiversity] 'Our life support system' [America Museum of Natural History]

*Motivational*: e.g. 'Not simply the variety of life-forms, but the urgent need to ensure their survival' [UK Department of the Environment]

*Technical*: e.g. ' ...the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and between ecosystems.' [CBD]

None of these is contradictory to one another, but they indicate the intrinsic tension between biodiversity and Biodiversity – the fact and the brand. It is clear, and heartening, that the brand is already starting to take on a more purposeful meaning in the minds of many key communicators.

### Different focuses

Most existing biodiversity communications seems to fall into one of three categories:

*Species-specific campaigns* – e.g. ‘Save the albatross’, ‘Save the whale’, ‘Save the...’

*Consciousness raising*: e.g. Recent communication around ‘The 6<sup>th</sup> Great Extinction’

*Grass roots education*: e.g. supporting children and others in audit projects in relation to the biodiversity profile of their local environment

All three approaches have clear value, but without a more integrated understanding of biodiversity, stakeholders remain uncommitted. Building real equity in the Biodiversity brand requires much better integration of messaging. One story: simply told.

### The Biodiversity media ghetto

As a consequence of the apparently scientific subject matter, and the media’s reluctance to engage with the topic, most biodiversity content is disseminated to the already evangelical – the environmental choir.

The result is that even high-level Biodiversity messages rarely make it beyond the scientific community, and when they do make it into the public domain (e.g in elaborating the link between environment and climate change), they are often framed by media in terms of obscure academic squabbles, rather than considered debate. This further reduces public trust in the value of biodiversity.

The media’s appetite for confrontation and bad news continue to make it difficult to reach out with positive messages in editorial media, creating a need for much more direct (unmediated) engagement with stakeholders. Natural History Museums and Botanical Gardens, and a growing array of sustainable community experiments (e.g. biospheres) already perform this direct educational function admirably, and these efforts should be integrated into other mass communication efforts.

### (Semi)-Effective Mass Media

Notwithstanding the above, mass media have proven effective at sensitising us to the plights of individual species: seals, pandas, elephants, tigers and whales.

Respect for nature, which is a pre-requisite for biodiversity conservation, has been entrenched among rural communities and even among metropolitan communities with little exposure to natural world.

In the UK, the illustrious and populist legacy of Johnny Morris, David Attenborough, Bill Oddie, David Bellamy, John Craven and their successors has produced a country which observes nature with fascination, fondness and considerable knowledge, but arguably little understanding or real engagement. This nation of nature-watching dog-lovers is not necessarily Biodiversity-aware or Biodiversity-engaged. This is the paradox of mass media. Entertainment is not education. Education is not action.

And yet...on the other hand, the immense power of mass media to touch people was notably demonstrated in the hit film 'Finding Nemo', Pixar's success story of 2003, and drenched with biodiversity messages. Historically, films like 'Born Free' and 'Gorillas in the Mist' have had an immense impact upon public imagination.

Nonetheless, this sensitisation is potentially a hollow victory for the Biodiversity cause if viewers are not provoked into action. Just as watching 12 cop shows a week doesn't necessarily make you an amateur detective (and may indeed make you more criminal), so many nature watchers are still net destroyers of biodiversity. This is neither hypocrisy nor ignorance. More realistically, it is just a failure on the part of communicators to offer and support a clear decision-process: "Watched the film; liked the story. Now who do I talk to? How do I actually do something? And what should I do to create most impact at least 'cost' to me?"

In branding and communications terms, the down-side to these endearing portrayals of biodiversity at work, is that there is no clear association with the Biodiversity brand, and hence no recruitment of loyalty for those trying to enact change.

Biodiversity communicators should be grasping the collar of these mass media efforts and trying to steer them (gently) towards more educational outcomes. They present an opportunity to turn into browsers into participants; participants into loyalists and loyalists into biodiversity advocates.

The further danger of mass media portrayals is that messages become so dilute and perversely comforting, that they are completely misconstrued – witness the upsurge in the purchase of tropical fish since the 'Finding Nemo's release.

Consider what biodiversity value would have added by linking the film to a campaign for protection of fish species and for a proof of origin stamp to be displayed by tropical fish retailers...

## **Q9. How will you take the community with you?**

Any organisation must deliver its brand promise consistently to its end customers. This inevitably means encouraging the workforce to understand and believe in the brand and then empowering them to deliver consistently against its promise.

The same is true of Biodiversity. Its vision, mission and values must be embodied by all those who represent the brand in the world.

This may feel more complicated for a brand like biodiversity that nobody, by definition owns. There is, of course, no Biodiversity Inc. to safeguard its survival. But the apparent complexity of this unstructured brand is actually an illusion. In reality, the fact that everybody owns biodiversity, should, and could be an asset. Those NGOs, government departments and business who consider themselves as biodiversity advocates (and hence brand stewards) are part of the Biodiversity value-chain.

Biodiversity actually has an advantage over a corporate brand. Its value-chain is already empowered and most are already, almost by definition, brand believers, even if they cannot articulate what that belief means.

In this decentric environment, any stakeholder can take the lead, and begin the a cost-effective public dialogue which reframes and advances brand insight.

In the meantime, there remains a leadership vacuum among biodiversity advocates, which official communication efforts have failed to fill.

Indicative of the difficulties of a purely collaborative approach is the stagnation of the Biodiversity education and public awareness (BEPA) website ([www.drostan.org](http://www.drostan.org)). This official communications portal designed to support the outreach and alignment of communications around the Convention of Biological Diversity. It held out a promise of a communications collaboration portal for the biodiversity community.

Several years on, it has just 140 individuals members globally, a tiny proportion of whom – perhaps one of two - come from outside the biodiversity cognoscenti.

This alignment question thus remains unresolved. How can this coalition of the concerned begin to sing in harmony without further investment in onerous and energy-sapping bureaucracy?

## **Q8. What is your strategy for investing in Biodiversity?**

At present two broad global strategies are competing for dominance:

- the *market-led* approach – favouring trading mechanisms which allow environmental costs and benefits to be translated into cash terms and thus incorporated into core business processes which bypass the need for state control. The market led approach has led to the creation of carbon-trading mechanisms, and vociferous debates over the use of ‘carbon sinks’ as a mechanism to meet national targets.
- the *target-led* approach – involving the setting of global targets, then relying upon co-operative mechanisms between national governments to develop policies, mechanisms and controls to reach them. This approach has led to notable victories, such as the creation of the IUCN redlist of endangered species and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Reinforcing both strategies are literally thousands of individual initiatives exerting pressure on governments and corporates to comply to environmental and social norms. This pressure may take the form of juicy carrots or nail-encrusted sticks – but the goal is the same: encouraging companies towards voluntary reform of their environmental practices, in the face of social pressure over their medium-term competitiveness.

Both these high-level approaches almost immediately reach the same barriers – short-termism and self-interest. Businesses are beholden to shareholders whose interest is only in short-term profit. Governments meanwhile are beholden to the electorate, whose voting interests lie within the four walls of their own personal castle, focused on: health, education, liberty and the money to pursue them. The long-term concerns of biodiversity almost always lose out.

Conserving biodiversity thus remains very low on both government’s and business’s agenda. Their real concerns are animated stakeholders who can vote with their wallets, or their biros on election day.

At first sight it seems difficult to square this vast and fragile circle. The only way through this impasse is to build Biodiversity thinking into everyday thinking – for government, business and society. Biodiversity must become a pervasive part of ‘how we think’, as a species.

A communications response to this challenge is to make Biodiversity a brand which is ethically, practically and politically valued – by individuals. Arguably too much effort has been dissipated in ‘push’ approaches to fixing biodiversity, and

too little on creating mechanisms which allow effective Biodiversity ‘pull’ from end-users.

The real goal of biodiversity education, communication or branding is to shape a common appreciation of Biodiversity which :

- is broad enough to encompass all facets of biodiversity
- communicates the systemic nature of the brand
- successfully connects the agendas of market advocates and target advocates alike
- is clear and simple enough for people to ‘get it’ instantly

But is this achievable? And what might this look actually like?

In order to bridge the agendas of these communities, a branding approach is required which is centred on neither government nor corporations, but on the community that they both rely upon – the general public. No brand should ever focus on stakeholder communication to the detriment of end users.

## **Q7. What is the big idea/story behind Biodiversity?**

At the heart of every brand is an idea. And by and large, the best brands have the best and biggest ideas. None of these ideas is new, otherwise they couldn’t resonate with us, but they are succinctly, creatively and consistently expressed by the world’s most successful brands.

As Robert Jones says in his turn of the Millennium book: ‘The Big Idea’\*:

“Big Ideas have this emotional component. They do more than attract attention; they encourage desire. People really *want* Sony televisions, they’re *determined* to stay at the Mandarin Oriental, they *can’t wait* to go to Disneyland, *they love* their iMac”.

Jones reduces many key brands to a single idea. Orange is about optimism. Nike is about winning. Starbucks is the cult of coffee. Dell is about directness. Coke is the real thing. Virgin is about iconoclasm. Tesco’s big idea is that they actually like their customers as human beings.

So what is the big idea underpinning biodiversity?

Given the diffuse nature of the brand, there are clearly several candidates, and time will tell which, if any, emerges as the central force at the heart of brand biodiversity?

One way of approaching this question is to look at people's concerns and see how biodiversity meets those.

In terms of the environment (which is only one of biodiversity's emotional touch-points), the 2002 European research study 'The attitudes of Europeans towards Environment' by The European Opinion Research Group is an interesting indicator.

The report identified the following top concerns among Europeans, significantly ahead of all others:

1. Air pollution	44%	'Very Worried'
2. Natural disasters	43%	"
3. Pollution of sea/coast	42%	"
4. Pollution of rivers/lakes	42%	"
5. Elimination of rain forests	41%	"
6. Extinction of species	37%	"
7. Industrial Waste	37%	"

While concerns over rain forests and industrial waste had been broadly static since 1999, fear of natural disaster rose more than 21 percentage points.

Pollution of rivers and lakes rose 15 points and species extinction, air and sea pollution between nine and 10 points each.

One could (easily) argue that a tacit concern for biodiversity underpins items 2-6 in the list, and that items 1 and 7 would also, be addressed by co-ordinated biodiversity action plans. What is also clear is that all 7 concerns exist as a mini-system. Waste drives Pollution. Pollution drives Extinction. Extinction accelerates Elimination. Elimination feeds Waste...and so on.

Finally, what stands out is that a concern for human health binds items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 together. And of course it is biodiversity erosion (partially captured in item no.6) which actually drives them all – albeit the European research did not use the term 'biodiversity' in any of its research.

This health insight is also reinforced in an American context. 'The Biodiversity Project' in the US, has done magnificent work in developing messaging, tools and advice for the North American biodiversity community. There is no European or UK equivalent.

The organisation describes itself as a 'nexus and catalyst for collaboration on biodiversity outreach strategies'; Its aim is 'to develop and disseminate proven and promising strategies and practices for communication and public education; and to strengthen the outreach capability'.

In its Handbook\*, the organisation identifies four overarching suggestions for US biodiversity communications:

1. *Describe the human health consequences of biodiversity loss*
2. *Emphasise the importance of habitats as nature's tools for cleaning our air*
3. *Appeal to a sense of responsibility to save the earth for future generations*
4. *Engage with the need to protect a healthy environment for our families.*

Interestingly three out of four of these messages reflect a focus on human health – a somewhat surprising and revealing finding to many ‘biodiversificationists’, whose focus tends to be on ‘charismatic megafauna’ – tigers, rhinos, pandas and whales.

This insight reinforces one common articulation of the meaning of biodiversity: *‘Our shared life support machine’*

This explanation might indeed be a very valid, resonant and campaignable expression of the brand story. However, this is not the big idea of biodiversity though. A big brand idea is implicit, not explicit. A big idea is the emotional feeling which drives brand momentum.

It is not the role of this paper to prescribe an answer to the ‘big idea’ question, but instead to identify options and themes which might lead to agreement around such an idea. By way of suggestion, to build on this health insight, we suggest three creative themes or springboards to provoke further thought from biodiversity stakeholders:

Theme #1    *‘The Natural Health Service’*

Theme #2    *“A Game of Consequences”*

Theme #3    *“Capacity for Change”*

#### **Q6.   What value can be added to Biodiversity to differentiate it from competing ideas?**

This question seems, at first sight, an offensive one for biodiversity evangelists, and smacks of duplicity or attempts at ‘spin’.

However, the question merely seeks to know how the delivery of Biodiversity might be better connected to the agendas of its stakeholders.

How can the ‘product’ biodiversity be made to deliver most value to its stakeholders. What process blockages stop us from ‘feeling’ the value of biodiversity, and how can they be overcome?

The reality is that biodiversity is a ‘product’. And however important it may be, it is still competing for attention within a marketplace of other idea-products. No campaigner or concerned individual should underestimate the cluttered emotional landscape within which biodiversity competes.

- Racism, debt, climate change, terrorism, authenticity, famine, genocide...

These concerns, and many others, compete for our time, attention, money and emotional commitment.

- So how can Biodiversity realistically expect to gain mind-share over and above these issues?
  - What makes it more deserving than sustainability, fair trade, GM foods, cloning, wars or even cancer and AIDS?
  - How does Biodiversity elevate its agenda from a ‘nice to have’ to become both urgent and critical to global publics?
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### Understanding Value-Add

In the commercial world the creation of real ‘value-add’ lies in connecting the brand ever more to the needs of its customers to differentiate ‘experience’.

- Virgin Airlines streamlines the entire travel experience including at the airport
  - BMW offers a lifetime ‘TLC’ service package with its Mini
  - Orange provides phone trainers in store to explain new technologies
  - Amazon creates a touch-free, ‘fast + simple’ experience\*
  - Tesco introduced cards which reward customers for their loyalty
  - Microsoft updates and debugs its software over the internet, free of charge
  - The BBC offers a host of learning and sharing opportunities for license payers
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The lesson for Biodiversity is to stop focusing exclusively on communicating ‘features’ (numbers of species, acres of woodland, tonnes of oxygen, lists of taxonomies) and to place greater focus on benefits. Enlightened stakeholders must help make its benefits more ‘vivid’, and ensure they are correctly attributed.

[NB. There would be no point in Orange having refunded the author £50 as a compensation for abandoning his favourite mobile phone service and then forgetting to tell him! And yet this is precisely the case for biodiversity services at present. They are not just free at the point of need, but invisible at the point of consumption.]

The fact is, we take biodiversity for granted. We treat it not as a responsibility, nor even a right, but as something that just 'is'.

Creating value-add for Biodiversity therefore means making its products visible to users. Future Biodiversity strategies should focus on making explicit links between biodiversity, and the value it delivers.

Step one is to make these products visible to users.

## **Q5. What is the Biodiversity 'product'?**

'biodiversity, in its more scientific descriptions, encompasses:

- organism diversity,
- ecosystem diversity,

and, perhaps most crucially, and invisibly:

- genetic diversity.

It thus encompasses all forms of biological 'difference' on our planet. These differences create change. 'biodiversity in its broadest explanation, is the difference that creates potential. And this potential produces many outcomes.

Among the cognoscenti, Biodiversity is described as providing three sorts of service. Translated into commercial terms, these are:

*Products* – our food, water, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, clothing. Without the raw material of nature, nothing can be created.

*Services* – the eco-services, such as climate and weather regulation provided by forests, wetlands, oceans, coral reefs. Water cleansing, provided by water plants and molluscs. Soil nourishment and aeration, provided by insects, beetles and worms. Pollination, provided by bees and butterflies.

and finally...

*Knowledge* – the understanding that we gain into the processes of evolutionary change, the strengths and limitations of ecosystems types, understanding our human origins and likely future.

However, these benefits are purely rational and utilitarian benefits. They are, within reason, obvious. Biodiversity (small b) could deliver these and we would be none the wiser; nor would we care. These benefits could also be delivered by a preserving only a portion of the world's current biodiversity. They are quantitative benefits. Many species, habitats and ecosystems could be lost without undermining these benefits. And 'So what?', many would argue...

So what indeed. When we leave biodiversity to one side and re-consider Biodiversity, as a brand, in its totality, we realise that it also actually offers potential benefits at a much higher, irrational level, which are crucial to its perceived value and offer much greater and more lasting human benefits. The ecosystem is inextricably bound to our ethosystem.

Progressing further up the hierarchy of value, we can identify intangible, but still very real benefits from Biodiversity:

*Emotion* – For many, Biodiversity gives us a spiritual (religious or quasi-religious) sense of harmony with our surroundings. While gazing up at the stars engulfs us with a sense of insignificance and awkwardness, so engaging with the richness of nature offers us peace and sense of instinctual serenity.

*Ethics* – At an ethical level, Biodiversity offers visible evidence of the interconnectedness of life, and of mutuality in action, if only we look hard enough, and long enough. The variedness and systemic complexity of nature should reinforce our acceptance of fragility and of change; it should, justifiably reinforce our sense of impermanence, which in turn motivates both our most open instincts and our most protective ones towards one another. (Which may, of course be helpful to our survival, or not)

*Engagement* – Finally, Biodiversity can engage us by invoking fond, but half-forgotten memories of childhood, or rekindling atavistic impulses to be closer to nature. Without drifting too far into the poetic, biodiversity's very richness can be a subliminal reminder of our own earlier potential and our perception of opportunity. The squandering, or channelling, of that potential, again creates a parallel with our human abuse of biodiversity.

Biodiversity is ubiquitous, but also very granular. We can, if we concentrate hard enough, point to it and its outcomes. "There! Right there!", we can say - is biodiversity in action.

The challenge for biodiversity communicators, is to balance the importance of specific education around products and services, with the wider need to communicate the brand values.

#### **Q4. What are your channels for delivering Biodiversity?**

We are all stakeholders in Biodiversity, but that doesn't mean we all have equal influence over the brand.

There is a clearly identifiable set of active stake-takers – they assert a right (with different levels of legitimacy) to manage the brand image. Many of these organisations already make use of biodiversity as a concept in their work.  
For example:

- Those who see biodiversity education as a critical background or context to their specific work – e.g. RSPB, Bird Life, WWF...
- Those who seek to educate and inform publics around specific Biodiversity issues – e.g. Greenpeace in relation to carbon sinks, GRASP in relation to ape survival...
- Those who seek to conserve biodiversity as a whole – e.g. UNEP...
- Those who seek to conserve biodiversity at a local level – e.g. national, regional and local biodiversity partnerships.
- Those who seek to educate publics on Biodiversity – e.g. Museums, Gardens, Parks...
- Those who monitor and describe biodiversity – e.g. UNEP-WCMC, Universities, Environmental Institutes...
- Those who create frameworks or regulations around the human/nature interface – e.g. Environment agencies, Health and safety agencies, and most especially local government...
- Those who perform biodiversity-related services – e.g. Zoos, Waste management companies, refuse collectors, ditch-clearers, hedge-trimmers ...
- Those who manage biodiversity infrastructure– e.g. National Trust, Forestry Commission, Highways agencies, Rivers Authorities...

Equally important, however, are those organisations who do not make use of the biodiversity brand, or even think about their connection to it, but who do make a contribution to the social attitudes that frame our behaviour. In the UK alone, these include:

- Not only the RSPCA, and enduring campaigns like Keep Britain Tidy etc, but also humanistic charities: the NSPCC, Shelter, Oxfam, The Red Cross, Amnesty, Business in the Community...

Just as importantly, and a focus on much communications effort, are those who have a negative impact on biodiversity: extractive industries, cement manufacturers, oil and gas companies, furniture manufacturers, pulp and paper manufacturers, power companies, and biotechnology firms who are often biodiversity aware, but not truly engaged.

Far less aware, are those whose impact has not yet been made visible, even to the biodiversity community. Those who have so far avoided active critique include manufacturers, retailers, the construction industry, and pharmaceutical manufacturers whose total biodiversity 'footprint' through their extended value-chain is nonetheless colossal.

Finally, and most influential of all, are the media; not just individual journalists, and commentators but the organisations which employ them. These are the organisations whose impact on our ecosystem and ecosystem is unparalleled and growing; but whose view of Biodiversity is presently very narrowly cast and judgemental, and whose response to the corporate responsibility agenda is derisory. There is a legitimate case for suggesting that Rupert Murdoch is actually the most powerful man on the planet.

It may seem a daunting prospect (and it is), but a pervasive, brand-building strategy requires all these groups, and probably many more, to be engaged.

### **Q3. What issues and trends are impacting the delivery of Biodiversity - both positively and negatively?**

For all Biodiversity stakeholders, the political, environmental, economic, social and technological conditions in which they operate condition their ability to generate the will and the wherewithal to enact change.

But which issues will specifically affect the success of Biodiversity?

Certainly, some of the most prominent and gossiped about are:

- The dumbing down of western media
- Lack of power held by global institutions
- United States continued rejection of environmental protocols
- Lack of scientific consensus
- Well-funded lobbyists from anti-biodiversity contingents
- A (growing, and global) culture of individualistic consumerism
- The lack of a single-minded biodiversity advocacy group
- Anti-environmental bias within influential media
- Reliance upon NGO leadership for education
- Lack of a single data repository
- Lack of genuine supply-chain traceability
- Inability to commercially value shared human assets
- Inequity of global wealth distribution
- Lack of mechanisms to ensure adequate auditing and treaty compliance

This list is just the start. Clearly there are many more factors at work, many of which create opportunities for biodiversity.

In particular, the growing affluence of the global elite is creating a vacuum of spiritualism, which is being filled by a plethora of pseudo-spiritual responses (astrology, crystallography, yoga) as well as religious awareness. This emptiness and the things that fill it, has been described by Rolf Jensen as 'The Dream Society'. This is a dangerous state of affairs.

A positive part of our response to the Dream Society is an appetite for conscience-salving behaviours from consumer-citizens. Demand for products which exhibit demonstrable responsibility and accountability is growing – witness a proliferation of responsible brands - fair trade, free-range, organic – as well as increases in labelling richness and scrutiny of both supply and demand-chains.

Another element is our drive towards scrutiny of corporate governance and corporate social responsibility is overturning traditional hierarchic social models and beginning to reinvent our sense of personal and collective responsibility.

This upturning continues elsewhere. A side-effect of 9-11, the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and the resultant climate of global tension is a greater sense of interconnectedness and fragility, which might be expected make us more comprehending of the complexities of biodiversity – IF our response is systemic, rather than particular.

Finally the regulatory trend to distribute liability across the supply-chain and place legal responsibility on primary producers, as well as end commissioners, is creating an emotional, and informational transparency within value-chains.

These trends towards transparency and local, more authentic sourcing competes directly with our affluent consumerism and desire for greater and greater choice and availability of product. It also undermines the mechanics which drive the redistribution of wealth and globalisation itself. Such trends are unlikely to take hold on a statistically significant level, but they do indicate a latent frustration with our western, mass-plastic culture.

The fundamental tension at work here at work is mankind's instinctual urge towards short-term gratification, at the expense of long-term sustainability. Our core survival instincts which drive us towards individualistic self-interest do not appear to have caught up with the more complex decision-making framework in which we now find ourselves.

Given that we are unable to alter the genetic make-up of mankind, a number of high-level structural approaches will have to suffice. Restricting suggestions purely to the level of communications, a number of routes look promising:

- To continue to personalise our individual sense of responsibility for Biodiversity
- To more accurately represent the immediacy of specific threats
- To begin to educate stakeholders in systems thinking – as an intellectual building block for Biodiversity insight
- To establish publicly accessible fora in which the benefits of biodiversity can be debated and validated
- To supersede the vagueness of the 'precautionary principle' with precise proposals

In summary, tackling these deep-seated issues requires us:

- To pursue both target-led and market-led communications approaches to Biodiversity preservation where these are not contradictory - and to engage in public dialogue where conflict is unavoidable!

## **Q2. Who are the 'end users' of Biodiversity and how can we segment them in marketing terms?**

All human beings are beneficiaries of biodiversity, but some are more affected than others; some of us are more aware than others, and some are more inclined to act to mitigate its erosion, either from a sense of fear, or through an opportunity. No robust global segmentation has been attempted to understand how these biodiversity 'customers' should best be understood.

No comprehensive segmentation of human stakeholder needs has been undertaken or even attempted. Certainly the needs of 'indigenous communities' are only sporadically considered.

One study of the US general public by Belden, Russonello & Stewart for 'the Biodiversity Project' unearthed 8 distinct segments, with roughly 1 in 4 people being supporters and 4 in 10 being unlikely to support biodiversity.

The remainder (just over 3 in 10) are claimed to be 'persuadable'.

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The core supporters were:

*National Bio-connectors* (8%) – valued nature's right to exist and understand the role of even unpopular species in the ecosystem. They were hikers, gardeners and already active environmentalists. Were attuned to nature in the sense of feeling that nature increased their own productivity.

*Patriotic Local Bio-connectors* (15%) – were politically moderate and local in their aspirations, involved in schools through their children, and were visitors of zoos and gardens. The patriotic value – protecting America's natural resources, was strong with them.

Persuadable groups were identified as:

*Young Cross Country Skiers* (5%) – this was a small, but active outdoor sports-focused group. They were Republican and unconcerned by issues but did tend to vote.

*Alone Agains* (15%) - typically older and female, this group were religious and pragmatic. They valued god's creation and the beauty of nature. They believed it was OK to eliminate some species and place jobs ahead of environmental concerns.

*Disconnected Singles* (14%) – this group were young and relatively less affluent and more come from ethnic minorities. They did not participate in politics. They were unlikely to read a daily newspaper but did go out to beaches and lakes.

Least likely supporters

*Disconnected Religious Conservatives* (14%) – this group tended to be female and less well educated and was not engaged in public affairs in the sense of voting. It comprised 44% born-again Christians, and almost half attended church services. They tended to be concerned about issues of personal health and job protection.

*Disconnected outdoorsmen* (14%) – this group hunts (95%) and does not get involved in politics or the church. Even so they do express a belief in nature's connection to God. Their major concern is the preservation of places to hunt, fish and swim outdoors.

*Engaged property owners* (16%) – these are primarily republican and are strong gardeners (76%). They are church goers (51%) and engaged in public affairs, but place less priority of environmental issues than all other clusters. Maintaining biodiversity is not an important concern for them.

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It remains to be seen how well this US segmentation maps onto other more collectivist markets. However, what is very challenging in this analysis is the flipping of some more simplistic assumptions that might be shared by environmentalists:

- That an outdoor lifestyle or leisure-style predisposes people towards biodiversity.
- That increasing age sensitises people to biodiversity – or indeed that young people automatically care more.
- That social conservatism might lead on to conservationism
- That engagement in public affairs predisposes people to be favourable to Biodiversity

Clearly, these cod-marketing simplicities do not hold water after even a cursory examination. More complex issues are at work here, and a challenge exists to find a better, more predictive segmentation, or even better, a marketing learning forum which could serve the needs of all global stakeholders in their communications planning.

Problems - at least for large membership nature-charities - (like the RSPB) these organisations may actually be carrying (for which read: 'being carried by') a substantial membership-base which is fundamentally disengaged by biodiversity, as they currently envisage it.

This could create a poignant schism between the charities' funding requirement and their desired campaigning priorities to fulfil their conservation mission. If true this would necessitate an urgent communications programme to reinforce the connection between the charity's membership and the biodiversity brand. Many charities face a similar threat as their activities become more transparent, and as they seek to engage more widely and deeply with their memberships.

Alternatively, and more radically, this structural conflict might be addressed through the creation of a separate charitable organisation wholly and uniquely focused on conserving biodiversity and to campaigning for Biodiversity – one which would not face this direct tension between its activities and the sensibilities of its membership.

Just as Bird Life International safeguards the interests (and draw funding from) around 100 bird charities globally, a global biodiversity charity might draw its funding (and a mandate) from all organisations whose self-interest relies upon a public consciousness of Biodiversity and the interconnectedness of environmental decision-making.

## **Q1. What human needs is Biodiversity addressing?**

Any process-, business-, brand-, or issues-marketing campaign starts from the same start-point. What fundamental human need is being addressed. What desire is being fulfilled. If the brand didn't exist...what would the world miss?

Brands only thrive for as long as the need persists. Biodiversity faces a very real threat of extinction unless it is seen to be intimately connected to human needs.

So how, finally, might we express our need for biodiversity?

“I want to breathe clean air”?

“I want my children to be safe”?

“I want to understand myself”?

“I want to explore”?

“I want to understand the world”?

“I want to feel confident”?

“I want to be free of guilt”?

“I want to make a contribution”?

“I want to feed my family”?

“I want to eradicate disease”?

“I want beauty” .....

All of the above, and many more, of our human needs are served by Biodiversity.

But beyond all this lies a greater need.

Perhaps the real promise of Biodiversity is that it feeds our most deep-seated need for optimism.

By contributing to Biodiversity, we feed our urge to feel important and influential. In our connectedness to nature we acquire personal meaning.

Our very humanity is defined by our difference from other life-forms. In DNA terms, we are, after all, around 99% the same as the great apes. If we save biodiversity, we preserve this difference, and create the possibility of a future and the continuance of meaning.

Perhaps the big idea at the heart of biodiversity is simply 'hope'.

Even for those of us with no religious or spiritual leanings, Biodiversity offers the possibility of continuation of life, beyond our own body, and beyond even our own genetic limitations.

At the end of the day, perhaps Biodiversity just offers us the chance to participate in the future.

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## PART III CONCLUSIONS

### Where next?

The world's biodiversity is in crisis.

Likewise, Biodiversity faces a crisis. Not just of conceptual credibility, but also of relevance.

However, given the already considerable penetration of Biodiversity among the NGO community, and given its status as the rallying-point for the world's most pervasive natural treaty, and given that it is the focus of colossal scientific auditing and educational effort, it is already a very considerable, but squandered communications asset.

The truth is, we need both biodiversity and Biodiversity to survive. No other encapsulation of our global challenge describes our symbiotic relationship with Mother Earth as well, or as richly as Biodiversity. None of the alternative concepts (nature, environment, sustainability...) captures the essential energy that exists within biodiversity – the ferment of nature – its potential to create change and progress, independently of humankind.

Biodiversity is not just the store-cupboard of mankind, but also its recipe book, its kitchen and its chef....and also its customers.

If the set of brand associations that are entailed by Biodiversity are to take hold, then piecemeal actions and campaigns around habitats, individual species and sustainable energies are a necessary, but not a sufficient, response. A systemic understanding is necessary - a true sense of our connectedness. And the best anchor for that feeling at this critical point in history is the brand Biodiversity itself.

If biodiversity is to be preserved, then Biodiversity the brand must take root. To save ourselves, we must first save the idea of salvation.

### Overcoming preconceptions

In order to safeguard Biodiversity, we must set aside some assumptions which have become prevalent and dogmatically accepted in the media, and even amidst the environmental movement:

- That good science and persuasive communication are mutually contradictory
- That the utilitarian case and aesthetic case for biodiversity are mutually exclusive.
- That protecting signature species is a sufficient response to assure biodiversity.
- That biodiversity is somehow ‘hard’ or ‘complex’ to understand.
- That ‘the people’ are incapable of grasping Biodiversity and therefore need to be patronised with pictures of pandas.
- That it matters more to be scientifically right, than environmentally effective.

### **What's the strategy?**

Based on the thought experiment of the foregoing 11 questions, the situation appears to require a 2-fold strategy. Neither approach will work in isolation, but both together stand a chance of bringing Biodiversity into the decision-making processes of all stakeholders.

#### Path 1: ‘Biodiversity and Me’

To make the practical benefits of biodiversity visible to individuals in their daily lives:

- By showcasing the connections of biodiversity to other key concepts, which are achieving some level of stakeholder buy-in.
- By creating clear and visible links between our individual behaviours and the biodiversity ‘thumbprint’ of those behaviours

#### Path 2: ‘Biodiversity and Mankind’

To actively communicating the emotional and spiritual benefits of biodiversity:

- By adopting a more confident purposeful approach to the use of the brand
  - By recruiting the endorsement of key individuals and communities
-

## PART IV      FROM STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION

The two campaign strategies above are merely the avenues, or motorways to be further explored. They imply a need for a variety of campaigns and tactics that could be implemented – either unilaterally, by a determined NGO, or through a more consensual approach. It doesn't matter so much who leads on this, as that somebody does. This report concludes with some two creative suggestions that would bring this twin –track strategy to life:

### **'Biodiversity and Me'**

Any number of approaches could make biodiversity more connected to people's lives – from innovative labelling solutions to art installations and active encouragement of biodiversity entrepreneurship, or even the creation of a new swathe of information-rich consumer products.

These executions are all subsumed by the campaign theme: 'Biodiversity Inside'. Any creative campaigns which bring biodiversity knowledge into the hands and wallets of consumers is, de facto, a good thing.

All or none of these approaches may be appropriate, depending upon the mandate and desire of the individuals or group that undertakes them. What matters, in this author's mind...is that NGOs make a decision to address the issue of personal connectedness and do so without fleeing from Biodiversity as a brand.

### **'Biodiversity and Mankind'**

The challenge is to create campaigns which are large-scale enough, and generic-enough to act as magnets to all stakeholders, but which nonetheless carry emotional power and break through the conversational clutter.

Solutions here might encompass the creation of new charities, communications portals, service-offerings.

Alternatively, a well thought-through strategy might be to subvert the entire movement, and help the world to visualise itself without biodiversity.

This may be interpreted literally, through the creation of "World BioUniformity Day" - to highlight the horrors of a world without biodiversity. Or it may be interpreted figuratively, through the creation of other campaigns which highlight the conflict between biodiversity and mankind - the struggle between Biodiversity...and the Beast. ENDS.

To discuss this document or its implications, please contact Tim Kitchin:  
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### Methodology

The Contextual Mapping approach adopted here was pioneered by Group Partners, a strategic partner of Glasshouse Partnership. [www.grouppartners.net](http://www.grouppartners.net)

## PART VI: Final Summary: Biodiversity Context

### Framing Biodiversity Communications

#### Q1. What human need is Biodiversity addressing?

A variety of personal needs are addressed by diversity:

- The desire to learn
- Self-preservation
- Family protection
- Aesthetic enjoyment
- Personal health
- Positive self-image
- Physical nourishment and protection

*In branding terms, what is noteworthy is how few of these human needs are directly addressed or implied in most biodiversity communications....*

#### Q2. Who are the 'end users' of Biodiversity? Viewing them as markets for biodiversity, how can we best 'segment' them in terms of usage and attitude?

A variety of identification approaches have been tried by biodiversity communicators, but have generally focused within single nations. Whatever segmentation approach is chosen by biodiversity communicators will inevitably vary according to the outcome they have in mind, and the data that is available. Any segmentation must be fit for its chosen purpose. We might categorise as follows:

- By attitude to biodiversity – for purposes of engagement
- By motivation – for membership recruitment purposes
- By exposure to biodiversity – for educational purposes
- By knowledge of biodiversity – for promotional purposes
- By impact on biodiversity – for campaigning purposes
- By dependence upon biodiversity - for conservation purposes

*What is clear, is that however we categorise these end-users, their expectations and experiences will all be affected by changes within the 'market' for Biodiversity...*

#### Q3. Which issues and trends are impacting the market for Biodiversity?

Biodiversity does not have an automatic right to exist.

By envisaging the ecosystem within which biodiversity exists, we quickly realise how difficult it is for Biodiversity to obtain distinctive mindshare.

'Supply'

Many factors reduce the evidence of biodiversity in our lives in effect the supply of the brand – consumerism, globalisation, intensive farming, owner-occupancy, industrialisation, individualism, packaging proliferation.

#### 'Substitution'

Bizarrely, many positive educational initiatives can actually act as substitutes for biodiversity: zoos, theme parks, gardens

#### 'Competitors'

Biodiversity must attract and retain attention. In doing so it competes against other conceptual brands and social memes which distract our attention - sustainability, global warming, global terrorism, famine, western status symbols, tribal customs all command our constant attention.

#### 'Demand'

Just as supply of biodiversity into our lives is restricted, so other factors reducing demand – urbanisation, media experiences substituting for real experience. Once again, forces which at first seem wholly benign, such as the growth of ecotourism, can actually reduce demand rather than increase it.

*These conflicting tensions at work in the market hint at just how many organisations must be aligned to protect biodiversity...but they also hint at the opportunity – for biodiversity to catalyse, rather than compete with these forces.*

#### **Q4. What are the channels for delivering Biodiversity?**

Many, many stakeholders need to be engaged in the biodiversity mission in the short-term. It is an assumption of the paper that achieving greater collaboration, or at least constructive dialogue between direct stakeholders and active stakeholders is an early priority to ensure biodiversity's future survival.

Stakeholders include:

- Anyone who sees biodiversity education as a critical background or context to their specific work
- Anyone who seeks to educate and inform publics around specific Biodiversity issues
- Anyone who seeks to conserve biodiversity as a whole
- Anyone who seeks to conserve biodiversity at a local level
- Anyone who seeks to educate publics on Biodiversity
- Anyone who monitors and describe biodiversity
- Anyone who creates frameworks or regulations around the human/nature interface
- Anyone who performs biodiversity-related services
- Anyone who manages biodiversity infrastructure

*What is clear is that very few of these stakeholders has a truly holistic view at present.*

*As well as being custodians of the planet, they must come to see themselves as brand custodians. Much of the emotional and practical value of biodiversity is currently squandered because of a narrow and intellectually 'excluding' brand image...*

## **Q5. What is the Biodiversity 'product'?**

At the heart of every brand is a product. Something that is offered to the market. What is it that Biodiversity does that people can buy and buy into?

Biodiversity comprises:

- Genetic diversity
- Organism diversity
- and Ecosystem diversity

However this description does not help us to understand. The Biodiversity product is a many-layered thing:

Biodiversity not only produces 'things': water, food, medicines, and clothing

But also services: cleaning the water, purifying the air, fertilising crops, replenishing nutrients, regulating the weather.

And knowledge: building our insight into genetics, geology, pharmacology, meteorology, biology...and many other facets of human existence.

And emotion: reinforcing values of long-termism, and hope

And ethics: encouraging respect, kindness, and reciprocity

And engagement: vividly demonstrating our interdependency

*It is clear from even this quick summary that the emotional value of biodiversity is massively underplayed in most communication at present. Existing attempts to 'sell' biodiversity do not capitalise on its potential value-add...*

## **Q6. What further value can be added to Biodiversity to differentiate it from competing ideas?**

The challenge here, for all stakeholders is ask themselves 'what else' could biodiversity do that would make it more important, more memorable, and more powerful, as a way of seeing the world. Some might be very strategic. Some of these might be more tactical. For example:

- Could its various services be more tightly defined and characterised?
- Could all the knowledge that biodiversity has provided be lodged in a single global library?
- Could our experience of biodiversity be sharpened or made less remote?
- Could individuals' loyalty to biodiversity be visualised in some way – for example by all stakeholders coming together to create by creating a biodiversity passport scheme?

However distasteful to many, saving biodiversity means thinking like a marketer.

In order to maintain the relevance of biodiversity, the services and knowledge that it brings must be enhanced. Its benefits must be made visible.

*What is clear to date, is that the benefits of biodiversity may be too nebulous to be captured through traditional scientific or educational communication.*

#### **Q7. What is the big idea/brand story behind Biodiversity?**

Every brand has a story to tell.

The paper explores many thoughts and options, but identifies the following key themes which may act as springboards for further discussion with key biodiversity stakeholders.:.

Theme #1     Health: '*The Natural Health Service*'

Theme #2     Connectedness: "*A Game of Consequences*"

Theme #3     Potential: "*Capacity for Change*"

*Whatever the story at the core of biodiversity, telling that story means confronting a stark reality: there is a basic strategic conflict at the heart of current global decision-making...*

#### **Q8. What is the best strategy for investing in Biodiversity?**

At present, the world is divided on strategy for biodiversity.

Two distinct strategies are in play:

- the *market-led* approach – favouring trading mechanisms which allow environmental costs and benefits to be translated into cash terms and thus incorporated into core business processes which bypass the need for state control. The market led approach has led to the creation of carbon-trading mechanisms, and vociferous debates over the use of 'carbon sinks' as a mechanism to meet national targets.
- the *target-led* approach – involving the setting of global targets, then relying upon co-operative mechanisms between national governments to develop policies, mechanisms and controls to reach them. This approach has led to notable victories, such as the creation of the IUCN redlist of endangered species and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The market-led approach has led to loud diffuse and dissonant communications.  
The target-led approach has led to soft, scientific and bureaucratic communications.

Clearly a more mutualist approach is desirable, however in the interim the best strategy seems to be to identify shared global brand platforms around which unified communications can be cohered.

World Biodiversity Day is one such example.

*The jury is still out on which route is most likely to lead to biodiversity preservation.*

*While existing evangelists are from the target-led camp, the power lies with the market-led thinkers. The challenge is to develop a stakeholder relationship – building strategy which brings all groups into alignment and allows an open dialogue across the philosophical divide...*

#### **Q9. How can we take the whole world with us?**

Not easily, is the answer.

However, in seeking to build a coherent brand image, Biodiversity actually has one very real advantage over a corporate brand. Its value-chain is already empowered and most are already, almost by definition, brand believers, even if they cannot articulate what that belief means.

Any stakeholder can take the lead, and begin the cost-effective public dialogue which reframes and advances brand insight.

In the meantime, there remains a leadership vacuum among biodiversity advocates, which official communication efforts have failed to fill.

*The next steps for anyone wishing to take leadership in biodiversity communications must be to engage with peers, and assert its position as clearly as possible. Its communications aims must be explained...*

#### **Q10. How can biodiversity be communicated?**

Clearly a dramatic improvement in Biodiversity communication is required:

- Smarter market segmentation
- Better co-ordination and collaboration among key stakeholders.
- Clearer and more compelling messaging.
- Greater mass-media outreach
- Much greater personalisation of content
- Better use of paid-for media
- Much better use of technology

Existing communication is highly fragmented and confused.  
And several barriers are apparent:

##### A wide variety of definitions

A review of the internet reveals a variety of interpretations and explanations of biodiversity:

*Descriptive:* e.g. 'The variety of life' [UK Biodiversity Partnership] 'The fabric of life' [[www.peopleandplanet.net](http://www.peopleandplanet.net)]

*Emotive*: e.g. ‘Things that live’ [World Resources Institute] or “The spectacular array of life on earth” [US Consultative Group on Biodiversity] ‘Our life support system’ [America Museum of Natural History]

*Motivational*: e.g ‘Not simply the variety of life-forms, but the urgent need to ensure their survival’ [UK Department of the Environment]

*Technical*: e.g. ‘...the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and between ecosystems.’ [CBD]

While none of these is contradictory to one another, they indicate the intrinsic tension between biodiversity and Biodiversity – the fact and the brand. It is clear, and heartening, though, that the brand is already starting to take on a more purposeful meaning in the minds of many key communicators.

### Different focuses

Most biodiversity communications seems to fall into one of three categories:

*Species-specific campaigns* – e.g. ‘Save the albatross’, ‘Save the whale’, ‘Save the...’

*Consciousness raising*: e.g. Recent communication around ‘The 6<sup>th</sup> Great Extinction’

*Grass roots education*: e.g. supporting children and others in audit projects in relation to the biodiversity profile of their local environment

### Education not Edification

Most biodiversity communication is educational (i.e. geared towards imparting knowledge), rather than edifying (seeking to build insight).

### The Biodiversity media ghetto

The media’s appetite for confrontation and bad news continue to make it difficult to reach out with positive messages in editorial media, creating a need for much more direct (unmediated) engagement with stakeholders.

### (Semi)-Effective Mass Media

Notwithstanding the above, mass media have proven effective at sensitising us to the plights of individual species: seals, pandas, elephants, tigers and whales.

### Light-touch co-ordination

Despite the fact that biodiversity is a global issue, demanding international collaboration, global collaboration efforts have been few and poorly funded.

*Only through thinking through and overcoming these hurdles will we stand a chance of reaching the overall objective...*

**Q11. So - What are the goals of Biodiversity?**

The aims of Biodiversity are broadly as follows:

**Conservation**

The conservation of existing species.  
The conservation of existing habitats.  
The conservation of existing ecosystems.

**Management**

The effective management of existing ecosystems.  
The replenishment and resuscitation of damaged ecosystems.

**Sustainability**

The sustainable exploitation of existing resources.

*These aims are rarely quantified and rarely explained to key stakeholders. Biodiversity communicators must be willing to concede a little scientific and philosophical purity in pursuit of these higher aims.*