

CATCHMENT VEGETATION REVIVAL WORKSHOP

26th April, 2023

Discussion Notes

Group 2: How do we leave the land better than we found it?

This group discussed solutions to living more sustainably and protecting nature and natural resources. The main solutions were to provide children and young people more opportunities to learn from nature, to develop a connection to the land in their local area, to develop rural skills and improve the availability of nature conservation jobs in local areas.



- Important to make sure there is no introduction of non-native and non-indigenous species, difficult to tackle non-native species
- Human activities are the main problem. We need to make sure human-nature interactions are positive.
- How can we change things with people's current priorities (economic)? How do we implement sustainable action with so many people?
- Grassroots education and influencing changes in political will, to minimise impacts on ecosystems
- Try and live within our own means, individual action is important
- Reducing dependence on imported, non-seasonal food, replacing beef with venison; venison is seasonal but can be frozen, more larders in estates now, venison available from July to October but a lot available in October, old venison used to be exported to Germany before Brexit, change in shooting patterns to produce more when it can be eaten locally; if hills were more fertile, it could support more deer and therefore produce more venison

- Individual action – also encouraging and inspiring other individuals; wider education based on scientific facts; problems with misinformation
- Example of community woodland, communities feel like they have a stake in it and want to learn about the land and protect it, but issues with widening access to nature but it must be done responsibly; people have the right to roam but do not understand the responsibility that come with that right
- Educating young kids – they practical experience in nature, need to build rural skills; health and safety rules and risk assessments hinder the organisation of outdoor activities for kids
- Getting young people in local communities some work experience opportunities where they learn about the land, scheme closed because of covid and changes in staff, these activities depend on staff and their initiative and enthusiasm, rural skills classes can be helpful
- Children should be educated about nature at the age when they are most receptive to it
- Fisheries trusts and other organisations should organise more activities with schools to get them interested in nature
- Forestry is a big drain on natural resources, causes flooding, there is destruction but no regeneration after; there should be pH monitoring in streams to check the health of forests; run off from forests increase spate levels and acidic water means no invertebrates in the rivers
- Learning from the past – fertilise crofts with seaweed rather chemical fertilisers, used to be done in the past, looking to the past for the future; we do not use the traditional ways but the new ways are not working
- Natural phosphate sources
- Everything is economy/profit driven, people were more self-sufficient in the past; self-sufficiency may be harder in cities but there are allotments and community gardens in cities, people working in groups; some people in rural areas have the land to grow their own food but do not use it; need to change people's mindset about self-sufficiency
- Long process to assess one's position, realise priorities and realise one's impact on nature
- Need to develop a sense of kinship/connection with place in young children so they would want to protect it, stay in the local area and work there
- In the past, fertile lands supported more sheep, cattle bones, leather etc. put back on the soil; nutrient cycle is broken now, hills were cleared; club mosses can colonise an area and start little microhabitats
- Natural fertilisers, e.g., leaving deer carcasses on hills

[thank you to Mary Gibson and Dr Shraveena Venkatesh for taking notes]

