Policy messages – something we need to market

Gwyn Jones
gwyn@efncp.org

We can’t afford not to ‘market’ our messages

• We think they’re important! We have an objective in sight (don’t we!?)
• Areas of semi-natural grazing land being excluded from vital CAP payments, with CAP rules being used as the reason (excuse?)
• WE can’t achieve our goals – we need others to act
• European Commission, European Parliament, Member States and regions
• These actions have a certain (usually quite urgent) timeframe
• Rapid change in the countryside
• New CAP in 2014

Our enemies are busy doing it
• Sometimes against it, more often focussing on other things
Just publicity isn’t always marketing!

- ‘Having the information out there’ is not enough

We need to target our audience

- If our resources are small, we can’t afford to be wasting them, but numbers aren’t everything
- We spoke to the Commission officials (again and again!) and held a seminar in Brussels to present case studies
- But we didn’t make enough of an effort with the European Parliament and with Member States
We can collaborate to spread our message without too much extra cost/effort

- Not everyone is our enemy! Sometimes we can fill a gap of specialist knowledge for them
- We collaborated with BirdLife and the European Environment Bureau in particular

How do we make our message simple?
How do we make our message easy to use?

- Though our goal is simple, our message is unfamiliar to people and needs detailed complicated action
- We tried to write simple demands (and I think failed….)
- We helped write some amendments to the Regulations, but we should have worked harder to promote them esp. with others promoting similar ones

Did anyone ‘buy’ our message?

- Some individuals in Commission completely against our position
- Some improvement in the Regulation, but still no recognition that bushes and trees can also be pasture resources
- A lot of detail is not in the main Regulation but will be done by ‘delegated acts’ by the Commission (this is therefore an extremely dangerous time!)
- There are many choices for Member States to make
  - Not all are in favour
  - Means acting against the big interests in agriculture
  - Means opting for something potentially complex
  - Benefits are to sectors with low political power (small farmers in marginal areas, the environment)
- People find it difficult to generalise!!
Generalising and simplifying

• If we leave in ALL the details, we make ourselves pointless
• If we omit too much, we also make ourselves pointless
  Like Goldilocks's bed, it needs to be just right! At best it shows the truth better than the whole picture!!

Generalising and simplifying

• Be as simple as possible, but no simpler!!!
• Governments like simple messages, but are often drowned in complexity and can't see the big picture
• NGOs can be good at simple messages, but then don't address the details that Govt. needs
• OR they can be good at details and fail to transmit the political message
• Simplicity needs to be based on detail!!!
• Who will be better at choosing which details to omit than you?
• Different simplicity for different audiences (the voter, the Minister, the desk officer in the Ministry)
Training needs??

• Writing attractively, concisely and in a way which transmits the message efficiently
• Presentation skills for giving the message face-to-face – how to make Powerpoint interesting, how to keep people awake!
• Choosing the messages and what facts to use
  – To address the reader’s priorities
  – To address the enemy’s arguments
• Adopting the appropriate styles
• Knowing who the key audiences are
• Knowing the key times to deliver the message