Environmental Groups in Politics

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Environmental Groups in Politics

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with additional contributions from

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Foreword

The Resource Management Series reflects the resurgence of academic interest in resource management and environmental planning that has occurred over the past 10 years. This resurgence has occurred in parallel with the growth of wide public concern over possible future resource shortages, pollution, the loss of valued wildlife species and landscapes and, more generally, over the possibility and desirability of sustaining current economic development patterns and associated life styles. All the books in the *Series* are policy-orientated, and share a common concern to improve our understanding of resource management policies; all are based on substantial research or practical management experience. Academic research into the objective need for, and the physical and socio-economic impacts of, resource developments is essential if the decisions to be made about the use of resources or about the nature and pace of technical and economic change are to be informed decisions. Moreover, if the results of such research are to be used to inform policy making, it is also crucial that an understanding is gained of how resource management decisions are made in practice, and of the relative roles played by different sectional interests.

It is this last research area that provides the focus for the sixth book in the *Series*. This book, by Philip Lowe and Jane Goyder, is the first to deal explicitly and comprehensively with the character and the role of environmental groups. In it, the growth of the environmental movement is traced, the internal organisation of environmental groups is analysed, and their external relations with other actors in the planning process is explored. In analysing the groups, the authors bring together the work of organisational sociologists and political scientists, arguing that the analysis of group organisation, hierarchical structure, objectives and internal decision-making procedures is vital to the understanding both of the methods used to influence environmental planning and of their past success and potential significance. However, the book is not an arid theoretical exposition. It contains a wealth of examples drawn from an extensive survey of a wide range of different types of groups, and the second half of the book is devoted to detailed case studies, illustrating the way groups operate at the local, national and international planning levels. It is clear that groups have adopted very different operating styles. Some have sought a close, even cosy, relationship with the planning agencies, rarely challenging establishment views, and avoiding overt political involvement; others have chosen, or have been pushed into, more direct confrontation in an attempt to change public and official attitudes. The relative effectiveness of these different styles in influencing policy making and opposing developmental interests is an important issue addressed in the book. In addition, the way in which environmental group activities can affect other sometimes less affluent and influential sections of society is also explored. At last we have a detailed, informed and comprehensive study of how environmental groups behave, and a reliable basis upon

which to assess both the way they represent the interests of three mil
members and their role in influencing the planning process.

RICHARD MUNTON and JUDITH REES
May 1982

Preface and acknowledgements

Environmental groups are such a common feature of national and local politics in Britain that it is surprising that no one hitherto has written a book specifically about them. Our book is the culmination of four years' research. Most of our efforts have been concentrated on contemporary national groups; we have sought to understand how they are organised and how they operate in the political system. To give a fuller picture of the causes and consequences of organised environmental concern, the book includes a review of the multitude of local environmental groups, and an historical analysis of the roots of environmentalism. Case studies of five environmental groups – the Henley Society (a local amenity society), Friends of the Earth, the National Trust, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the European Environmental Bureau – complete the book.

A study such as this incurs many debts. The background investigations were funded by the Social Science Research Council. The Ernest Cook Trust also helped indirectly, through the provision of the funds that created the lectureship in countryside planning held by one of us (P.L.). Many individuals have assisted our endeavours. For three of the case studies, we have drawn on three guest authors – Richard Bate, Sarah Buchanan and John McBride. Chapters 3 and 4 are based on a questionnaire survey of national environmental groups. Anthony Barker, Ted Smith, and Edward and Susan Dawson gave us valuable advice on the design of the survey. Sarah Buchanan and Henry Buller helped with administering the questionnaire and processing the results. The preparation of the book has benefited greatly from the guidance of Richard Munton and Judith Rees. The following people read drafts of various chapters and made helpful comments: Lincoln Allison, Bob Boote, Tom Burke, Irene Coates, Czech Conroy, Hubert David, Edward Dawson, Wilf Dawson, Dorothy Gibbins, Robin Grove-White, Mari James, Max Nicholson, Frank Perring, Jeremy Richardson, Tim Sands, and Ted Smith. Teresa Sexton, Walter Lane, Arthur Percival and Susan Joy gave us considerable help in our research. From the launch of the project to its completion, we have been inspired by Gerald Wibberley. To all of these people, we express our gratitude. To our spouses, Giles and Veronica, we record our heartfelt thanks for their consistent support and encouragement.

We acknowledge permission to reproduce copyright material from the following: Christopher Bull (Table 2.1); *Civic Trust News* (Fig. 2.2); David Handley; Nicholas Watts; the *Eurobarometer* (Table 2.4); Friends of the Earth (Table 7.1); John Wiley & Sons Ltd and Stephen Cotgrove (Table 2.2).

Finally, we must discharge at least some of our debt to the officers of environmental groups. We record in the Appendix the groups that took part in our survey. The people within these groups, who gave much time to answer our questions and supply us with statistics, are too numerous to mention by name.

Without their ready co-operation, however, the study would not have b
possible.

PHILIP LOWE and JANE GOYDER
University College London
May 1982

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1 *Introduction*

There is a widespread appreciation of the environment and the threats it faces. Of the British adult population, approximately one person in ten belongs to an environmental group. With an estimated two-and-a-half to three million supporters, the environmental movement is now larger than any political party or trade union; its present strength is roughly double that in 1970, which in turn was probably double that of 10 years earlier. Simply by virtue of its size and recent growth, the environmental movement qualifies as a major social phenomenon. Interest is further aroused by its diversity and impact. There are nearly a hundred national environmental groups and several thousand local ones. Some are quite old, dating from the 19th century, but many others have emerged during the past two decades. Their concerns range from global issues to do with the future of industrial society, the extinction of species and even human survival, down to local issues such as preserving neighbourhood amenities. These concerns have been taken into the political arena; since the 1960s, environmental groups have emerged as a significant force, enjoying contacts with local government, Parliament and the civil service, and using the media to mount campaigns. Not only have they influenced legislation and official policy, but they have also gained considerable public sympathy. Indeed, it seems that environmental groups are part of a broadly based change in the way people perceive and evaluate their surroundings.

How can this upsurge of interest be understood? How is it organised? And what has been its political impact? These are the questions we address in this book. Chapter 2 examines environmental groups in the context of a wider shift of opinion, whereby environmental concern has become a major cause. Social movements such as this arise from discontent with some of the customary values of society, and represent concerted attempts to institutionalise alternative values (Mauss 1975, Turner 1967, Oberschall 1973, Pickvance 1975a). Thus the environmental movement is taken as an episode of collective behaviour, whose formal manifestations are the separate environmental groups; and the flux in their activities and support is regarded as an expression and indication of changing values in society (Albrecht 1976, Sills 1975). The chapter focuses on the social characteristics of the movement, the values it expresses, its historical origins and its subsequent pattern of development.

The rest of the book concentrates on two main themes: the internal organisation of environmental groups and their external relations with the political system. Environmental groups fall within a particular organisational category. They are all voluntary organisations – formal groups in which individuals freely associate, without commercial motive, to further some common purpose (Hatch 1980). This definition distinguishes them from commercial and statutory organisations.

The report of the Wolfenden Committee (1978) on *The future of voluntary*

organisations in Britain commented on 'the paucity of research on voluntary organisations'. It appears that such research has suffered from occupying part of the no-man's land between sociology and political science (Pickvance 1975b). By and large it has been bypassed by organisational sociologists whose theoretical and empirical work has been devoted to what they consider to be the characteristic organisations of modern society – those that are large, complex and bureaucratic. Thus the sociology of organisations has been preoccupied primarily with commerical organisations, particularly large firms and corporations, and secondarily with public institutions such as hospitals, prisons and educational establishments (Dunkerley 1972). The exceptions in the voluntary field are trade unions, which have attracted a considerable literature. Significantly, they diverge the most from the voluntary principle of free association; they have also developed furthest towards the 'ideal' type of bureaucracy. However, many other voluntary organisations, including most national environmental groups, have also undergone a degree of internal differentiation, taking on paid staffs and developing hierarchy and oligarchy. These groups still have *relatively* simple formal structures, but this does not make their internal processes of decision any less interesting or important.

Political scientists on the other hand, although devoting much time to the role of groups in politics, have concentrated on the external relations of groups and have neglected their internal political processes and domestic affairs (Beer 1975, Kimber & Richardson 1974a, Finer 1966, Wootton 1978). The overriding concern has been to assess the impact of groups on the political system as a basis for moral judgement as to their worth or threat to democratic government. There has been a tendency to regard as unproblematic the way groups arise, generate support and commitment, establish objectives, and evolve administrative and decision-making structures. Yet, although the environment of a group may place effective, even narrow, limits on what it can achieve, its behaviour within these limits will be determined fundamentally by its internal relations (W. Grant 1977).

Any attempt to understand the activities of groups, therefore, should not be indifferent to their internal structure and processes. Chapter 3 looks in detail at the main internal characteristics of national environmental groups and how they have tackled certain key organisational issues facing all voluntary organisations. Some of these same issues, in particular the resources a group can command, are picked up again in Chapter 5 with respect to local environmental groups.

The connection of environmental groups to national and local politics is the subject of Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, focusing on their roles as pressure groups. We have chosen to employ the term 'pressure group' because of its general currency; yet it is something of a misnomer, as it characterises a type of activity rather than a type of association (reflecting, incidentally, the bias of political scientists towards judging the manifest behaviour of groups – Grove 1962). We would define pressure group activity, therefore, as the efforts of organised groups to influence the decisions of public authorities. It should be borne in mind, however, that many environmental groups operate only occasionally as pressure groups. There may be other ways of furthering their purposes, for example through provision of various services to their members, or by acting directly upon issues on which they are also pressing for official

action, such as the acquisition of special sites or structures under threat. Some groups also seek to influence bodies other than public authorities. At various times, environmental groups have sought to modify the outlook of companies, trade unions, professional associations and other environmental groups.

Chapter 4 examines the access national groups enjoy to the three crucial arenas of influence: government departments and agencies, Parliament and the media. The ways in which environmental groups determine their political tactics and act together as part of a co-ordinated lobby are also considered.

Chapter 5 looks at the relations between local environmental groups and local government, focusing on their involvement in the statutory planning system. Of course, environmental groups are not the only influence on planning policies, nor are planning decisions solely about environmental matters; such decisions embrace many different issues, including housing, transport, employment and economic development, all of which may conflict with environmental objectives. Furthermore, planning decisions allocate spatially both the costs and the benefits of new development, and one area's environmental gain may be another's loss. The chapter therefore examines the implications for other interests of the involvement of local environmental groups in the planning system.

Thus in Part I of the book, we hope to juxtapose three different perspectives normally pursued separately by social scientists. The first, the *social movement perspective*, relates environmental groups to society, to changes in values, and possibly to changes in social structure. The second, the *organisational perspective*, takes us inside the groups to see how unity and internal authority are maintained, support engendered, resources allocated and goals set. The third, the *pressure group perspective*, relates the groups to the political system, assessing their impact and accounting for their political efficacy. Taken together rather than in isolation, these three perspectives give a much fuller understanding of the way environmental groups work, of their historical significance and of their potential prospects.

Chapters 3 and 4 are based on the results of a survey, carried out in 1979–80, of 77 national voluntary organisations concerned with the environment. These are listed in the Appendix, along with any acronyms used in the text. We tried to be comprehensive in covering the following categories of groups: wildlife and resource conservation, amenity, landscape and building protection, promotion of countryside recreation and prevention of pollution. Specifically Scottish and Welsh societies were excluded, as were professional associations, such as the Royal Town Planning Institute or the Institute of Landscape Architects. The dynamic nature of the environmental movement is illustrated by the fact that at least four groups that we had hoped to include had become dormant by the time we were scheduled to see them, and a similar number were formed while the survey was in progress – the Underwater Conservation Society, the Land Council, the British Association of Nature Conservationists and the Anti-Nuclear Campaign.

The questions in the survey were put to the leading staff member in each group (usually the director or general secretary). In those groups without any staff, the leading officer (usually the chairman or honorary secretary) was interviewed. In addition, in the very big groups, extra interviews were conducted with senior staff other than the director. In this way, it was hoped to tap

the most well informed source within each group. With respect to certain questions, of course, such as those regarding the achievements of a group or its internal structure and control, our respondents were not disinterested parties. Nevertheless, we justify our approach on the grounds that the outlook and attitudes of people in such key positions are important facts. Moreover, we have tried to take into account the specific perspective of our respondents, in devising our questionnaire and analysing the results, and where appropriate seeking corroboration. As with all empirical investigations, however, it is important for the researcher and the reader to bear in mind the strengths and limitations of the information source used. (For further details of the methodology, see Lowe 1981.)

Chapter 5 on local environmental groups is based on literature covering the participation of voluntary groups in local government and on details of three kinds of local environmental groups: county branches of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust, and county trusts for nature conservation. We have concentrated, therefore, on groups devoted to protecting the natural or built environment, and have excluded the host of community groups – the tenants' and residents' associations, estate clubs and community action groups – with predominantly social objectives, though on occasions they may be drawn into environmental issues.

We have also focused on groups with an enduring and general interest in the environment, rather than those created simply to wage a particular campaign and which disband thereafter. A large number of such 'fire brigade' groups have sprung up over the past two decades to fight proposals for motorways, power stations and other large-scale developments. Usually they are short-lived and they subside in victory or defeat, especially when established as temporary alliances of existing local organisations. Some remain in being and evolve a permanent role, continuing to focus local attention on other environmental issues as they arise. Indeed, many long-lived environmental groups start in this way, in response to a particular threat. Where this happens, they begin to build the long-term contacts and expertise for involvement in the planning system that is analysed in Chapter 5.

In Part II of the book, case studies are used to illustrate the previous analysis. Here we have drawn on the assistance of three guests contributors. The case studies and their respective primary authors are as follows:

- Chapter 6 The Henley Society, a representative local amenity society (Jane Goyder and Philip Lowe);
- Chapter 7 Friends of the Earth, the most prominent of the new environmental groups (Richard Bate);
- Chapter 8 The National Trust, the largest, most prestigious and one of the oldest environmental groups (Sarah Buchanan and Philip Lowe);
- Chapter 9 The Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the leading conservation group (Jane Goyder and Philip Lowe);
- Chapter 10 The European Environmental Bureau, the umbrella organisation for environmental groups within the European Community (Philip Lowe and John McBride).

The purpose of the case studies is outlined in the introduction to Part II. Each

one draws on published and unpublished records of the group in question and interviews with key personnel.

The case studies furnish material illustrative of major themes from Part I and provide an opportunity for comparative judgements. Drawing on this material, the Conclusions marshal the book's findings around three central themes: the reasons for the emergence of environmentalism as a significant political force, the relationship between the internal and external organisation of environmental groups, and the implications of their involvement in politics for other interests within our society. The book ends with speculation about the future. Though facing uncertain prospects, the environmental movement seems to be well established as a permanent feature of the political scene.

Part I

2 *The environmental movement*

Environmental groups and the attentive public

The environmental movement consists of a number of environmental groups, the organisational embodiment of the movement, and what might be termed the attentive public: those people who, though they do not belong to any of the groups, share their values. The attentive public for the environmental movement would include the readership of various environmental magazines, students of environmental studies in schools, colleges and universities, sympathetic members of the design and land-use professions and the many people who, through their personal convictions, behaviour and life styles, express their concern for the environment – for example organic gardeners, health food devotees, outdoor enthusiasts and supporters of recycling schemes.

Environmental groups, therefore, are only one indicator of the wider social movement. Other indicators include the degree of sympathy expressed by non-environmental organisations, the burgeoning of environmental literature and the coverage of the environment in the news media. For example, a series of conferences held through the 1960s on the theme of 'The countryside in 1970' showed a marked increase in the range of organisations expressing their concern and support. Whereas the first conference (in 1963) attracted just 90 organisations, some 335 were represented at the final one (in 1970). By this time, the range included organisations such as the Boy Scouts' Association, the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, and the National Union of Students. Similarly, the creation of the Business and Industry Panel for the Environment, the Lawyers' Ecology Group, the Professional Institutions' Council for Conservation, and the Council for Environmental Education, illustrates the spread of environmental concern to industrialists, lawyers, the design and engineering professions and teachers respectively.

An analysis of the proportion of space devoted to environmental issues in *The Times* between 1953 and 1973 revealed steady but minor coverage until 1965, followed by a three-fold increase up to 1973 (Brookes *et al*. 1976). The authors suggest the growth of coverage marked a new tendency to redefine what had previously been perceived as individual problems, say of pollution or town planning, as part of a more general problem of 'the environment'. Analyses of newspaper coverage in America and Japan have shown a similar build-up of mass media interest during the late 1960s, with a levelling-off after the mid-1970s (Sandbach 1980).

The causal relationship between formal groups and social movements is not straightforward. Groups may be the creation of movements, and vice versa. The Ecology Party is a clear example of a group that has arisen out of the

contemporary environmental movement giving political expression to unease at the economic and conservation policies of established parties. However, it also seems that formal groups can exist without a social movement. There are certainly examples of organised groups in our society that enjoy minimal support beyond their own membership. Examples include extremist groups totally opposed to the prevailing order, those with very specialised or obscure objectives, and those promoting thoroughly unpopular causes. Though environmental groups currently enjoy the support of a large attentive public, this has not always been the case. Many predate contemporary concern for the environment, and indeed their publicity and campaigning efforts have helped to awaken and enlarge that concern.

The relation between formal groups and the attentive public in terms of social composition is complex. A major criticism of environmental groups has been that their members are predominantly middle- or upper middle-class, and that their values are unrepresentative of lower-class interests. The late Anthony Crosland, Labour Secretary of State for the Environment between 1974 and 1976, commented: 'To say that we must attend meticulously to the environmental case does not mean that we must go to the other extreme and wholly neglect the economic case. . . . Part of the conservationist lobby would do precisely this. Their approach is hostile to growth and indifferent to the needs of ordinary people. It has a manifest class bias and reflects a set of middle- and upper-class value judgements [for which] preservation of the status quo is the sole consideration.' (Crosland 1971.) There seem to be three distinct arguments in this statement. The first is that the membership of environmental groups is predominantly middle class. The second is that only the middle class is interested in environmental issues – which means, in our terms, that the attentive public is predominantly middle class. The third is that the environmental movement is pursuing class-based interests.

Available evidence strongly supports the first assumption, that members of environmental groups are predominantly middle class. Table 2.1 gives details of the social composition of the National Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Naturalists' Trust. The data for the National Trust should be treated with some caution as they were collected in 1973, since when the Trust's membership has

Table 2.1 Social composition of environmental groups (by head of household) compared with the general population.

	Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Naturalists' Trust (%)[1]	*National Trust (%)*[2]	*RSPB (%)*[3]	*England and Wales (%)*
managerial and professional (AB)	78	72	25	14
technical and clerical (C_1)	9	24	41	22
skilled manual (C_2)	11	3	20	31
unskilled manual (DE)	2	1	14	33

[1] Conducted by Christopher Bull, 1980.
[2] Conducted by the National Trust, 1973.
[3] Conducted by the RSPB, 1979.

increased three-fold. For all three groups, a sizeable majority of members are middle class; but there are marked differences, with the RSPB being mainly lower middle class, and the other two strongly upper middle class. Table 2.2 presents data for the Conservation Society and Friends of the Earth (FoE). This was collected on a different basis from Table 2.1, to bring out details of the sector in which members work as well as their occupational status. Members of these two groups also are predominantly upper middle class. Compared with a sample survey of the general public, they tend to have higher incomes and much higher levels of education (a majority of the members of both groups have degrees). As Table 2.2 shows, they are drawn disproportionately from the personal service professions, such as teaching, social work and medicine.

Surveys, both nationally and locally, of committee members of the CPRE, have shown them to be mainly upper middle class and upper class (Allison 1975, Buller & Lowe 1982). Similarly, in a national survey of local amenity societies, 87% of 578 societies agreed that 'most of our members are white-collar or professional-managerial people and their spouses' (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). Four fifths of the societies also reported that they do not have among their members even one third who do manual jobs. Certainly most of the leaders of local amenity societies are professional and managerial people (see Table 2.3).

Does the fact that membership of environmental groups is predominantly middle class mean that the environment is basically a middle-class concern? This need not be so. It could be that environmental groups are merely reflecting a characteristic of voluntary organisations in general – that they tend to be formed and supported mainly by the middle class (Stacey 1960, Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969). The critical question is whether the attentive public is also predominantly middle class.

Table 2.2 Occupations of environmentalists and the public.

	Members of FoE and the Conservation Society (%)	*General public (%)*
commerce and industry		
professional and supervisory	14.3	13.6
clerical	5.6	12.2
self employed	9.6	4.8
service, welfare, creative	38.4	12.2
manual	5.4	28.2
retired	9.1	7.8
housewife	8.0	18.0
unemployed	1.6	1.7
student	8.0	1.4
	100.0	99.9
	N = (427)	N = (294)

Source: This table originally appeared in Cotgrove, S. *Catastrophe or cornucopia: the environment, politics and the future*, published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd in 1982, and is reproduced by permission.

Table 2.3 Prevalent occupations of the chairmen and honorary secretaries of local amenity societies.

	%
teacher/educational administrator	11.1
housewife	8.1
business/industrial manager	7.7
architect	7.5
lawyer	6.0
lecturer	5.5
engineer	5.3
civil servant	5.2

Source: National survey conducted by the Civic Trust, 1976. Some 24% of the 1554 respondents were retired but in the table they have been allocated to their previous occupations.

One of the few ways of gauging the size and composition of the attentive public for an issue is the use of opinion polls. There is a lack of data for Britain, but there has been considerable research in America. This suggests that the attentive public concerned about the environment is more socially representative than the membership of environmental groups. As in Britain, members of American groups tend to have markedly higher levels of income and education and to hold higher status occupations than non-environmentalists (Morrison & Dunlap 1980). Examination of opinion poll data, however, reveals much more broadly based, passive support for the movement. Thus, whereas just 4% of American adults belong to environmental groups, about 50% claim to be sympathetic to the environmental movement and only 4% regard themselves as unsympathetic rather than neutral (Mitchell 1979b, 1980). A similar pattern emerges in response to questions about the perceived seriousness of environmental problems and the need for remedial action: a clear majority of people showed concern and expressed their support for more stringent controls, even those involving extra expenditure, and only a small minority opposed these.

The evidence suggests that support is widely spread across all social classes. Admittedly, most studies of environmental concern do report a negative correlation with age and a positive correlation with level of education, but these relationships are not particularly strong. Thus, although young adults and college-educated people are especially likely to identify themselves with the environmental movement, support is not lacking amongst low-education groups and older people. Moreover, the income and occupation bias amongst members of environmental groups is not reflected in the public support for the movement. It would seem, therefore, that these attributes of members are not a characteristic of environmental concern but of the propensity to join a voluntary organisation (Van Liere & Dunlap 1980).

The British opinion data which exist tend to support the American evidence. Table 2.4 presents the results of a survey that inquired about the degree of concern for pollution. Significantly, a majority of people in each occupational category regarded pollution as a very important issue, and there was no marked variation in concern between occupational categories (nor, incidentally, in

Table 2.4 Degree of concern over pollution, categorised according to occupation of head of household.

	Profes-sional (%)	*Business propri-etor (%)*	*Manual worker (%)*	*White collar (%)*	*Director (%)*	*Retired (%)*	*House-wife (%)*	*Row total*
very important	62.5	61.0	58.4	55.3	62.8	65.1	63.1	751 (59.5%)
important	32.5	37.7	39.1	42.9	37.2	32.8	35.4	485 (38.4%)
of little importance	2.5	1.3	2.3	0.5	0	2.1	1.5	21 (1.7%)
not at all important	2.5	0	0.2	1.4	0	0	0	6 (0.5%)
								1263 (100%)

Source: Eurobarometer **12**, Fall 1979.

relation to levels of income or educational attainment). A different survey examined awareness of threats to the environment. Interviewees were asked: 'One of the problems concerning many people today is pollution of the environment. What types of pollution – if any – do you personally feel concerned about?' Again, in all occupational categories, a clear majority expressed concern (Table 2.5). Higher social groups, however, showed a much greater awareness of specific environmental threats than did lower social groups. This difference was most marked with respect to air and water pollution; that is, to those forms of pollution whose effects are often much less immediate and tangible than visual or noise pollution. Realistic support for environmental policies involves willingness to pay. Cotgrove (1982) found that a majority of people (64%) favoured raising taxes to control pollution, and only 19% opposed such a proposition. However, when the critical choice was put in terms of a possible loss of jobs through more stringent environmental protection, there was no longer a majority in favour of additional controls. Cotgrove put these same questions to a sample of environmentalists (members of Friends of the Earth (FoE), the Conservation Society, the World Wildlife Fund and the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation). They expressed very strong support for raising taxes for pollution control and a preference for environmental protection over job protection. What distinguishes environmentalists, therefore, is not so much their concern for the environment as the degree of importance they attach to such concern. This conclusion is reinforced by the local protest groups which emerge to give expression to latent environmental sympathies wherever a major threat to the environment materialises. In such circumstances, environmental protection is likely to become a central rather than a peripheral concern for those people who are affected. It should be added that such protest groups do not arise solely in middle-class districts (I. Hall 1976).

Finally, we turn to the argument that environmental groups are, in effect, pursuing elitist interests. Environmental decisions have distributional consequ-

Table 2.5 Concern about pollution among Britons (%), according to social class.

		Class				
	All respondents	*AB*	*C1*	*C2*	*D*	*E*
air pollution	39	44	45	39	33	30
water pollution	40	51	45	40	33	29
land pollution	22	27	23	23	20	17
noise pollution	11	13	11	10	12	9
visual pollution, eyesores, etc.	12	15	12	10	14	12
other types of pollution/ other answers	4	6	6	3	3	5
not concerned	18	14	16	17	20	24
no answer/don't know	6	2	6	7	7	11
number of respondents	1,118	133	265	372	250	93

Source: Public attitudes to pollution. Opinion Research Centre, February *1976*.

The question asked in the survey was 'One of the problems concerning many people today is pollution of the environment. What types of pollution – if any – do you personally feel concerned about?' The results shown above group the different types of pollution and environmental problems mentioned by the respondents under each heading.

The interviewer then went on to ask, for each type of pollution, which two of a given set of possible causes were thought to be the most important in Britain. The three causes most often mentioned were:

air pollution – vehicle exhausts (70%); smoke from factories (46%); rubbish and rubbish dumps (15%)

water pollution – factory and industrial waste (51%); oil slicks and waste from ships (34%); sewage effluent (28%)

land pollution – litter and rubbish (41%); factory and industrial waste (30%); dumping of household waste (26%)

noise pollution – lorries/buses/cars (56%); motorcycles/scooters (26%); loud radios/TV etc (23%)

visual pollution – litter and rubbish left by the public (53%); ugly redevelopment in towns and cities (30%); waste disposal and tipping (29%)

ences which may be of two kinds: a spatial one where the costs and benfits are unevenly distributed between areas, and a social one, where they are differentially distributed between sections of society. In practice these often coincide, since different sections of society tend also to be spatially segregated. The distributional consequences of environmental decisions become particularly clear at the level of local planning, and Chapter 5 considers the implications for local environmental groups. However, in general at both national and local level, the major charge of elitism levelled at the environmental movement rests on a perceived conflict between environmental protection and material wellbeing.

The anti-growth sentiments of many environmentalists in the early 1970s were an easy target for left-wing politicians who charged that environmentalists were indifferent to the material aspirations of working people and to the relief of poverty. This charge missed the point that traditional forms of economic growth were perhaps an ineffective instrument for improving the lot of the poor, and that a pleasant and safe environment is an important element in a

reasonable standard of living for all classes. The fact that the poorer sections of society also tend to live in the most polluted and degraded environments and have the least ability to reach pleasant environments would suggest that they too have a major stake in environmental improvement. In any case, claims that economic growth and environmental conservation are inimical have lost their currency as the economy has stagnated. A more recent variant is that conservation is a luxury we can ill afford.

Other arguments have focused on the distributive mechanisms whereby the economic and environmental benefits of our society (with or without growth) are allocated to different areas and different classes. Crosland's strictures are relevant here, particularly his charge that environmentalists are affluent people who 'want to kick the ladder down behind them. They are militant about threats to rural peace and wildlife and well loved beauty spots; but little concerned with the far more desperate problem of the urban environment in which 80 per cent of our citizens live.' (Crosland 1971.) Certainly, the balance of environmental concern has been towards preserving 'unspoilt' areas rather than improving degraded ones. To what extent this is merely a regrettable blind spot or, alternatively, a zero sum game whereby some areas suffer poor environmental conditions *precisely because* others enjoy more favourable conditions, we shall consider at greater length in Chapter 5.

Having considered the social composition of the environmental movement and the relation between formal groups and the attentive public, we now turn to the origins of the movement and the values expressed by it. What are the central values of environmentalism which allow us to talk of a single environmental movement rather than a series of separate movements, each pursuing discrete objectives, such as the 'nature conservation movement' or 'the amenity movement'? To answer this, and to understand the origins of the movement, an historical perspective is needed to provide evidence of a common thread of values and the changing support they have elicited.

The episodic development of the environmental movement

The oldest national environmental group – the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society – dates from 1865. The complete history of the British environmental movement is thus encapsulated in less than a century and a quarter, although it is possible to find isolated examples of preservationist sentiment as far back as the Middle Ages, and prophetic pleas for preservation which were far in advance of their time (Boulting 1976, Harvey 1972, Nicholson 1970, Glacken 1967). Yet prior to the last century, such attitudes were characteristically rare. Only during the latter part of the 19th century, in a decisive shift in attitude, did a recognisable sense emerge that the preservation of historic buildings, wildlife and natural beauty should be ensured deliberately rather than left to chance. The concern for the environment expressed by organised groups was not confined to them but reflected a general stirring of opinion, sufficiently influential to carry legislation against fierce opposition from entrenched interests and to initiate state action, contrary to the usual inclinations of Victorian governments (Kennet 1972, Ashby & Anderson 1981, Sheail 1976).

A striking feature of the subsequent history of the environmental movement has been its uneven development, marked by distinct periods of organisational expansion and innovation followed by intervals which see few new departures. It seems that during the former periods, environmental issues and environmental concern catch the attention of a wider public leading to a major expansion of the movement. Figure 2.1 plots the pattern of these periods of expansion and renewal, using the dates of formation of the national environmental groups in our survey. Data for earlier periods in this cycle are not complete. Some environmental groups which flourished then have since disappeared. Figures for previous expansionary periods therefore tend to underestimate the total number of groups formed.

The first of these environmental eras, from the mid-1880s to the turn of the century, produced, amongst others, the Selborne Society, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Coal Smoke Abatement Society (now the National Society for Clean Air), the National Trust, the Metropolitan and Public Gardens Association, the Garden Cities Association (now the Town and Country Planning Association), the Camping Club, and the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (now the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society).

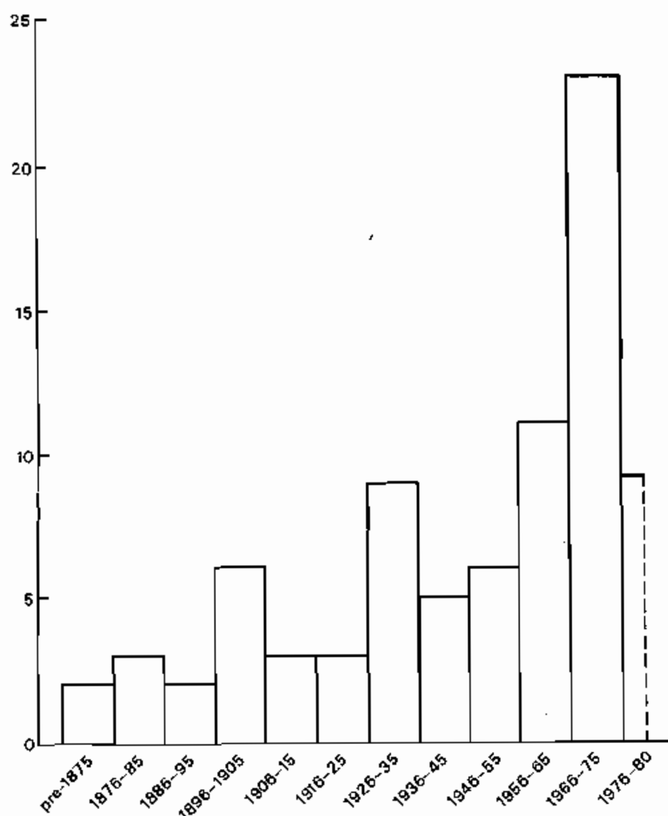


Figure 2.1 Dates of formation of national environmental groups.

The second period, the middle inter-war years, saw the creation of the Ancient Monuments Society, the Ramblers' Association, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (and its Welsh and Scottish equivalents), the Pedestrians' Association for Road Safety, the Youth Hostels Association, the National Trust for Scotland, the Pure Rivers Society and the Central Council for River Protection. Many of the older local groups date from this period.

The recent expansion of the environmental movement began in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the formation of the Civic Trust, the Council for Nature, the Victorian Society, the Noise Abatement Society and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. The early part of this period also saw the rapid spread of the county naturalists' trusts (Fig. 5.2). The membership statistics of groups, however, show no dramatic increase until the early 1970s, when most groups experienced rapid growth and there was a large crop of new groups. These included FoE, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Tree Council, Save, the Ecology Party, Rescue, Transport 2000, the Lawyers' Ecology Group, Watch, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, the Professional Institutions' Council for Conservation and many others. Amenity societies spread throughout the country (see Fig. 5.1).

Similar peaks in environmental concern have occurred in other countries at about the same time. The environmental era of the 1970s was common to most advanced capitalist countries (Knoepfel & Watts 1983). Similarly, the turn-of-the-century era in Britain was mirrored in the United States, in the creation of such groups as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society as well as a number of federal conservation agencies (O'Riordan 1971). Canada, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden witnessed parallel developments, and in the Netherlands three of the eight organisations that comprise the present Landelijk Milieu Overleg date from this period, as do a number of the constituent groups of the Fédération Française des Sociétés de Protection de la Nature. Indeed, throughout Europe, the late 19th century saw a spate of legislation and new institutions to safeguard historic monuments and natural areas (Baldwin Brown 1905, Conwentz 1909). The upsurge of environmental concern in the middle inter-war years in Britain also had its counterparts in the United States, in the formation of the Izaak Walton League, the Wilderness Society and the National Wildlife Federation as well as in the conservation measures of the early New Deal; and in Germany, in the youth and open-air movements, which the National Socialists exploited to propagate their notions of 'folk, blood and soil' (Marsh 1981).

How do we explain these sudden rushes of activity over the whole spectrum of environmental concern? Before addressing this question, we must justify the lumping of so many diverse groups as part of a single movement. What we need to do is to demonstrate that there are fundamental values in common to each of the three environmental eras and, within each era, across the spectrum of environmental concerns. Today, we are conscious of an environmental movement embracing a wide range of concerns. The late Victorians established the first nature conservation group, the first building preservation group, the first rural preservation group, the first landscape protection group, the first anti-pollution group and the first outdoor pursuit group. Were they conscious that these initiatives were linked as part of a single movement?

The underlying values of environmentalism

There is considerable evidence that the different initiatives taken at the end of the 19th century were, in fact, linked developments and were seen, by those involved, to be part of a common cause. Key people active in one society – such as Octavia Hill, Sir John Lubbock, Edward North Buxton, G. Shaw-Lefevre, James Bryce, Lawrence Chubb and William Morris – were active in others. There was considerable mutual co-operation and support between different societies. Moreover, the commonality of interest between preservation of wildlife, of antiquities and of rural amenities is evident in the formation of societies that embraced more than one of these aims; examples include the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, the Selborne Society for the Protection of Birds, Plants and Pleasant Places, and the British Empire Naturalists' Association 'to ensure protection for wildlife, wild plants, and interesting human antiquities'. In 1898, the first attempt at formal co-ordination was made when the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising convened a meeting of the various societies to examine how they might best co-operate 'in defence of the Picturesque and Romantic Elements of our National Life' (Sheail 1981).

Wildlife and historic preservationists often employed the same terminology, such as the frequent reference to the *relics* of the past and the *relics* of nature, or to ancient *monuments* and natural *monuments* – in much the way that the term '*conservation*' has been stretched in recent years to cover wildlife protection, building preservation and the husbanding of resources. Sometimes the imagery was transposed. For example, preservationists urged that ancient buildings be treated as 'living things'; whereas naturalists spoke of preserving 'the ancient life' of nature. The Huxley Report of 1947 drew on this widely held analogy when declaring that nature reserves are 'both ancient monuments and living museums – living embodiments of the past history of the land' and therefore deserving of treatment on a par with museums and ancient monuments for which the state had recognised a responsibility. Similarly, in proposing the establishment of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Patrick Abercrombie remarked in 1926 that 'the greatest historical monument that we possess, the most essential thing which *is* England, is the Countryside, the Market Town, the Village, the Hedgerow Trees, the Lanes, the Copses, the Streams and the Farmsteads.'

The mid-Victorian period was one of unprecedented industrial growth, urban expansion and agricultural improvement. Not only did this generate enormous upheaval, socially and environmentally, but it also increased prosperity, which, with greater opportunities for education and leisure, facilitated the growth of an informed public, knowledgeable about its surroundings. The Victorians' commitment to travel and self-improvement found a number of outlets, including the establishment of numerous local field clubs to promote the study of archaeology and natural history. By the 1880s, there were a few hundred of these with a combined membership around 100000 (Lowe 1978). One result was the accumulation of detailed records, county by county, which provided clear evidence of an alarming rate of destruction of the native fauna and flora and historic structures and sites. Evidence that many plant species were becoming locally rare or extinct induced the Selborne Society to set up a

Plant Protection Section, whose recorder gave the following causes for the decline or extermination of wild plants:

> Smoke; atmospheric abnormalities; drainage; cutting down of woods; desiccation; drought; cultivation; building operations; sport; hawking and collecting; professional collecting; nature-study operations. (Horwood 1913.)

Concern at the loss of valued environmental features was, of course, sharpened by a growing sense of their rarity. Yet this still does not explain why changes which in the past had been considered generally advantageous now aroused passionate opposition, at least amongst an influential minority of intellectual and upper-class Victorians.

What was different was a new evaluation of the features being obliterated and a new orientation towards the forces and motives which wrought these changes. In particular, there was a reversal of the rationalist, progressivist outlook deriving from the 'Enlightenment' which, with its confidence in the perfectibility of all things, had looked always to the improvement of nature and society through the exercise of human reason and ingenuity. Victorian environmentalists emphatically rejected the imperative to *improve* – whether it be the enclosure of common wastes for agricultural or building purposes, the control of 'vermin' on country estates, the demolition of ancient structures in the rebuilding of Victorian towns, the restoration of the fabric of historic buildings, or the drainage of old meadows and marshes. Indeed, instead of improvement, they saw in these acts deformation and vandalism (Hunter 1981).

It seems that environmental concern was an integral part of the late Victorian intellectual reaction to many of the tenets of economic liberalism. It is no coincidence, for example, that some of the social philosophers in the vanguard of this reaction, such as John Ruskin, John Stuart Mill and William Morris, were leading and founder members of environmental groups. This profound shift of opinion arose from a reassessment of the social and economic changes of the 19th century. The optimism and belief in boundless prosperity that had characterised mid-century Britain was replaced by pessimism about the prospects for social and economic advance. The Victorians' earlier self-confidence was sapped by the Great Depression of the 1880s and by the intellectual crisis of the post-Darwinian years, which cast doubt on the nature of the human condition and on the possibility of its relief or improvement (Burrow 1966). Britain's increasingly disappointing industrial performance in the final decades of the century was matched by a growing equivocalness towards industrialism itself: the source of the nation's economic and political power was coming to be seen as destructive of the moral and social order, human health, traditional values, the physical environment and natural beauty. This growing antipathy to the industrial spirit in late 19th-century Britain reflected the absorption of the urban bourgeoisie into the upper reaches of British society and its genteel value system – a value system which disdained trade and industry, which stressed the civilised enjoyment, rather than the accumulation, of wealth, and which preferred social stability to enterprise (Wiener 1981).

Environmental groups gave expression to doubts about industrialism, particularly in relation to its impact on urban life and urban growth. Indeed, common to all environmental groups of the period was a moral and aesthetic

revulsion to the contemporary industrial city. Some hoped to ameliorate urban conditions, for example, by attempting to improve housing standards, provide open spaces or curb smoke pollution (Hill 1913, Russell 1902). Others sought to create an idealised city which would be the antithesis of the industrial city – the so-called 'garden city' (Howard 1898). Others again turned away from the dirt, crime, disease, ugliness and social tensions of the city and set their sights on preserving places and things that had not yet been corrupted by urban and industrial expansion. A few went as far as setting up simple rural colonies (Hardy 1979).

Tangible relics of previous epochs and of the natural world served similar functions. Both provided evidence, however incomplete, of what 'progress' had destroyed. As constants in a changing world, they stood for continuity, stability and tradition, against the restless and rootless stirrings of industrial capitalism. Both were sources of spiritual, moral and aesthetic reinvigoration, in antithesis to the artificial creations and vulgar materialism of the modern age. Lord Bryce, a distinguished Liberal and supporter of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), anticipated that 'the growth of reverential feelings' towards ancient buildings would rescue men 'from that worldliness which comes of mere material prosperity and growth of wealth. Man does not live by bread alone', but requires 'all those subtle yet potent ties which bind the present to the past' (1882). In setting up the National Trust to safeguard places of natural beauty, it was decided that 'it should consist of men and women who should be free from the tendency to sacrifice such treasures to mercenary considerations, or to vulgarise them in accordance with popular cries – should be, in fact, those to whom historic memories loom large, who love the wild bird, butterfly, and plant, who realise the national value of hill slope lighted by sun or shadowed by cloud' (Hill 1905). Victorian preservationism was distinctly a gentlemanly avocation pursued by cultured people well removed from, and indeed averse to, the base pursuits of trade and manufacture.

Because of their uniqueness, relics of the past and of nature provided a kind of visible guarantee of historical identity, to be preserved from the arbitrary standardisation that a cosmopolitan industrialism seemed to threaten. With the gathering tide of nationalism at the end of the 19th century, this last factor became increasingly important. As disillusionment with industrial progress mounted, the essential national spirit was seen to reside not in British commerce and industry but in the past and in the country. Morris, for example, wrote of ancient churches as 'sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope' (1877). One contemporary architectural critic referred to the 'patriotic reverence' of the SPAB (Kerr 1884). Just before the First World War, *The Times* appealed for the preservation of our 'old native flora and fauna' (1912); and Sir Ray Lankester demanded urgent measures to save 'something of Britain's ancient nature' (1915). Similarly, Octavia Hill said of the property of the National Trust that it was 'a bit of England belonging to the English in a very special way' (1899). It is no coincidence that environmentalists constantly pointed to the achievements in nature conservation, town planning and historic preservation of Germany, the country's main industrial and military rival, to spur the British government and public into concern and action (Horwood 1913, Rothschild 1914, Horsfall 1904).

Two other values which late Victorian environmentalism derived from the wider intellectual reaction to economic liberalism were its collectivism and its rejection of laissez-faire. It expressed a collective interest in the environment against the private rights of individual owners. As Robert Hunter commented in 1898:

> In taking stock of the changes witnessed during the present reign, the growth of a feeling of collective ownership in the more noteworthy features of the country, whether natural or of man's creation, cannot be overlooked. . . . The successful movement for the preservation of the commons of the country, the strong feeling in favour of footpaths and rights of way . . . the development of the municipal regulations of towns, all point in the direction of limiting the power of the individual citizen to deal with his land in a manner injurious to his neighbours. This drift of opinion has been especially marked in the case both of beautiful tracts of country and of historic buildings and ancient monuments.

This notion of a collective interest was often conceived to extend beyond the present. It was argued, for example, that there was a duty to preserve the natural or cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations. In destroying a beautiful old building, William Morris declared, 'we are destroying the pleasure, the culture, in a word, the humanity of unborn generations'. The notion of 'heritage' also implied a duty to the past. For Ruskin, it was 'no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of past times or not. *We have no right whatever to touch them*. They are not ours. They belong, partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us.' (Cook & Wedderburn 1905.)

Indeed, the appeal of commons, the traditional countryside, ancient buildings, wildlife and unspoilt wilderness was that they seemed to embody an order quite different from the prevailing atomism and class conflict of the industrial cities. Each of the former, it seemed, was the manifestation of a natural, pre-capitalist community and of its organic social bonds. Thus to William Morris, the greatness of medieval architecture was founded on its social basis: 'it was common to the whole people; it was free, progressive, hopeful, full of human sentiment and humour; . . . the outcome of corporate and social feeling, the work not of individual but collective genius; the expression of a great body of men conscious of their union'. Similarly, common land was a survival of a pre-capitalist, indeed pre-feudal, form of collective ownership by village communities. The Commons Preservation Society, according to its first chairman, G. Shaw-Lefevre, was dedicated 'to restore to the Commons something of the attributes of the ancient Saxon Folk-land' (1894). The appeal of wilderness too was in the natural order of its interdependent animal and plant communities, characterised by Sir Ray Lankester as 'the interwoven flora and fauna, the members of which balance and protect, encourage and check one another, as is Nature's method' (1915). Amidst a tide of rural nostalgia in art and literature, the countryside was idealised as the setting for traditional and harmonious social relations (Williams 1973, Keith 1975).

Moreover, it is clear that protagonists saw these not simply as relics of a defunct order, but as ideal models, at once an indictment of contemporary society but also suggestive of how it might be redeemed. This is why their primitive integrity had to be preserved and not tampered with, and why, for

example, the restoration of ancient buildings or the transformation of commons into suburban parks met with as fierce opposition as did threats of outright destruction. To Morris, medieval buildings were an expression of a collectivist spirit absent from Victorian society which would only be regained in a future socialist society. Similarly, commons were regarded metaphorically by their defenders; they showed how the collective good might prevail over private property interests. The metaphor extended to setting up the National Trust to acquire land and buildings for public benefit, and pressing for local authorities to be given powers to regulate the use of private land in the public interest. In the words of Robert Hunter, the Solicitor to the Commons Preservation Society, who conceived the idea of the National Trust: 'the remembrance of old communal customs may usefully confirm us in the endeavour to make the land of England conduce in the highest degree to the welfare, not of a class, but of the whole community' (1907). Even the wilderness seemed to have lessons to offer. Charles Rothschild, the founder of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, saw the study of natural communities, as a justification for setting up reserves: such a study could reveal 'the natural laws which . . . apply equally to colonies of human beings' (1914).

Not surprisingly, Victorian environmentalists conceived a more active role for the state: to temper rampant individualism, and to promote the collective interest in environmental protection. For example, the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882 enabled the state, if the owner agreed, to purchase monuments or to become their guardian. Guardianship entailed the state assuming responsibility for the protection and maintenance of a monument and the owner abdicating his right to destroy it. It was not until 1913, however, that a measure was eventually enacted which contained the first halting and cumbrous provisions for compulsion, enabling the state to impose a Preservation Order on a scheduled monument (Kennet 1972). In other forms of environmental protection, a similar role for the state was sought; naturalists, for example, argued that 'natural monuments' should be protected in the same manner as ancient monuments.

Although many of their preoccupations are different, the new environmental groups of today express some of the same values as those which underpinned Victorian environmentalism, including concern at the impact on people and the environment of urban and industrial growth and opposition to the values of individualism and laissez-faire inherent in economic liberalism. Indeed, a statement such as the following from Green Alliance could well have been expressed in 1899 instead of 1979:

> Relentless pursuit of GNP is leading to catastrophic and perhaps permanent deterioration of our environment. . . . Political decisions should reflect a far deeper awareness of our need to live in harmony with the environment than industrial nations have yet allowed. . . . It is the lack of this perspective that has permitted industrial nations to measure their success or failure in terms of increasing material consumption alone, even though the pursuit of such consumption is now steadily choking the planet. It has also led us increasingly to regard domestic social problems in merely technical terms – a process which has stimulated social alienation and decay. . . . Other values – personal, social, and even religious – have been forced to yield before an overwhelmingly economic and technical view of things.

Given this continuity of values, how do we explain the fluctuating support for the environmental movement since its late-Victorian beginnings?

The roots of environmental concern

Two sets of factors seem to underlie the episodic development of the environmental movement – one internal to the movement, the other external. The former includes the ageing of voluntary groups and their association with different generations, reflected in characteristic organisational features and orientations. Thus, the Victorian groups typically had consciously elitist structures with control vested in a small number of leading figures in social, political or literary life. Their founders and principal supporters were drawn mainly from the upper class and their strength was seen to lie in the personal influence and patronage of their members.

The inter-war years saw a widening of the social base of environmental concern with the advent of the open-air movement and the growth of suburbia (Rickwood 1973, C. Hall 1976). Many of the new groups of the period had decentralised structures to tap the emerging popular interest in the countryside and to influence the growing regulatory powers of local government. The formation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926 marked a significant departure. Although, like most previous societies, it was essentially a London organisation, parallel county groups were soon established to pursue similar aims at the local level and to press for the implementation of rural planning schemes under powers given to local authorities by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932. Many environmental groups formed subsequently have set up local branches. Organisational evolution went a step further in the case of the Ramblers' Association. It was formed in 1935 as a federation of a host of local rambling clubs, bringing the first influx of lower-class support into the movement.

The most recent era has seen the widening of the environmental movement still further, with control of both national and local groups firmly in the hands of the professional and managerial classes, though often with considerable lower middle-class support. Some of the new groups are concerned with a different and broader range of issues such as the finiteness of resources, the dangers of global pollution and the adverse consequences of economic growth.

More generally, the expanding role of the state has led to shifts in the target for pressure. Environmental groups in the 19th century were concerned to influence and constrain the behaviour of private individuals and organisations: for example, a factory polluting a river, a landowner enclosing common land, sportsmen shooting rare birds, or an owner destroying an ancient building. If persuasion failed, they looked to legal restraints through action in the courts; and to parliament, if existing law failed to cover a particular abuse. Alternatively, some groups sought to secure threatened sites or features through private corporate ownership.

With the growth of the power of the state to control the actions of private individuals, the focus of environmental action has shifted to government. Groups formed in the inter-war years promoted the regulatory function of the state particularly in relation to land-use planning, pollution control and the loss

of natural or historic features. In turn, the expansion of such powers administered by local government stimulated the formation of groups to monitor and influence their use. Local environmental groups have arisen largely in response to the post-war planning system and the powers and responsibilities it conferred on local authorities. The majority of amenity societies, for example, were formed in response to a particular planning issue, the most common being either a major development (such as a town centre or new housing scheme) or a demand for a better approach to planning by the local authority (often a demand that an architect or planner should be among the authority's chief officers) (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). It is interesting that the really rapid rise in the number of local amenity societies has followed official consideration and encouragement of public participation in planning (Skeffington Committee 1969).

The expanding role of the state has also included powers to initiate development, through compulsory purchase and redevelopment powers as well as various incentives to the private sector. In the post-war period, most of the developments with a big environmental impact have been promoted, directly or indirectly, by government. Such developments have included airports, motorways, reservoirs, power stations, new towns, the exploitation of North Sea oil & gas, and the technological revolution in farming. Environmental groups formed in the 1960s and 1970s have therefore tended to focus on government as the initiator and promoter of economic activity, and have attempted to apply an environmental perspective to agricultural, energy, transport, industrial and regional policy making.

It seems that a particular configuration of groups prevails until a new generation perceives new environmental problems, or old problems in a new perspective, or wishes to create its own institutions to express its separate social identity and style of participation. The separate environmental eras represent the influx of new social groups into the movement. This has occurred at the local level also. The parallel existence of county branches of the CPRE (set up mainly in the 1920s and 1930s) and local amenity societies (set up mainly in the 1960s and 1970s) reflects in part a distinction in status between the older, more established middle-class residents and the more recent arrivals (Buller & Lowe 1982).

The need for fresh ventures becomes acute as existing groups lose their initial enthusiasm and crusading zeal, and settle into an established role as guardians of the environmental reforms they have secured. This ageing process is examined further in the next chapter. It is accentuated by the fact that the internal structure of groups tends to become more oligarchic over time, thereby insulating leaders from ordinary members and presenting a barrier to the adoption of new issues and new styles of political participation. Moreover, voluntary organisations are often created or built up by single individuals who continue to dominate them over extended periods of time, perhaps thwarting younger blood and fresh opinions. Monica Dance was assistant secretary of the SPAB from 1931 to 1941 and then secretary until 1978. Lawrence Chubb remained secretary of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society for a staggering 52 years, from 1896 to 1948. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds had the same chairman, Montagu Sharp, from 1895 to 1942. When he retired in 1965, Herbert Griffin had been general secretary of the

Council for the Preservation of Rural England for 39 years, since its inception. Tom Foley was secretary and then chairman of the Pedestrians' Association for Road Safety from 1929 to 1970. Although such long-term service does not necessarily indicate organisational stagnation, it may well provoke the creation of new channels to express new opinions. Significantly, new groups tend to have younger members than older groups.

The second set of factors in the episodic development of the environmental movement is external to the movement. It is perhaps no coincidence that each of the periods of sudden growth of new environmental groups in the 1890s, the late 1920s, the late 1950s and the early 1970s occurred at similar phases in the world business cycle – towards the end of periods of sustained economic expansion. This helps to explain why, despite different levels of economic activity, the advanced capitalist countries have simultaneously experienced heightened environmental concern. We would suggest that environmental groups arose at these times as more and more people turned to count the mounting external costs of unbridled economic growth and sought to reassert non-material values.

We can see why such values had particular appeal at these times and why at each stage the environmental movement has experienced considerable expansion. With greater prosperity, people are freed from their immediate material needs and are able to attend more to the non-material aspects of their lives. With a sense of material security, they are able to shift their attention from the accumulation of wealth to its enjoyment. Clearly, more people were in this position by the late 1920s than in the 1890s, even more by the end of the 1950s and many more still by the 1970s. Of course, with issues such as pollution, it is not just environmental quality that may be at risk, but human health, safety, or even survival.

In expressing concern about pollution, the destruction of nature, the loss of amenity and the depletion of resources, environmentalism, either explicitly or implicitly, challenges existing assumptions about progress which equate material prosperity with general wellbeing. It emphasises not only the costs of economic growth and technological advancement, but also aspects of the quality of life which growth can do little to enhance and may even destroy. It is ironical that environmental values tend to be espoused by those for whom economic prosperity has furnished the means to choose and fully appreciate their surroundings. This illuminates a central tension running throughout the environmental movement from its beginnings to the present day, between resistance to unwelcome change, often of a defensive and sometimes elitist character, and the assertion of human values, including a concern for social wellbeing, in opposition to crass materialism and inhuman technology.

Maslow (1954) has suggested a hierarchy of human needs which people fulfil sequentially according to their relative urgency for survival. Top priority is given to the satisfaction of material needs which include physiological requirements and physical safety. Once a person has attained at least minimal economic and physical security he may begin to pursue other, non-material goals. Next in sequence come belonging needs – the needs for love, esteem and status. When all of these are met, a set of goals related to intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction take on central importance. This last set Maslow termed 'self-actualisation needs'.

The ordering may be misleading. It is not clear for example that the last should necessarily be accorded a lower priority than those of esteem and status, or that the need for love is of the same qualitative category as the needs for esteem and status. However it may be said that in general people tend to accord a high priority to whatever needs are being least met. This concept is similar to that of marginal utility of the consumer in economic theory. Combined with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it suggests a specific direction in which values will change under given conditions.

Since the Second World War, Western nations have enjoyed a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Under these conditions, we would expect economic and physical security, though still valued positively, to assume lower relative priority than in the past. Furthermore, given the generalisation that the values acquired in the formative years of childhood and youth tend to remain throughout adult life, we would expect to see these changing priorities more fully represented among people born since 1945 and raised amidst post-war prosperity. Unlike their parents or grandparents who grew up during the Great Depression or one of the World Wars, when scarcity and physical danger posed such immediate threats, the post-war generation, it is suggested, will be far more sensitive to the 'higher order' needs predicted by Maslow's theory. They have been freed to demote safety and material needs among their personal priorities and concentrate instead upon fulfilling their belonging needs and intellectual and aesthetic drives. Prosperity, however, has led to enduring expectations which in the rest of the twentieth century may be disappointed – with a vengeance, for those for whom mass unemployment is a new reality.

This shift from what Inglehart (1977) has termed materialist to post-materialist values has been substantiated by a number of mass opinion surveys in various Western countries. In a seminal work, he asked people to rank in priority a series of goals which he related to a materialist/post-materialist classification, the materialist values corresponding to Maslow's safety and sustenance needs and the post-materialist values to Maslow's belonging and self-actualisation needs. Inglehart found that in Western countries, although materialist values still predominated, this was less so among people born since the Second World War. As well as this difference between generations, support for post-materialist values was also positively correlated with income and socio-economic status, and was strongly correlated with length of formal education. In short, post-materialism is strongest among those who have enjoyed the most advantaged upbringing in the world.

Inglehart's work has been followed up by Stephen Cotgrove and Andrew Duff (1980) with particular reference to the values expressed by environmentalists. They conducted surveys of members of FoE and the Conservation Society and a sample of the general public. Both environmentalists and the public generally agreed that the environment was being damaged. However, as might be expected, the environmentalists considered the problem to be much more serious. Significant for the argument above was a marked polarisation of values between environmentalists and the public, the former showing stronger support for post-materialist values. Finally, environmentalists were noticeably more opposed than members of the general public to the institutions of industrial society, including lack of confidence in science and technology and a rejection of the values underlying the market economy.

Cotgrove and Duff argue that the environmental movement has provided 'a vehicle for harnessing beliefs about environmental dangers to support an attack on the central values and beliefs of industrial capitalism'. They relate these values to the occupations of members of FoE and the Conservation Society, who are drawn disproportionately from that section of the middle class occupying positions in the service sector of the economy – people such as doctors, social workers, teachers, academics, clergy, writers, artists and actors. Cotgrove and Duff suggest that the radical environmentalism of these people is 'an expression of the interests of those whose class position in the non-productive [sic] sector locates them at the periphery of the institutions and processes of industrial capitalist societies'.

This explanation develops and modifies the notion that post-materialism is simply a product of affluence, by linking shifts in values to changes in the structure of occupations in society. One of the major characteristics of advanced industrial economies is the growth of service occupations, a number of which, though still subordinate to the dominant institutions of industrial capitalism, function outside the market and pursue non-economic values. The suggestion of Cotgrove and Duff that environmentalism is an expression of the class position of those employed in these occupations is intriguing. One caveat should be recorded: these conclusions are derived from a study of the membership of FoE and the Conservation Society. It is doubtful how representative their members are of environmentalists generally. Many established environmental groups, for example, do not directly confront dominant societal goals and it is unlikely that their members would show such marked antipathy towards industrial values.

The social limits to growth

So far we have considered the value changes which a period of sustained economic growth may induce and which may create an upsurge in environmental concern. A second factor which would help to account for heightened concern is the rate of environmental change. Times of economic boom are associated with the restructuring of industry, the intensification of secondary production, the creation of new urban infrastructure and increased consumption, and therefore a magnification of perceived threats to the environment. There is a paradox here: economic growth facilitates increased enjoyment and appreciation of the environment but is also a cause of environmental disruption.

Two major features of post-war prosperity have been the growth of mobility and home ownership. One result is that more and more people are exercising choice, often very wide-ranging, about where to live; they are able to make informed comparisons of the amenities and qualities of different localities. Once settled in their chosen suburb, town or village, people are understandably reluctant to see changes that might adversely affect the environmental standards which attracted them there. However, the factors that enabled them to move into the area – higher levels of income and increased mobility – are the very factors increasing the pressure for further development.

It is significant that the strongest representation of local environmental

groups is in the South-East of England, the most prosperous region in Britain and the one which has experienced the greatest developmental pressures. The three largest county trusts for nature conservation are in Essex, Sussex and Kent. The South-East has 53% of all amenity society members but only 30% of the population (Civic Trust July 1977). Even more striking is that membership for the whole of Scotland is less than that for Surrey, or Kent, or Sussex (Civic Trust May & July 1980). Figure 2.2 shows the geographical distribution of amenity society members. As well as the Home Counties, support is also strong in retirement areas such as Devon, the Isle of Wight, Cumbria and North Yorkshire. In contrast, the incidence of amenity society membership is particularly low in all the industrial conurbations save London, and in remote rural areas which have not experienced the impact of retirement or commuter pressures.

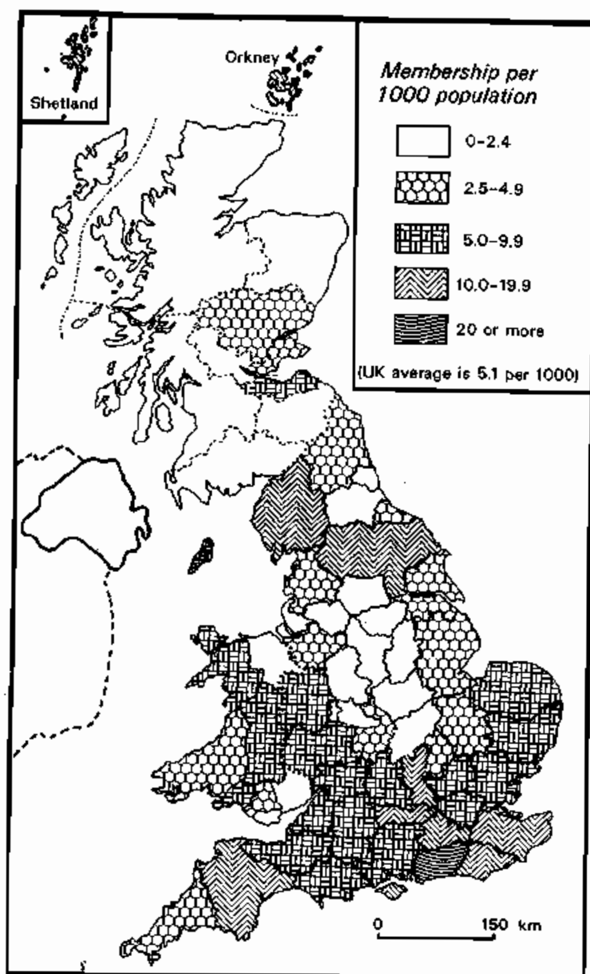


Figure 2.2 Geographical distribution of amenity society members (source: *Civic Trust News* no. 80, July/August 1980).

Hirsch (1977) has used the term 'social scarcity' to express the idea that the good things in life are restricted not only by the physical limitations of producing more of them, but also by the deterioration in their quality as they are used more and as they become more generally available. These are the social limits to growth rather than the physical limits and they affect such diverse commodities as higher education, top jobs and rural solitude. In the case of houses in a select suburb or attractive countryside near a large city, there is a *social* limit to the number of people who can enjoy that environment which is quite distinct from the *physical* limits set by level of income, the capacity of the house-building industry or the transport system. As general levels of material prosperity have increased, so more people have the means of access to attractive residential and recreational environments; but that ability may threaten the very attractions that they seek.

Hirsch used the term 'positional goods' to denote commodities subject to social scarcity. Because their attractiveness diminishes as more and more people acquire them, unrestricted market forces and increasing levels of prosperity would tend to eliminate them. Those who possess positional goods, therefore, must seek non-market mechanisms to choke off excess demand if they are to maintain their advantage. Thus, although access to a pleasant environment may depend upon personal means, the defence of that environment cannot be secured through private action but must depend on collective action and political means (with the exception, that is, of those with sufficient wealth to acquire a large country estate or a Scottish island).

At first, it may seem paradoxical that such an organised and demonstrative commitment to locality and place as expressed by the multitude of local environmental groups should have grown to strength during a period marked by ever-increasing mobility and personal travel, and amongst those with the greatest mobility. Deliberate and explicit identification with place of residence may, however, be a reaction to mobility and its implication of a weakened attachment to locality. For many of higher income, their home – its fittings, size, setting and location – is considered a mark of their status and life style, and is selected accordingly. In this respect, people consciously and deliberately identify themselves with their chosen place of residence, and their relative evaluation of place is sharpened by fine distinctions regarding the social connotations or 'character' of different districts. A gentrified house in a conservation area is a particularly conspicuous form of conspicuous consumption.

In his classic study of commuter villages, Ray Pahl (1965) argued that people choose to live in them not only for the physical surroundings but also for what they perceive as a distinctive pattern of social relationships. Typically, many are 'spiralists', moving up the ladder of job promotion and moving house at the same time. Without local roots, they are nevertheless concerned to establish social contacts in their adopted village. Key elements of their 'village in the mind' are ideals of 'community' and of a village-based social life. Environmental groups, like other local voluntary associations, are a means of realising this ideal through the scope they provide for local involvement, leadership and social interaction. Moreover, they provide an unequalled opportunity to promote particular visions of 'community' through intervention in the planning system to restrict the amount and kind of development.

There is evidence to suggest, however, that it is not the transitory 'newcom-

ers' who join local amenity societies, but those who are seeking to put down roots. In a survey of members of the Suffolk Preservation Society, 52% of those responding had lived in the county for more than 20 years and only 4% for five years or less (Buller & Lowe 1982). A study of the Sussex village of Ringmer suggested that it was rare for households of less than five years' residence to play an executive role in clubs and societies (Ambrose 1974). In Worcestershire, a survey of two villages showed that those who had arrived within the previous four years were least likely to belong to an organisation in the village (Radford 1970). It may be that only those intending to settle are willing to invest in such social commitments.

The values expressed by people joining local environmental groups are not just the post-materialist ones of aesthetic satisfaction and the esteem and status deriving from the defence of one's home environment, but also include a material element. The enormous growth of home ownership has meant that more and more people have a tangible stake in their locality, regarding their house as a financial asset, to be protected and enhanced, as well as a home. Central government at least has recognised the significance of conservation to property owners. For example, Department of the Environment Circular 86/72 directed: 'Conservation should always where possible be carried out on a self-financing basis, particularly by realising the enhanced value of improved property values' (1972b).

Our explanation of periods of intensified environmental concern has focused on generation differences in concerns and styles of activity, shifts in values and magnified threats to the environment following periods of accelerated growth. The emphasis on value change is important in that the environmental movement is not simply a reaction to objective changes in the environment. Environmental pollution and degradation have a subjective as well as an objective measurement. Our perception of spoilage and hazards and the standards by which we assess them change over time. Conditions accepted by one generation may be rejected by another. On some counts, for example, the environment has noticeably improved over time. Over a long historical perspective, the living and working conditions of the British people were clearly vastly superior in the 1960s to those in previous stages of industrialisation. Half a century earlier, most cities were dirty, smoky places in which slum housing mingled with polluting factories; a century earlier they were foul and insanitary, and cholera and typhoid were rife.

Moreover, lulls in the environmental movement have not coincided with significant improvements in living conditions. Though it has been suggested that heightened development activities associated with periods of sustained economic growth may evoke opposition, it is evident that developmental pressures, pollution and resource depletion do not cease in times of economic depression. On the contrary, possibilities for reclaiming degraded areas and abating pollution may well be reduced because of the shortage of public and private finance and the diminished opportunities for replacing inefficient and outmoded plant. What does increase is concern with employment, enterprise and economic security – that is, the satisfaction of material needs which are given priority in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs – though one of the initial effects of the onset of recession may well be to confirm disillusionment with industrial progress. Certainly this was the experience of the Great Depressions

of the late Victorian period and the 1930s, with their 'Back to Nature' movements in art, literature and recreation.

Elite manipulation of values

The foregoing analysis emphasises the role of long-term, though halting, changes in social values in the development of the environmental movement. It is distinct from, though not necessarily at variance with, an analysis which sees issues as arising out of an essentially short-term political process. In the latter, the focus is on the role of the media, political elites and interest groups in raising and manipulating issues and in promoting particular values from above. Of central concern are the factors that propel certain issues on to the political agenda – the range of issues which at any one time command the attention of government and politicians. Those issues with certain characteristics of public visibility (clearly exemplified by specific newsworthy occurrences), those in keeping with the prevailing values of the political system, and those issues on which some kind of action seems possible – all have a greater likelihood of commanding attention and gaining currency than do issues that are unspecific, contrary to dominant political values and which hold out few possibilities for amelioration (Downs 1972, Solesbury 1976, Cobb & Elder 1972). The emphasis is therefore on the interrelation between the characteristics of particular issues and the values and preoccupations of certain 'gatekeepers', such as politicians, newspaper editors and interest group leaders, who are able to assert a measure of control over the generation and circulation of issues.

Anthony Downs has suggested that there is a systematic 'issue attention cycle' at work in society, whereby successive social problems leap into prominence, remain there for a while and then gradually fade from view. The cycle begins when, perhaps through a dramatic event, a piece of investigative journalism, or the revelations of a crusading individual, the general public is suddenly made aware of the existence and evils of a particular problem which may well have been festering unnoticed for a considerable time. The initial public reaction is one of alarm, followed by euphoric enthusiasm about society's capacity to deal with the perceived problem. However, there is a gradual decline in the intensity of public interest as the difficulties and costs of solving the problem become apparent and as new issues arise which can exert a more novel and powerful claim on public attention. Downs predicted that environmental concern would suffer the same fate but that its eclipse would be more gradual because certain characteristics make it more robust than other issues. These include the possibility of technological solutions to environmental problems, their degree of visibility and the fact that pollution threatens nearly everyone but can sometimes be attributed to a small section of society.

We agree with Downs that there is a finite political agenda and that concern for the environment and the related quality-of-life issues of the early 1970s have inevitably suffered some decline in political salience as other issues have arisen. But we suggest that these other issues, like their predecessors, are not random and unconnected, but are part of a bundle of related concerns to do with material wellbeing and physical security, concerns such as unemployment, inflation, Britain's industrial decline, social disorder, international tensions

and the arms race. Moreover, rather than being caused simply by media fashions and the fickleness of public interest, as Downs suggests, these shifts in attention are related to changes in social values.

Theories that conceptualise issues solely in terms of their promotion and manipulation by political actors and elites fail to explain why environmental issues have achieved ascendancy during the periods identified above in various countries. They also fail to explain the history of the movement, which, as we have seen, is not of recent origin but dates back to the late 19th century and has been in continuous existence since then, although peaking at intervals. Evidently public attention is not as fickle as Downs believes, and there must be factors independent of opinion-forming groups and issue gatekeepers to account for such a long-term, mass movement. The notion of value change does account for this, and indicates the limits to the autonomy of political actors in determining the agenda of issues. The very fact that environmental concern has developed as a mass movement means that elite opinions must resonate with pre-existing values to produce such general appreciation.

Of course, to understand the timing of issues, the way they come to be defined and their fortunes, we must fully appreciate the role of the various elites and political actors who shape the political agenda. This is our main object in the rest of the book. One important set of actors comprises environmental groups or, more specifically, their leaders. Their views, influence and actions have significance in the generation and outcome of environmental issues, quite apart from the strength of the environmental movement they claim to represent. The next chapter analyses the internal organisation of environmental groups whereby some of the sentiment and latent energy of the environmental movement are channelled into effective action in support of particular objectives and leadership structures. Environmental groups are by no means the only determinant of environmental issues, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5. There we examine the way in which the media, politicians and local and central government respond to pressures from environmental groups and thereby help to promote, resolve, contain or defuse environmental issues. Though our focus now shifts to these various political elites, it is important to bear in mind the evolving context of public values in which they must operate, which we have examined in this chapter.

3 *The organisation of environmental groups*

Environmental groups both sustain and draw their strength from the environmental movement. They are the organisational channel through which the values of the movement are expressed. Their success in promoting these values will in large measure depend on how effectively they are organised.

Environmental groups face certain problems common to all voluntary organisations. They must formulate explicit aims and goals. They need to attract support and find sources of finance. As with all organisations, they have to develop methods of internal administration and decision making. The way in which a group copes with these problems will affect its relations with the outside world. Finance and membership, for example, help to determine its strength and authority, as well as imposing constraints on the scope, and possibly the nature, of its activities. A group's aims, size of membership, constitution and resources, all affect the kind of response it may elicit from government and other authoritative bodies. In this chapter we are concerned with the organisational characteristics and resources of national environmental groups, using data from our survey of 77 such groups (listed in the Appendix). The first section places them within a general categorisation of voluntary organisations, based on their aims and motivation: this should facilitate comparison amongst environmental groups as well as comparison with other voluntary organisations. Subsequent sections cover their membership, income, staff and expertise, and internal decision making.

Aims

The aims of any organisation are perhaps its most important characteristic. They are its reason for existence. They also relate the organisation to society's value systems and are the source of motivation for its members and leaders. It is not surprising, therefore, that classifications of organisations are usually based on the nature of their aims and the motivations which these express.

Analytically, the most useful classification of voluntary organisations is one that separates those that are unified in pursuit of particular common interests of their members (i.e. interest groups) from those that uphold a particular set of values (i.e. principle groups). The former are the appointed spokesmen for particular sections of the community with a definite interest. Some of the most prominent pressure groups (including the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry) are economic interest groups, representing occupational or business interests. However, interests need not be of a financial nature, but can be defined in terms of ethnicity (e.g. the National

Federation of Pakistani Associations), or gender (e.g. the Women's Institutes), or religious sect (e.g. Orange Lodges), or disability (e.g. the Royal National Institute for the Blind). Most local environmental groups come into the category of non-economic interest groups. Theirs is an interest based on residence and locality, though this is not to deny that their actions may well have economic consequences, for example, on property values. Typically they have a strong sense of territory – a sharply delineated area, whether a street, a town or a county, whose amenities they defend and from which they draw their support.

In contrast to interest groups, principle groups represent no specific sectional interest. Instead, they draw people together who share particular values, to defend these values or promote causes which embody them. We would classify national environmental groups as principle groups, alongside such as War on Want, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Abortion Law Reform Association.

Some environmental groups promote the interests of their members as well as expressing certain principles. The Ramblers' Association, for example, as the national organisation for ramblers, seeks to safeguard their interests in government legislation, in the decisions of local planning authorities and in the actions of highway authorities. But ramblers are only a very loosely defined interest group. Most people indulge in walking. What seems to distinguish ramblers is not so much a common interest or pursuit, but a set of shared attitudes about the value of open countryside and unrestricted access to it. Hence the Ramblers' Association is also involved in maintaining public rights of way and in the scenic protection of the countryside.

Of course, the specific goals and rhetoric a group is obliged to adopt may be quite distinct from its fundamental purposes. Often, sectional interests are rationalised in terms of principles, and apparently principled causes are not always what they seem. Indeed Wootton (1978) has hypothesised that, historically, the markedly successful principle groups have had some sectional character. Examples of commercial backing for environmental groups include the National Coal Board's financial support for the National Society for Clean Air, the involvement of manufacturers of noise suppression equipment in the Noise Abatement Society, and the establishment of the Central Council for River Protection by the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. Some trade unions have also promoted environmental causes. Transport 2000, a group that champions public transport on social and environmental grounds, consists of a coalition of various national environmental groups, the railway unions and the Railway Industry Association. It was formed on the initiative and with the administrative backing of the National Union of Railwaymen, which, along with the other two railway unions, provides some 60% of the group's finances. Similarly, Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers played a leading role in setting up both Energy 2000 (in 1977) and its successor, the Anti-Nuclear Campaign (in 1979). Other examples of the marrying of principles to interests include the coalitions between landscape and nature conservation groups and landowning interests in support of rural preservation, between the amenity movement and the planning profession in promoting public participation in planning, and between national environmental groups and local residents in anti-motorway campaigns. The principle/interest

group dichotomy, therefore, should not be allowed to obscure the relationships across this divide which may be crucial to understanding the achievements of either type of group.

Within the category of principle groups, it is useful to add an extra dimension to distinguish amongst groups on the basis of their orientation towards change, in recognition that some are in the position of defending the values for which they stand, whereas others are promoting value change. We will call the former 'emphasis' groups, by which we mean groups whose aims do not conflict in any clear-cut way with widely held social goals or values but which are motivated by a belief in the importance of certain values and the need for vigilance on their behalf (see Allison 1975). The latter we will call 'promotional' groups, by which we mean groups that promote causes involving social or political reform. Of the two, it is more likely that promotional groups will face explicit opposition as they may challenge existing power relations. Consequently, the distinction is of particular relevance in analysing the different political tactics that groups adopt (see Ch. 4). Of the national environmental groups surveyed, 48 were emphasis groups (including the Botanical Society, the Civic Trust and the National Trust, and 29 were promotional (including the Coastal Anti-Pollution League, the Conservation Society, the Ecology Party and Transport 2000). A not-unexpected time dimension becomes apparent from the mean ages of the two sets – 43 and 8 years respectively – suggesting a tendency for groups to evolve from a promotional to an emphasis role, or to fade away if their reforming efforts seem no longer relevant.

Most groups begin by challenging fundamental tenets of government policy or dominant social values. To win public acceptance or government recognition, they must wage public and parliamentary campaigns. Over the years, a degree of acceptance by society of a group's values often induces a revision of its original objectives, usually with related changes in its tactics and its constitution. Typically, the group will settle down to defend those values which it has succeeded in institutionalising in legal, administrative or policy reforms. As its legislative ambitions wane, the promotional role will likely be replaced by a watchdog (i.e. emphasis) role, which may be semi-official in relation to the implementation and administration of the reforms it has secured. Greater involvement with administrative government makes available institutional channels of influence and reduces reliance on public pressure. The group may also assume executive responsibilities of its own, perhaps again with government countenance. Examples of emphasis groups that have achieved a semi-official, watchdog status include the CPRE in relation to the preservationist British planning system, the Civic Trust and local amenity societies over conservation areas, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and its county conservation trusts in respect of sites of special scientific interest and local nature reserves, the Ramblers' Association over access to the countryside, the National Society for Clean Air with the Clean Air Act 1956, and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) with new towns. In all the above instances the group concerned was prominent in the lobbying that secured the relevant legislation; indeed, in most cases, it was involved in the actual drafting of the legislation.

In some instances, the watchdog role has been formally entrenched in legislation. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, local planning

authorities must consult the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Georgian Group, the SPAB and the Victorian Society before allowing a listed building to be altered or demolished. Significantly, the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Importance was compiled in close co-operation with these groups. Similarly, both the Camping and Caravan Clubs are able to authorise the establishment of camp sites, otherwise subject to local authority control. Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, when fully enacted, local authorities will be obliged to consult the Keep Britain Tidy Group in drawing up plans for litter abatement. With the National Trust, government acceptance has gone even further: post-war legislation for the preservation of buildings and landscape has tended to use the existing machinery of the Trust which, with its own statutory powers, has come to act as a *de facto* government agency (see Ch. 8).

Completion of the transition from a promotional to an emphasis group is sometimes marked by a change of name: for example, from the National Smoke Abatement Society to the National Society for Clean Air (two years after the passage of the Clean Air Act), and from the Standing Committee on National Parks to the Council for National Parks (some 28 years after it had fulfilled its main legislative purpose!). One of our case studies is of the evolution of a promotional group into an emphasis group (see Ch. 9). In this case, the original Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves has become the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (via the intermediate Society for the Promotion of Nature Conservation). Granting of the 'Royal' prefix marks a group's complete assimilation into the most cherished values of our society.

Of course, there is nothing automatic or inevitable about such developments, and not all groups will follow the same pattern. For example, some start out defending a particular value which does not confront official policy or widely held social values. This is particularly so with groups that have been set up by other established groups or government. Recent examples include the Council for Environmental Conservation (formed by established groups), the Tree Council (formed by government), and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (formed by established groups and government). At birth, so to speak, such groups are already established; they may have to prove their worth, but not the legitimacy of their objectives.

On the other hand many groups which challenge dominant values never become established. Some simply cease to exist. This is a particular tendency with single-cause promotional groups. Sometimes, it is demonstratively clear that they are redundant, having decisively succeeded or failed to achieve their original objects, and it is possible therefore for all concerned to agree to call it a day. The Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising, which succeeded, and the Anti-Concorde Project, which failed, are two examples. Only a few groups soldier on with little prospect of success. Examples include the Soil Association, in its continued opposition to modern agricultural practices, and the animal rights and anti-vivisection groups. The fact that they comprise people who in their life and work styles are singularly committed to the particular values expressed, helps to explain their tenacity in the face of adversity.

Finally, there are examples of emphasis groups reverting to a promotional role. This seems to have occurred recently to the CPRE and the TCPA. Both

have passed through three parallel phases of development, which is surprising given their different and sometimes opposing objectives. During the period up to and including the Second World War, they were promotional groups; from their different perspectives, they contributed considerably to the creation of the post-war planning system. The CPRE led the campaign for areas of special protection in the countryside, including national parks, and argued for the extension of town planning to the countryside and for specific controls on ribbon development and urban sprawl (Sheail 1981). The TCPA was the chief proponent of new towns (Foley 1962, Cherry 1974). With both achieving their major legislative aims, they settled down to monitor the new planning system to ensure that it functioned effectively. This phase, as emphasis groups, lasted roughly twenty years until the early 1970s.

During the 1970s both resumed a promotional role, taking stands on such matters as population growth, transport, energy and resource depletion; and both took a renewed interest in instrumental and procedural issues, such as the conduct of public inquiries, improved public participation and defence of the planning system. They also altered their political tactics, adopting a more adversarial, media-orientated approach to complement their former reliance on informal pressure and influence behind the scenes. In both cases, the reason seems to be a combination of staff changes, competition from newly formed promotional groups and a decline in the groups' traditional influence, due to public disillusion with the statutory planning system.

Membership

The basic resource of most environmental groups is their members. The combined membership of the national groups in our survey is 2700000. Cairns (1974) found that about 60% of his sample of environmental group members belonged to another environmental group. Subtracting 30 per cent from our total to compensate for double counting we arrive at an estimate of two million supporters, to which local environmental groups would add perhaps another million. Some of the biggest voluntary organisations in our society are included. Of principle groups in general, Coxall (1981) comments 'usually, membership is numbered in a few thousands or even in hundreds; 5000 is a good membership for a "cause" group and 10000 is exceptional.' The median size of national environmental groups is 3000, but this figure conceals an enormous range (see Fig. 3.1), with a large number of moderately sized groups and several giants each with over 100000. How do we explain this considerable variation in size? Some causes have greater intrinsic appeal than others. Birds, for example, are one of the most popular forms of wildlife; this accounts in part for the support enjoyed by the RSPB, whose membership of 300000 far exceeds that of any other nature conservation group.

Some populations are also much more easily organised than others. The Ramblers' Association with a membership of 32000 has obviously captured a much greater fraction of its potential population than has the Pedestrians' Association which has just a few hundred members. The problem for the latter is that there are few occasions when pedestrians are brought together in large numbers for their support to be canvassed. Rambling is more of a social, if not a

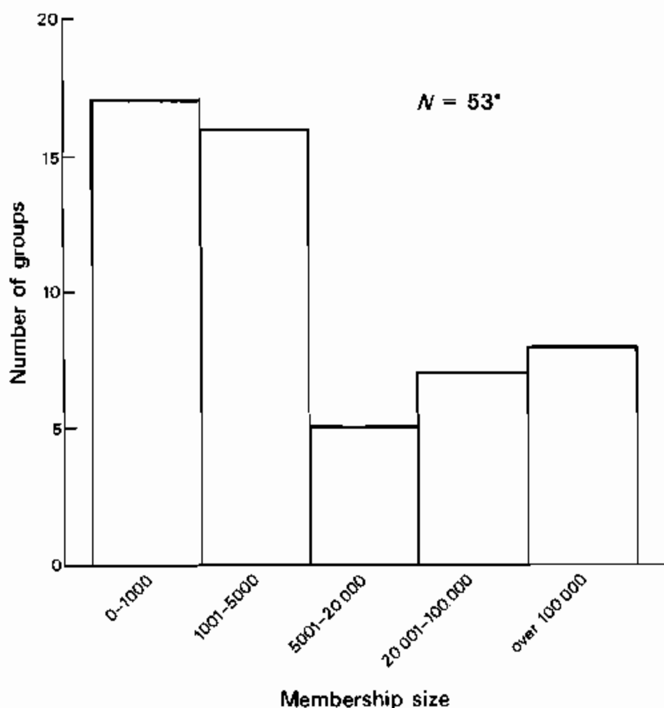


Figure 3.1 Variations in membership size of environmental groups. * This and subsequent figures and tables are based on the authors' survey of national environmental groups and tables, carried out in 1979–80. The groups covered in the survey are detailed in the Appendix. *N* varies from figure to figure because some questions did not apply to specific groups, and some groups were unable or unwilling to answer certain questions.

gregarious, activity and ramblers form themselves into clubs: this facilitates the task of organising them nationally. Localised interests are also relatively easily organised through local social networks, hence the proliferation of environmental groups covering a single village or town or city district. Preservation societies in a number of small towns in West Sussex claim more than one in ten of their resident population in membership (Civic Trust May & September 1980). There are, however, considerable variations amongst local communities in the ease with which organisational support can be mustered: this depends on the social milieu and the size and composition of the community (Hampton 1970, Pickvance 1975a). Some of the consequences of the uneven distribution of, and support for, local environmental groups are examined in Chapter 5.

The other set of explanations of size variations among environmental groups relates to differences in group resources. One indication of the significance of internal resources is the strong correlation between the size and age of the national groups in our survey. This would suggest that it simply takes time to harness support and to build up an organisation capable of engendering further support. Undoubtedly, membership numbers depend on recruitment effort. Some groups have greater means to publicise their activities and thereby attract members. To refer again to the RSPB, its budget for promotion and recruit-

ment in 1980 was £334000, a sum exceeding the full annual income of three-quarters of the other national groups, though only 12% of its own.

A number of groups are also able to offer specific incentives to those who join. The benefits that environmental groups are seeking, such as clean air, access to open countryside or protection of the landscape, are by their nature public goods: they are available to everyone within a population, whether or not he has contributed to their attainment. The rational, utility-maximising person, it has been argued, will not be inclined to help achieve a public good which will then be enjoyed equally by those who do not contribute. He will be inclined to take a free ride too, and avoid the costs necessarily involved in any collective action (Olson 1965). Groups can overcome this dilemma if they are able to offer private benefits exclusively to members (Clark & Wilson 1961, Mitchell 1979a). This can be illustrated from results obtained in our survey. The leader of each of the national environmental groups was asked to rank in order of salience the reasons why, in his or her opinion, people join the group (Table 3.1).

Purposive support appears to be by far the most salient reason, though leaders are probably inclined to believe that their members support what the group stands for rather than belonging for more selfish reasons. However, most (77%) group leaders did concede that there were other, though usually secondary, attractions to membership. The most important are material benefits, which fall mainly into two categories: either publications such as magazines and handbooks, or privileged access to the group's properties, whether nature reserves, camp sites, hostels or historic houses. The eleven groups for which material benefits are the prime membership attraction include some of the biggest. They, it seems, have overcome the free-rider problem by devising attractive and exclusive incentives. The two other significant attractions, of mainly secondary importance, are intrinsic rewards and sociability, the satisfactions that derive from participation itself. Realising their importance parti-

Table 3.1 The reasons why people join environmental groups, in the opinion of their leaders.

Reasons for joining	*Categories presented to respondents*	*Number of groups ranking* *1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*
purposive support	(1) to register their support for the group's aims	32	2	5
material benefits	(2) to get the special benefits and privileges of membership	11	6	5
intrinsic rewards	(3) to get actively involved in doing and organising voluntary work	1	13	6
sociability	(4) to seek social contact and companionship	1	10	6
power seeking	(5) to further their own point of view and influence the direction of the group	—	4	2

$N = 44$ (a few groups jointly ranked two categories)

cularly for retaining the commitment of members, groups such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Ramblers' Association, the National Trust and the Caravan Club have evolved, or are built upon, a complex, decentralised, secondary organisation for harnessing their members' enthusiasm.

The corollary to questions about what members derive from an organisation is the question: what does an organisation derive from them? Each group leader was asked to rank the benefits that his group derived from its general membership. The overall ranking is recorded in Table 3.2 (in declining order of importance). The most important function of membership is as a source of income – 72% of groups ranked this first. After income comes practical assistance, ranked first or second by 44% of groups. Those who singled out such assistance as being even more important than income include the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, and the Soil Association, all of which are heavily involved in practical conservation work. The role of the membership as a network of local environmental watchdogs is ranked next in importance. Groups for which this function is particularly important (i.e. ranked first or second) include those combating pollution, such as the Pure Rivers Society, the Coastal Anti-Pollution League and the Anglers' Co-operative Association, and those preserving amenities, such as the Ancient Monuments Society, the British Mountaineering Council and the Woodland Trust.

Fourth in importance overall is the role of the membership as a source of authority in dealing with government and other organisations. The groups that ranked this highly (i.e. first or second) are those with a socially well connected membership including the CPRE, the Royal Forestry Society and Rescue, as well as the National Trust and the RSPB which also enjoy mass support. Few groups accord much significance to other possible functions of their general membership. Only one group, the Ecology Party, singled out any of the remaining functions; it regards its members as a team of proselytisers. Its recruitment literature refers specifically to the need for members 'to learn about the policies of the Party and to discuss them with friends' so as to canvass additional support.

The predominant view then is of membership as primarily a passive or instrumental resource rather than as active agents. Thus, voluntary assistance in the group's practical work is ranked higher than the membership's role as a source of ideas and initiatives. Similarly, the membership is valued more as a source of authority in dealing with government than as a source of active help in campaigns and lobbying. And, of course, most groups view their membership primarily as the means to another valued resource – money. This view is in keeping with the general level of involvement of members. Some 58% of groups reported that less than one in ten of their members is actively involved, and only 18% could claim that more than a quarter of their members are active. The vast majority of environmental group members seem quite content merely to contribute their annual subscriptions. It should be added, however, that many groups do not encourage their members to get involved; indeed, some would be wary of a more active membership.

A few leaders, particularly those of some of the historic preservation groups, expressed their preference for a small membership. The chairman of the

Table 3.2 The benefits that environmental groups derive from their members.

	Number of groups ranking		
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*
a source of income	31	4	2
providing voluntary assistance in the practical work of the group	8	11	8
a network of local environmental watchdogs to alert the group to any problems that call for action	3	8	7
a source of authority in dealing with government and other organisations	2	7	8
a team of proselytisers, disseminating the group's message at the grass-roots	1	5	8
a source of ideas and initiatives for new policies and issues for the group to pursue	—	5	4
a source of active help in campaigns (for example in lobbying MPs or writing to the press)	—	3	1
		$N = 43$	

Friends of Friendless Churches commented: 'We've never gone in for a large membership. All we need is a base to operate from. We only want dedicated people who accept our aims. A large membership would be a distraction.' Similarly the general secretary of the Ancient Monuments Society asserted: 'We're a learned society, a repository of expertise. We don't want to be a popular society with a big membership.' In the case of the Green Alliance, membership is by invitation only 'since for our particular purposes, which are to make political headway, it is important that the Alliance shall neither have more than its fair share of nuts nor be liable to takeover by extremist groups.'

Some groups that have secured alternative sources of finance do not have an individual membership. There were 21 in our survey, though most of these had an organisational membership instead. A few, however, have no general membership whatsoever. One of the foremost is the Civic Trust. In the view of its director, 'individual subscriptions would be more trouble than their worth' (Brookes & Richardson 1975). Unencumbered by democratic procedures, the Trust has unrestricted manoeuvrability and has firmly resisted pressures to adopt a federal structure which would bring it into a formal constitutional relationship with the local amenity societies whose interests it represents at the national level. A similar attitude is taken by Greenpeace. In the words of one of its pamphlets (1981), 'We do not have an official membership as we feel the amount of time and energy involved in assembly and maintenance of membership files would be better spent in organising campaigns.' Despite such sentiments, most groups with a membership are not greatly hampered by democratic procedures. As we shall see below and in the case studies, full-time officers and executive committees enjoy a considerable degree of operational autonomy.

Income

The total income for the financial year 1979/80 of the groups surveyed was £26 000 000, a sum equal to the combined expenditure for that year of the main

government environmental agencies: the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and the Historic Buildings Councils. The two sums are not additive, as a significant proportion of the income of the groups comes from the agencies. Even so, voluntary endeavour is roughly on a par, financially, with statutory provision in this area.

As with membership figures, there are considerable variations in annual income (see Fig. 3.2) around a median of £55 000. Sources of income can also be ranked (Table 3.3) and for half the groups, the most important source is membership subscriptions. Earnings, the second most important source overall, include fees, the sale of publications, fund-raising events, and the growing trade in mail-order goods. Although now third in overall importance, government support for environmental groups is a recent phenomenon. Indeed, half the groups still enjoy no financial support from government whatsoever. However, 23% are heavily dependent on government as their first or second most important source of income; these include such prominent groups as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Council for British Archaeology and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. The money comes mainly from the Department of the Environment and the agencies linked to it – the Countryside Commission, Nature Conservancy Council, Sports Council and the Historic Buildings Council – but also from other government departments and local authorities. Environmental groups have not been alone in benefiting from official interest in the contribution that voluntary organisations might make to a variety of social needs. This interest, which grew throughout the

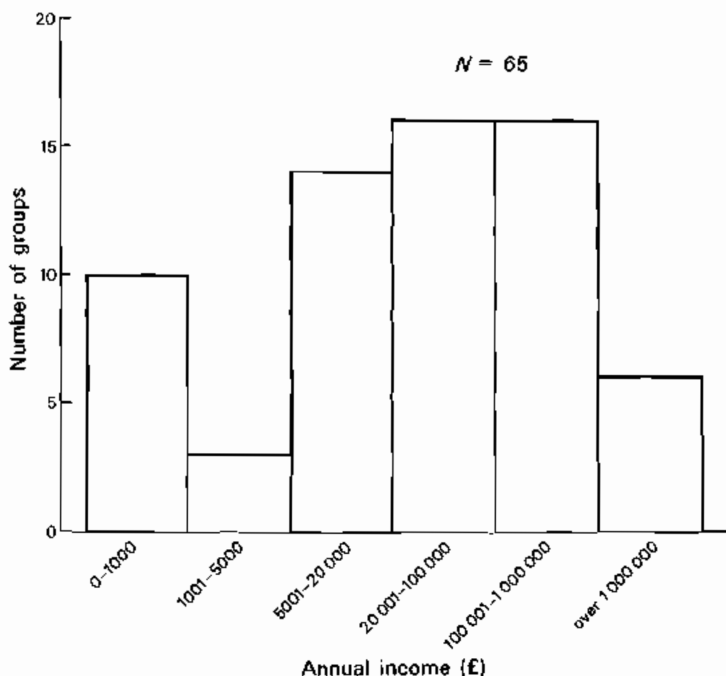


Figure 3.2 Variations in annual incomes of environmental groups.

Table 3.3 Sources of income for environmental groups.

	Number of groups ranking		
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*
membership subscriptions	36	10	8
earnings	11	19	12
government grants	11	6	11
gifts or endowments	9	16	14
private trusts or foundations	6	9	9
investments	4	8	5
donations or sponsorships from private companies	4	5	4
		($N = 73$)	

1970s, stemmed partly from political pressure to limit statutory services and public expenditure, and partly from the recognition that voluntary organisations have a role complementary to that of the state in promoting social welfare (Stevenson Committee 1972, Leat *et al.* 1981, Voluntary Services Unit 1978).

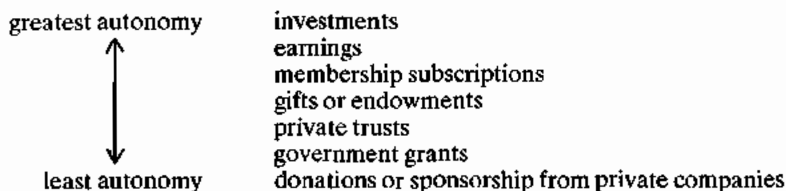
The aggregate ranking of income conceals a number of distinct patterns. For most groups with a general membership, subscriptions come first or second, and the other major source of income is either earnings or investments or gifts. For other groups, with relatively minor or no subscription income, the main sources are either government or private trusts, combined with earnings or gifts, but not investments which as a major source of income are strongly associated with subscriptions. There are two other noteworthy associations. Private trusts and government grants do not occur together as the major sources of finance for any group. This reflects the usual practice of private trusts to support promotional endeavours which, because of their innovative or unconventional nature, do not yet enjoy official sanction. The contrary is the case regarding sponsorship by private firms and government. Of the groups that rely on the support of business and industry, some two thirds look to government as their other major source of income; these are the Tree Council, the Civic Trust, the Keep Britain Tidy Group, the Central Council of Physical Recreation, the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea, and the Building Conservation Trust.

Each of the different income sources has its uncertainties which place constraints on recipient groups. Membership income, for example, may fluctuate from year to year. Membership turnover varied from as much as 40% in one year for Friends of the Earth, down to an average of 11% for the National Trust. In order to retain support, groups have to devote considerable effort to servicing and recruiting members. This represents resources deflected from their primary purposes, except, that is, for groups such as the Camping Club and the British Horse Society that are specifically service organisations. In the words of a trustee of the Woodland Trust, 'members can be an expensive way of raising income'. Inflation has exacerbated the problem, posing many groups the dilemma either of watching their real income steadily dwindle or of regularly raising their subscription fees with the consequent risk of losing members.

As against the possible fluctuations of membership income, grants from private trusts, business or government are usually of a specified duration,

thereby providing greater medium-term security, though at the risk of a sharp drop in income should a grant not be renewed. In a climate of cuts in public expenditure, those groups dependent on government felt particularly vulnerable. These external sources of finance are subject to a different type of constraint in that recipient groups can become beholden to their donors. It has been argued that the environmental movement in Britain has already been co-opted by government and big business and thereby rendered ineffective as a radical force (Sandbach 1980). If this is so, there are two possible ways in which it might have happened: through environmental groups having been drawn into elaborate but token consultative procedures (we shall discuss this possibility in Ch. 4), or through their financial dependency.

In declining order, we can rank the degree of autonomy that a group enjoys when spending different types of income:



Most groups have income profiles in the upper half of this spectrum. A sizeable minority, however, cluster in the lower half. The degree to which the latter may be vulnerable to external pressures or influence varies enormously. Of course, a group is free to reject a grant or donation if it feels that this may compromise its independence. However, groups that are heavily dependent on a small number of external sources have few options. The alternative course, of diversifying grant income, requires skilful and persistent fund raising.

There are three possible ways in which 'he who pays the piper may call the tune'. First, in making donations, trusts, government and businessmen are fulfilling their own objectives. Government tends to favour emphasis groups such as the Tree Council, the Council for Environmental Education and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, which concentrate on providing public information or doing practical conservation work, rather than promotional groups or those whose primary task is servicing their members. In supporting certain groups only, external sponsors may be selectively reinforcing one perspective on a problem rather than others. For example, the only environmental group supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), which brings together conservationists and agriculturalists to promote mutual understanding and co-operation. Its unifying principle is that loss of wildlife through agricultural intensification can best be ameliorated by advising farmers to modify their practices. Other groups perceive a basic antipathy between modern farming and nature conservation, and a consequent need for reform of agricultural policy or for control over farming practices, but these are not supported by the Ministry. Moreover, the Ministry, as well as other sectors of the agricultural lobby, is able to counter criticism from these other groups by pointing to its support for FWAG as evidence of its commitment to conserva-

tion (see Wiggin 1981). Another example is the support for the Keep Britain Tidy Group from firms such as Metal Box, Cadbury–Schweppes and British Cellophane, as well as the Glass Manufacturers' Federation and the Brewers' Society. The philosophy of the group is 'People make litter – People can stop it', and it concentrates on publicity, propaganda and educational work to discourage litter dropping. FoE has promoted a different perspective on the issue, arguing that the real problem is the manufacturers' wastage of resources in excess packaging. Its campaign targets have included some of the chief supporters of the Keep Britain Tidy Group.

The second form of external constraint is the conditions under which grants are given. Particularly where large sums are involved, the money is likely to have strings attached, limiting it to specific projects or functions and requiring certain accounting procedures. A number of environmental groups act, in effect, as agents of government, performing specified tasks on its behalf. The Keep Britain Tidy Group describes itself as the 'chosen instrument of the Government for carrying out its policy in the field of litter prevention and abatement'. Over half the Group's income is in the form of a grant from the Department of the Environment: in 1978, this amounted to £231000. Another example is the Civic Trust. In 1975, the Trust co-ordinated the British programme for European Architectural Heritage Year on behalf of the government (in other countries this task was performed by governments). Since then, it has performed other agency work, such as administering grants for local conservation schemes.

In a number of instances, government has adopted an explicitly interventionist approach. The Building Conservation Trust and the Tree Council were both established by, and received considerable initial support from, the Department of the Environment. This approach, however, is more typical of public agencies than the central departments of government. The Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and the Sports Council each have programmes for funding the general administration of voluntary organisations and have deliberately used such funding to promote organisational reforms. A grant from the Countryside Commission, for example, effected a complete restructuring of the Standing Committee on National Parks in 1977, under the new title of the Council for National Parks. The money – £4000 per annum over 6 years – enabled the new Council to employ its own secretariat and thereby operate apart from its parent organisation, the CPRE. A grant from the Commission to the Woodland Trust facilitated its transformation from a small band of enthusiasts in the South-West into a national organisation. The money allowed the Trust to appoint its first staff member. A requirement of the grant was that the Trust should assume a general membership.

The third form of constraint may be a reluctance on the part of recipients to criticise their donors. A number of groups dependent on external sources of finance stated that they did not regard this as a constraint on the views they expressed. The director of the Civic Trust, for example, remarked:

> In our earlier years we would have perhaps refused government money. But we do not feel compromised by our associations with government. We are not beholden to government. If anything, it is the other way round.

The assistant director of the Council for Environmental Education explained:

> We're funded by the Department of the Environment yet work with the Department of Education, so can criticise without fear.

An alternative view was expressed by the secretary of the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea, which is supported by local authorities:

> There are things you can't do if government is fostering you. . . . Chances are you'll find yourself seeking permission to do things, having things vetted, and all that is complicated and time consuming. You lose your political muscle.

Other groups gave reasons why they specifically avoid dependency, the greatest concern being a loss of independence and of the ability to criticise government policy.

To examine the issue further, we asked all groups the question 'In contemplating what could prove to be a controversial step, from which direction would you be most wary of a critical response?' (See Table 3.8.) Of the groups most dependent on gifts and endowments, two thirds said that they would be most wary of a critical response from their donors or sponsors. Of the groups for whom government is the primary source of income, two thirds put sensitivity to criticism from government either first or second. Thus there may be some hidden dissuasion associated with dependence on external finance, such that groups become reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them. This is unhealthy if it entails an inhibition to voice legitimate criticisms of government policy or of the actions of particular industries. The unwillingness of some group leaders to acknowledge the possibility renders it more insidious. Though not apparent in specific actions, it may well reinforce the generally conservative tone they adopt.

Staff and expertise

Perhaps the most important consequence of the growth in support for environmental groups has been their ability to take on or expand their professional staff. Some 73 groups provided data on their staff complement. The total number of full-time employees was 4210, and the median figure was four. The distribution between groups is shown in Figure 3.3. Both membership and income are separately correlated with staff numbers; the latter is the more important factor, which indicates that there is a tendency among staff to search out alternative forms of income apart from membership subscriptions.

Looking at the range of environmental groups, two distinct size thresholds are apparent. The first is the capacity to employ at least one member of staff. Being entirely dependent on voluntary labour, groups below this threshold are severely limited in what they can do, and therefore in their ability to attract additional support. This is not to deny the talents and enthusiasm of the volunteers that many groups can call upon, but merely to aver that effective use of such assistance usually requires administrative back-up. A third of local amenity groups overcome the difficulty through having as their honorary

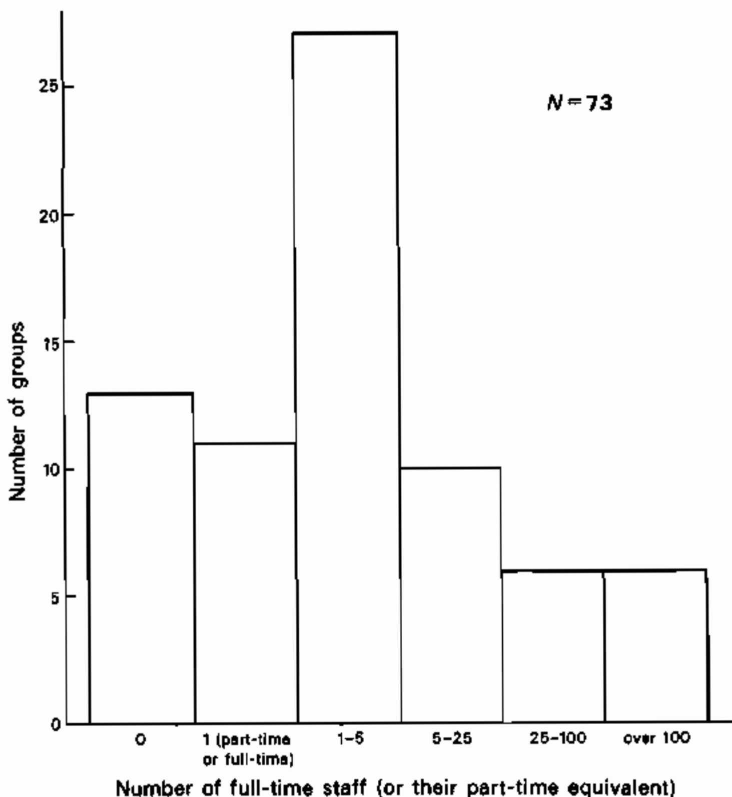


Figure 3.3 Variations in staff of environmental groups.

secretary someone who is a housewife or is retired (See Table 2.3). The threshold is apparent in the hiatus in Figure 3.2 for national groups with an annual income between £1000 and £5000. The latter (about the minimum income from which to employ a full-time officer at the time of the survey) must seem an unattainable target to the several groups that survive on an income of a few hundred pounds.

Many of the groups that have crossed this threshold have relied, at least temporarily, on external aid. In some cases, support has come from a wealthy benefactor or from a charitable trust. The Rowntree, Cadbury and Carnegie Trusts have been particularly significant in helping a number of environmental groups get off the ground. In other cases, new groups have been launched by established organisations which have borne many of the initial launching costs and difficulties. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers was set up by the Council for Nature, for example, the Council for Nature by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (see Ch. 9), the Youth Hostels Association by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo) by the CPRE, and the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group by the SPAB. There are many other examples. Indeed, surprisingly few national environmental groups have arisen *de novo*.

The next threshold is less pronounced but seems to occur when a group has between about half a dozen or a dozen staff. Whereas the first threshold was associated with the differentiation of a distinct administrative function, the second is associated with administrative specialisation. With specialisation comes greater staff autonomy, as staff acquire (or are appointed with) specialist knowledge and expertise, as they assume greater control over the generation of the group's income (with one or more staff being assigned to such matters as membership recruitment or fund raising) and as the complexity of administration elicits a separate managerial function, sometimes signalled by the translation of the post of general secretary to that of director.

The figures given in Table 3.4 illustrate the changes in staff numbers since 1965 for particular groups. The general expansion in the staff of environmental groups has had far-reaching implications for both their internal and external politics. There is now a sizeable core of environmentalists professionally committed to sustaining their groups' activities, support and influence. Most of our respondents saw their long-term future in working to protect the environment, a fact underlined by the length of time they had worked for the group – the median period was five years. To get some impression of their backgrounds, we asked each about their previous occupation (Table 3.5). A third of them had been employed by another environmental group, suggesting the existence of a rudimentary career structure for environmentalists. The growth in staff numbers has also drawn in people with experience of administration and journalism and others with relevant technical expertise who have undoubtedly contributed to a general improvement in the sophistication of environmental lobbying. The 10% of group leaders who have come from related government agencies represent an important lobbying resource, given their detailed inside knowledge of government. Such movement of former civil and public servants to major interest groups is not uncommon (Richardson & Jordan 1979).

The increase in staff has facilitated stronger links with other organisations. Because of the large number of environmental groups, liaison can be a full-time

Table 3.4 Changes in staff numbers of selected groups.

	Number of full-time (or, if part-time, their full-time equivalents) employees			
	1965	*1970*	*1975*	*1979/80*
(1) British Trust for Conservation Volunteers[1]	1	1	1	34
(2) Conservation Society	—	0	3½	2½
(3) Council for Environmental Conservation	—	0	2	5
(4) Council for Environmental Education	—	1½	2½	4
(5) CPRE	6	11½	15	13
(6) Friends of the Earth	—	1	15½	21
(7) Keep Britain Tidy Group[1]	—	4	22	24
(8) National Society for Clean Air	16	12	9	7
(9) Town and Country Planning Association	—	7	9	17
(10) Tree Council	—	—	1	4

[1] The big jump in staff numbers for these two groups followed the commencement of annual government grants to them.

Table 3.5 Previous occupations of the leading staff members of environmental groups.

	%
employed by another group	33
general administration	32
media or public relations	12
related government agency	10
relevant technical occupation (such as town planning)	7
irrelevant technical occupation	7

job. Between groups with related objectives, staff generally know one another personally and are regularly in touch over issues of common concern. As we shall see in the next chapter, the environmental lobby acts very effectively as a network for exchanging information and intelligence between groups and for mutual co-operation on projects and campaigns. Full-time staff also have the opportunity to cultivate links with civil servants and politicians. There is a strong correlation between a group's staff numbers and the extent of its contacts with government.

Another mark of the increasing professionalism of the lobby is its growing expertise. We asked each group leader to list the technical and professional skills readily available to the group, both externally (via consultants or honorary advisers) and internally (Table 3.6). By far the most prevalent was that of solicitor or barrister, usually as an honorary legal adviser. Historically, this has been the single most significant skill for environmental groups as for most other pressure groups. Many of the 19th century organisations such as the RSPCA, the Commons Preservation Society and the RSPB, devoted much of their efforts to litigation. As the focus of environmental pressure has moved from the courts to legislation and executive action, lawyers have maintained their importance, advising a group, for example, on parliamentary drafting or representing it at a public inquiry. The other generalist pressure-group skill – public relations/journalism – is of much more recent interest to environmental groups. As we shall see in the next chapter, only since the late 1960s have most groups given sustained attention to influencing public attitudes via the media.

Table 3.6 Prevalent skills available to environmental groups.

Skill	Availability
solicitor/barrister	more than 70% of groups
public relations/journalism ecologist/biologist	50–60% of groups
town planner architect agriculturalist publishing/graphic design forester landscape architect surveyor	30–40% of groups
building conservation architectural historian water engineer chemist/chemical engineer	20–30% of groups

Except for publishing/graphic design, all the other prevalent skills are specific to the environmental field. They mirror the sort of specialist expertise that local and central government deploy in regulating environmental change. Thus they contribute to a group's authority in dealing with officials, as confirmed by the correlation of a group's range of skills (independent of its staff numbers) with its range of contacts with government. Several environmental groups now command considerable respect for the quality of their work and expertise. Examples include the National Society for Clean Air in pollution control, the Civic Trust in urban improvement, the SPAB in architectural conservation, the RSPB in managing wildlife, and the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea in monitoring marine pollution. When such expertise comes to be valued and sought after by government and statutory bodies, the group's position is greatly strengthened.

Internal decision making and authority

If democracy implies that constituents have a real opportunity to select their leaders, most environmental groups are not democratic. These organisations are oligarchic in nature; in all but a few, the leaders cannot be realistically challenged. Many, though not all, have elections; but they are often not contested, and the primary source of nominations is usually the centre and not the grass-roots. Other instruments available to the centre, such as proxy voting and powers to co-opt onto the governing body, also ensure the continuity of the existing leadership despite elections. In the words of a staff member of one of the large wildlife groups, 'essentially we appoint council members for their expertise and contacts. As in other conservation groups, the elections are a formality.' He could have added that environmental groups are not alone in this respect among voluntary organisations generally (Selznick 1952, Devall 1970).

By and large, elections serve to ratify the authority of a group's leadership. The ineffectiveness of such formal procedures in expressing 'rank-and-file' opinion was indicated when group leaders in our survey were asked which channels they found most useful in keeping them in touch with members' views (Table 3.7). Neither elections nor the annual general meeting are considered by most group leaders to be significant channels; nor are honorary officers

Table 3.7 Channels whereby group leaders are kept in touch with members' views.

	Number of groups ranking		
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*
letters and telephone calls from members	28	5	5
the group's local branches	12	7	5
the group's committees	4	7	12
honorary officers	4	4	9
the annual general meeting	2	6	3
membership turnover	—	3	4
elections	—	1	—
		N = 43	

usually seen to perform as spokesmen for the membership. Instead, groups rely mainly on informal means, counting on members with decided views to make direct contact. Alternatively, groups with strong branches find that these are useful sources of members' opinions. Even the last resort of members – to vote with their feet – does not figure prominently as an indication of members' feelings, probably because a few isolated and disgruntled resignations can seldom have a significant effect on the membership total.

The need to preserve a group's unity and support does, however, circumscribe its leaders in exercising their prerogatives. Avoiding internal dissension is perhaps more important for voluntary organisations than for more complex organisations whose internal specialisation helps to diffuse and contain potential goal conflicts (Dunkerley 1972). The structural simplicity of voluntary organisations makes it difficult for them to accommodate routinely all but the simplest disagreements; nor do they possess the sanctions that non-voluntary organisations use to enforce internal discipline. Indeed in recent years, groups as varied as the National Trust, the British Horse Society, FoE, the British Mountaineering Council and the RSPCA have been split by internal faction.

The salience that preserving a group's unity has in the minds of its leaders is apparent from our respondents' replies to the question, 'In contemplating what could prove to be a controversial step, from which direction would you be most wary of a critical response?' Most (Table 3.8) expressed themselves relatively *insensitive* to criticism from such external sources as the press or government or other environment leaders, the major exception being those groups heavily dependent on outside financial support (see p. 46). Otherwise, the great majority of group leaders are most attuned to internal criticism, from their members, branches or constituents. To many of them, knowledge of what their constituents will stand will be second nature, as will knowledge of what will keep their membership quiescent and what the branches expect. Through such judgements, group leaders internalise certain constraints to their discretionary authority.

Indeed, just because the leadership of a group is undemocratic does not necessarily mean that it is unrepresentative. Much will depend upon the attitude of the leadership and the extent to which the structure of the group is receptive to members' pressures. To determine the decision-making style of those groups in our survey with an individual membership, we posed four questions: two were designed to elucidate whether a group's leadership was

Table 3.8 The sensitivity of group leaders to criticism from different quarters.

	Number of groups ranking		
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*
membership	23	11	5
branches	19	8	—
constituent groups	17	7	6
donors or sponsors	8	8	3
the press	4	4	8
government	3	12	1
leaders of other environmental groups	1	3	7
		$N = 74$	

representational (i.e. taking the views of the membership as their reference point for establishing aims and decisions) or authoritative (i.e. making decisions and establishing aims *without* reference to the membership); and the other two aimed to elucidate whether its structure was open or closed to the involvement of its ordinary members (Table 3.9). In the opinion of group leaders at least, structures are predominantly open, and half the groups have an authoritative leadership. The combination of these two features we might characterise as open oligarchy. A largely passive membership allows, perhaps even obliges, executive decisions to be taken by the committed few with reference only to the group's objectives. An open structure, however, preserves at least something of the voluntary ethos and its anti-authoritarian norms by enabling anyone who wants to become actively involved to do so. Most groups incline to the open oligarchy model, and a third conform completely; this epitomises the structure of much of British public life.

A number of emphasis groups deviate away from this model towards a closed oligarchy in which members are effectively excluded from the group's decision making. They include two overlapping categories: older groups formed before the First World War (such as the RSPCA, the National Trust and the Camping Club) and most of the building preservation groups (including the Ancient Monuments Society, the Friends of Friendless Churches, the Georgian Group and the SPAB). In the first instance, what appears to have happened is that a large membership has been grafted to the small, well connected elite which comprised the original group, but the elitist leadership has remained unreformed. As we shall see in the case of the National Trust (Ch. 8), major questions can arise about the internal accountability of such a leadership. The second category might be characterised as the tyranny of taste. Qualitative judgements as to the superiority or inferiority of artefacts and their treatment are more central to historic preservation than any other environmental field, thereby sharpening the dichotomy, faced by all principle groups, between

Table 3.9 Organisational styles of environmental groups.

	Questions	*Responses*	
leadership	It is the duty of the leaders of the society to safeguard and promote its aims, not to represent the opinions of its members. There's no need to consult the members much: they would not expect it.	agree = authoritative agree/disagree = intermediate disagree = representational	50% 29% 21%
structure	If members are dissatisfied with what the society is doing there are adequate channels for them to change things. If any of the members wants to get involved, it's easy enough to get elected or co-opted onto one of the society's committees.	agree = open agree/disagree = intermediate disagree = closed $N = 42$	71% 17% 12%

promoting a particular ideal and representing popular (or even heterodox) opinions. It is also a field which, in the past, has been peculiarly split between rival factions and dogmas. The oldest preservation group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, is itself a monument to such a split between 'Scrape and Anti-Scrape' (i.e. the Victorian advocates of building restoration and their opponents – see Pevsner 1976). Though the dispute long ago lost its currency, intending members of the Society are still asked to sign a form saying that they are in agreement with William Morris's Anti-Scrape Manifesto, which launched the Society over a hundred years ago (Harvey 1972). The closed structure of this and other building preservation groups ensures the exclusion of unorthodox or philistine views. Our respondents in these groups were fully prepared to acknowledge this point. As the secretary of the Georgian Group commented, 'We are a most undemocratic body . . . controlled by a self-perpetuating oligarchy.' Somewhat paradoxically, given the factionalism of the past, the building preservation groups co-operate much more effectively than other environmental groups, particularly over lobbying. This is probably due to their similar organisational structures.

In contrast, a number of groups deviate from the standard model of open oligarchy in the opposite direction, towards a representational leadership. Here again there are two categories. One is recreational groups, such as the Youth Hostels Association, the British Mountaineering Council and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, whose predominantly service function calls for leadership responsive to members' needs and opinions. The other includes such promotional groups as the Conservation Society, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, and the Ecology Party. Seeking fundamental political change, they have consciously developed decentralised structures in order to mobilise grass-roots activism. A representational leadership corresponds with this emphasis on participation. Interestingly, FoE, on our measure, differs in having a leadership that is authoritative rather than representational, even though it too has encouraged local activism. This difference helps to illuminate a number of contrasts, particularly between the Conservation Society and FoE, as well as the failure of efforts to amalgamate these two groups. The latter is a much more energetic though acrimonious group, reflecting the tensions between its strong leadership style and its participatory membership (see Ch. 7). By comparison, the Conservation Society is often said to be suffering from democratic stagnation, hindered by its complex procedures from responding decisively to the flagging involvement of its members.

The discussion so far has focused on groups with an individual membership. There are distinct constraints on decision making in groups whose membership consists of other organisations. Their federal structure facilitates a far greater degree of participation by constituents. The responsiveness of a federal group is fostered by the control that member groups can exercise, both directly through representation on its governing council and indirectly through its dependence on their resources. This means more than just financial support. Much of the progress of a federal group depends upon the amount of effort that staff and representatives of its constituents are prepared to contribute, serving on working parties, furnishing expertise or information, and using their contacts and influence to promote the group's work and views. Indeed, the

critical question regarding decision making within federal groups is not that of democratic control (which seems to be more than adequate in most) but of their ability to act decisively, particularly when each constituent possesses an effective veto. Some 41% of the leaders of federal groups said that they could not take an independent line on an issue which might run contrary to the views of any of their member groups. We return to this theme in the next chapter, when we consider the effectiveness of federal groups in co-ordinating the environmental lobby. It should be added that the responsiveness of a federal group is towards its constituents' leaders, not their members. Being organisations of organisations, most federal groups are remote from the ordinary members of environmental groups. In Chapter 10 we examine this point in relation to an international federation, the European Environmental Bureau.

Intermediate, between the very limited autonomy of groups with an organisational membership and the practically unrestricted autonomy enjoyed by leaders of groups with an individual membership, are those groups whose local branches possess some autonomy plus a degree of financial or constitutional control over headquarters. In such cases (which include the CPRE, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the Conservation Society), not only do branches act as channels of members' views, they can also function as independent centres of power, able to exert internal pressure on the leadership to make it respond to alternative views.

Having shown that, with the exception of federal groups, constituents are not usually the dominant influence on environmental groups, what remains to be considered is the comparative influence of professional staffs, honorary officers and governing councils. Most groups have a constitution which places formal power in the hands of a governing council (or a board of directors if the group is registered as a limited company, or perhaps a board of trustees if it is registered as a charity). In practice, this is seldom the way decisions are made. In most groups, effective responsibility for both day-to-day decisions and policy making is delegated to the senior staff, honorary officers or an executive committee of the governing council. Formal definitions of responsibility, therefore, can be misleading because they do not necessarily indicate the real locus of power within a group, but also because they simplify the way decisions are made. In reality, decision making is not a single event in which authoritative judgements are dispensed, but a series of steps by which a group becomes committed to a course of action. The final step for major policy departures may well be *pro forma* approval by a governing council. In determining the direction taken by a group, however, the ability to propose is probably more important than the formal power to ratify.

Therefore, we asked of groups two questions. What was the major source of initiative in the group's development? And who in practice took the major decisions? Where possible, we asked for examples so as to pinpoint the actual path that decisions had followed. Aggregated (see Table 3.10), the results present a few dominant patterns whereby different groups formulate and choose between major options. Decisions initiated by staff are typical of groups with staff complements of more than five. Staff→staff decision making, in which the staff also determine policy, is typical of certain newer groups (such as the Civic Trust, Greenpeace, Population Concern, FoE, Transport 2000 and the Political Ecology Research Group), and is another manifestation of the

Table 3.10 The way decisions are made in environmental groups.

Number of groups	*Major source of initiative*	*Dominant decision paths*	*Major decision-making body*	*Number of groups*
26	staff		staff	12
			staff and council[1]	16
24	council[1]		council[1]	25
			officers and council[1]	5
18	officers		officers	10
			$N = 68$	

[1] Or executive committee.

professionalism of the environmental lobby. Indeed, some of these groups do not have a membership. In contrast, in older membership groups that have acquired staff over the years, power lies jointly with the senior staff and the governing council. Examples include the National Trust, the TCPA and the RSPCA. The situation in which the staff propose and the council ratifies is typical of federal groups (and the rather tight rein that their constituents exercise) such as the Planning and Environment Group and the Tree Council. Officer→council (such as for the Botanical Society and the National Society for Clean Air) and council→council decision making (such as the Salmon and Trout Association and the Victorian Society) is typical of older groups with just a few staff. Officer→officer decision making is typical of younger groups with very few or no staff. These are often run by one or two people, acting as chairman or honorary secretary, who were also among the prime movers in setting up the group and who dominate and animate its proceedings. Examples include the Coastal Anti-Pollution League, the Conservative Ecology Group, the Friends of Friendless Churches, and the Seabird Group. Overall, the results are in keeping with the findings of other studies of voluntary organisations which suggest that a stronger bureaucratic structure, which may well include stronger organisational roles for governing councils, often arises as a group ages, and particularly following the demise of its dominant founder and leader (Zald & Ash 1966).

Organisational effectiveness

The national groups in our survey showed a variety of responses to the organisational problems of membership, finance, staff and decision making.

The success with which they cope with these issues depends on a delicate balance between competing concerns. A balance has to be achieved between the administrative constraints of membership size and the financial and manpower benefits of a large membership. Freedom of action through financial autonomy has to be balanced with the benefits of adequate financial resources. Administrative efficiency and speed of political response are weighed against the needs to inform and consult members.

Organisation renders available the diffuse energy and enthusiasm of the environmental movement as tangible political resources. But particular organisational forms place specific constraints on the use of these resources. The form adopted by many environmental groups is an oligarchy of a few leaders plus many supporters. This has advantages and disadvantages. By concentrating a group's resources and decision making, it ensures the maximum tactical manoeuvrability in dealing with the centralised organs of government and the media. One corollary, however, is an instrumental attitude towards the membership. Members are regarded primarily as a passive source of income rather than as active agents in securing environmental change, and thus are not encouraged to play a part in the group's affairs. In general, environmental groups offer their ordinary members little scope for participation in lobbying and campaigning. Indeed, simply as channels for representing the opinions of their members, many groups are not very effective because of the way they are structured and because of their leaders' perceptions of their own roles.

As a consequence, the mass following of environmental groups remains a largely untapped political resource. Of course, passive members do swell membership statistics, but the political value of mere numbers is limited. A group may claim that its large and growing membership is a pointer to increasing public sympathy for its aims. This claim is weakened, however, if it is evident that the leadership does not fulfil a representational role or that the membership is little involved or interested in the group's political activities. In any case, a number of organisations are able to thrive without members at all, deriving legitimacy instead from their obvious affinity with dominant cultural values (e.g. the Civic Trust) or from the favourable media coverage they achieve (e.g. Greenpeace).

In the next chapter, we turn from issues of internal organisation to look at how groups conduct themselves in the political system. In considering their external relations, it is important to bear in mind the resources and constraints presented by the internal organisation of environmental groups. The support of members and sponsors must be maintained. Issues should be avoided which would create disaffection or disunity. Above all, a group must live within its means. Given the relative impecunity of most environmental groups, this entails severe limits on their political activities.

4 *Environmental groups in national politics*

In pursuing their objectives, environmental groups seek to influence policy making and legislation as well as the general context of institutions and values in which decisions affecting the environment are made. The extent to which they indulge in political activities varies considerably, with some seeing this as their *raison d'être* and others regarding it as an adjunct to their own conservation work. Most of this chapter examines the political channels available to groups in putting over their views. Their relations with government, parliament and the media are considered in turn. We then examine relations between environmental groups, because in considering their structure of access, it is important to be aware of the way in which they work together in the political system as an environmental lobby. We begin with a review of the resources which groups can bring to bear in their lobbying. These are a product of the internal arrangements discussed in Chapter 3, though only a proportion are available for political activities.

Political resources of environmental groups

Money is perhaps the most crucial political resource because it can be used to acquire other resources and because lobbying can be an expensive business. Most environmental groups considered money to be the limiting factor. Some of the more expensive demands, apart from employing staff, can include publicity, the services of a parliamentary agent, buying in expertise, commissioning research, and litigation. Mounting a good technical case at a major public inquiry or against a Private Bill can be particularly expensive, typically running into several thousand pounds if Counsel and specialist assistance need to be engaged; it may be much higher, as in the £44000 spent by the Wing Airport Resistance Association giving evidence to the Roskill commission (1969/70), the £35000 incurred by the National Trust for Scotland on the Drumbuie inquiry (1973/74) and FoE's £50000 on the Windscale inquiry (1977). Such expense has led to calls for some form of relief, equivalent to legal aid. So far, petitioners against Private Bills have been relieved of the cost of transcription and all Counsel's speeches (CoEnCo Report 1975) but the other reform sought by environmental groups, namely assistance for financially disinterested third parties at public inquiries, has not been conceded (TCPA 1979).

The overall impression is that most groups run their political activities on a shoestring, paying their staff low wages and relying on a lot of voluntary assistance from sympathetic specialists and free publicity via media coverage of

their stances. Thus, when confronting a large company, a state corporation or a major interest group, environmental groups can seldom match their opponents in terms of financial resources, and it is quite beyond their means to engage in the sort of slick lobbying which some private interests do, with their public relations firms, glossy propaganda, renowned consultants and lavish entertainment for MPs and journalists. However, without going to such extremes (which might be of dubious advantage), it is clear that most environmental groups could considerably increase their political capacity with just modest increases in their incomes.

Another resource, organisational ability, has greatly improved for most groups over the past decade as they have taken on or expanded their full-time staff, often bringing in people with administrative experience. Efficient organisation may be critical if a group is to achieve its purpose, but may run counter to the voluntary ethos. Thus, along with other voluntary groups, environmental groups face twin dangers. On the one hand, new groups may be unable to survive for long, especially if, as with many of the eco-action groups of the early 1970s, their leaders are temperamentally or ideologically ill disposed towards administrative routine and formal organisation. FoE (see Ch. 7) is one that has survived but has experienced difficulties overcoming various organisational obstacles. Many established groups run the opposite danger of suppressing voluntary endeavour through too rigid and hierarchical an organisation. By excluding the membership from active involvement, this inhibits the use of members as a political resource. Perhaps the greatest failing of environmental groups in the 1970s has been their inability to translate their massive numerical support into an appreciable political force. Though substantially larger than the consumer movement and the women's movement, the environmental movement has won fewer institutional reforms. Moreover, its political impact seems likely to be eclipsed by the smaller anti-nuclear movement.

Related to organisational ability is leadership quality. The vogue for the environment during the past decade has meant that groups have been able to recruit energetic, idealistic staff of high calibre, although relatively low wages tend to favour enthusiasm over experience. The influx of new recruits has been less marked in the governing circles of many of the older groups whose closed structures have stifled the flow of new blood. Some of these groups seem to suffer from a conservative and unimaginative leadership.

Expertise is another important political resource, in contributing to effective argument and in establishing a group's authority in its dealings with politicians and civil servants. MPs are typically understaffed and overworked and are often unable to keep abreast of government (Barker & Rush 1970). A well informed and technically competent pressure group, therefore, can be very helpful in keeping an MP adequately briefed and thus able to intervene knowledgeably and effectively in parliamentary proceedings. MPs come to rely on groups with which they are in broad sympathy and whose information they have learned to trust.

Most of the specialist information that environmental groups have is readily available to government (though not so available to local authorities, which strengthens the hand of some local environmental groups: see Ch. 5). However, if a group's special competence is recognised by a government department, it is likely to be drawn into close consultation over relevant issues. For

example, during the preparation of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Bill (enacted in 1979), the Department of the Environment repeatedly consulted the Council for British Archaeology. Before the Bill was published, its final contents were agreed with officers of the society. Department officials and the society also liaised closely over the tactics for getting it through Parliament, the society playing a crucial role in winning Liberal and Conservative support during the minority Labour government. Similarly, in the preparation of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill (enacted in 1981), the RSPB was the only environmental group consulted by the Department of the Environment prior to the public consultation stage. This was in recognition of its expertise in bird conservation, as well as its role in achieving the EEC Bird Directive which had necessitated some of the measures in the Bill (Cox & Lowe 1983).

In Chapter 3, we recorded the prevalent skills available to environmental groups which are mainly those related to land use, design and natural history. Shortcomings have arisen as groups have tackled ever more complex technological projects requiring highly specialised knowledge, and as they have moved out of their traditional preserves to combat the environmental effects of other aspects of public policy. Lacking sufficient technical back-up, they may be unable to overcome administrative 'stonewalling' or match the sheer weight of expertise of industrial or commercial lobbies. Some groups have acquired new specialisms: energy forecasting, nuclear engineering, radiobiology, environmental health, transport planning and soil science were among the fields of expertise that a few said they could muster. However, there are major gaps. It seems surprising, for example, that no group employs an economist, particularly when many of the projects they are tackling – such as an expanded nuclear power programme, agricultural reclamation of wetlands and moorlands, housing redevelopment rather than rehabilitation, waste disposal rather than recycling, expansion of domestic forestry – may in the final analysis make dubious economic (as well as environmental) sense. Such an argument would be a powerful one, given political concern over public expenditure.

Finally, a pressure group is in a strategically strong position if it can veto policies to which it is opposed. Some major interest groups are in this position because they possess economic sanctions or their co-operation is vital to the implementation of policy or the normal functioning of government. Environmental groups lack such strong sanctions. Not being dependent on their co-operation, government is not obliged to accommodate them. Yet sanctions of a kind are available to environmental groups.

Richardson (1977) identifies two weapons they may use: public censure and delay. Regarding the first, he remarks, 'It is clear that many environmental groups can, under favourable conditions, generate a body of opinion to which policy makers are prepared to respond. The outcry over heavy lorries, over cyanide dumping, and over the demolition of particular historic buildings has clearly demonstrated this.' Richardson suggests, however, that this weapon is common to all pressure groups and may be somewhat ephemeral (see also Gregory 1972). Here we would want to disagree. The evidence presented below on the strong links between environmental groups and the media would suggest that media receptiveness to environmental issues is likely to be more than a passing fashion. Moreover, other research has shown that some groups, such as trade unions, are not so favourably treated by the media (Glasgow

University Media Group 1978, 1980, S. Hall *et al.* 1978). If there is cultural bias in the media, then environmental groups seem to be among the beneficiaries.

Of the second weapon, delay, Richardson (1977) comments 'The planning process, providing as it does (however inadequately) for some measure of public participation is by its nature lengthy and protracted. The opportunity to put one's case against a proposal may be used not only for just that, but also as a tactic. . . . No rational authority or company will willingly provoke amenity protests if the procedure for reaching a decision is extremely time-consuming.' The ability to inflict delay is increased not only by opportunities for participation but also through the devolved nature of statutory planning. Following the reorganisation of local government in 1974, district and county authorities were given parallel planning powers. In addition, the Local Government Act 1972 made provisions even for parish councils to make representations on planning applications within their boundaries. Thus, particular planning decisions may involve all three tiers of local government plus central government, which retains the right to intervene if contentious or important issues are raised. The multiple points provided for intervention allow environmental groups to fight a protracted rearguard action against a development proposal that they oppose.

Large corporations, nationalised industries and statutory undertakings seem particularly sensitive to the risk and many of them employ their own environmental teams to help anticipate and avoid amenity protests (Elkington 1980). Investment plans, dependent upon the scheduled introduction of new plant and infrastructure, can be thrown off course by unanticipated delays in gaining planning permission. Modern corporations also tend to be conscious of their public image which may be tarnished in a long drawn out and acrimonious planning battle. Thus, though Gregory may be correct in his assessment that 'very few amenity organisations carry sufficient fire-power to defeat powerful developers' (Gregory 1971), many of the big corporations are anxious to appease environmental opposition for the sake of their corporate plans and image. This may involve avoiding environmentally sensitive areas in seeking possible sites to develop, detailed negotiations with planning authorities, informal discussions with environmentalists, and acceptance of stringent planning conditions.

The wrangling and delay caused by sustained environmental opposition may also precipitate a reappraisal of a project and related policy commitments. One casualty was a programme of geological tests sponsored by the Atomic Energy Authority to examine the technical feasibility of underground disposal of nuclear wastes. This was to have been Britain's contribution to an EEC study agreed by the Council of Ministers in 1975. Several sites for test boreholes were selected in England, Scotland and Wales. Strong local feelings were revealed at three public inquiries held in 1980 and 1981 (Cowan 1982). As a foretaste of the reaction which any future proposal for underground disposal would evoke, the experience was sufficient for the government to cancel the whole programme, despite the fact that the inquiry inspectors reported in favour of allowing the test drillings.

Second thoughts provoked by fierce opposition may sometimes coincide with other changes which can undermine the rationale or the viability of a course of action. Disruption of motorway inquiries in the mid-1970s created such difficulties and delays in trunk road construction that it led to a government 'reapprais-

al of the basic justification for the road programme' (Department of Transport 1978, Tyme 1978). The outcome was a downgrading of the programme, as part of cuts in public expenditure and a shift in government priorities from private to public transport (Painter 1980); and a reform of road planning procedures, following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (1978), which accepted many of the criticisms environmentalists had been making (Levin 1979a). Similarly, the third London airport, having been successfully resisted first at Stansted (1964–8), then at Cublington (Wing) (1969–71), eventually fell victim (at Maplin in 1974) to declining forecasts of traffic growth and government concern at the cost of the project (Wootton 1978). Stansted's victory may prove Pyrrhic because in 1981 another public inquiry opened to consider a proposal by the British Airports Authority for a major expansion of the local airport (Buchanan 1981). As this long saga illustrates, a change of government or simply a change of minister can occasion a review of what had seemed a final and closed decision. So there is always an incentive for a group, determined in its opposition, to maintain a rearguard fight as long as possible.

As with all sanctions, delay and public censure are best used sparingly and then only as a last resort. Otherwise they may provoke countermeasures. Government and big business have responded to the critical media campaigns of environmental groups by giving much greater attention to the way in which they publicise their own actions. The fact that details of the government's efforts to 'reduce over-sensitivity to environmental considerations' became public through the leak of Cabinet papers to *The Sunday Times* (18 November 1979) merely added an ironic twist to the spiral of propaganda and counter-propaganda. Equally, the construction industry has campaigned against the delays in obtaining planning permission and the costs incurred as a result (Commons Expenditure Committee 1977). Government has shown itself more and more sympathetic to such complaints as building and construction have gone deeper into recession. As a result, steps have been taken to contain opportunities for participation, reduce the overlap in powers between district and county planning authorities and generally speed up the procedures of development control (Department of the Environment 1980).

Environmental groups deploy their political resources through the channels available to them to express their views. Different political channels are used for different functions. Links with administrative agencies (including local government) are necessary for groups wishing to influence the way in which environmental programmes and policies are implemented. Access to senior civil servants and ministers is vital for involvement in the formative stages of policy making and the allocation of resources. Support in Parliament is important for amending and sometimes initiating legislation and putting pressure on ministers. Access to the media is crucial for bringing issues to the attention of government and Parliament, and in demonstrating and sustaining a group's public support. None of these channels is mutually exclusive. A group whose access to the executive is limited or feels its views are not being fairly accommodated in the consultative process may well resort to a public campaign or parliamentary lobbying. Equally a group may seek to expedite an administrative disagreement through raising the matter with the responsible minister or in Parliament.

These culturally sanctioned means of exerting influence do not exhaust the possibilities for political action. In recent years, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Spain, Japan, Switzerland and Austria have all seen the rise of quite militant ecological politics which have included acts of sabotage and violent confrontations between protestors and the police (Pilat 1980). In this country there have been incidents of direct action by environmentalists but more in keeping with a traditional strand in British radicalism of civil disobedience, of a non-violent and often symbolic kind. Examples include local protest groups that have blocked highways and picketed factories and construction sites, the immobilising of a number of heavy lorries in the London area between 1973 and 1974 by members of the Stop the Juggernauts campaign, attempts in the mid-1970s to disrupt motorway inquiries through noisy protests and sit-ins, and efforts in the late 1970s to block the construction of the Torness nuclear power station.

It is important to stress on the one hand how isolated these examples are amidst the vast amount of conventional lobbying by environmental groups. Only one of the groups in our survey is explicitly committed to such tactics. In the words of one of its pamphlets, 'Greenpeace operates within the philosophy of non-violent direct action because we believe that we must change attitudes generally in order to influence the decision-makers within governments and society to abandon the many destructive abuses of the environment.' In the past, it has intervened to disrupt seal culls and commercial whaling and to prevent the shipment and dumping of radioactive waste.

On the other hand, from a longer historical perspective, it is clear that direct action on the part of British environmental groups is not entirely novel. Lord Eversley recorded how the fledgling Commons Preservation Society employed 120 workmen over one night in 1866 to remove two miles of railings that had just been erected to enclose Berkhamsted Common (Shaw-Lefevre 1894). Seventy years later, in the 1930s, rambling groups from Sheffield and Manchester directly confronted landowners, their agents and the police by organising mass trespasses in the Peak District as part of their campaign to secure the right of access to open moorland (Hill 1980). These and other examples suggest that protest and direct action are part of the armoury of pressure groups, though only to be used when a group sees no prospect of progress through other, more conventional means. Otherwise, the general receptivity of the British political system to group activity, pervasive cultural pressures and fear of disrupting established relationships operate strongly to discourage militant and unorthodox approaches.

Relations with government

Government has been not a passive recipient of pressure from environmental groups but an active agent, establishing new consultative procedures, funding environmental groups, even promoting the creation of such groups. This undoubtedly represents a degree of official acceptance of the objectives they pursue, as well as the inclination of government to manage and contain the pressures upon it. All but four of the groups in the survey were regularly in touch with at least one government department or public agency, the median

number being six government organisations per group. Inside most of them, groups have their own personal contacts. Each group was asked whether or not it found access easy to the relevant level of authority in the eighteen government organisations with the most extensive contacts with the environmental lobby (i.e. those with which at least a fifth of groups claimed to be in touch). The response was overwhelmingly positive. All were considered accessible by a majority of groups in contact with them (see Table 4.1). The response was only slightly less uniform when groups were asked whether the same government organisations kept them in touch with issues of interest to them. All but the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Industry, the Department of Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were, on balance, considered open (see Table 4.2). With these departments, most groups have yet to establish their consultative status.

In a number of instances, consultative relationships have been formalised. A quarter of groups have government observers on their executive committees, including the Tree Council, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Heritage Education Group and the Field Studies Council. This enables their decision making to be in step with departmental thinking and vice versa. Some 40% of the groups are also represented, formally or informally, on official advisory committees, including the Standing Committee on Pollution Clearance at Sea, the Consultative Panel on Badgers and Bovine T.B., the regional councils for sport and recreation, the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment and the Advisory Committee on Birds. These committees,

Table 4.1 The accessibility of government departments to environmental groups.

entirely accessible	British Rail
	British Tourist Authority
	British Waterways Board
	Central Electricity Generating Board
	Countryside Commission
	Historic Buildings Council
	National Water Council
	Sports Council
very accessible	Nature Conservancy Council
	Forestry Commission
	Department of the Environment
	Health and Safety Executive
	Department of Education and Science
	Department of Transport
generally accessible	Department of Trade
	Department of Industry
	Department of Energy
	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Environmental groups were asked: 'When dealing with this organisation have you mostly found access easy to the relevant level of authority?' The ranking in this and in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 is based on the margin of 'yes' over 'no' responses as a percentage of all the responses an organisation received. 'Entirely' represents 100%; 'very' is from 50% to less than 100%; and 'generally' is from 0% to less than 50%.

Table 4.2 The openness of government departments towards environmental groups.

very informative	Historic Buildings Council Countryside Commission Nature Conservancy Council Sports Council British Waterways Board
generally informative	British Tourist Authority Department of Transport Forestry Commission National Water Council British Rail Department of the Environment Health and Safety Executive Central Electricity Generating Board Department of Energy
generally uninformative	Department of Industry Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Department of Trade Department of Education and Science

Environmental groups were asked: 'Does this organisation keep you in touch with issues of interest to you?'

which usually include economic as well as environmental interests and independent experts, are serviced by seconded civil servants. They advise the relevant minister on issues selected at his or their initiative, and can be significant sources of legislative and policy proposals, though the political motive for setting them up may have been to postpone action and defuse criticism. Of a similar nature, though with an independent constitution, is the standing Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (Lowe 1975).

The crucial question is the extent to which the involvement of environmental groups is influential or merely token. Each group was asked whether or not the various government organisations are reasonably receptive to its point of view. The results are shown in Table 4.3. The organisations considered most receptive are all statutory agencies with a specific environmental remit. These are policy areas in which government has in effect institutionalised the environmental lobby. Among the organisations considered unreceptive are all the major, development-orientated government departments. Environmental groups do not enjoy the sort of close, symbiotic relationship with senior civil servants in these departments as do major interest groups such as the National Farmers' Union with the Ministry of Agriculture (Self & Storing 1962, Wilson 1977), the Confederation of British Industry with the Department of Industry (Grant & Marsh 1977) and road haulage interests with the Department of Transport (Hamer 1974, Painter 1980). In their own judgement (which is more likely to overestimate than to underestimate their true influence), the inclusion of environmental groups in consultative relationships with the developmental departments is largely a token gesture. Group leaders made specific comments to this effect. A phrase which, with slight variations, was repeated by a number of them was 'They listen to whatever we have to say, but only hear what suits

Table 4.3 The receptiveness of government departments to environmental groups.

very receptive	Countryside Commission British Waterways Board Historic Buildings Council Nature Conservancy Council
generally receptive	Health and Safety Executive British Tourist Authority Sports Council National Water Council Department of the Environment Department of Education and Science British Rail
generally unreceptive	Department of Energy Department of Trade Central Electricity Generating Board Department of Industry Forestry Commission Department of Transport Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Environmental group were asked: 'In general, do you find that this organisation is reasonaby receptive to your point of view?'

them.' With respect to these departments, group leaders take a longer view of their lobbying efforts. As the director of the Civic Trust commented: 'Within an ostensibly hostile department, there are always some who disagree with official policy.' A staff member of the CPRE made a similar point:

> Our contacts are incipiently sympathetic. Even in those organisations with which we disagree there are usually individuals or units which are receptive to our point of view. These are the people that we cultivate. We try to encourage their attempts to modify their organisation's stance. By applying pressure or giving a favourable reaction, their initiatives can be fostered. They are useful leverage for us in their organisation and we may be useful leverage for them in trying to introduce policy changes.

Only through close contact with a government department can groups acquire the advance intelligence and much of the information necessary to develop their criticisms of the course of official policy. This is particularly important given that unreceptive departments are also likely to be uninformative departments, and one side-effect of environmental groups cultivating links in unreceptive departments is the increasing number of leaks from these departments. An example, which caused considerable political embarrassment, was the release in October 1978 of a memorandum written by senior officials of the Department of Transport advising their minister to hold a carefully orchestrated public inquiry (eventually, the Armitage Inquiry) to prepare public opinion for the introduction of heavier lorries into Britain. The memorandum was leaked to Transport 2000 which passed it on to *The Guardian* (Wardroper 1981). Another example was a CEGB document leaked by regional management to the Political Ecology Research Group who passed

it on to *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian*. It showed sites for future nuclear power stations and indicated the CEGB's commitment to nuclear power as opposed to coal in the future generation of electricity.

The exercise of influence is of course a two-way process. Groups drawn into elaborate consultative procedures with government are induced to moderate their demands and tactics. Much time can be spent responding to a flow of consultative documents from government, sitting on official committees and providing information for policy making. Group leaders become enveloped in the consensual atmosphere of Whitehall with civil servants attempting to explain the constraints on government action and the rival claims which have to be balanced. Consultative status is gained and maintained by adhering to an unwritten code of moderate and responsible behaviour. It may be forfeited if a group is too outspoken in its criticisms or fails to show the necessary tact and discretion. Thus a close relationship with civil servants can all too easily become a closed relationship, given the general obsession of the British civil service with secrecy (despite the occasional leak). Some 30% of leaders of environmental groups agreed to the statement that 'Involvement in governmental or parliamentary discussion often precludes keeping the membership informed'. In this closed atmosphere, environmental leaders, flattered by their concessionary access to power, constantly run the risk of co-option by government. The director of the CPRE spoke of the dangers of a 'sweetheart relationship' with government and 'the loss of independence'; and the secretary of the Environment Committee of the Royal Society of Arts referred to the possible loss of power to criticise government.

To preserve their freedom, group leaders usually prefer regular consultation with government rather than the institutionalised representation of formal advisory committees. Indeed, some expressed scepticism about the committees on which they were represented, considering them time-wasting and ineffective. There was a fear that these might simply be 'window-dressing'. The Landscape Advisory Committee, for example, set up to comment on the design and impact of every trunk road scheme, has been criticised by the CPRE which claimed that it could be 'used as a scapegoat for any proposal unfavourably received by the public' (*The Times* 19 September 1970). Similarly, the director of FoE commented, 'we have quite consciously limited our involvement in government committees.' This decision followed its experience of the protracted but ultimately inconclusive proceedings of the Waste Management Advisory Council (see Ch. 7) on which the group had been outweighed by industrial representatives.

The establishment of a committee of inquiry, however, is often an important goal for promotional groups, some of which are faced with the initial task of convincing government of the very existence of a problem. The appointment of such a committee signifies official acceptance that there may be cause for concern. Thus a major achievement of the Conservation Society's campaign against population growth was the setting up of an official Population Panel in 1971, despite widespread misgivings amongst politicians as to whether this was a proper subject for government. A committee of inquiry also holds out the possibility of authoritative endorsement of a group's views, giving them greater currency and obliging government to respond. This may be especially important for a promotional group, normally unable to *demand* that government give

serious consideration to a particular issue. Thus, a turning point for the National Smoke Abatement Society was the appointment of the Beaver Committee on Air Pollution (1953–4), with three out of eleven of the members being committee members of the Society. The Society had been pressing for powers to establish smokeless zones since 1936, but it was only through the endorsement of the Beaver Committee that the idea become law in the Clean Air Act 1956 which gave effect to the Committee's proposals (Sanderson 1974).

One way in which government has sought to manage and contain pressures from environmental groups has been to deflect them from the centre of government where the major decisions are made about the direction of the economy, the allocation of resources and the legislative programme. The spectrum from very receptive to unreceptive government organisations (see Table 4.3) is correlated with the size of budget, executive power and degree of political centrality of the organisation. By and large, environmental groups have achieved most influence with quasi-autonomous government agencies such as the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Historic Buildings Council and the Sports Council. These have small budgets, little power and limited policy-making initiative, and they are politically marginal.

It is not coincidental, perhaps, that strong environmental representation in these agencies is actively encouraged by government through a number of formal and informal channels. Each has a governing council whose members are appointed by the minister responsible; usually, a proportion are respected environmentalists with previous service in voluntary bodies. Derek Barber, for example, became chairman of the Countryside Commission in 1980 after being chairman of the RSPB. Similarly the chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for England since 1975 has been Jennifer Jenkins, who was formerly secretary of the Ancient Monuments Society.

The staff of the agencies are generally very sympathetic to environmental groups. Frequent discussion and consultation between them, as well as a certain amount of staff transfer, facilitate a common appreciation of problems. There is also a great deal of administrative co-operation, with the agencies funding the educational and practical work of the groups, and the groups providing the agencies with voluntary assistance (see, for example, Ch. 9). The agencies have come to regard well organised environmental groups as vital political support in strengthening their own positions within government. Many emphasis groups, in turn, are dependent on the agencies for funds, expertise and access to government. This type of relationship has been called 'clientelism' and it is not exceptional between other government departments and their client interests (Richardson & Jordan 1979).

The utility of the strong links environmental groups enjoy with the environmental agencies is limited, however, by the latter's severely circumscribed powers. Their very marginality has facilitated close lobby–agency links. Indeed, it has been argued that 'one of the functions of such agencies is to create a kind of phoney "insider" status for some groups in order to reassure them that they have a sympathetic point of access within the government machine' (Grant 1978). With much environmental pressure channelled towards sympathetic but peripheral agencies, senior civil servants and ministers retain their room for manoeuvre. The environmental agencies act as negative filters to the environ-

mental lobby. Demands from the lobby which are opposed by the agencies are unlikely to be taken seriously by government. However, the corollary – that demands supported by the agencies will command government attention – does not necessarily follow. Indeed, the environmental agencies tend to be regarded by government as pressure groups, whose views should be treated with scepticism and whose involvement in central policy making should be carefully circumscribed. The effect of such attitudes on the agencies is to induce them to behave 'responsibly' – to temper the demands made by environmental groups and to internalise the constraints which government regards as salient (Cripps 1979, Kimber *et al.* 1974e, Cherry 1975). This mediating function is institutionalised in the make-up of the agencies' governing councils which usually comprise competing interests, such as the representatives of forestry and agriculture on the Nature Conservancy Council (Rose 1980).

In a similar manner, central government has been able to distance itself from environmental pressure by promoting participation in local government. There are now elaborate statutory provisions for public participation in determining local planning policies and planning permissions (see Ch. 5). One consequence is to concentrate environmental opposition on those issues within the remit of local government, such as zoning and land-use matters, and to deflect criticism from the industrial, transport, energy, agricultural and housing policies of central government. Much environmental pressure is expended in challenging the siting and the design of proposed developments. Indeed, many of the set-piece battles of the environmental movement (for example, over the third London airport) have been internecine struggles between local communities each seeking to deflect an unwanted development elsewhere to protect its own environment – often leaving unchallenged the key central policies which *promote* development.

The lack of a close relationship with senior civil servants in the developmental departments is a source of weakness for environmental groups. Good media and parliamentary relations can compensate, to a certain extent, by enabling groups to raise issues for government attention and ensuring considerable opprobrium for any official initiatives with blatant and damaging environmental implications. However, failure to be closely involved in policy formulation often means that environmental groups must fight a rearguard campaign at subsequent stages against a course of action to which officials and major interests have become committed. Moreover, when an issue has passed from the realm of intense media interest and parliamentary scrutiny back into the administrative realm, environmental groups may once again find themselves at a disadvantage, unable to sustain the pressure to ensure the full implementation of hard-won reforms. Examples of this failure to follow through would include major parts of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (Cherry 1975) and the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (Levitt 1980).

Access to Parliament and the political parties

Compared with their mixed reception in Whitehall, environmental groups have found greater sympathy in Parliament. Each group was asked which MPs and peers, if any, were prepared to assist it on a continuing basis. All but 12 (out of

74) groups can count upon the assistance of at least one MP or peer, the median number being nine per group. Most of those without any such contacts are specialist nature conservation groups with little interest in parliamentary business; they make use of the excellent parliamentary contacts of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation or the RSPB, if the occasion arises.

The latter are two of the 19 groups which reported having over 30 MPs and peers in regular working contact. Almost all of these groups employ the services of a parliamentary agent or have close links with one of the dozen all-party groups of back-bench MPs and peers concerned with the environment, such as the Conservation Committee, the Ecology Group and the Heritage Group. Not surprisingly, the range of a group's parliamentary contacts is strongly correlated with its income, reflecting the expense involved in any extensive lobbying. An MP who shows an active interest in environmental matters is normally courted by a number of environmental groups. Indeed, a core of about a dozen MPs (including Dennis Howell, Peter Hardy, Marcus Kimball and Patrick Cormack) and a score of peers (including the Duke of Grafton, Baroness White, and Lords Sandford, Kennet, Beaumont and Melchett) were mentioned by five or more groups. Even so, a couple of hundred MPs and peers were mentioned in all, indicating extensive parliamentary interest in environmental matters.

Though most environmental groups enjoy some support in both Houses, the overall balance inclines, if anything, towards the Lords rather than the Commons. To an extent, this reflects the practice of some of the older groups of seeking titled figureheads for the prestige and respectability that these confer. A different reason was given by Lord Craigton, the chairman of the CoEnCo, who explained that peers, with fewer commitments than MPs (they have no constituency responsibilities, for example), are more able to get involved in the work of a group and therefore be more effective at representing its interests. Of course, this advantage is diminished by the lesser importance of the Second Chamber. Two additional factors are also significant. Firstly, many hereditary peers are large landowners and have a personal interest in many aspects of rural conservation and historic preservation. Secondly, party links and party discipline are much weaker in the Lords than in the Commons. Given the non-party character of many of their issues, environmental groups have often seen a greater opportunity for airing them in the Lords. Governments have sometimes concurred in this view by introducing important environmental measures, or having junior environmental ministers, in the Lords rather than the Commons. An additional factor in recent years has been the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities which has played an important role in scrutinising environmental measures emanating from the EEC.

Groups were asked to rank in descending order of frequency the sort of assistance they normally received from friendly politicians (see Table 4.4). For the majority of groups, assistance in legislation was most significant, mainly involving introducing amendments to government bills and opposing environmentally unsound aspects of Private Bills (usually promoted by local authorities or other statutory undertakings). Sympathetic MPs can also be counted on to help enlist the support of their colleagues. Sufficient parliamentary opposition can often be aroused to introduce environmental safeguards into legislation and occasionally to make a government back down. Much depends on

Table 4.4 Assistance rendered to environmental groups by friendly politicians, ranked in descending order of significance.

	Number of groups ranking		
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*
helping to safeguard or promote the group's aims in legislation	38	4	6
influential spokesmen for the group and its aims	14	12	7
sources of information and parliamentary intelligence	8	15	5
providing a link to ministers and the government	4	6	12
service within the group, on committees, etc.	2	3	7
providing a link between the group and the political parties	2	2	6
		$N = 59$	

the parliamentary arithmetic. During the Commons Committee stage of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill (enacted in 1981), a combination of filibuster by the Labour opposition and pressure on ministers from some Conservative MPs won limited concessions from the government, including an enabling power for the Secretary of State for the Environment to declare marine nature reserves and new safeguards for sites of special scientific interest (see Ch. 9). In another example, intense lobbying of MPs and peers by the CPRE and the Civic Trust forced the minority Labour government to withdraw a draft order, laid before parliament in November 1977: this would have relaxed detailed planning controls. Yet the succeeding Conservative government, with a large parliamentary majority, was able to bring in a similar measure against strong environmental opposition (see p. 101).

Occasionally, groups sponsor their own legislation with the co-operation of an MP who has been fortunate in the private members' ballot, or through one of the many sympathetic peers. Most wildlife legislation has originated in this manner from groups such as the RSPB and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. Similarly, the Civic Amenities Act 1967 was drafted by the Civic Trust and introduced into the Commons as a Private Members' Bill by Duncan Sandys, the Trust's chairman and founder. The measure enjoyed the government support which is usually necessary if such a Bill is to have any chance of success. Promoting a Bill which is unsuccessful can, however, be a way of eliciting a response from government. Friends of the Earth, for example, collaborated with Lord Wynne-Jones in twice getting an Endangered Species Bill through second readings in the Lords against government opposition (first Conservative, then Labour) before the Labour government felt obliged to introduce a similar Bill of its own.

The second form of assistance is when MPs and peers act as spokesmen for a group. They can lend weight to its views by adding their names to letters to newspapers and ministers, or by chairing meetings and press conferences. Through the back-benchers' traditional devices – tabling parliamentary questions, sponsoring early-day motions and moving adjournment debates – an MP can place an issue on the political agenda and put pressure on ministers. Kimber and his colleagues (Kimber *et al.* 1974f) report that, during the period October 1970 to December 1971, members of the House of Commons tabled to all departments an estimated 1579 questions on environmental matters.

Throughout the same period, approximately 20 early-day motions were tabled expressing concern over such matters as marine conservation, noise from jet flights, heavy-metal pollution and preservation of the Roman city of Viriconium.

Another device, allowing more intensive investigation than other parliamentary proceedings, is to get one of the parliamentary select committees to take up an issue. Interested groups can then be invited to give evidence or even to furnish an official advisor. Several inquiries have proved influential in investigating environmental issues and giving authoritative support to the views of environmental groups. Examples include the several reports of the Select Committee on Science and Technology on nuclear power policy which have opened up Britain's civil nuclear programme to public scrutiny and debate (Williams 1980); and its reports on the handling of the Torrey Canyon and Eleni V incidents, which led to the establishment of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and to the Department of Trade's Marine Pollution Control Unit respectively (Lowe 1975). In 1979, the select committee system was reformed. In place of the old subject committees, twelve new committees were established each with responsibility for 'shadowing' a single government department. With greater authority, more funds and better support services, the new select committees promise a more rigorous review of government policy (Davies 1980). They have been welcomed by environmental groups as a means of challenging the orthodoxy of policy commitments in fields such as agriculture and transport where the groups' influence is limited.

Third in overall significance for the groups was the role of MPs and peers as sources of information and parliamentary intelligence. Written answers to parliamentary questions can provide groups with useful technical information which otherwise would be inaccessible to them or time consuming to acquire. Through their contacts with members of the government, back-bench colleagues, other lobbies and lobby correspondents, MPs can also be excellent sources of the kind of political intelligence that groups need to plan their own tactics. In 1978, Green Alliance was formed specifically to improve the overall parliamentary intelligence and strategy of the environmental lobby. Its first co-ordinator was Lord Beaumont, ex-president of the Liberal Party; and its membership includes sympathetic parliamentarians and leaders of environmental groups for whom it provides an opportunity to discuss legislative objectives and a regular briefing on current and forthcoming parliamentary business.

Half the groups did give some, though usually a low (i.e. third or below), ranking to the role of MPs and peers as links to ministers (see Table 4.4), indicating their exceptional use of parliamentary links to arrange, say, a ministerial deputation on a matter of pressing concern, or to expedite an issue which has become deadlocked within the Civil Service. Otherwise, groups prefer to use their direct links with the executive. As the director of the CPRE commented, 'We prefer to talk directly to ministers and civil servants while an issue or legislation is brewing. We start priming MPs once the matter has been introduced into Parliament.' It should be added that there is a strong correlation between the extent of a group's contacts with both government and Parliament, suggesting perhaps that government departments are aware of a group's parliamentary strength in according it access.

Even fewer groups (a quarter) gave any ranking (and then usually a low ranking) to the role of MPs and peers as go-betweens to the political parties. This reflects the general lack of interest in party politics among environmental groups. We asked all groups whether they had any additional contacts with the political parties, other than the meagre links already revealed via friendly MPs and peers. Only 12 said that they did. For most of these the contacts were infrequent and usually initiated by the parties and not the groups. As the director of the Civic Trust commented, 'We're called upon every few years by the party head offices, usually as an election approaches and they're preparing their manifestos and think there may be votes in the environment.'

Thus, few environmental groups make any effort to influence party policies or would consider such effort worthwhile. In part, this is a judgement on the significance of the parties themselves in determining environmental policy. A number of comments were made to the effect that governments did not feel bound by manifesto commitments; that other political commitments, for example concerning levels of public expenditure, were more decisive in shaping environmental policies than specific environmental commitments; and that government action was more strongly influenced by such factors as the pressure of events, civil service advice and powerful lobbies, than by party policy.

Moreover, most groups consider that environmental issues transcend party differences. In the words of the director of the Civic Trust, 'There's nothing to choose between them. Thank God the environment is not a matter of party politics'. The secretary of the Council for National Parks suggested that the division between pro- and anti-environmental forces cut right across party lines following the division between pro-business and pro-welfare factions in all parties. A comment repeated by a number of environmental leaders was 'We're apolitical'. The non-party nature of many environmental issues is certainly endorsed by the large number of all-party back-bench groups dealing with the environment. Similarly, most environmental groups enjoy cross-party support. Some, including the National Trust, make provision for seats on their governing council to be occupied by an MP from each of the major parties.

A few have stronger support in one party than the others – for example, the Ramblers' Association in the Labour Party, the Conservation Society in the Liberal Party, and the British Field Sports Society in the Conservative Party. A minority of group leaders also expressed their personal opinion on the relative merits of Labour and Conservative governments. On balance, more felt that the former had the better environmental record. However, as yet none pursues a politically partisan approach, so as not to alienate any of their own members and to be on reasonable terms with whichever party is in power.

The exceptions to these generalisations about environmental groups and the political parties are the politically specialised groups, all of which are products of the 1970s' reaction to economic growth. In 1972, following the publication of *Blueprint for survival* by *The Ecologist* magazine, a Movement for Survival was launched, supported by Friends of the Earth, the Conservation Society and the Soil Association. It was committed 'to act at a national level and if need be to assume political status and contest the next general election'. This was the precursor of the present Ecology Party, which was formally launched in 1973, initially as the People Party.

In a sense, the Ecology Party is within the non-partisan tradition of environmental politics in viewing 'conventional political rivalries as dangerously irrelevant, in that they obscure the nature and the urgency of the problem we have to face up to' (Ecology Party 1979). In particular, it challenges the commitment of existing parties to economic and technological growth, arguing that the assumptions on which the industrial state was built – abundant raw materials and energy, ready international markets, space for expansion, and the link between technological advance and social progress – can no longer be made. The Party's manifesto for the 1979 General Election set out its long-term programme for basic reforms in the welfare state, industrial policy, planning, transport, agriculture, defence and the electoral system, embodying its commitment to zero growth, self-sufficiency and decentralisation. Apart from its electoral pretensions, it is this distinct ecological ideology linked to a broad social programme which distinguishes the Ecology Party from the range of environmental groups.

However, compared with a pressure group, a new political party faces formidable obstacles in establishing itself. The difficulties include building up a national organisation and securing sufficient funds to fight election campaigns, and overcoming the strength of voting habits and traditional party allegiances, though these are weakening (Crewe *et al.* 1977). Our 'first-past-the-post' electoral system also militates against small parties that are not geographically concentrated. In addition, the Ecology Party faces some quite specific problems. It has no obvious regional or ethnic base, such as the nationalist parties have, nor a class base as do the major parties. Many people will find unpalatable its prognostications concerning economic growth and the future of industrial society. To many others, and perhaps all but the very concerned and committed, its ideas will be strange, even opaque. As the Party admits, 'The stable society is not a familiar idea in political discussion, and at first it is difficult to see how the principles of such a society really do hold together as a coherent and necessary system.' It is not surprising therefore that it has made little electoral impact. In the 1979 General Election, it polled an average of 1.3 per cent of the votes in the 53 seats it contested (out of the total 635 seats).

Apart from the barrier that our electoral system presents to the establishment of minority parties, the Ecology Party also has to contend with the major parties' monopoly of power. Indeed, the politicisation of the environment in the 1970s illustrates the adaptive capacity of the existing parties – their ability to respond to new issues with potential electoral appeal in order to safeguard their hold on the electorate. In 1973, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) was set up in order 'to identify the social and economic problems affecting the environment and to formulate socialist policies to deal with them'. The Liberal and Conservative Ecology Groups followed in 1977. SERA is by far the most substantial of the three, with the largest membership (700 compared with about 300 each in the other two), a national organisation and its own part-time staff. Unlike the other two, whose focus so far has been confined to influencing opinion within their respective parliamentary parties, SERA is orientated towards grass-roots politics throughout the Labour movement. It has been influential, for example, in getting many constituency parties and a number of unions to adopt an anti-nuclear stance (Elliott 1981b).

The Liberal Ecology Group has probably had the greatest impact on its

party's outlook. It is represented on a number of the party's policy panels. The founder and first chairman of the Group is the chairman of the Environmental Panel which advises the party on environmental matters. David Alton (the Liberals' environmental spokesman in the Commons) and Lord Beaumont are both active members of the Group. SERA is not without high-level influence within the Labour Party. As one of its members commented, 'The National Executive Committee regard us as the source of environmental comment within the party.' It is well represented on the NEC environmental study group though less so on the more influential energy sub-committee which remains a focus of pro-nuclear opinion within the party. The Conservative Ecology Group, in contrast, has made little impact, its work being limited to providing Conservative MPs with short briefing papers on environmental matters.

As yet, none of the three act as effective channels of access for the environmental lobby. They are very much enveloped within their respective parties and enjoy few links with the lobby. Rather than promoting environmental policies *per se*, each is committed to reconciling environmental issues to its party's philosophy and encouraging environmentally aware people to support that party.

Media access

Good contacts with the media are vital if a group is to generate support for its aims. They can also be an important campaigning weapon for environmental groups in putting pressure on civil servants, ministers and parliamentarians. What was striking in our survey was the extensive media coverage enjoyed by the majority of groups, and yet their appetite for more. Only 9% attracted none, and these indeed did not seek any. All the rest had enjoyed exposure in the national press: 74% on radio, and 59% on television. Media access follows a step-wise progression. Most groups achieve press coverage several times per month or per year. Radio coverage is usually less frequent and television coverage less frequent again, with most groups recalling one or two incidents, if any, during the past few years when they or their views have been covered by television.

This progression reflects in part the relative diversity of outlets in each medium, the way news is generated (i.e. with radio and television often following up press items), and the preference of many groups to reach the influential readership particularly of the 'quality' newspapers rather than television's mass audience. Newspapers also give greater scope for more detailed comment and analysis of what are often complex and technical issues. A few groups actually expressed themselves wary of television publicity in case their views were over-simplified or distorted, though others saw in television an opportunity to popularise environmental concerns.

The marked orientation of environmental groups towards the media is noteworthy for two reasons. First, this orientation seems to have arisen fairly recently, since the late 1960s. Second, it is somewhat at odds with the assumptions of political scientists who have generally regarded the use of the mass media as something of a last resort for pressure groups in Britain. Rose's comment is typical:

> Through public controversy, bargaining groups run the risk of upsetting delicately balanced agreements arranged after lengthy private negotiations. . . . Appeals to the peripheral public may well be a sign of weakness, resulting from the exclusion of a group from private consultation. (Rose 1970.)

Let us look more closely, therefore, at the recent growth in the use of the media by environmental groups and try to explain how and why this has happened.

Twenty years ago environmental groups were much more discreet than today. The great increase in public concern and media attention over this period has called for different lobbying skills. Now these depend less on personal influence and string-pulling behind the scenes, more on an open, adversarial approach; less on the censure of educated taste, more on direct appeals to popular opinion as a sanction against unsuitable development proposals. The experience of the CPRE illustrates these developments.

A senior staff member described the changes that had occurred since 1965 when Sir Herbert Griffin retired after 39 years as general secretary:

> Under Griffin, publicity was very restrained. The CPRE did not seek attention. 'Do good by stealth and be found out by accident' was his motto. His style of operation was through personal contact in the corridors of power. He fastidiously avoided embarrassing those whom he influenced or sought to influence. . . . Nowadays we are not reluctant to go public. Indeed, we are very media-conscious. This is better suited to the general style of environmental politics which has become more conflict-orientated. However, unlike some of the new radical groups, we still prefer to clobber a chap in private rather than in public.

Following Griffin's departure, the CPRE appointed an assistant secretary to look after the Group's publicity and press relations, in the hope that if its work were better publicised, membership recruitment would be boosted. Initially, the approach was somewhat mechanical and self-conscious – regular reports were made to a publicity sub-committee of the executive committee giving details of the number of column inches of coverage. By 1970, this was achieving about ten references in national newspapers and magazines per month, reports in 70 provincial newspapers and two or three mentions on television and radio. CPRE's use of the media took on a new sophistication when Christopher Hall was appointed director in 1975. He had been secretary of the Ramblers' Association, but before this had worked first as a Fleet Street journalist and then as public relations adviser to Barbara Castle when she was a Labour minister. Under Hall, links with journalists and broadcasters were built up and media coverage became a routine element in CPRE's campaigns. Significantly, when Hall left (in 1980) to return to journalism, the staff member appointed to replace him had experience in advertising and freelance writing for television and radio.

There are many similar examples among the older groups. As recently as 1966, the National Trust, whose public relations is now among the most professional of any environmental group, sacked the first director of its Enterprise Neptune appeal because of disapproval amongst the Trust hierarchy of his flamboyant, 'PR' approach to fund-raising (see Ch. 8). Equally, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, one of the groups which today

enjoys some of the most extensive media coverage, was said in 1970 to have 'rarely advertised because it fears such a rush of applicants that its administrative staff would not be able to cope' (*The Ecologist* **1** (2)).

Most of the groups formed since the 1960s have from the start held quite different attitudes towards publicity and the media. As groups new on the scene they have tended to prefer open politics to the closed politics which inevitably favour established interests. The new groups were able to demonstrate that there was a great reserve of public concern awaiting to be mobilised and considerable appetite in the media for environmental stories. One of our case studies is of Friends of the Earth, the most media-orientated group. In the words of its first director, 'we decided to make the organisation charismatic' (Graham Searle, quoted in Rivers 1974).The public impact achieved by the newer groups has provoked a more active approach to the media by the older groups. A number of group leaders said that they had become concerned that others were stealing their thunder by claiming credit in the press for what they themselves had achieved behind the scenes.

This still does not explain why, in general, the media has acquired such salience for environmental groups. First there is the media's general receptiveness. Environmental issues have certain characteristics which make them eminently newsworthy. There is the strong emotive and moralistic appeal of issues which can be presented as a simple conflict of good versus evil, hence the standard formula for many news items of:

the people the community a rare species local beauty spot unspoilt nature the national heritage	threatened by	the bulldozers the planners speculators the juggernauts pollution agribusiness

Of course, the values implicit in this formula will fluctuate in their appeal depending on their affinity with shifting social values. Indeed, with an orientation to different values, the standard formula can be reversed to produce equally censorious copy of the 'jobs threatened by environmentalists' variety. Nevertheless, a major part of the attraction of environmental issues for the media is that they are public interest issues of a non-political (i.e. non-partisan) nature. Thus they provide an important outlet for campaigning and investigative journalism, even for newspapers that take a typically conservative stance on other matters, and for broadcasting services striving for a 'balanced' view.

Environmental disasters, such as the Aberfan tragedy, the Torrey Canyon oil spillage and the Flixborough explosion, automatically command media attention as important events. Something of the same dramatic impact has been achieved by alarmist warnings of *impending* ecological disaster. Olson (1973) coined the term 'the profits of doom' to characterise the undoubted achievements of this particular brand of environmental journalism. There is also the strong visual appeal of many of the features that environmentalists seek to protect – the countryside, wild life and the architectural heritage. These have come into their own as subjects of popular media attention, particularly with the advent of the colour supplements and colour television.

Among national newspapers, the most significant outlets for the views of

environmental groups are first *The Guardian*, second *The Times* and third *The Daily Telegraph*, plus *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and *The Sunday Telegraph*. It can be assumed that these newspapers reflect the preoccupations of their mainly middle-class readership. Each has a specialist planning or environmental correspondent. Other correspondents on these papers, with responsibility for science, agriculture, transport and local government, deal frequently with environmental issues also. All in all, there are about a couple of dozen Fleet Street journalists who cover environmental affairs and who rely on good working relations with environmental groups for many of their stories and for informed comment on current issues. Usually, through these channels, the views and actions of environmental groups are assured a sympathetic and knowledgeable treatment.

The other major periodical outlets for environmental issues and views are the specialist weekly and monthly magazines, ranging from high-class glossies such as *Country Life* and *The Field* to publications such as *Undercurrents* and *Resurgence*. Most of these should properly be regarded as integral to the environmental movement. They often act as the mouthpiece for the environmental groups in which their staff and contributors are involved. Some, such as *Town and Country Planning* and *ECOS*, are in fact published by environmental groups (the Town and Country Planning Association and British Association of Nature Conservationists respectively). Some mount their own environmental campaigns, the most far-reaching example being the publication of *Blueprint for survival* by *The Ecologist*. In addition, the magazines act as extra links between the environmental movement and the general press in that they are sometimes used as sources by the national dailies and a number of their contributors are freelance journalists who also write for the general daily and weekly press.

A number of journalists are personally committed to the environmental cause, some having established their careers and reputations through their environmental reporting. A few have become significant campaigners in their own right, for example Jeremy Bugler against pollution, Geoffrey Leach over energy conservation and John Wardroper against heavy lorries. Other sympathetic journalists and broadcasters have set up their own environmental groups. The earliest such initiative was the creation in 1959 of the Council for Nature's Intelligence Unit, with a grant from the BBC of £25000 over five years. The Unit did much to publicise nature conservation issues, encourage natural history film-making and cement the relationship between the growing band of wildlife conservationists and programme makers (the BBC Natural History Unit had been set up two years earlier – Parsons 1982). In 1972, the Environmental Communicators' Organisation (or ECO) was established by journalists and media men to promote the coverage of environmental news. For a number of years it provided an opportunity for journalists to hear speakers on environmental topics and gave advice to environmental groups on how to approach the media. Journalists Against Nuclear Extermination (JANE), set up in 1981, has similar aims, encouraging journalists to give fuller and fairer coverage of the anti-nuclear movement and helping anti-nuclear groups to get their case across in the media. The most successful of these media ginger groups has been Save Britain's Heritage (1975), which brings together architectural journalists and writers to campaign against the destruction of

historic buildings. It has strong links with the building preservation groups for which it acts as a very effective public relations outfit, preparing press releases, reports and exhibitions on various threats to old buildings.

Another venture, Watch, is somewhat different in that it has a general membership. It was set up in 1971 by the Advisory Centre for Education and *The Sunday Times*, to involve children in environmental projects and campaigns. Through *The Sunday Times Magazine*, national surveys have been conducted of such matters as air, water and noise pollution and the state of historic buildings, involving many thousands of children; Watch is now run jointly by *The Sunday Times* and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. Other newspapers, it should be added, have sponsored various environmental improvement schemes, design competitions, publicity events and educational projects in conjunction with environmental groups.

Thus, the media have not simply been passive recorders of environmental events, but active agents, investigating issues, giving prominence to the views of environmentalists and conducting their own campaigns. Indeed, it has been suggested that the widespread public concern of the late 1960s and early 1970s over an impending environmental crisis was created by the media (Parlour & Schatzow 1978). With such a generally receptive response, environmental groups have looked to coverage in the media to fulfil three distinct objectives.

First they need to ensure their own continued buoyancy and legitimacy. Some publicity and campaigning is necessary, for example, to satisfy activists, sustain the commitment of the general membership and bring in new recruits. In addition, the acceptability of the case made by a principle group to those in authority rests ultimately on the degree of public support or acquiescence that it and its aims enjoy, and this calls for periodic reaffirmation through media exposure. Otherwise, principle groups are always open to the charge of being 'self-appointed arbiters of taste' (Eversley 1974).

Second, environmental groups have used media pressure to influence an impending decision or course of action. Through coverage of their concerns, environmental groups have found that they have been able to go on the offensive and, with the backing of an aroused 'public opinion', elicit a response from a previously recalcitrant government department or industrial company. Much depends on the groups' ability to exploit chance events. An example was when the Conservation Society received and publicised information about the illicit dumping of cyanide wastes in late 1971. Over the following weeks, similar incidents came to light as the media actively pursued the issue. For two years, the government had had before it proposals from an official committee to control the disposal of such toxic wastes. Within three months of the publication of the Conservation Society's revelations, the government had rushed a Bill to this effect through Parliament and into law (Kimber *et al.* 1974d, Grant & Marsh 1977).

Another example is the way in which the historic preservation societies seized the opportunity of the sale and dispersal of the contents of Mentmore in 1977 to publicise their general criticisms of the Treasury's restrictive administration of the Land Fund, set up specifically to acquire historic buildings and land of natural beauty. The critical media coverage (with Save playing its part) prompted an investigation by the Parliamentary Expenditure Committee and this in turn elicited from government the Fund's reform as the National

Heritage Fund, with wider terms of reference, additional finance and independent trustees. A third example is the publicity attracted by the Greenpeace vessel, Rainbow Warrior, when it was sent in October 1978 to intervene in a proposed seal cull on Orkney. So great was the media coverage featuring pictures of pathetic, wet-eyed seal pups awaiting execution, that the Secretary of State for Scotland, who had ordered the cull to conserve fisheries, called it off (Lister-Kaye 1979). Two final examples – the campaigns to reduce lead in petrol and against the introduction of heavier lorries – have involved much more sustained media and parliamentary pressure over the course of a decade. In both cases, environmental groups have to an extent prevailed against official advice and industrial pressure. Significantly, both campaigns have been strongly supported by the media, to the extent of *The Sunday Times* (on the lorry issue) and *The Observer* (on the lead issue) mounting their own campaigns.

In each of the above examples, the intense media interest transformed what had previously been a humdrum administrative matter into a sensitive political issue. This points to the general influence of the media in determining the political agenda, and relates to the third objective that environmental groups have pursued in seeking publicity for their aims – to improve the climate of opinion for environmental issues through long-term educational and propaganda campaigns. Much of this is not aimed at mass opinion, but takes the form of specialist conferences and publications for politicians, civil servants, professional groups, industrialists and others whose opinions are of consequence. Occasionally groups also come together in concerted campaigns, designed specifically to stimulate media interest over a sustained period and thereby raise general awareness. Examples include the 'The countryside in 1970' conferences (1963, 1965 and 1970), European Conservation Year (1970), European Architectural Heritage Year (1975), and promotion of the World Conservation Strategy (the early 1980s). Such campaigns can attract enormous media attention. In relation to European Architectural Heritage Year, for example, 100 television programmes appeared (accounting for 60 hours of screen time) and over 8000 items in the national and provincial press (*Architects' Journal* 25 February 1976).

Most groups engage in a certain amount of background campaigning. For some, the intention is to remedy specific environmental abuses: for example, the Keep Britain Tidy Group discourages the dropping of litter, the Farming and Wildlife Adivsory Group solicits the conservationist sympathies of farmers, and the Victorian Society promotes a general reassessment of the legacy of Victorian architecture. Other groups are seeking more fundamental value change. The open lobbying of Friends of the Earth, the direct action of Greenpeace, the educational work of the Conservation Society and the political propaganda of the Ecology Party are all in their different ways aimed at disseminating awareness of the ecological problems faced by our society, so as to transform the context of public values in which both individual choices and institutional decisions are made about the use of natural resources. Through their background campaigns, environmental groups in general have enhanced their public image and generated a climate of opinion sympathetic to environmental protection – what Gregory (1972) refers to as a 'halo effect'. As a consequence, environmental decisions enjoy a high degree of visibility, obliging decision makers to consider carefully what the public is likely to tolerate or

reject in terms of environmental impact. The fact that, since the late 1970s, with growing impatience over Britain's economic performance, the tide of opinion has reversed, generating some hostility towards environmental constraints, has merely spurred many groups to redouble their propaganda efforts.

The structure of the environmental lobby

As pressure groups, environmental groups seldom operate alone. In considering their structure of access, therefore, it is important to be aware of the way in which they work together in the political system as an environmental lobby. Some 74 groups provided data on their contacts with each other. Half of them are in touch with at least 14 other groups. A few – the CPRE, the Civic Trust, CoEnCo, FoE, the National Trust and the RSPB – enjoy contacts with a majority of environmental groups. They are the effective focal points of the environmental movement, as their links spread across the whole movement and are not limited to any one sector. Most of the other groups have a narrower range of contacts restricted mainly to groups with closely similar interests. In aggregate, this clustering of groups gives rise to four broad sectors: resources, conservation, recreation and amenity. By and large, the link between groups within any one of these sectors and the wider environmental movement is via the central core of groups with extensive movement-wide contacts (see Fig. 4.1). Even so, it was striking that all the groups considered themselves part of a single environmental movement. Yet with such a large number of groups, the twin risks of factionalism and rivalry arise: the former from *conflict* between groups pursuing *divergent* objectives: the latter from *competition* for limited resources between groups pursuing *convergent* objectives.

There are instances of policy conflicts between environmental groups. Amenity groups and nature conservation groups, for example, disagreed over the siting of the third London airport; the former (including the CPRE, the TCPA, the Civic Trust and the Noise Abatement Society) preferred a coastal site; the latter (particularly the RSPB) an inland site. In contrast, the CPRE and the TCPA have generally been in opposite camps over plans for new towns. The most serious and systematic disagreements arise in relation to recreation. Between recreation groups, there are sharp disagreements over their conflicting requirements. For example, in promoting access to the countryside, the Ramblers' Association often faces opposition from some of the groups promoting field sports. In addition, recreation groups occasionally conflict with other environmental groups, particularly those concerned with amenity protection and nature conservation who seek to curb pressures on the countryside.

When, in contrast, groups are pursuing objectives that are very similar, the risk is in competition. Half of the groups were aware of some competition. When asked 'competition for what?', 42% specified sources of finance, 40% specified public attention and 18% specified potential recruits. Significantly, though offered as an option, no one suggested that environmental groups are in competition for government attention. That sources of finance may be limited is not surprising. Most of the groups aware of financial competition are dependent on external sources. What is much more surprising is the perception of a number of groups that public attention is limited and that some groups, in the words of one respondent, 'hog the limelight' to the exclusion of others.

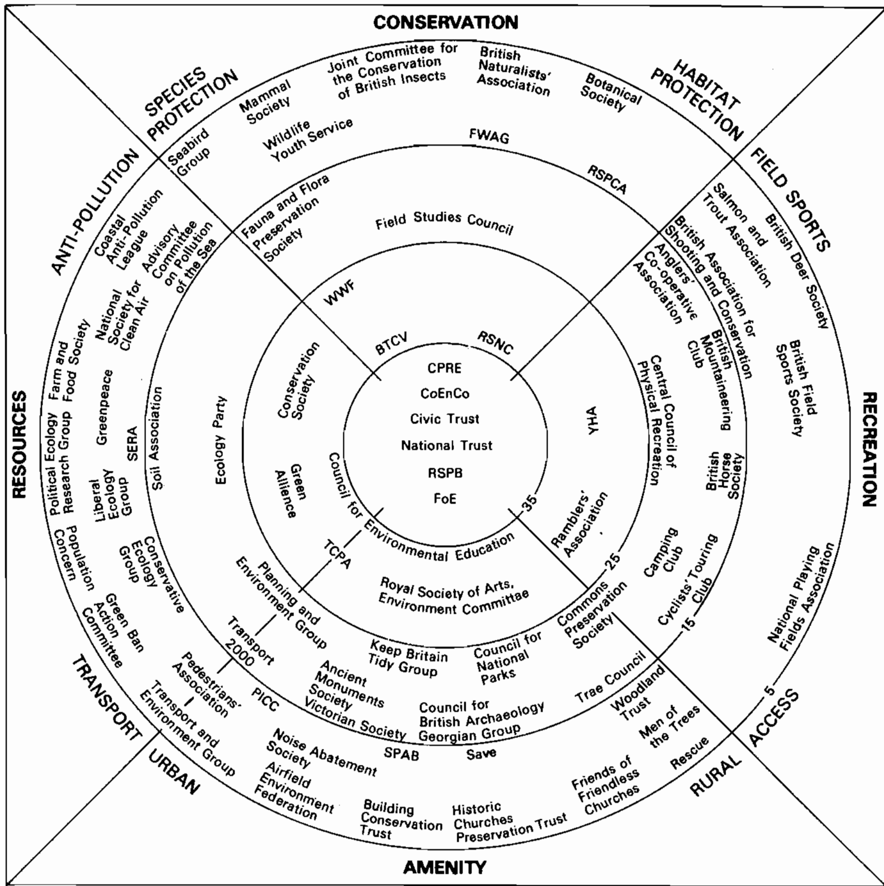


Figure 4.1 Organisation of the environmental lobby. Each group was asked with which other groups it was in regular contact. Groups have been allocated to different bands according to the number of contacts attributed to them (rather than claimed by them). Thus, groups in the outer band are in regular contact with five or more other groups, but less than 15. By and large, groups tend to be in contact with other groups in the same sector or with groups in the central core.

Some of the recreational groups accused the Ramblers' Association of this, suggesting that it had become accepted by the media as *the* public spokesman for countryside recreation, even though its views were unrepresentative. One other group attracted even more critical comment on this score – FoE. Indeed, most of the groups that mentioned competition for public attention had it specifically in mind. As one group leader commented sourly, 'Friends of the Earth is very possessive of any issue with a whiff of publicity value'.

Half of the groups, however, were not aware of any competition and most of the others considered it limited and no obstacle to friendly co-operation. One reason for this is that most groups have a distinct and specific purpose which

does not significantly overlap with any of the others. There are two possible ways in which groups may specialise: by subject or by function. An example of subject specialisation is the division of preservation groups into historical periods, namely the Council for British Archaeology, the Ancient Monuments Society, the SPAB, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society and the recently formed Thirties Society (covering the inter-war years). The nature conservation sector provides examples of functional specialisation: the World Wildlife Fund is the fund raiser and banker; the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers provides voluntary manpower; the Field Studies Council is the educational arm; the county trusts for nature conservation are the landowners; the Royal Society for Nature Conservation co-ordinates the county trusts; the Council for Nature (now superseded by the Wildlife Link Committee of CoEnCo) co-ordinates the national groups. This sector, in fact, is the most specialised functionally, reflecting in part the 'dirigisme' of the Nature Conservancy which, since the mid-1950s, has deliberately intervened to shape the conservation lobby and which was involved in the creation of most of the above groups.

Co-operation between groups is also fostered by the multitude of links between them. Many groups exchange literature and a few even share staff or premises. Routine contact between officers, however, is by far the most usual link between groups. Its significance is a sign of the professionalisation of environmental groups in that to maintain the range of contacts that many of them do, demands full-time staff. In most instances, staff know their opposite numbers personally. As a staff member of CPRE commented, 'environmental groups work closely together. There is extensive co-operation. We work as a team. We all know each other, drink together and are personal friends.' This is not to deny the occasional friction between the extrovert personalities that the leadership of voluntary organisations inevitably attracts.

Often operating in parallel with staff contacts are formal and cross-membership links between groups. These are usually an indication of long-standing alliances. They are typical of the links between older groups, particularly in the nature conservation and amenity sectors, as well as the relationship between federal organisations and their constituent groups. Cross membership is where a leading member of one group happens to occupy a leading position in another; formal representation is similar but with the individual concerned operating not in a personal capacity but as the representative of one group. The effects of cross membership and formal representation in some subsectors of the environmental movement are such that a variety of decision-making positions are occupied by comparatively few people wearing many hats. To give just one example, in 1981 Lord Craigton was chairman of CoEnCo, chairman of the Zoo Federation of Great Britain, chairman of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, chairman of the All-Party Conservation Committee, vice-president of the World Wildlife Fund (UK), a member of the council of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and a member of the Environment Committee of the Royal Society of Arts.

All groups were asked what benefits they derived from their contacts with other environmental groups. Some two thirds ranked 'information and intelligence' as the most important. Next came 'mutual co-operation on projects and campaigns' (ranked either second or first by two thirds of the groups). Other potential benefits, considered of much less significance, were material assist-

ance (such as finance, expertise or accommodation), a source of advice and a source of additional political contacts. Thus the real significance of the environmental lobby is not the pooling of resources and views, but as an information grapevine. In this way, groups co-operate to mutual advantage but retain their independence and control over their own resources.

This points to some of the real strengths of the environmental lobby in Britain. Its function as a chain of communication is greatly enhanced by two factors. First, through their local members and branches many groups have a nationwide capacity for gathering information about potential environmental threats. As we saw earlier (p. 40), most groups attached relatively high importance to the function of their membership as 'a network of local environmental watch-dogs to alert the group to any problems that call for action'. On many issues this capacity has been employed to considerable effect. Second, there is a strong correlation between the range of contacts a group has with other groups and its range of contacts with government and parliament, which greatly strengthens the potential of the environmental lobby as an intelligence grapevine. Finer (1966) has characterised advance intelligence as a necessary condition for the success of any pressure group, enabling it to anticipate and therefore to affect, rather than merely to respond to, the course of events. Early warning of government thinking, for example, allows for a campaign to be mounted or pressure to be applied before options are narrowed down and government becomes committed to particular courses of action. The nature of the environmental lobby is such that what a group lacks in terms of its own special sources of information is compensated by its contacts with a large array of groups all gleaning and swapping information.

Another facet of the environmental lobby is its operation as a co-ordinated network for co-operation on projects and campaigns. Most major environmental issues involve a number of environmental groups. Through the network, a range of groups can be quickly alerted to action, tactics can be informally co-ordinated, and pressure can be applied at many points and behind the scenes. As the secretary of the Ramblers' Association commented, 'To make any impact on decision makers you have to speak in concert with other bodies with similar interests.' External observers have found the great number and variety of environmental groups bewildering and have suggested that such fragmentation of effort must be a source of weakness (Kimber & Richardson 1974b). Some group leaders, in contrast, claimed the proliferation of groups to be an advantage, particularly in the impressive host of groups that can be mobilised to support or oppose an issue. Yet there is a cost involved, namely the effort needed to maintain communications between groups. In the words of the RSPB, 'We put a lot of time and resources into keeping good relationships and preventing others doing silly things which might affect us detrimentally. Liaison itself could be a full-time task.'

One response has been to set up formal institutional arrangements for co-ordination. These have grown in number since the mid-1960s, in response to the growing size and complexity of the environmental movement, as well as the desire of environmentalists to present a more unified front to government and the media. They include coalitions to focus attention on specific issues, such as Clear (the Campaign for Lead-free Air), and broad umbrella groups, the foremost of which is CoEnCo, established in 1969 to co-ordinate the whole

environmental lobby. Considerable ambivalence was expressed by our respondents about formal as opposed to informal co-ordination. Many groups called for more of it, the chairman of Green Alliance suggesting that lack of unity prevented the environmental movement having 'real political bite', but there was also much criticism of the effectiveness of existing co-ordinating groups. Individual groups are naturally jealous of their own authority and resources and are unwilling to cede much to another group. As the secretary of the Field Studies Council commented, 'co-ordinating efforts fail because groups are too independent minded and don't lend themselves to being co-ordinated'. As a consequence, co-ordinating groups are often starved of resources by their constituent groups and are seldom able fully to develop their functions and thus to demonstrate their worth. The director of Friends of the Earth, explaining why it avoided joining co-ordinating bodies, characterised them as 'mere talking shops'.

Despite these general strictures, some co-ordinating groups have been markedly more effective than others. By and large, coalitions set up for a relatively specific purpose, such as Transport 2000, the Council for National Parks, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Joint Committee of the building preservation societies, and the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea, have been more successful in establishing their own niches than broad umbrella groups such as the Council for Nature (now defunct), CoEnCo, the Planning and Environment Group, the Royal Society of Arts Environment Committee, the Professional Institutions Council for Conservation, and the Green Alliance. With their narrow remits, the former offer less of a challenge to existing groups who are more likely, therefore, to grant them a certain degree of autonomy. Moreover, there is a greater likelihood of achieving a working consensus for a limited purpose.

Tactics of environmental groups

A group's tactics will depend upon its leaders' assessment of the strategic situation it confronts in relation to its aims. The choice of tactics is subject both to internal constraints, particularly of resources, and to external constraints, in relation to the political channels open to the group. Most environmental groups maintain a variety of political channels, though the thrust may differ, with the established emphasis groups relying more on their well developed links with administrative agencies and promotional groups tending to pursue their objectives more through public campaigns. Two of the case studies enable a contrast to be drawn between the political tactics of one of the most conservative groups, the National Trust (Ch. 8), and one of the more radical groups, FoE (Ch. 7).

A major constraint operating to moderate the tactics of most emphasis groups is their charitable status. In our survey, 59% of groups were charities – nearly all of them emphasis groups. In principle, they are debarred from overt political activities (Goodman Committee 1976). What this means in practice is that their lobbying is discreet and restrained, and their efforts to inform opinion are presented as public education and not propaganda. A few of the promotional groups – including the Airfield Environment Federation, the Conservation Society and FoE – have set up separate charitable trusts to support

their educational and research work so as not to constrain their campaigning activities.

Overall, environmental groups have generally good media and parliamentary relations. Their links with the political parties, however, are notably weak, and they lack the close, symbiotic relationship that major interest groups enjoy with senior civil servants. The latter is a source of weakness in bringing an environmental perspective to bear on the generality of government business beyond the circumscribed policy programmes, such as wildlife conservation and historic buildings preservation, which government has conceded to environmental groups. It is not that environmental groups lack access to the executive; rather that they lack the higher level access, and sufficient resources and sanctions to make full use of the access they do enjoy.

Most environmental groups are fighting interests which are well entrenched in government policy. Since the Second World War, farming interests have enjoyed strong political representation and protection through the Ministry of Agriculture, a position which environmental groups concerned with landscape and nature conservation have found difficult to assail. The nuclear power industry has long enjoyed the support of government and has benefited from the momentum generated by previous policy commitments. Environmental groups have found this momentum hard to reverse. The commitment to economic growth, supported by business, industry and the trade unions, has similarly had a seemingly unassailable place in government plans for the future of the British economy.

Given this initially weak position for environmental groups, contacts with the media have assumed a particular importance in generating public support and exerting pressure on government. The media provide a means of arousing public concern and challenging policy commitments. In this respect, there is truth in the assumption by political scientists that use of the mass media is something of a last resort for pressure groups, indicating failure in other channels of influence.

However, the importance accorded to the media by environmental groups does not appear to be the result of failure in developing alternative channels of influence. Nor do these other channels of consultation, agreement and negotiations with authoritative bodies appear to be jeopardised by appeals to the public. Rather the campaigns and lobbying of environmental groups make use of all channels in ways that complement each other. In the absence of any other sanctions available to environmental groups, the media provide a valuable back-up to their more private negotiations with government. They can pave the way for the establishment of these negotiations and present the threat of adverse publicity should they fail.

The network of links between environmental groups lends further support and sanctioning power to the environmental lobby in its relations with government. The concerted voice of many environmental groups, as with the public airing of issues through the media, lends strength to their argument and campaigns, making it more difficult for government to ignore them. In the diversity of environmental groups lies some of the lobby's strength, for it allows the appearance of a much wider support on specific issues than if only one group were involved. Together with media support, it has provided for a loud voice, if not an immediately influential one.

5 *Environmental groups in local politics*

This chapter examines the involvement of local environmental groups in local politics. Many of them also engage in practical work to preserve or enhance the environment. Nevertheless, most of their activities bring them into contact with local government, and the focus of their attention is usually local authority policies and decisions affecting the environment. Indeed, it was suggested in Chapter 2 that the growth of environmental politics at the local level has been in part a response to the statutory planning system and to the powers it confers on local authorities to regulate and initiate development. This chapter looks in detail at the relations that environmental groups have with local authorities and the implications of their involvement in the planning system for the distribution of the costs and benefits associated with planning decisions.

The statutory planning system

In its essentials, the present land-use planning system dates from 1947. The economic and environmental consequences of urban sprawl and congestion, the limitations of pre-war planning and the need for major post-war reconstruction caused the state to extend its control over the use of private land. In effect, the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 nationalised the development rights of private property by making all development subject to the permission of the local planning authority. The definition of development excluded agriculture and forestry, an omission which in recent years has become a major source of concern for environmental groups. The Act charged local authorities with the duty of preparing development plans to show their proposals for the use of land in their area and to guide their decisions about the control of development.

The present provisions for development plans and development control were consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. Since the reorganisation of local government in 1974, these duties have been divided between county and district authorities. County councils formulate 'structure plans', subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Primarily a written statement, a structure plan is concerned with general strategy for a county rather than the detailed allocation of land for different uses. The issues covered in a structure plan include the location and scale of employment, housing, shopping, mineral extraction, conservation, and provision for recreation and tourism. Structure plans may also indicate action areas where major change is needed, whether through development, redevelopment, or improvement of what exists already.

Local plans are the responsibility of district councils. In principle, they are intended to be a detailed elaboration of the broader policies indicated in the structure plan. They may be of three types: 'district plans', setting out comprehensive proposals for land use in a particular area, typically a group of villages, a small town or part of a city; 'action area plans', detailing policies for an area of rapid change; and 'subject plans', dealing with a specific topic, such as housing, leisure or conservation. District councils are the primary authorities responsible for development control. Applications for planning permission may be approved, refused or granted subject to conditions regulating the way in which the development should be carried out. If an application is refused or granted conditionally, the applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

In exercising their powers, local authorities are concerned with the consequences of development for the economic, social and physical wellbeing of their areas. A key concept of particular relevance to environmental groups is 'amenity'. Although frequently invoked in the refusal of planning permission and in design and conservation policies in development plans, it remains undefined in legislation (Cullingworth 1979). As used, it covers a range of matters including peace and quiet, freedom from pollution, visual appeal, recreational value, and historical or architectural merit.

In development plans, a major means of safeguarding amenity is through a protective designation, of which there are a number of different types. Even though responsibility for making some of these designations resides with central government agencies, local authorities still play a key part in implementing the relevant protective policies. National parks, chosen for their landscape and recreation value, and 'areas of outstanding natural beauty' (AONBs), chosen on landscape grounds, are designated by the Countryside Commission, subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Local authorities themselves designate 'areas of great landscape value'. The Countryside Commission and local authorities together agree on the designation of stretches of coastline of high scenic quality as 'heritage coasts'; and on the establishment of 'country parks' to provide recreational opportunities, particularly within close motoring distance of large conurbations. Places with a special flora, fauna or geology are designated as 'national nature reserves' or 'sites of special scientific interest' (SSSIs) by the Nature Conservancy Council. Local authorities in consultation with the Conservancy may also set up 'local nature reserves'.

In development plans, 'green belts' may be created or extended, to check urban growth. District planning authorities have a responsibility to declare areas of special architectural or historic interest as 'conservation areas'; individual buildings of such merit are also protected in a number of ways, through 'listing' by the Secretary of State or the serving of a temporary 'building preservation notice' by the local planning authority. The demolition and alteration of listed buildings and the demolition of buildings in conservation areas are subject to planning control. Single trees or groups of trees can be protected from felling by a 'tree preservation order'. Further designations which local authorities can make include 'general improvement areas' to improve the environment of particular areas, 'traffic regulation orders' to exclude heavy vehicles from using certain roads, 'smoke control zones' to reduce domestic air

pollution, and 'noise abatement zones' to exclude intrusive noise. For areas covered by these and other designations, local authorities have additional powers and special grants are usually available from local or central government, to protect or enhance amenity.

Environmental groups seek to influence the selection and management of designated areas and features, as well as general local-authority policies towards conservation and development. Opportunities to exert influence are provided by formal procedures for public involvement in planning. In the case of a development plan, there is a statutory requirement for the public to have the opportunity to make representations on the plan's possible contents and for the local authority to consider these representations. Before approval, structure plans are submitted to an 'examination in public', though the issues considered and the organisations included are selected by the Secretary of State. Local plans are submitted to a public hearing or inquiry, which is less circumscribed in terms of participants or subject matter than the examination in public. In both the examination in public and the inquiry, proceedings are conducted by an independent inspector who reports in the case of a structure plan to the Secretary of State, and in the case of a local plan to the district authority. Public inquiries are also held, at the discretion of the Secretary of State, to consider major development proposals 'called in' for his determination, as well as appeals by those refused planning permission by local authorities.

In addition to these formal opportunities for participation, voluntary groups may also seek informal influence with local authorities through contacts with councillors and officers. Local environmental groups have laid a great deal of emphasis on such informal contacts, as we shall see. First we consider the resources available to them in putting over their points of view.

The resources of local environmental groups

Organised voluntary activity to protect the local environment is a comparatively recent phenomenon. As a movement it dates from the 1920s, although interest in the local environment existed long before that, finding expression, for example, in the proliferation of natural history societies, field clubs and local archaeological societies in the Victorian era. Indeed, the oldest existing amenity society in Britain, the Sid Vale Association, was founded in 1846. However, by the end of the First World War, there was little activity apart from that of a dozen local environmental groups. Yet twenty years later, there were just over a hundred such groups. The period from the late 1920s to the late 1930s marked the creation of a network of CPRE branches (30 of them by 1939); the formation of the first county naturalists' trust (for Norfolk 1926); the establishment of preservation societies for a number of historic towns and cities, including Wisbech, Boston, St Andrews, Cambridge, Oxford and Norwich; and the formation of local societies in a few choice London suburbs such as Chelsea, Highgate and Blackheath.

The Second World War brought the growth of the local environmental movement to a temporary halt and it was not until the late 1950s that it took off again. The period since then has seen an enormous growth in the number of local groups and in the support they command as Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show. By

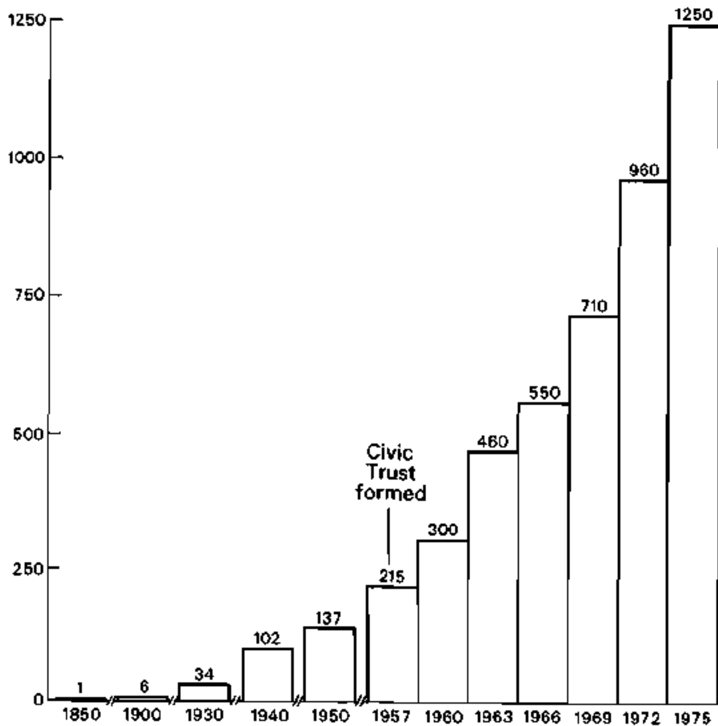


Figure 5.1 The growth of local amenity societies.

1965, all of England and Wales were covered with county trusts, which have continued to grow, from a combined membership of 5000 in 1961 to 142000 in 1981. Amenity societies have also spread throughout the country to most towns and cities and to many villages. Their numbers doubled every six or seven years between 1955 (when there were about 150 of them) and 1975 (when there were over 1200). Over this period, the aggregate number of amenity society members rose from less than 20000 to 300000. By the mid-1970s, support for local environmental groups had reached a ceiling. Since then, there has been no further expansion in the number of amenity societies and their combined membership.

The county trusts for nature conservation are the biggest local environmental groups. In 1977, their median size was about 2900 members, ranging from 133 in the Manx Trust to over 7500 in the Essex Trust. County branches of the Council for the Protection of Rural England rank next in size with a median figure of about 600, ranging from the 38 members of the recently established South Humberside branch to the 2300 members boasted by the Oxfordshire branch. On the whole, local amenity societies, with a median size of about 200, are smaller than these county groups – the vast majority of them (86%) report a membership of less than 500, and more than a quarter have fewer than a hundred members (Barker/Civic Trust 1976), many of these being village preservation societies. In most environmental groups only a minority of

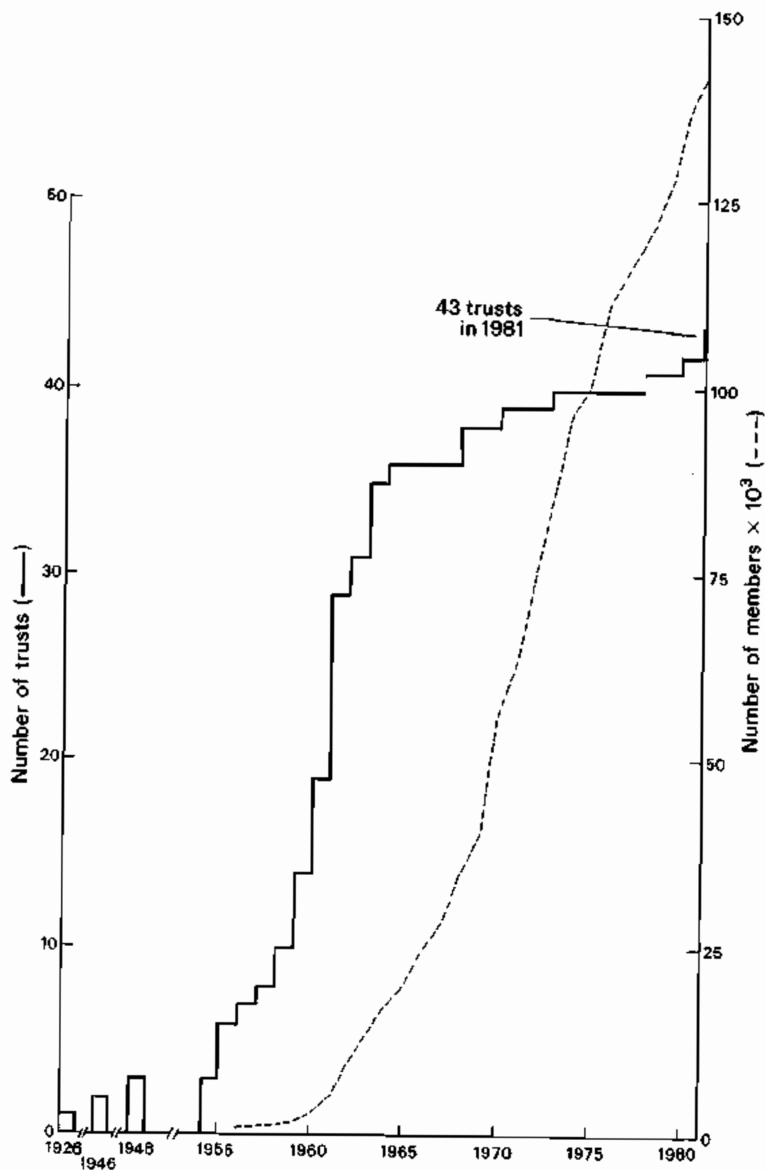


Figure 5.2 Growth in the number and combined membership of county trusts for nature conservation.

members involve themselves in the work of the society. The disproportionate number of retired people on committees and in official positions suggests that spare time is a significant filter to active participation.

The social composition of voluntary organisations is an important determinant of the kinds of skills and knowledge they command. As established in Chapter 2, environmental groups have a largely middle- and upper middle-class membership. From this section of the population they attract a high proportion of professional people with skills of particular help to them in their relations with the local planning authority. A survey of Yorkshire amenity societies found that 62% of them all, and 74% of those in urban areas, could call on more than six different professional skills from among the following: teacher, architect, historian, lawyer, financier, planner, surveyor, estate agent, journalist, archaeologist, youth leader and forester (Gamston 1975). Similarly, a survey of amenity societies in Kent revealed that most societies numbered amongst their members at least one architect, nearly half had a lawyer, 15% a surveyor and 12% a planner (Civic Trust September 1968).

Planning and architectural skills are of particular relevance to the work of an amenity society, and most societies have one or both available to them. In Yorkshire, only 13 out of 40 urban-based societies and three out of 11 village-based societies were unable to call on either of these skills, the majority being able to combine the two (Gamston 1975). In a national survey of over 600 amenity societies, 43% could even claim 'a lot of people' amongst their members 'in relevant professions such as architecture, planning, law or design' (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). Approximately one in seven professional planners take an active part in amenity societies (Cohen 1975), whereas architects have been said to 'provide the burgeoning civic society movement with its backbone (or perhaps its brains)' (Gundrey 1971).

These professional skills underpin the legitimacy and competence of a group in commenting on environmental issues and are important in establishing good relations with the local authority. They enable the group to 'speak the same language' as the planning department, to criticise official policies in an informed manner, and to handle detailed technical arguments. They also enable it to put forward its own proposals, including alternatives to contentious plans, and thereby take the initiative instead of merely reacting defensively to issues as they arise. In this way, some environmental groups are able to help shape the long-term planning policies of a local authority against which all future development proposals will be judged.

Some societies, particularly the county nature conservation trusts, have greater expertise within their memberships than do local authorities. The county trusts employ their own conservation officers, have professional biologists and ecologists on their committees, and include many naturalists in their ranks with detailed knowledge of the local flora and fauna. Local authorities have little or no expertise in these areas, even though they have a statutory responsibility to pay regard to nature conservation in exercising their planning powers (DOE 1977a), and often have a direct involvement in conservation through running local nature reserves, country parks or other areas of wildlife interest. Not surprisingly, many authorities regard the county trusts as valuable sources of specialist knowledge to be consulted on any conservation issues that arise.

Similarly, technical skills amongst members often enable amenity societies to assist a local authority in a practical way, for example in carrying out surveys, clearing a derelict site, planting trees, preparing a village plan, repairing historic buildings and launching street improvement schemes (Civic Trust March 1980). Such work, if recognised as a valuable community service, helps to cement the relations between a society and its local authority. Some practical work, particularly surveys, can be turned to more specific political advantage. To give an historical example from the late 1930s, the Sheffield and Peak District Branch of the CPRE, with its own architect/planner, did the preliminary mapping and surveying to support its proposals for a Peak District National Park and a green belt for Sheffield, both of which were designated in the 1950s. In recent years, many amenity societies have conducted local surveys of the quality and history of the building stock as a prelude to their campaigns for conservation area or general improvement area designations (as in the case of the Henley Society – see Ch. 6). Equally, a study of the volume of traffic may provide a group with ammunition in pressing for traffic restrictions, or a floristic survey form the basis for seeking a SSSI designation, or a survey of historic buildings furnish the evidence for additions to the statutory list.

As well as time, expertise or specialist knowledge, leaders of a local environmental group may lend it social prestige. A survey of the chairmen and secretaries of county branches of the CPRE found that they 'tend to have either a high social status or some expertise in a field related to planning'. Those of high social status were members of the House of Lords, Justices of the Peace or retired army officers. An examination of the lists of branch subscribers showed 'a similar picture: a high proportion of JPs, double-barrelled names and members of historically important families' (Allison 1975).

Finally, although most societies are dependent on voluntary sources of labour and expertise, a small number of groups are able to employ full-time officers. There seems to be a critical size threshold round about a thousand members (cf. p. 46). Groups above this threshold have administrative commitments warranting a paid secretary and at the same time are large enough to afford one. The majority of county trusts employ at least one full-time officer, and half employ more than one. In comparison, only a third of CPRE branches employ a paid secretary and most of these only on a part-time basis, and the vast majority of local amenity societies rely entirely on the voluntary service of their active members.

Professional staff enable local groups to extend their activities by providing sufficient support, back-up services and organisation to ensure the maximum use of the available voluntary assistance. It is no coincidence that, among local environmental groups, the county trusts with their professional staff have the most extensive commitments to practical conservation activities, managing between them over 1000 nature reserves. In addition, the trusts engage in extensive educational activities quite beyond the resources of most other local environmental groups, such as providing facilities for nature study and field biology for schools and colleges. Groups with professional staff are also better equipped to take the initiative rather than merely react to issues when they arise.

Relations with local government

The relationship between any organised group and government, whether at national or local level, will depend both on the group (its aims, style of action and resources) and on the officers and elected representatives of government. Turning first to officers and councillors, it is these who have the final responsibility for making and implementing planning policies and decisions. Therefore, the way in which key officers and councillors perceive a group and its demands will be a major factor in whether it is allowed effective access to official decision making.

Important factors shaping the attitude of those in authority to a particular pressure group include their assessment of its character and worth, the nature of the demands it makes and the methods of communicating these demands (Darke & Walker 1977). Dearlove (1971), studying the attitudes of councillors to interest groups in Kensington and Chelsea, found that groups allowed effective access typically adopted styles of action that were considered 'proper' in that they did not embarrass the council or those in authority; their demands were regarded as 'reasonable' in that they conformed to the policy predispositions of councillors or officers; and they were perceived as 'helpful' in providing information or a useful service to the council or to the local community (For parallel studies of other London boroughs, see Saunders 1975 and Cousins 1976.). There is a tendency for these factors to interact. Groups without established access to decision making may have to resort to 'unacceptable' means of exerting pressure to show that they are a force to be reckoned with and to indicate the extent of their support amongst the wider public.

Two main reasons for a group not having established access are that it is new or that it opposes local authority policy. Building up contacts and acquiring knowledge of the working of local government is a matter of time and experience. A group opposing existing policy challenges also the authority of decision makers who, therefore, are less likely to accord it routine access, obliging it to seek other channels to air its grievances. Examples would include some of the many community action groups established in inner-city areas in the 1960s and 1970s because of local dissatisfaction with housing conditions, facilities and services. Given their often staunch opposition to prevailing policies, their tactics sometimes took them outside the accepted channels of participation and into open conflict with the council, through petitions, demonstrations, picketing and rent strikes (O'Malley 1977, Baine 1975, Wates 1976, Hain 1980).

In contrast, most environmental groups have a style of action characterised as 'responsible'. In the main, they are committed to working with and through local government. As one environmental group put it, 'It is increasingly possible to feel that the society is working with the planning authorities to preserve Suffolk rather than against them in defence of it.' (Buller & Lowe 1982.) It follows that most of their efforts are within the institutional framework of local authority planning. Their activities include, for example, checking the planning register, attending local-authority committee meetings, serving on official working parties, corresponding with the planning department and involving council officers and members in their meetings.

Most societies also adopt other means of getting their view across. Of 67

amenity societies in Yorkshire, for example, 70% communicated regularly or occasionally with the local press, 80% had organised public meetings or exhibitions, and over 60% produced their own literature (Gamston 1975). Newspaper coverage may be sought when contacts with a local authority have failed to reverse a planning decision. However, an established group will also weigh carefully the consequences to its future relations with the local authority of adopting a stance of public opposition. In the words of the secretary of the Lancashire CPRE: 'Fighting cases means publicity. Publicity means conflict, and conflict can mean loss of contact and credibility' (Allison 1975).

Another facet of the responsible approach of local environmental groups is their projected image of an essentially disinterested commitment to good planning and design, and to the protection of various environmental features for the public good, rather than the promotion of sectional interests. The explicit values of many environmental groups are aesthetic, historical or scientific rather than social or political. They avoid supporting local causes or pressure groups which seem parochial or narrowly self-interested. Moreover, local amenity and civic societies typically describe themselves as 'non-political'. Indeed, a Civic Trust spokesman has urged: 'It may be that most of [a group's] members are Tories, or Socialists, or Liberals, but this fact should never be allowed to colour its approach to a particular problem.' (Percival 1967.) Unlike certain other groups interested in the conduct or local government, such as residents' and ratepayers' associations, local environmental groups seldom get involved in supporting candidates for local elections. Because they are not seen by councillors to pose a direct electoral challenge, this fosters a more relaxed and accommodating attitude towards them. However, because environmental groups each have a geographically concentrated membership, often organised on a ward basis, councillors can ill afford to neglect the views of a well supported group. In addition, their non-partisan concern for good planning and their stress on expertise is congruent with the professional ideology of many planning officers and is a further factor conducive to mutual sympathy between planning departments and environmental groups.

Increasingly, many planning authorities have come to rely on environmental groups in fulfilling their duties with regards to public participation. Since the late 1960s new statutes, government circulars, public opinion and changes in professional attitudes have promoted the cause of participation (Barker 1979). Provision for public involvement of some kind in forward planning and development control is now a well established duty of local authorities. However, their experience in seeking the opinions and involvement of the unorganised public has been disappointing (Fagence 1977). Not surprisingly, local authorities have tended to turn to organised groups to sample public responses to policy options and development proposals.

We can distinguish a number of reasons why active local environmental groups are often accepted by planning authorities as surrogates for lay interests and lay opinion in local planning matters. Organised groups present relatively fixed, identifiable points, with some permanence and continuity, in a shifting sea of attitudes, values and interests. They serve to channel and structure amorphous local opinions. Moreover, groups that are technically skilled may be proficient at formulating local interests in a coherent, ordered and internally

consistent manner and translating them into formal political demands, capable of being handled and responded to by local officials and politicians.

Rightly or wrongly, the low response by the general public to participation exercises has been interpreted as reflecting a widespread lack of interest towards standards of planning, design and amenities. Those active within environmental groups are seen to comprise the concerned public. Indeed, it has been argued that environmental groups articulate local community interests just as trades councils and chambers of commerce do for local labour and business interests, i.e. 'They represent ordinary people in their role as consumers of the environment.' (Percival 1972). More specifically, the position now is such that on many issues, environmental groups constitute 'public opinion', in the sense of Key's (1961) definition as 'those opinions of private persons which governments find it prudent to heed'.

A further reason why environmental groups fulfil a central role in public participation is that this enables local planning authorities to exercise influence in the reverse direction. Through a continuing relationship with established groups, planning authorities can put over their own intentions and explain the constraints under which they operate. Where an authority has modified its own stance to take account of the views expressed by a group, it will usually expect backing from the group in return. Many planning authorities now regard a close collaborative relationship with responsible environmental groups as an important political resource in establishing good public relations for official planning as well as in delivering public consent for particular policies and decisions. Such a relationship can also be used to strengthen the arm of planning officers, say in presenting particular proposals to elected representatives, or in internal conflicts with other departments of the council, or in dealings with outside agencies. As one Yorkshire planning officer put it: 'Planners are becoming aware of the immense power of civic societies, and now know that support will often be available in the witness box' (Gamston 1975). When it comes to public inquiries, amenity societies more often appear to give evidence in support of the local authority's position than to oppose it (Barker/Civic Trust 1976).

Although there is much variation between authorities, by and large local environmental groups tend to have much greater contact with officers than with councillors (Darke & Walker 1977). In part this may be a reflection of the division of responsibility for policy between planning departments and elected representatives. The growth of planning legislation, the complexity of long-term planning and the detailed demands of development control have inevitably resulted in some shift of authority away from elected members and towards the chief planning officer and his staff. The picture is seen to be more complicated, however, if types of issue are differentiated. Typically, a group will rely on routine contact with the planning department to deal with day-to-day issues. When a matter of major concern arises, it is still likely that this will be raised first with officers, but if such an approach fails to resolve the matter, then a group will probably take it up next with councillors (Fujishin 1975).

Finally, in considering the factors affecting a group's relationship with the local authority, it is impossible to separate the access a group is afforded from the nature of the aims it is pursuing. Legislation and public opinion have made conservation a legitimate concern of local government, though the extent to which environmental values have been institutionalised, in the official policies

of local authorities and their decision making and management structures, varies across the country. However, in most English rural counties the values represented by the CPRE and the county trusts for nature conservation are now strongly represented in local government policy. Indeed, rural preservation, including the protection of landscape and wildlife and the defence of agricultural land, is the leitmotif of planning in counties such as Suffolk, West Sussex and North Yorkshire. In a similar respect, in such historic towns as Cambridge, Bath and Chester, building preservation has become part of the unquestioned context within which local government operates (see, for example, Green 1968). On the other hand, in the Home Counties and some others adjacent to major conurbations (including Warwickshire and Leicestershire) urban containment, restraint of settlement growth and the protection of the open countryside are overriding concerns of planning.

Greater regard for environmental conservation has often been accompanied by organisational and staff changes with, for example, the establishment of countryside or conservation sections within planning departments and the employment, particularly by county councils, of small numbers of specialists in such fields as landscape architecture, archaeology, conservation and ecology. For example, the number of local authority staff concerned with building conservation was 1578 in 1979, representing an increase of 16% over the previous year (Civic Trust March 1981). Such changes have brought into local government, staff whose training and professional interests favour environmental protection and whose values are in sympathy with those of local environmental groups. Many planners have also found conservation an attractive cause to espouse, in helping to neutralise the general opprobrium which the profession attracted in the public backlash against comprehensive redevelopment.

Compared with the generality of local voluntary bodies and pressure groups, we would judge most environmental groups well 'established' (Newton 1976). The following are indicators of established status: whether a group's membership includes an elected member or senior officer of the local authority; whether it is represented on a local authority committee; and whether it is consulted by the local authority. The majority of local environmental groups fulfil at least two of these conditions.

Considering first the county trusts for nature conservation, most of these have local authority personnel not just as members but also serving in an official capacity. Indeed, only 10 out of 37 trusts in England and Wales have neither local planning-authority officers nor elected members on their governing councils or one of their committees, and 14 trusts have both officers and councillors serving in such a capacity. In turn, half the trusts are directly represented on official countryside committees; and some of the remainder serve on special working parties of their planning authorities reviewing various aspects of nature conservation. In addition, a majority (20) of the trusts have arrangements whereby county planning authorities refer certain planning applications to them for their observations. All the trusts have been consulted by planning authorities in the process of statutory forward planning, with a number of them also being represented on structure and local plan working parties. Last but not least, all the trusts advise their local authorities on the management of public land of wildlife interest, such as local nature reserves, country parks and roadside verges. Indeed, a majority of trusts (21) are

represented on local authority committees which manage such land (Beynon & Wetton 1978).

CPRE branches present a similar picture to the county trusts for nature conservation. A majority of CPRE branches, for example, have a representative of the county council on their executive committee, often the chief planning officer; and in return the CPRE is represented on official countryside committees where these exist. CPRE branches are also well represented on national park committees (MacEwen & MacEwen 1982). Most branches are automatically notified of planning applications for their consideration, and most are consulted, usually extensively, in the preparation of development plans. As well as strong formal connections with their county planning authorities, CPRE branches typically rely also on much informal contact and influence, with planning staff and sympathetic councillors (Ringrose-Voase 1970). The weak link of CPRE branches, as with county trusts, is with district councils. This has become a source of vulnerability to them as more and more planning powers have passed from county to district authorities.

Turning to local amenity societies, we find more diverse situations, but we would still characterise most of them as well established. A national survey of amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust concluded that, compared with most other local voluntary bodies, they typically enjoy a more 'insider' rather than 'outsider' relationship with their local planning authorities, as indicated by the degree of informal contact with these authorities and by the membership of councillors (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). Most societies could number one or more councillors amongst their members, usually including someone on the planning committee of the local authority. About half of the societies also report at least one councillor sitting on their executive committee. However, some societies, anxious to maintain their apolitical image, have constitutions that prevent councillors occupying official positions.

It is common practice for local amenity societies to be consulted regularly on planning applications. In addition, in a national survey conducted in 1978, 63% of amenity societies claimed to have been involved in the preparation of structure plans. Some 54% also recorded their involvement in local plans, the lower proportion reflecting the fact that in some areas no work had yet started on a local plan. Transport policies and programmes, which county councils have to prepare, attracted the attention of 40% of societies. In contrast, their relative lack of interest in local housing provision is reflected in the fact that only 5% of societies offered any observations on housing investment programmes (Civic Trust March 1980).

Representation of amenity societies on formal bodies advising their local authorities is less prevalent than for county environmental groups. In part, this reflects the fact that conservation planning only became a district function in 1974. The main channels for formal representation of amenity societies are conservation area advisory committees. Only a quarter of district councils in England have as yet established such committees, though two thirds of London boroughs have. Where conservation area advisory committees do exist, they usually include, as a matter of course, representatives from local amenity societies. Thus, 61% of London amenity societies are represented on such committees (Civic Trust July 1980).

Environmental groups, which now enjoy established access to local decision

making, were not necessarily always in such a favoured position. Many began as 'outsiders', challenging existing policy or reacting to a particular planning proposal. Thus, fierce opposition from local protest groups in the early 1970s halted major highway schemes in cities such as Cardiff, Bristol, Carlisle, Reading, London, Nottingham and Southampton (J. Grant 1977, Hart 1976, Priest & Cobb 1980). Similarly, amenity societies played key roles in the campaigns that checked central-area redevelopment proposals in Covent Garden, Cardiff, Halifax, Chesterfield, Hereford, and Hertford. The defeat in the late 1960s and early 1970s of large-scale housing clearance schemes in many, older, inner-urban areas also owed much to the sustained resistance of newly formed amenity groups (Barker/Civic Trust 1976).

Some groups, created to fight a specific development, subside with the fate of that one issue. Others survive through broadening their concerns to embrace the generality of local environmental and conservation issues. It is these groups that seek to develop a working relationship with their local planning authorities. Over time, as they gain political legitimacy and their arguments become more acceptable, councillors and officials may come to regard them less as *ad hoc* protest groups and more as permanent pressure groups within the planning system. Particularly in many urban areas, however, official commitment to conservation and acceptance of local amenity societies was predicated on a reversal of policy, often following the defeat of a major redevelopment or transport scheme promoted by the local authority.

Rural authorities, in contrast, have tended to become committed to conservation in a gradual, piecemeal manner rather than through a dramatic policy reversal. This cumulative process is reflected in the accretion of protective designations often covering the same area, such as listed buildings in conservation areas; conservation areas in AONBs, green belts and national parks; green belts in AONBs; heritage coasts in AONBs and national parks; and SSSIs in AONBs and national parks. Nearly 50% of the countryside is covered by some sort of landscape protection policy (Countryside Commission 1979). As Connell (1971) commented of Surrey, 'County planning policy has to be largely one of conservation and protection' because all but a tiny part of Surrey is green belt and/or AONB (and there are 115 conservation areas). Many local environmental groups were formed to press for such protective designations. Approximately 16% of amenity societies, for example, were set up specifically to lobby for the establishment of one or more local conservation areas, and, as we shall see, the designation procedure is responsive to such political pressures (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). Having achieved a particular designation, local groups then assume a watchdog role in relation to it. In effect, an environmental designation, with its statutory safeguards, provides a group with additional political leverage in staving off unwanted development. It may also act as a deterrent to potential developers (Gregory 1970, Blacksell & Gilg, 1977, Anderson 1981).

Distributional issues

When local environmental groups succeed or fail in their campaigns, it is usually not just the environment that benefits or suffers but particular groups and individuals. The precepts of 'good planning' and the 'public interest' which

many environmental groups have taken as a rationale for their activities are vague concepts which may obscure some of these distributional consequences. Planning decisions and policies involve costs and benefits which may be unevenly distributed amongst the population both spatially and socially (see Ch. 2). In as much as this is so, a generalised concept of the public interest may be misleading. In this section we compare the interests of environmental groups firstly with those not so organised, on whom environmental decisions may impose a regressive distribution of costs and benefits, with the costs weighing heaviest on those least able to bear them, and the benefits accruing to those who already enjoy superior financial and environmental circumstances. We then turn to consider other interests, in relation to which the activities of environmental groups may help to effect a progressive distribution of costs and benefits, securing a wider public interest against private gain.

For many environmental groups, their concern with protecting the environment does certainly extend beyond preserving the interests of their members or local residents. Many members would claim to be defending aspects of the nation's cultural or natural heritage for general benefit as well as for their own satisfaction. This would certainly be so for most specialist groups such as local archaeological societies, groups concerned with preserving architecture of a particular period and the county trusts for nature conservation. Moreover, some area-orientated preservation groups such as the Friends of the Lake District, the Society of Sussex Downsmen, the Exmoor Society and the Dartmoor Preservation Association attract support from outside the area. Each, for example, has a London branch. Clearly, there is a wider national interest in protecting such fine countryside, as there is also undoubtedly a national interest in protecting certain other areas, for example the historic centres of cities such as York, Edinburgh and Norwich.

Most other environmental groups project an essentially disinterested commitment to good planning and design, the conservation of historic or natural features of intrinsic worth, and the maintenance of environmental standards and amenities in the public interest. Nevertheless, their efforts do have specific consequences for their members' interests and the interests of others, given that the ability to participate in the planning system is unevenly distributed amongst the population.

Perhaps the clearest examples of distributional consequences are to do with what might be termed locational politics. Many environmental disputes are essentially about the siting of a proposed development. The success of one area in preventing the development may be to the cost of another area. In such cases the real battle is not between the defenders of the environment and the developer, but between groups of citizens, each protecting their own patch. The M3 motorway controversy in the Winchester area saw hostility between different groups of objectors, each arguing separate cases based on their individual interests. Aldous wrote of the public inquiry that the real dispute appeared to be 'not conservationists against mean-minded ministry vandals but to some extent urban conservationists against rural conservationists' (quoted by Twinn 1978).

Conflict between groups over the siting of a development is particularly likely when the need for the development, say a power station, a refuse tip or a new road, is beyond dispute. Few groups are loath to regard the deflection of

such noxious but necessary developments elsewhere as anything but a complete victory. The consequence is that areas which are 'under-represented' in the uneven spread of amenity society activity may suffer in the competition over the distribution of environmental benefits and disamenity, compared with areas that have strong and active environmental groups.

In Chapter 2 it was suggested that environmental values were more widely spread amongst the population than the membership of groups would suggest, the discrepancy being explained by the greater propensity of the middle class to participate in organisations of all kinds. Nevertheless, this in itself becomes significant when looking at the distributional consequences, both social and spatial, at the local level of environmental decisions. If lower-income groups are less likely to organise to protect their interests, they will be less able to protect their local environment from unwanted development. Developments regarded as necessary but which no one wants on their doorstep will tend to go to areas where opposition is least, other things being equal. Thus urban motorways tend to go through so-called 'soft areas' – areas where opposition and the costs of compensation are least (Goodman 1972). Similarly, as Gregory (1976) commented 'when the decision on the third London airport passed from the realm of objective inquiry into that of pressure-group politics, it was Foulness that proved to be the eventual loser. This was the area which – of the four shortlisted by the Roskill commission – contained not only the smallest population, but also a population that was by far the poorest, least educated, and included the highest proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers and state pensioners.'

The danger is that certain areas, inhabited by the poor and the deprived, and already suffering from environmental degradation and dereliction, come to be regarded as environmental sinks where all sorts of non-conforming and noxious land uses can be sited without provoking effective opposition. Working-class districts do tend to experience the highest levels of pollution (Wood *et al.* 1974). On the other hand, areas of high environmental quality attract people who are well equipped to defend their interests. Two thirds of amenity societies state that their members 'generally tend to live in the neighbourhoods with the best standards of layout and amenity' (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). The net result will be to exacerbate spatial and social inequalities in environmental standards. This regressive trend is reinforced by the fact that a favoured environment, unlike a blighted one, is a positive asset in environmental politics to be legitimately defended and promoted – a notion sanctified by the whole plethora of environmental designations.

There is evidence, however, that the spatial pattern of these designations reflects the geography of social and political influence as much as the geography of environmental quality. Gamston (1975) found that local planning authorities had designated many conservation areas simply under pressure from local groups. Even where a complex of historic buildings and spaces had been selected for designation by conservation specialists, the effect of subsequent public consultations was often greatly to extend the boundaries of the proposed designation, as surrounding residents lobbied to be included. The result is that conservation area legislation, which was introduced ostensibly to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of places of 'special architectural or historic interest', has become a weapon for defending smart residential areas

often of little architectural or historic interest. The original concept was derived in part from the notion of 'heritage areas' proposed in 1966 by the Council for British Archaeology to protect historic town centres (Dobby 1978). However, whereas the CBA envisaged this applying to 324 historic towns, there are now five and a half thousand conservation areas and the number continues to grow.

Other designations have similarly been much extended both spatially and conceptually under pressure from local amenity interests. Green belts, conceived as a means of checking urban sprawl, have become an instrument for local preservation, used to exclude new development from the commuter hinterlands of the major conurbations (Munton 1983, Hall *et al.* 1973). Since the original designations made in the 1950s, the area covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt has doubled to about 450 000 ha, mainly through pressure from local amenity societies throughout the Home Counties seeking this additional defence against development. Green belts now cover 11% of England and Wales.

Thus the various environmental designations not only bring extra safeguards and resources to privileged residential areas, but also enable the residents to dress up the defence of their self-interest in the guise of environmental conservation. The political advantage of designated over undesignated areas was greatly increased in 1981 when planning controls were relaxed nationally except within national parks, AONBs and conservation areas where they were actually tightened. This change will further polarise environmental standards (CPRE 1981).

Environmental decisions may also have an opportunity cost which is borne more by one section of the population than another. This cost will tend to be socially rather than spatially differentiated. For example, protecting farmland or open countryside from housing development, although desirable in other respects, may exacerbate the problems faced by local people in finding a home. Successful opposition to a proposed industrial development may deprive local labour of access to a greater choice of employment. Even in those areas considered for the construction of a third London Airport, local trade unionists were prepared to put up with the obvious disadvantages of an airport because of the employment benefits it would bring, though their views were submerged in the clamour of opposing voices (Wootton 1978). Similarly, the National Coal Board's proposal to mine coal under the Vale of Belvoir was supported by local branches of the Labour Party and the National Union of Mineworkers.

Sometimes, the community as a whole may incur a cost as a consequence of exacting standards imposed in response to pressure from a local group. For example, the huge extra expense incurred in burying electricity transmission cables across certain tracts of attractive countryside inflicts on all consumers of electricity an increased cost of supply. Any spending on the environment which raises the price of basic utilities such as fuel, power or transport will involve costs to be borne by rich and poor alike (Stretton 1976). Gregory (1976) has likened this to a regressive tax: 'the poor are obliged to pay more for what everyone needs in order to preserve amenities from which they derive no more (and sometimes less) benefit than the rich.'

Not only may the costs of environmental decisions be differentially distributed amongst the population, but also benefits may accrue more to one section than another. For example, some people have a greater financial stake

in the environment through owning land or property. Conservation policies may significantly increase the value of residential property, by simultaneously enhancing the attractiveness of an area and restricting new development. House prices in national parks and AONBs tend to be much higher than in the rest of the countryside (Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils 1979, Clark 1980, Shucksmith 1981). 'Conservation area' and 'listed building' status are often used by estate agents as selling points. Enjoyment of the fruits of environmental protection will also depend on the necessary means, which are unevenly distributed through society. For example, lack of a motor car is a severe handicap in gaining access to the countryside. Other types of restriction are of a legal or proprietary nature, such as exclusive rights of access, fishing and hunting over private land. Of course, the shortage and high cost of housing in designated areas restricts residential access mainly to higher income groups. In this way, environmental designations act as social filters, reflecting and reinforcing the geographical segregation of social classes (Smith 1974).

These distributional issues raise the question of the extent to which environmental groups may be said to be representative of wider opinions. As with national groups, there is evidence concerning local groups which points to 'self-perpetuating' executive committees, of key officers serving for long periods of time and of an absence of certain democratic procedures in decision making (Fujishin 1975, McCarthy 1976). All of these must raise doubts about how representative are the positions taken by some environmental groups of even their own members' views. Indeed, officers of amenity societies commonly see themselves as being committed to 'good planning principles' rather than to representing their members' or local opinion, and are prepared if necessary to follow an unpopular course, preferring to lead rather than follow public opinion (Barker/Civic Trust 1976). There is evidence from some areas that this stance runs contrary to the interests of others, particularly lower-income groups. Connell (1978) in interviews with council house tenants in Surrey, found their desire for more shops, council housing and social facilities not to be shared by the higher-income groups in the amenity societies which opposed such developments. Studies of rural Suffolk have shown that environmental protection favours middle-class residents, farmers and landowners, but acts against working-class interests, particularly in restricting employment and housing opportunities and public amenities (Newby *et al.* 1978, Buller & Lowe 1982). Ferris (1972) in his case study of environmental improvement in the Barnsbury area of Islington, has shown how a well endowed environmental group can pursue policies which are at odds with the interests of the majority of the area's residents. The main achievement of the Barnsbury Association, formed in 1964 by a group of newly arrived young professionals in a traditionally working-class area of private rented accommodation, lay in 'the way in which they gained official acceptance of what they defined as the major problems facing the area'. Their aims of enhancing the environment of recently improved housing, and changing the policy for the area from redevelopment to the improvement of older houses, and their successful promotion of a traffic management scheme were, Ferris suggests, irrelevant or even counter to the interests of the majority, for whom standards of housing were more important than general amenity.

Ferris's interpretation was supported by the formation of a group represent-

ing the established residents and working-class tenants of the area, the Barnsbury Action Group, which opposed the recently introduced traffic scheme because of the increased traffic on local roads outside the improved zone. The Action Group also attacked what it saw as the 'gentrification' of the area, involving the displacement of private tenants by middle-class owner–occupiers, a process which environmental improvement had encouraged. It sought instead improvements to the housing conditions of established residents, if necessary through council redevelopment rather than rehabilitation.

Given that amenity societies may not necessarily represent all views and interests in an area, their strong links with planning departments could mean that other interests are overlooked, particularly if the relationship between organised groups and planning departments became too exclusive. It could be argued that if there are interests which are not represented by a local environmental group, this should be balanced by the formation of groups, such as the Barnsbury Action Group, pressing a different point of view. This pluralist argument, however, overlooks both the differences in the propensity to organise amongst different sections of the population and the value of established, insider relationships with local authorities. A lower propensity to organise and to participate amongst any section of society means that their interests in the environment are less likely to be *consistently* pursued. They are unlikely to take part in the formative stages of decision making and plan formulation, when alternatives are being discussed and when policy preferences are more open to change. They will have less information on the different options and less knowledge of official procedures and personnel. They are thus in a weaker position than members of established groups when they do become involved in a local issue.

When those who were previously unorganised do participate, it may be only if their interests are immediately and visibly threatened. It has been shown that the political system is more accessible to groups whose aims and style support rather than challenge local authorities. Voluntary groups which arise as the result of their interests being under immediate threat or severely neglected are likely to be challenging local authority policy and to have an outsider relationship. Suspicion and hostility may make such groups wary of co-operation; and tactics of confrontation may jeopardise any closer links with the council, alienating the sympathies of officers and councillors. An additional danger is that established environmental groups may come to monopolise available channels for public participation in planning, thereby excluding other community interests from effective representation. This might be reinforced by a local authority's concern to limit access so as to make decision making manageable. In Kent, for example, most of the public consultation over the structure plan was organised through the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies (Kent County Council 1975). In such a situation, the expression of alternative views in the community may be inhibited.

So far, the distributional consequences of the involvement of local environmental groups in local politics has been considered in the light of interests which may be under-represented or unorganised. However, environmental groups are not the only interests to be well represented in local politics and in looking at distributional questions it is necessary to consider also how environmental groups may affect these other interests.

Among the interests that the activities of environmental groups may threaten most in seeking to protect an area from development are those of property companies, developers and the construction industry. Arguably, it is these who have benefited most from the post-war boom in urban development. Large-scale town centre redevelopment, commercial and office development schemes, the planned expansion of towns, cities and villages, and the building of new towns have all carried large financial benefits for the development industry. The granting of planning permission can bestow huge financial gains on the developer or landowner. Central government, recognising this, has sought at different times but with limited success to recoup some of this benefit for the wider community (Darin-Drabkin & Lichfield 1980).

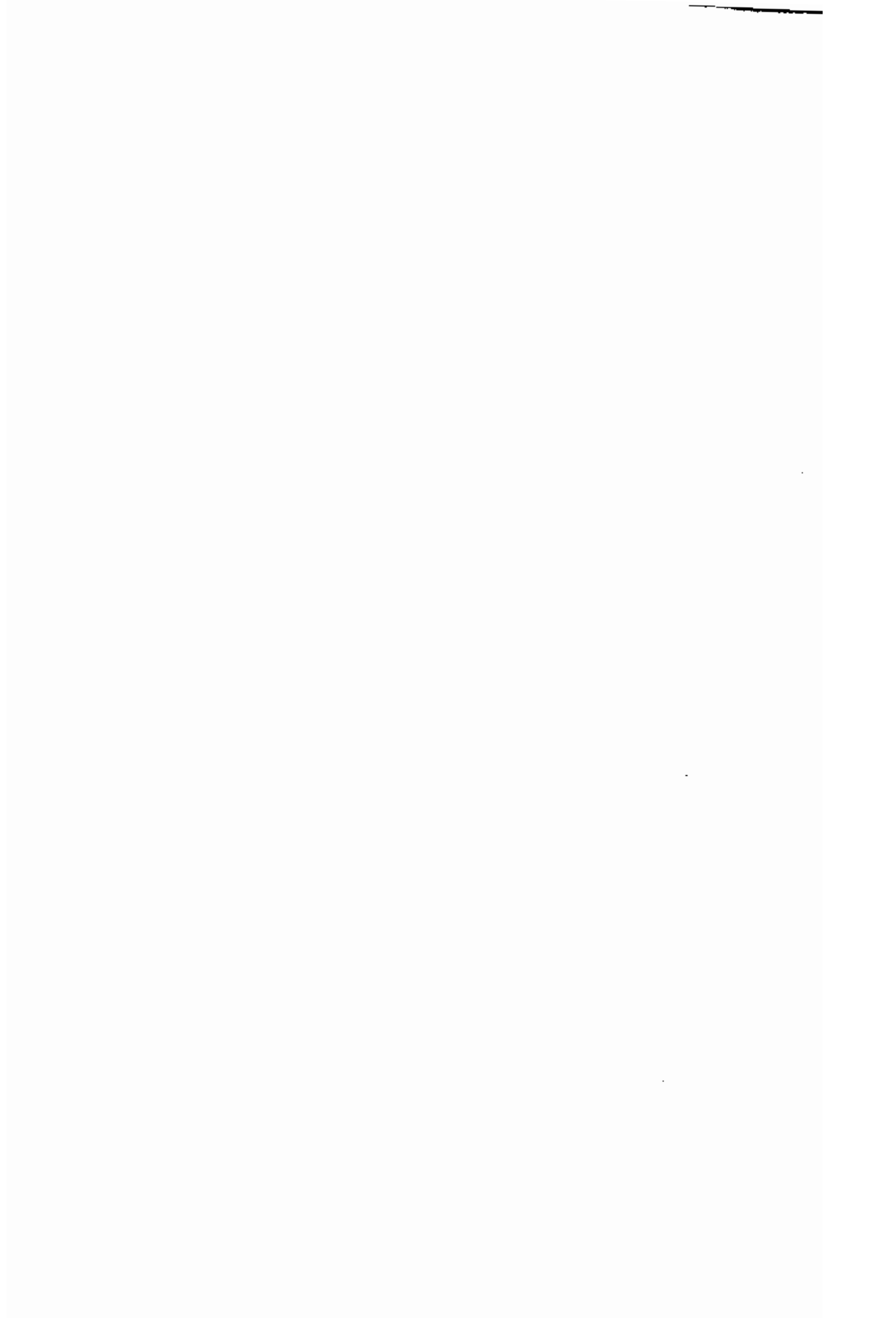
One of the principles of British planning, however, is that no compensation should be paid for a refusal of planning permission. Environmental groups, therefore, in promoting their view of the community interest, often do so against the interests of the private developer or landowner who, through refusal of planning permission or conditions attached to planning approval, may have to forgo development gains. Occasionally environmental groups may be in the position of supporting property interests. In Barnsbury, for example, the environmental improvement schemes promoted by the local amenity society helped to enhance the value of property. This in turn helped to draw the attention of property companies, whose interests coincided with those of incoming owner–occupiers in the gentrification of the area (Power 1973).

Environmental groups in some areas may be in a comparatively weak position in relation to development interests. This is likely to be the case where policies of a local authority are strongly development-orientated, as they were in most cities in the 1950s and 1960s before the tide of opinion, mobilised by local environmental groups, swung against large-scale redevelopment in favour of conservation, rehabilitation and small-scale renewal. It is not inconceivable that this trend could be reversed. With Britain's continuing economic difficulties there are strong pressures, supported by central government (DOE 1977b, 1980), to give priority to any development that generates employment or economic activity, particularly in depressed areas. Local authorities, for their part, are loath to refuse developments that hold out the prospect of new jobs, a boost to the local economy or a strengthened rate base.

Where a strong presumption in favour of development does prevail, conservation interests may receive short shrift. In contrast, development companies with the necessary capital and expertise may find themselves in a strong and favourable position as key figures in the implementation of development plans. Big developers are often able to offer considerable inducement to local authorities in the form of much-needed open space, housing or community facilities as an integral part of a major development scheme (in a few cases the inducement has taken the form of bribing officials or councillors). The possibility of realising such planning gains even at the expense of existing planning policies is behind the trend towards bargaining in planning decisions, especially where considerable development gains are at stake (DOE 1981).

Many councillors, through their social and occupational backgrounds, have certain sympathies with property and business interests which predispose them to policies favouring development and change rather than conservation. Local authority representatives are drawn disproportionately from the entrepreneur-

ial middle class: farmers, local businessmen, shopkeepers, members of chambers of trade and the so-called 'exchange professionals' – people such as solicitors and estate agents who own their own professional businesses and are involved in market transactions (Morris & Newton 1971, Sharpe 1962, Maude Commission 1967). In a study of politics in Croydon, Saunders (1979) has shown how a closely woven network of business and social ties linked councillors with large development companies and businesses which have benefited from the expansion of offices. However, even without such ties, we would expect that the predominance of the entrepreneurial middle class on many councils would predispose them towards the values of business enterprise and the market, and against the 'post-material' values of environmental conservation. In these cases, where there are strong vested interests in development, where policy already favours development and where there is a strong identity of interest between councillors and the local business community, environmental groups may find themselves in a weak position in seeking to promote conservation policies.



Part II

Whereas Part I set out general information about environmental groups as well as an interpretive framework, the second part of the book brings together case studies of just five groups. The objective is to present detailed data and analysis specific to individual groups, to furnish material illustrative of major themes from Part I, and to provide an opportunity for comparative judgements. We have therefore included a diversity of groups within a common analytical framework. The selection incorporates a range of scale (from local to international), of subject matter (from historic preservation to resource conservation), of organisational resources, and of political styles.

The first case study (Ch. 6) is of a local amenity society, the Henley Society, chosen to illustrate a number of themes developed in Chapter 5. In particular it shows the importance of a constructive outlook, professional skills and expert local knowledge to a particular style of participation that inclines local authority planning departments to regard amenity societies as responsible and helpful. In addition, by examining the group in its local context, it is possible to judge the distributional implications of its activities against the background of other interests within Henley. The chapter also illustrates the divergent attitudes towards environmental conservation which may arise from different occupational and social backgrounds, a theme explored in Chapters 2 and 5.

The second case study is of Friends of the Earth (Ch. 7), the most prominent of the new promotional groups. FoE combines an open confrontational style of lobbying with considerable skill in technical debate; it therefore illustrates some of the recent innovations in political tactics described in Chapter 4 and provides an opportunity to assess their effectiveness. Moreover, as a young group, it is having to grapple with many of the organisational problems reviewed in Chapter 3 – ensuring a steady income, developing administrative routines to service a large membership and an extensive network of local groups, and evolving procedures whereby major decisions can be made in an uncontentious manner. The focus of the chapter is how the organisation and tactics of FoE, with growing political maturity, have responded to the tension between the centralising forces of British politics and the decentralising demands of local activism.

The third case study is of the National Trust (Ch. 8), one of the oldest and most prestigious environmental groups. Unlike FoE, its political activities are very discreet and are conducted through established channels, and its structure is highly centralised and oligarchic. This reflects the Trust's status as a statutory body. Indeed, in many respects, it acts and is treated by government as an official agency. The focus of the chapter is the implication of the Trust's peculiar status for its role as a pressure group and for its organisation as a voluntary body, raising questions about its external accountability and its internal representativeness.

The next group, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (Ch. 9), is also well established, but its federal structure, in contrast to the National Trust's highly centralised organisation, introduces different opportunities and constraints. An historical approach is adopted in the case study. The Society's evolution serves as an example of the transformation of a promotional into an

emphasis group (as discussed in Ch. 3) and illustrates the related changes that may occur in constitution and activities. The main focus of the chapter is the relationship which has developed between the Society and the Nature Conservancy: this serves to illustrate the interaction between an official environmental agency and one of its leading client groups, outlined in general in Chapter 4.

The subject of the final case study, the European Environmental Bureau, is one of a small but growing band of international groups, created in recent years by environmentalists from different countries joining forces to combat problems transcending national boundaries, such as pollution, the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of species. It demonstrates the international character of the environmental movement mentioned in Chapter 2. It also illustrates the emergence of new pressure groups in response to the changing capacities and structure of government. The Bureau represents national environmental groups to the supranational European Commission, and the focus of the chapter is the evolving relationship between the Bureau and the EEC as the latter assumes a growing role, extending and co-ordinating the environmental policies of member states.

Each case study analyses the resources and structure of the group and its relations with government. The dialectic between a group's internal and external relations is given particular attention as a key to understanding its organisational character and political tactics. Finally, each study attempts to assess the group's effectiveness.

Before embarking on the case studies, it is important to make some general comments about assessing the effectiveness of pressure groups. Two sorts of judgement should be distinguished (Allison 1975). One involves an assessment of a group's resources and political access, and gives us an indication of its potential for pressure. The other involves an assessment of its achievements and is a measure, therefore, of its effective pressure in action. The latter is a more complex judgement to make because achievements are relative to the specific issues which a group has tackled and thus depend on the contingency of events and the opposing forces that the group has encountered. In principle, also, it demands a judgement of the extent to which the outcome of an issue might have been different, if the group had not existed or acted, and the extent to which the outcome conformed with the group's purpose. Both these points cause difficulties. Because environmental groups seldom act alone, it is often impossible to isolate responsibility for specific outcomes. Moreover, the judgement of success or failure is very sensitive to the time frame chosen for evaluation – this is partly because of the long-term lobbying required to achieve major reform, and partly because set-backs or victories can eventually prove illusory. All these qualifications make assessments of effective pressure particularly hazardous and tentative, especially with respect to recently formed groups such as the European Environmental Bureau.

6 *The Henley Society*

It was suggested in Chapter 5 that many established amenity societies share a common style of political activity which might be characterised succinctly as 'responsible participation'. The example of the Henley Society illustrates how one particular society has responded to specific local issues, the kind of relationship it has built up with the local planning authority and the consequences for different interests in the town.

Henley-on-Thames, a medieval market town best known for its annual regatta, lies on the banks of the River Thames some 35 miles west of London. With a population of about 12 000 its nearest major shopping and service centre is Reading, 8 miles away (see Fig. 6.1). Its position by the river on the edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and with easy access to London (about one hour by car or train), is reflected in the high price of property in the area. For those who can afford it, Henley offers an ideal compromise between a country and a London residence. Some 35% of all

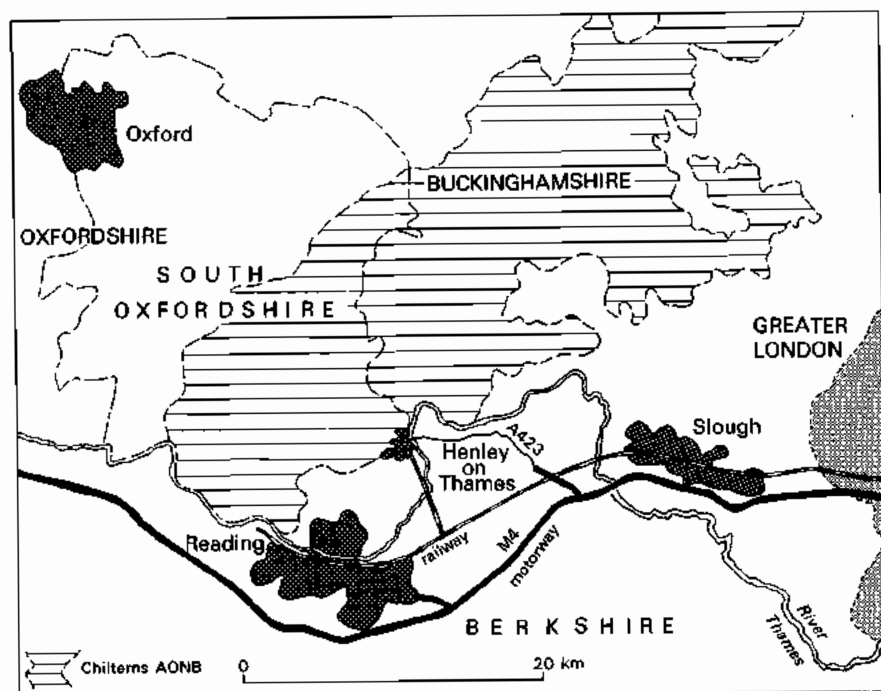


Figure 6.1 The location of Henley-on-Thames.

economically active persons living in the town work outside it, a third of them commuting to London. Within the town, the largest employers are the local authority and the service sector. The only manufacturing industry is provided by a brewery, an engineering works and a small trading estate on the outskirts. Commercial office space, however, represents a third of the combined total of shops and offices.

The town is on the old coaching route from London to Oxford and it contains fine examples of 17th-century coaching inns. A wide main street with buildings dating back to the 16th century leads directly to the bridge, still the only crossing point on the Thames for eight miles, and the key to Henley's importance in the past as a trading centre and staging post. By the river, granaries and warehouses (now luxury residences) tell of the days when the river was the main means of transporting goods. Architecturally, the town contains fine examples of buildings from the Tudor to the Victorian periods. Wooded hills surround the town and are visible from most streets.

Organisation and resources

The Henley Society was formed in 1963 following a successful campaign to prevent the conversion of a 17th-century inn in the main street into a shop. From a hastily formed protest group it has gradually become a stable and well organised society with an interest in the whole future of Henley. The main aim of the Society as stated on its membership form is:

> the conservation and improvement of the glorious setting of the town, including . . . the water front and other river-side scenes together with the surrounding hills, the preservation of the general character of the town, especially its historic centre and fine approaches. . . . It seeks to ensure that the town is not spoilt by haphazard development, by the wanton demolition of its period buildings or by the erection of buildings of inferior design.

This aim has been followed in its monitoring of planning applications, evidence given at inquiries, its support for the designation of the conservation area in the town centre, surveys of listed buildings, work with tree preservation and planting, and concern with street furniture and the general appearance of the town. The Society's interest in conservation ranges from the large scale – as in seeking to limit the town's population growth – to concern over the colour of lamp standards.

In keeping with findings on other voluntary groups, the committee forms the active core of the Society. Its personnel changes little. It meets every six weeks and is responsible for both general policy and action over specific issues. Responsibility for considering and commenting on planning applications is delegated to a sub-committee which meets once a fortnight. Separate *ad hoc* sub-committees are formed on other matters as they arise, for instance trees and traffic.

General meetings of the Society are held once or twice a year. Attendance at these, which is on average between 80 and 90, is the limit of the involvement of the Society's wider membership of 600, other than payment of their annual subscriptions. There is little other formal contact between committee and

general members apart from the chairman's annual report which is circulated to all members. In an effort to increase participation, members have been encouraged to write to the committee and state their views; few have availed themselves of this opportunity; most appear content to delegate responsibility. As the chairman suggests, in joining, most members have no intention of becoming actively involved and are merely registering the fact that they are glad the Society exists.

The subscription rate of one pound is deliberately nominal to encourage maximum recruitment. Thus the real importance of the general membership is not as a source of funds but in the legitimacy it gives to the Society, as committee minutes acknowledge:

> There was general support for the chairman's view that it was desirable on several grounds to increase membership of the Society from all sections of the community. A larger and wider membership would increase the Society's negotiating and political strength. (Society Minutes 14 May 1973.)

A wide general membership is important if the Society is to be able to claim representativeness in the town. The committee likes to feel that its actions would command at least tacit support from the general public of Henley. To this end, the Society's comments on planning applications are available for public inspection at the town library, and it seeks to publicise its views through the local press.

Table 6.1 Occupations and professional qualifications of committee members and officers (total = 24) of the Henley Society (1979).

Banking (2) bank manager (retired) director of international bank	*Architecture (1)* past president RIBA (Esher) ARIBA	*Armed Services (1)* major (retired)
Civil Service (5) Inland Revenue (retired) House of Commons (retired) War Office (retired)[1] Foreign Office (retired) Colonial Service (retired)	*Estate manager (1)* (retired)	*Historian (1)*
Housewife (2)	*Industry (1)* assistant chief brewer local brewery	*Interior designer (1)*
Media (4) 3 BBC (retired) newspaper journalist (retired)[1]	*Secretary (1)*	*Surveying/housing (1)* ARICS, FIH (assistant housing manager, Westminster City, retired)
Law (4) solicitor and chairman of Henley Citizens Advice Bureau management committee lecturer in law at police college (retired) 2 Justices of the Peace (and housewives)		

[1] This person is recorded twice – media and Civil Service.

Committee members are formally elected at annual general meetings, usually after they have been approached and invited to stand by the chairman. The chairman likens the selection of committee members to choosing a cricket team – 'you should choose a strong team and a mixture of skills'. As Table 6.1 shows, the committee contains people whose experience and skills are relevant to the work of the Society. Retired senior civil servants bring valuable knowledge of the workings of government. Professional secretarial skills possessed by the secretary have been particularly useful for minute-taking, filing and administration. Another member, a former editor of BBC news who has a part-time appointment with the local press, handles the Society's press relations. The design and surveying expertise on the committee is supplemented by two architectural advisors, one a retired architect, the other employed by a London authority. Previous architects on the committee, whose practices were in the Henley area, found themselves in a difficult position when planning applications for their firm were being considered and have since resigned from the committee. The commitee now considers it undesirable for architects practising in the area to sit on the committee or act as advisors.

Formal occupations and qualifications can be misleading as an indication of expertise since they may get out of date. Also people may possess expertise without a qualification to show for it. In particular one of the 'housewives' has considerable knowledge of trees and is the Society's main advisor on tree planting. Other members have detailed knowledge of the town. Indeed, one thing they all have in common is a long residence in Henley, which would seem to contradict suggestions by other writers that amenity societies are dominated by 'newcomers'. The shortest residence in Henley of any committee member is 14 years. The family of the president, Lord Camoys, has been resident in the ancestral home of Stonor Park for over 500 years. Another characteristic of the majority is that they are retired, indicating the importance of free time for involvement.

Expertise, as Chapter 5 suggested, is important in establishing a style of participation that is informed and 'responsible'. Committee minutes show a wide knowledge and sophisticated understanding of planning matters at district, county and regional level in so far as they affect Henley. Expertise has been used in fighting planning appeals as well as in data gathering and survey work, much of which has been of help to the local planning authority.

In addition to such expertise, the Society enjoys the support of figures of high social ranking. The president of the Society is a director of Barclays Bank. The Committee also boasts two KCMGs (one of whom was a colonial governor), two OBEs and a CB. Some members combine both relevant expertise and prestige. A former president, and now a vice-president, is Viscount Esher, past president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. As well as giving general advice and assistance, he designed, free of charge, an area of seats and trees replacing a car park in front of the town hall. John Piper, artist and architect, is a member and past vice-president, and has given artistic advice and assistance, in particular in work on the conservation area in the town centre, as well as giving evidence at inquiries. J. St Bodfan Gruffydd, past president of the Institute of Landscape Architects, is a member and advisor on landscape matters and has also given evidence at inquiries. Clearly, such eminent

professional expertise, as well as being of practical value, lends considerable authority to the Society's statements on planning matters.

The status of the Society is further enhanced by its links, both formal and informal, with other respected bodies within and outside the area. At a national level it is registered with the Civic Trust and has adopted the constitution recommended by the Trust for amenity societies. At district level its vice-chairman is also a member of the general committee of the Henley and Maple-Durham branch of the CPRE, while the chairman of the latter has also attended committee meetings of the Society. One of the vice-presidents is treasurer of the Chiltern Society. A representative, and former area secretary, of the River Thames Society is a full committee member of the Society; and the chairman of the Henley Society has stressed the 'close collaboration between the Henley Society and the River Thames Society'. Three members of the committee are members of the CPRE, three of the National Trust. St Bodfan Gruffydd (honorary consultant to the Society) is a member of the Council of the National Trust. Viscount Esher is president of the Chiltern Society, vice-president of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust and a trustee of the national CPRE.

These links serve to establish the legitimacy of the Society and its position amongst the established environmental groups of the area. They also ensure that groups with overlapping geographical areas do not clash and that their strategies are co-ordinated. The local branch of the CPRE, for example, has expressly left concern with Henley in the hands of the Henley Society. However, more important than such formal links are the various informal links through overlapping membership and friendship networks whereby, if necessary, opinion can be quickly mobilised across a range of groups.

The Society and local planning

The Society's emphasis on conservation coincides with planning policies for the area. Thus many of its potential battles have already been won. Some of these were fought by other local groups, in particular the Chiltern Society. For example, the designation of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in December 1965 followed a deputation to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Crossman, by county branches of the CPRE and the Chiltern Society. The minister, although expressing sympathy with the views of the deputation, stated that the designation might have to include a smaller area than that initially suggested by the Countryside Commission, to allow for urban expansion around certain towns. The deputation 'argued strenuously that the boundaries already drawn allowed for this', and their argument won the day (Chiltern Society 1975). The countryside to the north and west of Henley is included in the AONB. County policy, in line with the Strategy for the South-East, has been to concentrate development and restrict growth to certain towns. New development is being directed to towns to the north of Henley and to the south, where there is a major regional growth area centred on Reading, Aldershot, Wokingham and Basingstoke. Henley, however, is exempt from any requirements to provide social and physical services for any of the growth points. The local plan for the town suggests a population limit of

15000 and the policy is one of limiting the growth of employment in order to reduce the pressure for residential development.

As well as this favourable strategic planning context, almost half of Henley is covered by conservation area designations. This achievement does reflect the Henley Society's influence. The Society was closely involved with the original designations in 1969, carrying out much of the preparatory survey work, and this was acknowledged in the published study. Its promotional activities ensured early designation, for of the eleven conservation areas established by Oxfordshire County Council, the two proposed in Henley had not been considered a priority. Yet in 1976 one of them was recognised by the Department of the Environment as an 'outstanding conservation area'.

The South Oxfordshire District Planning Authority has proved more sympathetic to the Society's aims than the former county council. It is one of three districts in the county to have created the post of Conservation Officer, and its annual budget for historic buildings and conservation is substantially higher than for neighbouring districts. The District Conservation Officer has sought to establish as many conservation areas as possible, to make up for what was considered the deficiency inherited from the county council in 1974. In putting forward new areas for designation, he relies to a large extent on the initiative of local people, feeling that it is important that 'people in the area should want [the designation] and feel involved and responsible for it, rather than having it imposed by the planning department' (Interview 1975). This approach inevitably increases the influence of local amenity societies. In the local plan, the Henley Society has successfully pressed for the conservation areas to be extended beyond the historic town centre to include areas of Victorian and Edwardian housing.

The recognition accorded the Society by the district planning authority has been built up gradually over the years through contacts of both a personal and a more formal nature. Two major local authority committees on which the Society has been represented are the Traffic Advisory Committee, membership of which is recent, and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee before it was disbanded in 1974. In October of that year, the Society, together with the town council and chamber of trade, received an invitation from the Chief Planning Officer to co-operate with the district council over the preparation of the new town plan. The letter to the Henley Society mentioned a particular contribution it could make:

> I am afraid that for this exercise we cannot assume an input from the county council transportation team and therefore your experience on traffic matters would be particularly useful. (Society Minutes 13 March 1974.)

This was a direct acknowledgement of the Society's technical reputation. Papers summarising the views of different groups handed out by the district planning department at subsequent public meetings on the draft town plan consisted of comments received from the town council, the Henley Society and the chamber of trade.

Generally the relationship between the Society and the planning department is one of co-operation based on a mutual exchange of information and aid. It is hard to find instances of conflict. Where there is disagreement, it tends to be

over administrative matters rather than policy, such as the slowness of the authority in publishing the report on the preliminary town study, and its failure to take 'effective enforcement action' in relation to changes of use and extensions to premises. Much depends on personalities and personal relations. The chairman of the Henley Society is on close terms with the district's Chief Planning Officer and when contacting the planning department tends to deal directly with him. Similarly the District Conservation Officer, although he has contacts with a number of organisations in the town, commented:

> If I want anything done in the area, I'll phone the chairman of the Henley Society – I know him and I'm more likely to get results. . . . I know who to contact immediately for anything in the area. (Interview 1975.)

The district planning department provides easy access for the Society to officers and information. On its side, the Henley Society, apart from supplying local information and the survey work it performs for the department, perhaps more importantly provides an accessible body of informed and influential opinion which is sympathetic to the planning department's objectives. The Society's support is particularly valued over planning appeals and there are arrangements for it to be notified, at an early stage, of impending appeals and how they will be handled. Although evidence is given separately at inquiries, the Society and planning authority co-operate beforehand over evidence and tactics. In an appeal over refusal of permission for a 24-hour garage, the Society carried out surveys which strengthened the council's case. In another inquiry, following an appeal against refusal of permission for a housing development, valuable evidence on access was given by two of the Society's architect members, while another member, J. St Bodfan Gruffydd, gave evidence concerning trees and landscaping.

At roughly the same time as the latter appeal, the Chief Planning Officer wrote to the DOE 'expressing concern at the result of certain recent appeals where applicants had been granted permission to convert residential accommodation for commercial use, contrary to the agreed policy of the (district) council, the town council and the Henley Society.' Thus the Society is referred to as the third major authority in the area, on a par with the two organs of local government. On behalf of the Society, the secretary had then written to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry a formal letter supporting the Chief Planning Officer's views (Society Minutes 13 December 1974).

Although most contact is with officers, the Society cultivates a few councillors, not only to influence decisions, but also to gain information. On occasions the Society will lobby – a circular letter was sent to each member of the county council when it was found that an issue of rights of way was being dealt with by the Traffic and Works Sub-committee rather than by the Planning Committee, which arrangement the Society considered would prejudice the outcome. The Society prefers informal links with councillors. Only one district councillor is a member and he is not active. Generally, it is thought that the few councillors particularly sympathetic to the Society might be less effective if thought to be acting as spokesmen of the Society. Similarly, the chairman of the Society decided not to stand in local politics as he felt he was more useful outside, as a voice of dissent where necessary. The Society's closer contact with the officials

of the planning department rather than with councillors lends further support to its claim to professional expertise and political neutrality, as well as demonstrating a belief that influence over planning policy may best be effected through dealing with officers rather than politicians.

Social leadership

Though conservation is the prevailing planning policy in Henley, there are certain undercurrents of disagreement over how this should apply in practice with, on the one hand, the Henley Society supporting the stance of the district planning department and, on the other hand, prominent elements of the town council, chamber of trade and the local Conservative Party preferring a more relaxed attitude to locally initiated commercial developments. Behind this division we can see two groups competing for social leadership: the salaried professional and managerial class, most of whom are retired or gain their livelihood outside the town and who are interested in preserving a pleasant and convenient residential environment; and the local business class whose interests would be best served by a qualified form of conservation which excluded big developers from outside without sterilising the property market or denying scope for realising local commercial and development opportunities.

The two groups legitimate their social leadership and their claims to represent the public interest in different ways. The local business elite, via the Conservative Party, is well represented on the town and district councils where its representativeness is confirmed by democratic election. The local professional elite is concentrated in the Henley Society whose favourable access to the district planning department is made acceptable by the different democratic notion of public participation. Occasionally, conflicts between the two groups have arisen; it is instructive to examine these.

Resistance to prevailing planning policies surfaced during the preparation of the local plan. Whereas the Henley Society supported the position taken by the planning department, both the town council and the chamber of trade pressed for a more sympathetic approach towards commercial and industrial development. The town council, though agreeing that there should be no new office blocks in Henley, urged that light industry be encouraged on the outskirts of the town and warned against a 'too rigid employment policy'. This was in line with the comments of the chamber of trade which also felt that employment policy as set out in the draft local plan was too restrictive and that 'policies should seek to generate, not limit, employment opportunities'. The similarity of views reflects the strong representation of members of the chamber of trade on the council.

On 26 March 1976, this basic disagreement was taken to the wider public when a letter appeared in the local newspaper from the chairman of the Joint Area Committee of Conservative Associations. He expressed the view that planning decisions in the area had been 'too rigid' and stated Conservative support in the forthcoming local elections for 'a more flexible and commonsense approach to planning'. A reply the following week from a committee member of the Henley Society defended the local planning authority:

> One is prompted to ask: 'more flexible and common sense than what?' A considerable part of Henley was designated as a Conservation Area under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, an enlightened piece of legislation sponsored by Mr Duncan (now Lord) Sandys, who was then a Conservative MP and supported by elements from all parties.
>
> The local planning authority has, on the whole, over recent years, acted in the Henley area with a proper regard for those special aspects of our town and its landscape setting which make this such a cherished place, not only for residents but also for visitors.

Following this, the paper published a letter from the chairman of the Society starting a campaign of support for the local authority:

> Concerned at any suggestion of lack of support for the planning policies adopted by the [District] Council since it was formed, the Henley Society together with the Council for Protection of Rural England (local branch) and the River Thames Society is inviting delegates from other amenity and conservation societies throughout [the District] to a meeting in order to frame a questionnaire to candidates in the forthcoming elections.
>
> At the same time, while hoping for complete support for the initiative of the Chief Planning Officer in framing basic policies the opportunity will be taken to consider what shortcomings there may have been in day to day implementation and what additional support should be given to the Planning Department to remedy any deficiencies. (*Henley Standard* 9 April 1976.)

As well as demonstrating the Society's strongly supportive role towards the district planning department and its professional staff, this also shows the sort of organisational assistance that the Society can quickly activate through the local amenity network. Some months later, following the Society's comments on the town centre study, a 'very warm letter of appreciation' was received from the Chief Planning Officer who commented: 'Your general points give me great confidence in the strength of support which we can receive in our planning endeavours in the somewhat problematic position which exists in Henley'.

Other incidents have been more symbolic, involving a trial of strength rather than a basic policy conflict. In August 1979, the town council was reported in the local paper as heading for a direct clash with the planning department over plans to re-roof the town hall, a listed building and one which the town council is responsible for maintaining. The Chief Planning Officer regarded the late Victorian building as meriting replacement tiles matching the original ones. However the town council, opting for cheaper and more readily available tiles, questioned the view that the roof was an important feature of the building and furthermore made it clear that they had no great love for the architecture and materials used in the first place. As one member said 'the fact that the [proposed] tiles are not in keeping with the town hall is not the point, the town hall is out of keeping with the rest of Henley.' The Henley Society however supported the Chief Planning Officer's view, and the local paper in a leading article urged the town council to back down. This they would have to do eventually since the district council was unlikely to accept tiles which 'would not be permitted for Henley buildings of much less architectural merit'.

The town council appears slightly wary of the Henley Society. Lack of the kind of professional expertise that the Society commands makes it difficult for

the town council to take the initiative in planning matters. It tends therefore to play a more reactive role and has not developed such a close relationship with the planning department. A motion that the town council should discuss planning applications after the Henley Society's views were made known was rejected on the grounds that it would lower the prestige and independence of the town council. Nevertheless it allows the Henley Society the use of the committee room at the town hall to consider planning applications on the day previous to its own deliberations, and passes the Society's comments, together with its own, to the district council.

Distributional issues

Part of the Henley Society's responsible image is its claim to act in the best interests of the whole town. It is pertinent to reflect, therefore, on the Society's stance towards lower-income groups in Henley and the consequences for them of conservation policies. Relative wealth of an area does not exclude the existence of significant pockets of need. Indeed, the problems of the less well off may be more acute, particularly in relation to the housing market. Inflated house prices make it difficult even for middle-income earners to buy a house, and the majority of private housing built over the past 20 years in Henley has been expensive, low-density, three- and four-bedroomed dwellings. Very little has been constructed of a type suited for small family units and a high proportion of potential first-time buyers are forced to move to Reading or other nearby towns. Poorer families are also forced to leave the town, through the shortage of public housing. Only 20% of dwellings in Henley are council owned, compared to 33% nationally and 24% in the whole of Oxfordshire. In 1976, 358 households (8% of the total number in the town) were on the housing waiting list, 148 cases of which were judged to be in 'short-term' or 'immediate' need of rehousing. The 1971 census lists 8% of households within the borough as being without an inside WC and 40 households had more than 1.5 persons per room (South Oxfordshire District Council 1979).

The Henley Society has consistently expressed concern at the shortage of rented accommodation and the need for more low-cost housing for local people. In its comments on the draft town plan it stressed the need for urgent action by the district council, particularly in acquiring a ten-acre site, one of the few remaining sites considered suitable for residential development in the plan. It has also suggested that the district council should consider the purchase or lease of local privately owned housing, especially flats in the town centre. One reason for the Society's concern is the shortage of labour in the service industries:

> Whatever may be said about the desirability of house ownership . . . house purchase is not a practical proposition for a large section of the working population. The Society therefore has felt it right to press for more low-cost housing for local people who will man many of the town's essential services. (Chairman's Annual Report 1976.)

The town's attractiveness as a residential environment relies on manual labour,

and shortages are reported of shop staff, traffic wardens, dustmen, roadsweepers, domestics and postmen.

In addition, the Society feels that the lack of low-cost accommodation exacerbates traffic congestion:

> The Chairman said it was most important to ensure that for the future there should be a proper balance between housing, commerce, shops and recreation. There was considerable evidence that office and shop development was inadequately supplied by local labour and attracted a large number of workers from the surrounding towns, which added to traffic and car-parking congestion. At the same time, planning approval over the past years tended to have been given to the more expensive houses which encouraged commuting outwards. (Society Minutes 13 December 1974.)

The point is then related to more general planning principles:

> It is an accepted tenet of planning that travelling to work should be kept to a minimum in order to conserve resources in the provision of transport, fuel, etc. Thus there seemed at first sight a strong case for stopping high-cost housing development and concentrating the remaining land resources on low-cost housing. (Society Minutes 13 December 1974.)

These quotations show an appreciation of issues wider than conservation of the physical environment which is in line with the Society's claim that it is 'not just preservationist or defensive in character; it recognises that some change and development is both sensible and inevitable' (membership form). This in turn shows an awareness of some of the criticisms to which similar societies are open and a wish to avoid being seen merely as narrow and reactionary. The argument is measured and couched in terms of the public interest, even though the motives may be self-interested. The provision of more council housing is seen as desirable in that it will help provide labour for the service industries and reduce commuting and traffic congestion, rather than simply benefit those who could not otherwise afford to live in the town.

Though the Society expresses the need for more low-cost accommodation in general planning terms, it fails to make the link between the shortage of such accommodation and its own support for a strict policy of containment. Yet, in catering for housing need within the town, the housing department encounters two main problems. First, the high cost of land imposes an immediate constraint for the local authority on buying small plots or converting existing accommodation. Secondly, because planning policy for Henley is one of containing new development within the existing, built-up area, little land has been made available for housing and that which has been developed has been mainly for the private sector. Within the town there is virtual stagnation in council house building. According to a local housing officer, most of the urgent cases have been housed not in Henley but in two neighbouring villages where 51 units were built between 1974 and 1976. There are no plans to build more council houses in the area in the near future. Thus, whatever the nature or strength of the Society's concern for the plight of low-income groups needing housing in Henley, remedial action is frustrated by the restrictive planning policies which the Society staunchly supports. Though perhaps unintentionally,

the Society reinforces planning policies which, through market forces, increase the social exclusiveness of Henley.

Assessment

In its relations with the planning department and its recognition locally, the Henley Society may be described as a relatively successful group. Much of its local standing and reputation rests on its 'responsible' style of participation which in turn depends partly on the kind of resources it commands, especially expertise. Percival (1967) of the Civic Trust defines responsibility as connoting 'knowledge, consistency, vigilance, thought and action'. The Society certainly brings together considerable knowledge about the area, local government procedures, and principles of planning and design. It has formed a coherent policy concerning the town and its future which it has consistently pursued, including putting forward its own proposals for action.

It is more difficult to evaluate the extent to which the Society has achieved its aims. Much depends on the context within which a group is operating. As the case study shows, the Society is working in a planning and political climate sympathetic to its aims, a climate which, of course, it has helped to create. To demonstrate an active exercise of power or where the Society has clearly influenced policy, it is necessary to find an issue on which a change in policy was directly effected or prevented by the Henley Society. There are examples of this, such as the initial issue which led to the formation of the Society, when plans to change the facade of a 17th-century coaching inn were successfully fought on appeal, using the expertise of subsequent members of the Society; or the designation of the first conservation area in Henley when the Society's survey and promotional work prevailed against the priorities of the county council. In other cases, the Henley Society has intervened, seemingly decisively, to reinforce the stance of the planning authority in the face of opposition from other interests. Examples include the re-roofing of the town hall and the Society's backing both for firm development control and for a restrictive approach to the construction of new offices. In the opinion of local planners, the Society's support at public inquiries has also helped the planning authority win on occasions when a disappointed applicant has appealed to the Secretary of State.

It is hard, however, to find many other examples where the influence of the Society has been clear and where it has not concurred with the position adopted by the local authority and other groups. Yet this does not mean that it lacks independent power or influence, for influence is not always visible. Equally, given the context of local government policy there is usually no need to turn its potential power into effective power. It could also be argued that its power has been so great that without even acting it has affected policy – policy makers avoiding options which they know would be opposed by the Society. In reality any influence it has will be a mixture of these different kinds.

The local planning authority welcomes its support on different issues, valuing it more than the elected town council. It might be inferred that, in giving the local authority support, the Society reinforces local policy in the direction it wishes. Whether, however, the local authority would desist from a

policy which they knew the Society would not support is a matter for conjecture. The professional standing of some of the Society's members is so much higher than that of council officers as to make it difficult for the local planning authority to ignore the Society's views. Popular support for conservation in the town may also mean that in a conflict with the local authority over a conservation issue, the Society could call upon support outside the Society, not least from a sympathetic local newspaper. One could only conclude that, at the very least, it would be a cause of considerable embarrassment for the local authority to be publicly opposed by the Society.

The Henley Society generally argues its position in terms of the interests of the town as a whole, rather than any one sectional interest. Admittedly, this is as defined by the values of the Society's leaders and reflects their interests. However, there is no evidence that the environment of Henley, and its picturesque and historic character, is not generally valued within the town by all social groups. What may be open to doubt is the priority that others might accord to conservation. For example, someone on the waiting list would probably rank additional council housing higher than a preserved environment. In as much as the Society reinforces a policy of strict containment, it does not represent those in housing need.

The Henley Society, however, is aware of such needs and has argued for more council housing in the town. This may have been for reasons of self-interest, out of concern at the lack of service workers, rather than concern for those in housing need. It nevertheless shows a flexibility of approach and a wider definition and awareness of conservation than simply the preservation of existing buildings. Furthermore, to what extent should amenity societies be expected to champion housing and employment issues, other than having an awareness of such needs and a willingness to accommodate them within their central concern of conservation? People join civic and amenity societies for many reasons, including a sincere desire to protect their own surroundings, but not usually as a means of improving employment and housing prospects. Ultimately it must be the responsibility of the district and county authorities to balance these and other priorities against conservation in determining policy, but their hands may be tied if they are wary of provoking opposition from amenity groups.

7 *Friends of the Earth*

Friends of the Earth is the most prominent of the new promotional groups. 'Committed to the conservation, restoration and rational use of the environment' as the letterhead states, it has built up a reputation for its vigorous and flamboyant style of campaigning across a wide range of environmental issues. The connection that Friends of the Earth (FoE) finds between energy policy and allotments, bicycles and protection of endangered species, or toxic waste disposal and national parks may not be immediately apparent. Unity is provided by a perspective upholding the ideal that man should follow sustainable life styles, in harmony rather than in conflict with nature. FoE's achievement since its formation in 1970 has been to translate this abstract philosophy into practical politics.

Organisational structure

Friends of the Earth is one of the few international environmental organisations. There are now groups comprising FoE International in 29 countries. Each is independent but all are bound together by a sense of common purpose. FoE (UK) has three primary components: FoE Ltd with its London office, local groups, and individual supporters (see Table 7.2).

Before FoE had any supporters or local groups it had an office with two professional staff. The London office is still the centre of the group's organisation, now with 19 full-time staff. It is a registered company limited by guarantee, a status that permits political action disallowed under charity law and confers various benefits under company law such as control of the group's name. The London office provides leadership on campaigns and directs its own lobbying efforts for the most part at central government and national institutions.

In 1971, FoE Ltd set up the first local FoE groups to assist in the return of non-returnable soft-drink bottles to depots of Schweppes. Around this nucleus, more groups have arisen, some spontaneously, others with stimulus from the London office. There are now approximately 250 around the country, all autonomous, handling their own budgets and choosing their own campaigns and the stance they take. This independence is double-edged, though, as local groups have no formal control over the policies of FoE Ltd.

Friends of the Earth is committed to the ideal of developing strong, well informed local groups in order to extend and diversify its campaigning capacity and build a national constituency for its aims. This has occurred to varying degrees. At one end of the spectrum are the smaller and newer local groups which, lacking expertise and experience, often rely heavily on the assistance and suggestions for action offered by the London office. At the other end are

some local groups which have developed sufficiently to employ their own staff: there are currently about 35 people on campaigning or practical work around Britain. FoE Scotland has recently become a member of FoE International, independent of London. Other separate groups have roots in FoE: one such is SCRAM (the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace).

The local groups confine their lobbying mainly to their own local authorities, MPs and local organisations, raising both national and local environmental issues. Some have become particularly well informed on specific issues. For example, Durham FoE's pioneering work on home insulation was incorporated into advice given by the Department of Energy to local authorities in 1976. Similarly, FoE Ltd has looked to Newcastle for advice on aerosols, Bristol on toxic waste disposal and Stratford on plastics recycling.

A monthly newsletter is sent from the London office to each local group, to disseminate news, advice, ideas for discussion, reports from groups and exhortations to support national campaigns. Strategy and tactics on individual campaigns are discussed intermittently at 'workshops' to which any group may send a representative. An annual conference of co-ordinators from each group, with the FoE Ltd staff, discusses priorities, innovations and organisational matters. One member of staff at the London office has the single task of servicing groups' needs. These communication channels are supplemented by regional meetings of local groups, the free distribution of FoE Ltd publications, and a two-day annual review of progress attended by FoE Ltd staff and a small number of local activists. All these means of contact are informal. None is prescribed in any constitution, nor are there any sanctions to apply to those who ignore the facilities offered.

A board of directors is responsible for FoE Ltd under company law. Initially drawn from the group of committed environmentalists who set up the United Kingdom branch of the organisation, many of the directors are professionally employed in the environmental field, for example as researchers or consultants, and are therefore well equipped to give advice. Their formal authority, however, is limited to financial control, organisational matters and the approval of staff appointments. Administration, campaigning and policy making are largely determined by the staff themselves, though the board may become involved.

Policy co-ordination between FoE Ltd and local groups is by informal consensus rather than voting or explicit direction. This approach stems from a conscious choice to give maximum flexibility to both components and to eliminate delay and bureaucracy that would result from formal consultation and decision making. FoE's founders hoped to emulate the success of the student movement, with its stress on individual responsibility in a common cause, by generating an informal network of activists not constrained within a rigid structure (Lowe 1972). A group is remarkably capable of adapting to changing circumstances when its strength is decentralised in this way (Schon 1971). In contrast, environmental groups with complicated democratic or hierarchical procedures cannot respond as quickly.

Informality suffices for much of the time but cannot easily accommodate major differences of opinion on matters such as whether FoE Ltd should take a party political stance, change its key campaigns or reallocate its budget. Usually this prompts healthy debate, but sometimes deadlock. Another con-

sequence is that internal politics tends to be dominated by personalities and personality differences. Groups such as Greenpeace, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association and the Anti-Nuclear Campaign have been among the beneficiaries of a trickle of FoE dissidents who have opted to take their disagreements outside the group. By giving maximum play to individual initiative, however, FoE's informality also attracts a sustained flow of enthusiastic young recruits with fresh ideas. In the words of the campaign director:

> We deliberately do not have an elaborate structure like the trade unions and political parties. It does not need formal resolutions and working parties to get an issue going. People can easily get involved – indeed they are attracted by the lack of structure. (Conroy, personal interview 1980.)

FoE's organisation and ethos create some specific funding difficulties. A sizeable income is needed to maintain the London staff and their campaigning activities. FoE Ltd's turnover in 1979/80 was £250000, placing it among the highest earning, environmental groups (see Table 3.4). However, some of the income sources used by other groups are not so readily available to FoE. The need to retain complete independence to criticise official policies, for example, has precluded it seeking government financial support. Given that FoE's target is equally likely to be industry, it also ensures that any business backing is unconditional. Moreover, the autonomy of its local groups means that, unlike the CPRE or the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, it cannot extract an affiliation income from them for the services it provides.

FoE Ltd's main source of income is its individual supporters. Originally supporters were just listed as potential activists, and not until 1978 did FoE Ltd decide to exploit supporters more deliberately as a source of funds for national campaigning rather than rely simply on their spontaneous goodwill. One full-time staff post was created to recruit and service supporters, since when their number has doubled to 18500. Only a minority of supporters have ever become active in local groups, though equally many local activists do not support FoE Ltd financially.

The need for FoE Ltd to establish more secure sources of finance has become apparent in recent years. A specific problem is that FoE has probably the largest rate of turnover among its supporters of any environmental group – non-renewal of subscriptions has been up to 40% per annum. The large transitory element has a number of possible causes. FoE offers few of the membership benefits of other groups, such as magazines or access to protected areas, but merely three brief bulletins a year (see p. 39). The emphasis on young people, radicalism and idealism may attract first time environmentalists who subsequently move to more specialised organisations. Equally, the participatory style may accord with people at a particular stage in the life cycle, notably the young with few commitments.

The other major income source is special fund raising, with additional sums from industry and the Joseph Rowntree Social Services Trust (who have contributed office facilities as well as cash). Trading activities, though amounting to over £80000 in 1979/80, generate negligible profit and lag far behind the more effective marketing activities of organisations such as the National Trust and the World Wildlife Fund. Since 1977 there has also been a search for 'one

thousand workers', each pledged to raise £25 annually. However, the difficulty of sustaining the total budget remains.

Style and strategy

Friends of the Earth's roots are American, not British. The parent body was founded in San Francisco in 1969, a year before the British group, as part of a growing movement of 'eco-activists' whose focus of attention was the environment as a whole, in which people mattered at least as much as flora and fauna (Allaby 1971). The solution to man's numerous abuses of the natural environment was seen to be in fundamental social change, not temporary remedies. In this way, it was argued, environmental problems could be tackled at source. The first ecology action group of this sort arose in 1968, in the same city as FoE, on the university campus at Berkeley.

The new breed of environmentalism was radical not only in its broad field of concern but in its campaigning methods also. At the time, the style of Friends of the Earth presented a significant departure from traditional environmental lobbying in Britain characterised by low-key representations through established channels. FoE's approach was more open, media-orientated and confrontational, again betraying its American origins. It also incorporated notions of participatory democracy and forms of direct political protest, such as boycotts, sit-ins, marches and demonstrations, borrowed from the student movement. Significantly, in Britain, the first executive director of FoE had been chairman of the National Union of Students Committee on the Environment, and many initial staff members and supporters had also been involved in student politics. It is from a similar following of young, well educated, middle-class discontents that FoE still draws the majority of its support (Cotgrove & Duff 1980).

Various distinctive features in FoE's campaigning strategy have endured throughout its existence (Burke 1977). These are its technical competence, professional staff, presentation of alternatives, avoidance of party political allegiances, emphasis on policy contexts rather than individual cases of environmental abuse, and concentration of effort on a small number of specific topics.

FoE rests its claims to legitimacy on the technical rationality of its arguments rather than on its ideals. Accurate information is seen as the most important prerequisite for effective action. FoE's success in this respect is fundamental to understanding the group's status since the rest of its strategy rests on this pillar. Some of the more radical environmental groups, such as Greenpeace, get on with direct action themselves while leaving detailed argument and analysis to FoE.

FoE Ltd uses full-time paid staff with a few volunteers. Most of the staff are appointed for their campaigning abilities rather than expertise, though some may subsequently become recognised authorities in their own fields. A small number of technical experts have been employed in the energy and wildlife campaigns, and in such specialist areas as legal services and book keeping. Campaigners know how to find and use outside experts if technical knowledge is not available in house. Being full time they are also able to establish personal

contacts with key officials. Government and industry are therefore tackled
more equal terms than would otherwise be possible.

In 1973 Earth Resources Research (ERR) Ltd was set up as a lega
independent, charitable offshoot to conduct research. A subsequent F
Supporters' Bulletin stated:

> Their task is to act as a 'civil service' to provide the information back-up
> campaigners. By taking the bulk of the research workload off the campaigners, t
> will enable FoE staff to spend more time lobbying, contacting the media a
> mobilising public opinion. . . . The two organisations remain very closely linked
> the constant contact between researchers and campaigners. (FoE 1976.)

In practice, the links between the organisations have weakened as ERR did r
restrict itself to research within FoE Ltd's current or expected remit. Vario
projects have been taken on largely to raise money (as funding has always be
a problem), and others because of the interests and expertise of ERR st
members, such as the social and environmental consequences of mic
processors. Outstanding commitments sometimes prevent rapid responses
FoE Ltd's immediate needs. Equally, FoE Ltd does not always make clear
research requirements.

A pressure group is seen to be responsible if it argues *for* a particular cou
of action at least as much as *against* another course. FoE stresses genera
coherent alternative strategies to environmentally unsatisfactory practic
These are not attempts to off-load problems from one place to another, whi
is the traditional option for objectors on local issues, but sustainable long-te
alternatives. Thus, for example, walking, bicycles and public transport ha
been promoted as much as road building has been opposed, and the scope
energy conservation emphasised as part of the case against further nucle
power stations for extra electricity generation. The former executive direct
commented:

> Unless . . . FoE and the environmental movement can show that there are r
> options available, that our alternatives are both possible and practical and that ba
> needs can be met more certainly and more equitably by these alternatives, then
> will become increasingly irrelevant as people are no longer able to afford to care
> the environment. (Burke 1977.)

FoE avoids a politically partisan stance when presenting its arguments, ev
if on balance its supporters' allegiances would incline to the left of centre. Ma
environmental issues transcend party differences, as indicated by such bac
bench committees as the All-Party Ecology Group. Moreover, when FoE ga
its backing to the Labour Party's anti-motorway stance in the Greater Lond
Council elections of 1973, it found itself being identified with that party and
package of intentions rather than the issue of the London 'Ringways' alo
Since this experience, FoE has refrained from backing any party ticket.

Effort has been concentrated on policy changes to seek prevention
environmental degradation rather than on its relocation or local amelioratio
FoE normally uses individual problems to bring out the general policy issu
involved. For example, motorway inquiries have been used as platforms
campaigning for the downward revision of the traffic forecasts that underpin

motorway proposals, and more fundamentally for questioning the validity of forecasting as a policy-making tool. This is viewed as a more complete rebuttal of proposals than simply discussion of alternative routes or the deleterious effects on local amenities, and also capable of resolution with less value judgement.

Friends of the Earth selects specific topics for attention to avoid dissipating its limited resources. The consequence of this for FoE Ltd is that it may become an effective authority in some fields, as in energy policy, yet almost ignore other major environmental issues, such as London's third airport, because it is unwilling to take a position if technically unprepared. The selection process is therefore most important. A distinction should be drawn between FoE Ltd's wider campaigns and the individual issues within these. At present the main campaigns are concerned with energy, resources, wildlife and bicycles. These normally endure over a number of years whereas new issues are frequently taken on for shorter periods. Issues are chosen which highlight the group's ideology and challenge existing practices, yet which are normally capable of satisfactory resolution in the short term. In this manner, FoE seeks piecemeal though cumulative change towards a more conservation-orientated society.

There is an intricate link between the package of campaigns and issues selected and the various styles in which they are pursued. Such campaigns as the 1974–8 transport campaign seek reform through institutional channels, working closely with government committees and civil servants. Others such as 'Save the Whale' are taken onto the streets, with mass rallies in Trafalgar Square, stunts such as a plastic whale sinking in the Thames to capture media attention, and promotional posters, T-shirts and badges. Controversial issues of public policy are tackled in some campaigns, such as nuclear power, yet a complementary image will be developed elsewhere by pursuing such popular and less contentious issues as legal protection for the otter.

From time to time, issues will have their style of presentation changed. For example, the campaign against excessive packaging has been pursued in the public eye with bottle dumps, through institutional channels with Parliamentary Bills, behind the scenes in a government committee and amongst expert opinion with technical studies. Rapid tactical adjustments in style frequently catch FoE's adversaries by surprise and create new opportunities for effective campaigning.

Strategic review of campaigns has proved more awkward for FoE. No rigorous procedure has been developed for deciding when a campaign should be terminated and opportunities created for new ones. All campaigns that have ceased have done so ostensibly for lack of money. The staff's annual review discusses the merits of campaigns but no careful evaluation is undertaken of objectives, time horizons, level of achievement or opportunity costs incurred through not taking new initiatives. Mistakes have been made. Persistent pressure from local groups led to the establishment of a land-use campaign in FoE Ltd to lobby on aspects of urban and rural development. The campaign strategy was not determined adequately in advance in terms of finance, style, issues or co-operative working with other campaigns. It failed after eighteen months.

Rarely does FoE act jointly with other pressure groups. It is particularly jealous of safeguarding its own public image. Moreover, as a group which seeks

to initiate issues rather than respond to those that arise, the careful preparation that usually goes into its choice of tactics means that it is willing to co-operate with other groups only on its own terms. To preserve its independence of action, it prefers informal contacts with other environmental groups whereby it can gain the benefits of formal association without the liabilities. Small societies seeking the support of the national body for their own local environmental battles almost always receive a referral to the local FoE group, who may in turn respond that they possess no expertise on the matter. This logic has not prevented FoE Ltd from encouraging other organisations to append their names to campaigns under the FoE banner, like the 'No to Windscale Now' rally in 1978. Its attitude generates a self-assured aloofness that other organisations can at times find patronising.

Political tactics

A pressure group needs more than ideals, arguments and a strategy to be successful. It must convince those in power of the legitimacy and importance of its views. FoE gives as much attention to marshalling support as to producing reasoned arguments. Its sources of support are related to its style and strategy. Compared with other environmental groups, FoE's distinctive political tactics are its effectiveness as a publicity machine and its encouragement of individual participation in environmental action.

FoE has given more attention than any other environmental group to getting its message across in the media, as well as projecting its own image. A consistently good working relationship with journalists and broadcasters has been maintained by understanding how the media work, the type of information wanted and when it is wanted. The media have been attracted by FoE's coherent arguments, good press relations and high-quality publicity events. Information not readily available from other sources has been the basis for leading articles, even if FoE itself is not mentioned. Media appeal is specifically considered in the choice and design of campaigns because of its importance for the group in changing public attitudes.

Numerous low-budget events have been organised to satisfy the media's appetite for a story with a picture that sums up the issue. One example was a nine-foot high Coca-Cola can delivered to the American embassy in London as part of an international day of action to urge the US President to introduce legislation controlling throw-away cans and bottles. Such legislation, it was anticipated, would set an example for other countries to follow. The three television crews and two dozen pressmen and photographers sent to record the scene outnumbered the environmentalists.

Extensive and usually favourable media coverage ensures that FoE's message is widely broadcast. From the first press mention, in the *Evening Standard* early in 1971, there has been a general increase in coverage, exceeding 300 press articles in a single month on four occasions – first at the height of the Windscale inquiry (June 1977), then when the International Whaling Commission met in London (July 1979), again for an anti-nuclear rally one year after the Harrisburg accident (March 1980), and once more when sympathisers mailed empty beverage cans to the Prime Minister (May 1981). The threat of

Table 7.1 Schedule of national demonstrations organised by FoE.

Date	*Subject*	*Venue*	*Remarks*
1. May 1971	bottle demonstration	headquarters of Cadbury Schweppes	100 people
2. Oct. 1971	bottle demonstration	headquarters of Cadbury Schweppes	100 people
3. March 1972	packaging demonstration	countrywide	30 local groups participated
4. Sept. 1972	whale rally	Trafalgar Sq.	several hundred people
5. Dec. 1972	transport demonstration	Downing St.	presentation of bicycle to Prime Minister
6. June 1973	whale demonstration	Battersea Park	aimed at children
7. Oct. 1973	transport demonstration	Earls Court	at Motor Show: 40 people and a bus
8. March 1974	thermal insulation demonstration	countrywide	50 local groups participated
9. March 1974	paper demonstration	countrywide & County Hall	several hundred people in London; 40 local groups
10. June 1974	whale demonstration	Vauxhall Bridge	floating whale on Thames
11. Nov. 1974	allotments demonstration	Waterloo	30 people
12. Dec. 1974	bottle demonstration	countrywide	70 local groups
13. March 1975	allotments demonstration	countrywide	about 60 groups
14. June 1975	bicycle demonstration	County Hall	3000 cyclists marched to Downing St.
15. June 1975	whale demonstration	Vauxhall Bridge	40 people: coffin and procession
16. Dec. 1975	whale demonstration	Whitehall	oil cans and Christmas cards
17. April 1976	anti-nuclear demonstration	Cumbria	1000 people outside perimeter fence at Windscale
18. June 1976	whale demonstration	Aldwych	100+ people
19. Dec. 1976	whale demonstration	Grosvenor Sq.	40 people all night vigil and 200 people in the morning
20. April 1977	transport demonstration	the City	picket of Annual Dinner: 20 people
21. June 1977	bicycle demonstration	Windsor Great Park	several hundred people; attended by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh
22. June 1977	whale demonstration	Grosvenor Sq.	march from Japanese to Russian Embassy: 500+ people
23. Jan. 1978	can demonstration	Grosvenor Sq.	40 people
24. April 1978	anti-nuclear demonstration	Trafalgar Sq.	12 000 people

Table 7.1 – *continued*

	Date	*Subject*	*Venue*	*Remarks*
25.	June 1978	whale demonstration	Jubilee Gardens	c. 3000 people
26.	Jan. 1979	energy demonstration	London and countrywide	50 people in London; 100 local groups
27.	March 1979	energy demonstration	Whitehall	presentation of 10-foot millstone; 20 people
28.	May 1979	whale demonstration	Jubilee Gardens	several hundred people: sponsored jog
29.	June 1979	bicycle rally	Trafalgar Sq.	6000 cyclists
30.	July 1979	whale rally	Trafalgar Sq.	12 000 people
31.	Dec. 1979	packaging demonstration	the City	20 people
32.	March 1980	energy rally	Trafalgar Sq.	15 000+ people
33.	April 1980	allotments demonstration	Department of the Environment	30 people

The demonstrations listed here are demonstrations initiated from, and organised by, the national office of Friends of the Earth. During the period in question, Friends of the Earth local groups have organised several hundred local demonstrations on a wide variety of matters.

adverse publicity has been a powerful weapon in winning concessions from government and business interests. More generally, the strategic consequence of widespread media coverage of such matters as the slaughter of whales, the risks of nuclear power and wasteful packaging has been to awaken and inform public concern.

The other distinctive feature of FoE's approach is the use of its followers as a political resource. It deliberately facilitates people to become agents of change. For example, its followers are encouraged to collaborate in recycling schemes in order to make their own contribution to saving resources and to set an example in adopting conservationist life styles. Political activism is also encouraged. The local groups enable people to mount their own campaigns as well as providing a potential for mass lobbying in support of national campaigns (see Table 7.1). The belief has persisted that a large public is awaiting a spur to action; indeed, FoE would like to be a mass movement.

The success of FoE's campaigning has drawn it onto government committees and into consultation with civil servants and legislators, in pursuit of the reforms that its public campaigns have made possible. This has inevitably prompted modifications in its tactics. The tact and discretion necessary in consultations with government have induced greater care in the timing and content of FoE's publicity to avoid embarrassing and antagonising those officials involved. In addition, as negotiations advance and discussion becomes more intricate and technical, it may be difficult to encapsulate what is at stake simply in a slogan or publicity-catching event. Equally, it may not be possible to keep local groups abreast of delicate and fast-moving negotiations, for example, over a compromise amendment to a Bill.

Finally, as FoE has established its authority for rational argument, it has distanced itself from the more militant forms of protest. Though civil disobedience and direct action were contemplated in its early days, it now eschews any

illegal or disruptive activities. In 1972 the first executive director warned publicly that, if major quarrying was allowed in the national parks, 'thousands of mostly young people from all over the country . . . will somehow get to the site and, as peacefully as the situation permits, will stop the digging.' 'After all is said and done,' he added, 'putting sugar in a bulldozer's petrol tank is relatively undramatic compared with blowing up a mountain and it hardly constitutes warfare.' (Searle 1972.) In contrast, just eight years later, in a memorandum to a parliamentary committee investigating the law relating to public order, FoE stated:

> No demonstration, organised by FoE Ltd or one of its local groups, has, to our knowledge, led to any arrest or conviction for any offence. It is the stated policy of FoE Ltd to co-operate closely with the police in organising public events of any kind and this policy is reflected in the advice given by our legal staff to FoE local groups. (FoE 1980.)

Assessment

Friends of the Earth is generally regarded as the most successful of the new promotional groups. This section assesses its achievements and reviews some of the major choices open to FoE in its second decade.

The expansion of its budget, staff, local groups and supporters are tangible measures of progress in developing a national constituency for its aims (see Table 7.2). Comparison of the environmental perspective, including FoE's viewpoint, with opposing positions also suggests a general advance in credibility. The former executive director put it this way:

> There has been a curious reversal of roles. When the wave of environmental consciousness first broke against the cliffs of affluence in the late sixties, environmentalists were seen as prophets of doom and economists were promising us heaven on (an exponentially expanding) earth. Strangely it is now the economist who preaches doom and gloom, as inflation erodes affluence, and the environmentalist who sees, in the collapse of the conventional wisdom, promising new opportunities. (Burke 1977.)

Effectiveness is difficult to analyse because FoE as a pressure group has influence, not executive power. Cause and effect may be difficult or impossible to prove. Moreover, changes cannot be expected rapidly because much of the behaviour that FoE seeks to modify is rooted in society's cultural traditions and

Table 7.2 Growth of FoE's resources.

		Year	
	1971	*1976*	*1981*
number of local FoE groups in Great Britain	8	140	250
annual income of FoE Ltd	£10000	£44000	£206000
staff of FoE Ltd (including paid consultants)	6	16	20
number of registered FoE supporters	1000	5000	17000

economic relations. Changes to the context in which decisions are taken may be essential before specific victories can be secured.

FoE claims the major responsibility for particular environmental successes, such as the Endangered Species Act 1976, and persuading the government to hold a public inquiry into proposals for nuclear fuel reprocessing at Windscale. Other successes have been the prevention or amelioration of adverse outcomes. FoE helped prevent copper mining in Snowdonia National Park (1973) and its activities resulted in a government decision not to purchase environmentally unsuitable nuclear reactors (1974).

These highlights are notable for their accomplishment in areas where success does not come easily – in each case FoE was opposed by powerful economic interests. So there can be little surprise that no type of 'excessive' packaging is, as yet, controlled by law or that the government retains a commitment to a sizeable (though reduced) road construction programme. Some battles may even be lost intentionally to prove a point. For example, the inadequacy of customs legislation to control imports of rare-species products was underlined in 1975 by the well publicised failure of a prosecution brought by FoE against an artist importing whale teeth.

Success has not been evenly distributed. Some local authorities have provided facilities for cyclists, for instance, whereas others have not. Some concepts may even be acceptable in certain areas of policy choice but not in others. A good example is the scope for reducing demand for products rather than continually searching for new sources of supply. It is now government policy that energy should be conserved, but in the development of transport policy, intensive lobbying has achieved little more than an official statement that 'we should aim to decrease our absolute dependence on transport and the length and number of some of our journeys' (Department of Transport 1977). Government minerals policy still holds that demands must be met without question, thereby ignoring opportunities for reducing demand.

The single most important turning point in FoE's credibility came when campaigning efforts were focused on nuclear fuel reprocessing at Windscale, in particular at the 1977 public inquiry. The press consistently referred to them as the 'leading objectors' or 'most effective opponents', and *New Scientist* concluded that 'On an overall balance of form, content, style and timing . . . FoE emerges as the cardinal adversary in these hearings.' (Breach 1977.) This favourable coverage changed public perceptions markedly. A wider public now knows about FoE, and has a higher regard for the group, than ever before.

Friends of the Earth's emergence as one of the leading environmental pressure groups has brought both benefits and burdens to its cause. Opportunities have increased as FoE's opinion is now canvassed and taken seriously on many issues: publicity comes more easily. Similarly, access to the relevant committees, civil servants and ministers has become much easier. This improved political access has tended to be self-reinforcing as FoE receives better advance information and a more intimate knowledge of government thinking on which to base future tactics. Expansion, however, has brought a flood of correspondence and inquiries increasing the volume of administration, often without more money. In turn, greater emphasis has to be placed on fund raising. There follow permanent book-keepers, mail-order staff and typists where once voluntary helpers would suffice.

Opposition to FoE from outside interests has inevitably arisen. Initially FoE was ignored, but this is no longer possible on those issues it tackles. Outright hostility, dismissal of FoE as a 'bunch of lefties', and similar ill considered responses from some industrialists can play directly into its hands. A letter from the Director of the British Leather Federation in 1976, stating his intention to throw all letters from FoE into the wastepaper basket, was featured subsequently in the group's publicity against the use of sperm whale oil in leather products. Other organisations have responded in a more spirited manner to FoE's challenge. Citroën, Vickers–Logemann and the South of Scotland Electricity Board have sought to legitimise their own activities by mentioning FoE's name in advertisements without permission. Other industries and institutions pay lip-service to the virtues espoused by FoE but do nothing to implement them. This makes criticism of such sectors more difficult. Most of the bigger firms and government agencies have become conscious of the need to manage their own public relations carefully. They now seek to anticipate and, if possible, avoid giving hostages to their environmental critics. Attempts have also been made to undermine FoE's own credibility. As the former executive director commented, 'If anything is an indicator of the growing maturity of the environmental movement, it is that we have now become a target for smears.' (Burke 1978.)

A group must continually evolve its strategy if it is to remain at the centre of public debate. FoE consciously attempts to keep pace with changing preoccupations. In 1970, ever-increasing affluence was the perceived prospect. Emphasis then was placed on raw-material recycling as a reaction against the complacent assumption of boundless growth and unlimited resources. Subsequently, a wildlife campaign took the lead role, using the national and international support for nature conservation to fuel a persistent attack on the whaling industry. The most important campaign now is the energy campaign, built on the growing acceptance of the 'small is beautiful' message and fear of radioactivity. This campaign has lent itself very well to presentation in language relevant to present-day political concerns such as structural unemployment, inflation and public expenditure, in contrast to the campaign language of a decade ago with its reference to resource wastage and the destruction of ecosystems.

There is some evidence that the campaign strategy now suffers from inertia. No new campaign, apart from land use, has been allocated a full-time staff member since 1974. Campaigns on minerals, human settlements, water resources and derelict land have all been contemplated but deferred for lack of money (though a pollution campaign is in prospect). Priorities have been maintained in the energy campaign, but even here oppotunities to extend FoE's case have been missed. Though FoE has shaped public opinion on nuclear power, the initiative on such related issues as nuclear proliferation and test drilling for nuclear waste disposal has thus passed to other groups (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Town and Country Planning Association, respectively).

There is continual internal debate on FoE's ability to adapt its campaigning methods and organisational structure. Currently the prevailing opinion is that resources should be channelled more to swelling the group's support, because 'popular feeling will prove to be more important than rational argument in

influencing many government decisions' (Conroy 1979). This offers opportunities for FoE to exert more influence at a different point in the spectrum between co-operation and confrontation with government. However, the intended tactical adaptation has not been very spirited. FoE is reluctant to jeopardise its reputation for rational argument, and the London office is structured more efficiently as an agency lobbying central government with local support than as an office subservient to local group requirements. Furthermore, weight would be given to tactics that now seem less effective than previously: flamboyant publicity events such as bottle dumps and the giant-can event still attract attention but have less impact on decision makers. The novelty is wearing off.

One spur to a change in political tactics has been a growing sense that, in a number of instances, FoE has been out-manoeuvred within government. Two particular experiences have stimulated much self-searching: the Windscale inquiry, where FoE felt it won the technical argument but lost the political battle; and the non-returnable container campaign whose momentum was dissipated through FoE's involvement in the long drawn out, but ultimately inconclusive, Waste Management Advisory Council. FoE Ltd, it has been suggested, has been co-opted by government and has thereby lost its radical edge (Bugler 1981, Pye-Smith & Rose 1981). This has crystallised the discontent of some local activists within FoE, as the magazine *Undercurrents* (1980) reported:

> Local groups are unhappy with what they see as the absorption of FoE nationally into the blotting paper of Whitehall. The FoE bottle campaign, for returnable bottles, got bogged down in an official study, which, with industrial representatives, overrode FoE completely: yet FoE seem only to respond with a 'Bottle Bill' – parliamentary action rather than the street action that made them famous.

The local groups widely support the principle of a switch to grass-roots activity. There are, however, other centralising and decentralising forces straining the organisation's structure. First, the idea of decentralised authority for local groups is difficult to effect when effort must be concentrated at the centre to deal effectively with the highly centralised power structure of government, the media and big business. Originally, it was hoped that autonomous regional offices with full-time secretaries would emerge, with the London office providing back-up services to locally initiated campaigns (*The Ecologist* 1972). However, this aspiration was overtaken by a local group development strategy to establish the local group netork on the principles that still persist. Second, FoE Ltd encourages the independence and flexibility of local groups but simultaneously encourages local activism to assist national campaigning objectives. At the same time, momentum and commitment in FoE Ltd, which build up in major campaigns, mean that redirection can only be gradual even when local groups desire a change. Third, although FoE Ltd offers the benefit of central leadership on campaigns, the growing number of experienced and technically skilled local groups now wish for more control over national activities. Fourth, the conflict between central and dispersed authority has been sharpened by the need to accommodate the views of over five times as many groups as when the structure was designed.

There is no easy solution to these difficulties. The only sanction that dissatisfied local groups can exercise on FoE Ltd appears to be financial. There has been a rapid reversal of attitudes in FoE Ltd to sources of finance. In the summer of 1976, the *Supporter's Bulletin* proclaimed: 'Our fund raising is guided by two basic principles: first we will not take money with strings attached and second that the local groups should not be asked to raise money for the organisation. We intend to stick to these principles.' (Burke 1976.) Only the first has survived. Local groups were asked as early as spring 1977 to assist in a special appeal for funds to contest the Windscale inquiry, and were again asked in February 1979. The local groups have responded, but there have been isolated cases of money being raised for other groups such as Greenpeace.

Proposals to change one component of FoE's style or strategy frequently imply consequential changes. For example, increased professionalism in the London office staffing arrangements and administration would be useful. Enthusiasm is no longer a sufficient reason for employing staff. Accepting a full-time fund raiser without relevant experience proved unwise on the first occasion but was risked a second time. It is difficult to ensure high-quality staff when salaries are so low (rising from £4500 to £5500 per annum in 1981), which in turn brings into question the allocation of the budget. A more ordered investigation of income and expenditure might question the effectiveness of some campaigns and certain tactics. Like staff, these need more rigorous selection and monitoring. Budgets for each campaign could reduce the need for cross-subsidy from donations generated by the wildlife campaign.

The conclusion that emerges from these observations is that FoE is finding difficulty in adjusting to current circumstances, financially, internally and in its relations with central government. The organisational structure was not designed to cope with the benefits and problems that expansion has brought. Action in the short term has been preferred to developing an enduring strength. Within the organisation there is a great diversity of views about possible futures, but no consensus. Indeed a plurality of approaches may be the strongest combination, but not if the different parts pull in opposite directions. There is a fascination in watching FoE as a leading pressure group respond to a completely different operating environment brought on partly by its own achievements. FoE must learn to cope with the legacies of success, or suffer the consequences of failure to do so.

8 *The National Trust*

The National Trust is one of the oldest environmental groups. It was founded in 1895 as part of a general movement for the preservation of open space, a movement which sprang from upper-class horror at the impact of industrial and urban expansion (see Ch. 2). The concept of the Trust arose out of the work of the Commons Preservation Society which, since its foundation in 1865, had been conducting a battle to save common lands. The honorary solicitor to the Society, Robert Hunter, came to realise that its inability to acquire lands was a drawback to its work. As early as 1884, in an address published by the Society, he advocated the creation of a special body to buy and hold land and buildings for the benefit of the nation (Hunter 1884).

It remained for Hunter to be joined by two others, first Octavia Hill and then Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, for the idea to be carried through to fruition. Octavia Hill was a disciple of Ruskin and a pioneer in the field of housing reform. Through her experiences in this field, she came to realise the importance of open spaces, particularly for those living in poor and overcrowded housing. Canon Rawnsley was, in his time, the foremost defender of the Lake District and it was in his battles to preserve the Lakes that he turned to the other two (Fedden 1968).

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty, as the new body was called, was uniquely constituted to acquire land and buildings by gift or purchase so that they could be protected from development and secured for public enjoyment. The Trust was conceived not only as a land-holding body but also as the national champion of the preservationist cause, as its first leaflet explained:

> The National Trust is not only a holder of natural scenery and ancient buildings, but it also does what it can to promote local interest in the preservation of any worthy historical object or natural beauty. Whether it be a waterfall destroyed . . . or the need of obtaining . . . a pleasure ground . . . for the people, the Trust, working sometimes alone, at other times in conjunction with kindred societies, brings its influence to bear in the direction and spirit of its promoters. It helps when necessary to stimulate and promote legislation upon matters cognate to its aims and intentions. (The National Trust n.d.)

In its early years, this propagandist and campaigning role was exercised energetically in diverse matters including the condition of Stonehenge, the proposed Snowdon railway, encroachment on Hampstead Heath, threats to Georgian streets in Bath and Westminster, and the disfigurement of the countryside with telegraph poles.

The Trust quickly established its authority as a holding body. In 1907 it was reconstituted as a statutory body by Act of Parliament. The Act charged the Trust with 'the permanent preservation' of property 'for the benefit of the

nation'. It gave the Trust the powers to declare its land and buildings inalienable and to create bylaws for their regulation and protection. The unique status of inalienability enjoyed by most of the Trust's properties means that it cannot divest itself of them, nor can they be compulsorily acquired without recourse to Parliament. The original intention was to prevent the Trust from disposing of land it ceased to value and to inspire confidence in donors and supporters that its properties would be preserved in perpetuity. Inalienability has undoubtedly been an important factor in attracting land and finance. Table 8.1 indicates the growth of the Trust's estate. It is now the largest private landowner in England and Wales, owning more than 1% of the land surface, as well as over 200 historic buildings.

The Trust could not have attained this position without the support and encouragement of successive governments. Seen to be fulfilling an important public function, the Trust is regarded, in effect, as a public agency and it enjoys various powers and privileges as a result. Yet it remains a voluntary organisation. Indeed, with over a million members, it is the biggest in the country. Thus it has an unusual dual status. On the one hand, it is a large, bureaucratic organisation with statutory powers and major public responsibilities. On the other hand, it is a voluntary organisation enjoying extensive popular support and capable of acting as a powerful pressure group – usually, these days, in defence of its own estate rather than on general environmental issues. This chapter examines the relationship between these two facets of the Trust as manifest in its internal organisation, external relations and a particular campaign, Enterprise Neptune.

Internal organisation

The National Trust is a highly centralised organisation. Ultimate control rests with its council of 52 members, of whom half are elected at the annual general meeting and half are nominated by prominent national institutions (such as the Royal Academy, the National Gallery and the British Museum) and old established voluntary bodies (including the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the Royal Horticultural Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings). It includes people of literary, artistic or scientific distinction, and others with specialist knowledge of historic buildings and estate management, including a number of titled owners of great houses and landed estates. The sheer size of the council means that most of its power is delegated to an executive committee, currently with 28 members. Fourteen regional committees have also been set up to handle the affairs of the Trust in different parts of the country, but control over general policy, finance, property acquisi-

Table 8.1 Growth in the area of land owned or held under covenant by the National Trust.

	1917	*1937*	*1957*	*1977*
Area owned (ha)	2560	20837	98071	162398
Area covenanted (ha)	—	6237	16733	29499

Source: Benson Report 1968 and National Trust reports.

tion, negotiations with central government and appointments to the regional committees remains firmly with the executive committee.

Committee members are appointed for their personal qualities, connections and public spiritedness. They serve in an honorary capacity, thus perpetuating the ethos of voluntarism and commitment to the Trust's ideals fostered by its founders. The administration of such a large organisation, however, rests with its 1400 staff, at the head of whom is the director-general, who is in charge of the Trust's day-to-day management. His responsibilities have been described as 'second only to that of the Chairman of the Executive Committee . . . the health and tone of the administration reflect his influence' (Fedden 1974).

Within this centralised structure, there is little room for participation by ordinary members in the policy formulation and decisions of the Trust, and little opportunity for members to question priorities or initiate changes. Involvement of members tends to be restricted to practical assistance at properties and fund raising. In the last 17 years, local centres have been set up to provide a social focus for members. They constitute no part of the formal framework of the Trust and have no involvement in its decision making.

Members' views do not appear to form an important reference point for policy. The leadership sees its own role as predominantly one of safeguarding and promoting the Trust's ideals, rather than representing the opinions of members. With these attributes, the organisation is a closed oligarchy; its leadership is authoritative rather than representational, and its organisational structure is difficult for ordinary members to penetrate (see p. 52). Lord Antrim, chairman between 1965 and 1977, specifically characterised the leadership of the Trust as a 'self-perpetuating oligarchy'.

The centralised and closed organisation is in part explained by the requirements of its role as a *de facto* public agency. As a statutory body, handling a large amount of public money and responsible for the management of a large area of land, the National Trust has, of necessity, a strong central organisation with which to liaise with central government and to meet its commitments. At the same time, the lack of representation of members is a legacy of the Trust's beginnings; although preserving land *for* the people, the Trust was never meant to be *of* the people. The founders, in keeping with the contemporary spirit of patrician reform, intended the Trust to be controlled by responsible people committed to aesthetic ideals. This deliberate elitism now sits incongruously with the mass membership acquired over the past 30 years (see Fig. 8.1).

The Trust's large membership does attest to considerable support for its general objectives. In 1980 just over a million people paid between £3 and £7 each for a junior, ordinary, family or group membership. Support is concentrated in the south of England and is predictably biased in socio-economic terms. A survey conducted in 1972 concluded that 'with an average age of 54, the typical Trust member may be described as middle-aged and middle-class, a country lover with a strong interest in gardens and an appreciation of fine houses' (Mann 1974). Although the privileges of membership – including free admission to all properties – act as a substantial bait, it seems that the great majority of members continue to belong because they believe the Trust to be a worthy cause.

The Trust regards its membership, above all, as a source of funds: gross receipts from subscriptions amounted to £5½ million in 1980. This is the only

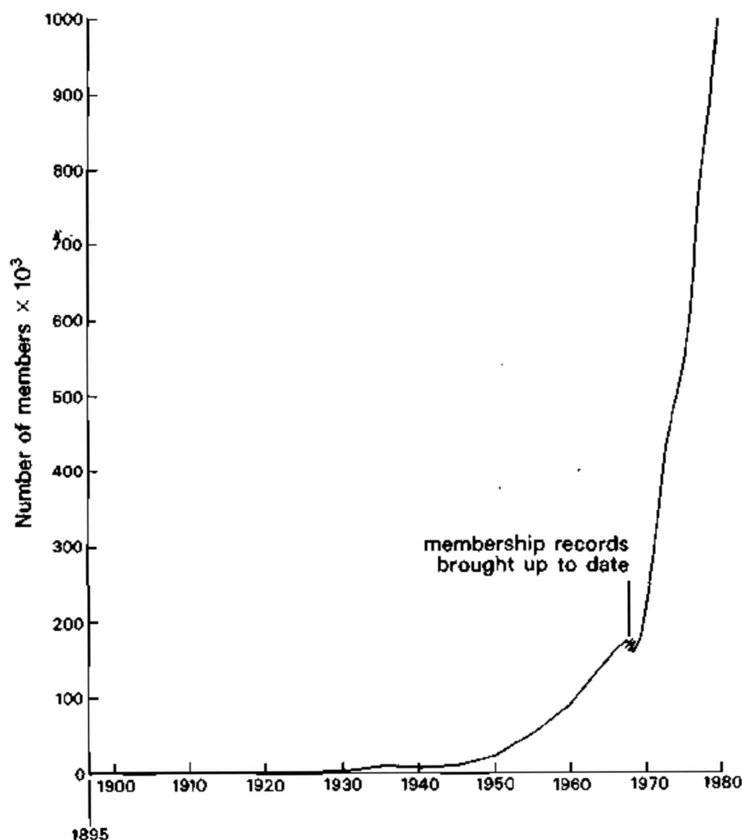


Figure 8.1 Growth in membership of the National Trust.

income source whose growth has regularly outstripped inflation, with the consequence that its contribution to the Trust's annual revenue rose from 14% in 1971 to an estimated 30% in 1981. The Trust also recognises that its mass membership lends strength to its negotiations with national and local authorities. Yet, in the past, it has been distrustful of increasing numbers, particularly of the possibility that they might begin to dictate the direction it is to take. 'The tail has been known to wag the dog', warned its chairman in the 1960s. The Trust's historian, Robin Fedden, put it this way: 'The Trust did great things with less than a thousand members, and set high standards. Any lowering of these standards, and compromise in deference to a vast membership and the irrelevant pressures that such a membership might exert, would in the long run undermine its authority and hazard its future.' (Fedden 1968).

The Trust's external relations

The National Trust's relationship with government is the closest of any environmental group. This rests on government recognition of the value of the

Trust's work. As legislation has been passed to preserve buildings and landscape, government has tended to use the existing machinery of the Trust for its own purposes rather than extend its own establishment. In other European countries, official agencies perform functions equivalent to those of the National Trust. In Britain, in contrast, the achievement of official policy in the areas of scenic protection, historic preservation, nature conservation and countryside recreation depends critically on the Trust.

For example, the Trust was one of the earliest supporters of the concept of national parks in Britain, advocating the creation of one in the Lake District as early as 1904. The extent of its ownership of national park land (7.5% of the total) is second only to that of the Forestry Commission, and far in excess of the 1.2% owned by national park authorities (MacEwen & MacEwen 1982). The importance of the Trust in the fulfilment of the parks' objectives is enhanced by the fact that its holdings are concentrated in the heartlands of the parks and in those parks subject to the greatest popular pressure – the Lake District (where 23.7% of the land is owned by the Trust), the Peak District (10.4%) and Snowdonia (8.9%). Because 73% of land in the parks is privately owned, one commentator maintains that 'it is primarily through the existence of Trust lands, providing guaranteed conservation, controlled access and strategic facilities (such as nature walks), that the National Parks can relate to the international concept they claim to represent' (Tunbridge 1981).

The Trust also plays a central role in relation to nature conservation. It owns by far the greatest number of Grade 1 sites of special scientific interest in England and Wales: it has 117 of them, covering 47000 hectares. This represents a third of the total number and 12% of the total area, which is more than three times the area of such sites owned by the official Nature Conservancy Council in England and Wales. Twelve of the Trust's properties, totalling 1700 hectares, are national nature reserves and all but one are leased to the Nature Conservancy Council.

Government recognition of, and dependence upon, the Trust has led to considerable support for its work. Significant co-operation began in the post-war years of reconstruction. Following a meeting in 1945 with the Minister of Town and Country Planning, it was agreed that the Trust should submit to the ministry its proposals for inalienability to ensure that Trust policy would not conflict with national planning. In return, the minister agreed to offer support should any attempt be made at compulsory acquisition through parliamentary procedure. The Acquisition of Land Act 1946 gave the Trust the right (granted to no other private landowner) of appealing to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament if ever a public authority proposed to take its land by the use of compulsory powers.

The government was also keen to support the Trust financially. This was done through the establishment of the National Land Fund in 1946. Money for the Fund, conceived as 'a thank-offering for victory', came from the sale of surplus war stores and was to reimburse the Inland Revenue for beautiful countryside or historic buildings offered in lieu of death duties. After a Trust initiative, the legislation was extended in 1953 to enable the Inland Revenue to accept chattels in a similar way such that the Trust could receive outright a great house and its contents. By 1978, some 50 historic buildings and 44000 hectares

of land had been transferred to the Trust at a charge to the Fund of about £6 million (Commons Expenditure Committee 1978).

In addition, the Trust benefits from practical assistance, technical advice and grants from a number of government agencies. It is the greatest recipient of grants from the Historic Buildings Council for England. In 1978/79 for example, almost a quarter of the Council's £2½ million for the repair of historic buildings went to the Trust. Other agencies from which the Trust receives extensive assistance include the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission, the Forestry Commission, the Ancient Monuments Section of the Department of the Environment and the Historic Buildings Council for Wales. Indeed, with similar aims, equivalent or greater resources, and its own statutory powers, the National Trust resembles these semi-autonomous public agencies. There is much contact and co-operation between their respective staffs, as well as cross-membership of their councils, and some intra-institutional rivalry. Unlike some environmental groups, the Trust does not depend upon its links with these agencies in its dealings with other government departments. It has well established links across Whitehall and it is the only environmental group with ready access to the Treasury.

On average, about an eighth of the Trust's income is from government grants. However, this does not include the considerable sums coming to the Trust because of its special tax exemptions. Like many other environmental groups, the National Trust enjoys the tax-free status of a charity. In addition, since 1931, land and buildings given to the Trust, and which have been declared inalienable, have been exempted from death duties (now capital transfer tax). The exemption was extended under the Finance Act 1949 to land or securities given as an endowment and, in 1951, to the objects associated with a building given to the Trust. The effect of this and subsequent legislation was to make the Trust a tax haven for the owners of historic houses. Properties transferred to the Trust must be sufficiently endowed to cover their upkeep, but this endowment as well as the gift of the property are free of tax and the owner and his descendants are permitted to remain in residence rent-free subject to public access on specified days.

Although the National Trust has many of the attributes of an official government agency, it is nevertheless a voluntary organisation and it acts on occasions as a pressure group. It has a significant amount of political power. Besides its statutory powers and the benefit of working relations with government, it enjoys the support of many Members of Parliament, particularly in the House of Lords. On occasions this support has been used with decisive effect. For example, in 1962 its supporters in the Lords (at the time, 120 out of 932 peers on the roll were Trust members) blocked a Private Bill promoted by Manchester Corporation to enable it to abstract water from Ullswater in the Lake District (Dolbey 1969). To represent its interests in the general run of parliamentary business, the Trust co-opts one Labour and one Conservative MP onto its executive committee. It also maintains close contact with the Heritage Group of MPs. In addition, there are numerous peers on its council and committees who are willing to speak for the Trust in the House of Lords.

Not the least of the Trust's political resources is the large reserve of goodwill it enjoys. Its influential support among the leading institutions of high culture is reflected in the quality of expertise it can command on a voluntary basis, as

honorary advisers and on its expert committees. In addition, the Trust's mass membership attests to its wider popularity, as does the unending flow of donations that gives it the highest voluntary income of all British charities. In the national consciousness, the Trust has the sort of hallowed status that the Church of England used to possess, in that opposition to the Trust would seem at once sacrilegious and unpatriotic.

To preserve this status, the Trust uses its influence judiciously and it assiduously avoids the image of a pressure group. Normally, it leaves campaigning on general environmental issues to other groups, reserving its own considerable political muscle for the defence of its estate. One recent exception is Enterprise Neptune, the Trust's campaign to preserve the coast, which is examined in greater detail below. Another has been its persistent championing of tax exemptions for the private owners of country estates, which has involved it in extensive parliamentary lobbying and representations to the Exchequer. Sometimes, without publicly identifying itself with a campaign promoted by other environmental groups, the Trust gives support behind the scenes, using its ready access to government to press the merits of action. This was the role the Trust adopted in the campaigns to strengthen the Wildlife and Countryside Bill in 1981, to reform the National Land Fund in 1977 and to reform the administration of national parks in 1971.

Though avoiding active involvement in the campaigns of other environmental groups, the Trust keeps on good terms with them. In acquiring and preserving some of the finest scenery and buildings, the Trust sees itself acting as 'the banker of the conservation movement'. Other groups regard the Trust as the ultra-conservative wing of the environmental lobby. Indeed, in the past, the Trust itself has been the object of pressure from other groups in the movement, seeking to reform its outlook (see, for example, p. 152). In part, we can understand the Trust's general cautiousness in terms of the considerable burden of responsibility that it must bear as a large landowner and statutory body. It is anxious to conserve the public goodwill and sympathy on which the integrity of its estate depends. The leaders of the Trust feel that it cannot afford to jeopardise public support or disrupt its special relationship with Whitehall by going out on a limb and taking up issues which are contentious or in advance of public opinion as do some environmental groups.

In part, the Trust's conservatism also reflects its establishment leadership, the professional outlook of its senior staff, who are mainly chartered surveyors, and the interests with which it aligns. It has been suggested that 'The Trust is an ingenious political device that secures the conservation of scenic beauty without disturbing the landed interest which in turn supports the Trust and exercises great influence within it.' (MacEwen & MacEwen 1982). The Trust regards its ownership of country houses and estates as a last resort. Its attitude is that the best owner is the private owner. Thus, in its representations to Parliament, government departments and public inquiries, the Trust is frequently associated with groups such as the Country Landowners' Association in preserving the status quo in the countryside.

Enterprise Neptune: a Trust campaign to save the coast

Enterprise Neptune illustrates the resources that the National Trust can bring to bear on a campaign. It also brings into focus the conflict between its role as a semi-public body and its role as a voluntary organisation and pressure group. The campaign, which received its public launch in 1965, was the culmination of a long-standing concern for coastal preservation dating from the 1930s (Cornish 1937).

In the 1950s, the demand for more and cheaper forms of seaside holiday accommodation created new pressures for the development of caravan and camp sites with which the post-war planning system had difficulty in coping. The Trust's response was to accelerate its acquisition of coastal properties. The achievements of its Cornish Coast Advisory Committee, formed in 1957, and the Pembrokeshire Coast and Ulster Coast Appeals, begun in 1962, encouraged the Trust to consider a national appeal. In 1963, it declared that 'action almost this day is needed if by 1970 the people of Britain are to find any lengths of our coast worth revisiting' (National Trust 1963). This reflected disillusionment with the safeguards embodied in the planning legislation. The conviction within the Trust was that 'planning has failed to protect our coastline' (Rawnsley 1966). Hence, ownership by the Trust was seen as the only sure and immediate means of protection.

In 1962, the Trust conducted a survey of the 3000 miles of coast of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Of the two thirds which remained undeveloped, some 980 miles (in addition to the 187 miles already owned by the Trust) were deemed 'worthy of preservation by the Trust' because of their outstanding natural beauty (National Trust 1966). Before the public launch of Enterprise Neptune, the Trust sought to guarantee that it would receive general support. Using its network of contacts, the Trust obtained the endorsement of 21 government departments, 63 voluntary societies and many industrial and commercial concerns. In addition, the Duke of Edinburgh accepted appointment as Patron of the Appeal. Then the Appeal was launched with much publicity.

Enterprise Neptune proved remarkably successful. The initial target of £2 million was reached in November 1973, with 155 properties acquired. Neptune's popularity led the Trust to renew the Appeal, despite earlier intentions to the contrary. As 'Neptune Resurgent', with a new target of 'the next 100 miles', the fund remains open to this day. Some 240 properties have been acquired and the Trust's total coastal holding covers 407 miles (in 1980), 220 miles of which have been acquired through Neptune. Enterprise Neptune was conceived not only as a financial appeal but also as a campaign to draw attention to threats to the coast and elicit from government a more vigorous approach to coastal conservation. In this wider aspect, it was also a success. As well as contributing an estimated £1 million to the Neptune fund (approximately 30% of the £3½ million raised by 1977), the government was prompted to review official policy. The National Parks (now Countryside) Commission was asked to conduct a study of the coastline, in conjunction with maritime local planning authorities. A detailed analysis of coastal land changes was made, and a series of regional conferences were held to take stock of the problems facing the coastal landscape.

The Commission concluded that urgent steps were needed to conserve the most outstanding stretches of undeveloped coastline, and proposed the designation 'heritage coasts' for such areas (Countryside Commission 1970a, 1970b). The concept was accepted by the government which recommended local authorities to define heritage coasts and prepare management plans for them, in consultation with the Commission (DOE 1972a). Over thirty, covering a total of 750 miles, have been defined to date. The ready response of local authorities reflects the degree to which Enterprise Neptune has made them receptive to the issue. Indeed many of them have donated land or money to the appeal.

The very success of Enterprise Neptune, however, revealed contradictions within the Trust. In 1966, a dispute arose over the conduct of the campaign between the executive committee and the director of Enterprise Neptune, Commander Rawnsley (a grandson of one of the Trust's founders). Some of the committee members were concerned at what they regarded as excessive expenditure in publicising the appeal. The Commander disagreed and was dismissed, having 'proved incompatible with the Trust' (*The Times* 26 October 1966). Some of Neptune's activities were curtailed and its publicity reduced.

In seeking support for his viewpoint, Commander Rawnsley became the focal point for members of the Trust discontented with its policies. Their central criticism was that the constitution of the Trust had failed to adapt to changing circumstances. In Commander Rawnsley's words, 'The purpose of the movement is to ensure . . . the adoption of a more liberal outlook towards the leisure needs of the people, to meet the challenge which the future holds. These changes will not . . . be achieved unless . . . ordinary men and women in the membership may participate in the government of the Trust.' (*The Times* 19 January 1967). The reform movement made a number of criticisms of the Trust's management of its properties. Access, it was suggested, was unduly restrictive, facilities provided for visitors were inadequate, and it was wrong and impractical for a body of the National Trust's size to be administered centrally. Enough members were enlisted to requisition an Extraordinary General Meeting early in 1968. Though the motions hostile to the executive committee were decisively defeated, a poll was obtained of the general membership in which almost 10% expressed dissatisfaction with the current policy and administration of the Trust.

The Trust's council responded to the implications of the debate and the damaging publicity it attracted by appointing an advisory committee under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Benson, which conducted a thorough appraisal of the Trust's work and organisation (Benson Committee 1968). While endorsing the broad lines of Trust policy, it made a series of recommendations, most of which have since been implemented. Decentralisation of the Trust's management was proposed to ensure speed of decision and sensitivity to local feelings. A more vigorous and lively attitude to public relations was urged, with the recommendation that the elected council of the Trust should be more directly involved in policy making and more responsive to the Trust's membership. It also suggested that 'the policy of the Trust should be to give as much access as possible' to its properties.

Enterprise Neptune was a return to the Trust's campaigning role, effected in a changed social and political environment which demonstrated that the Trust's

organisation required modernisation. Thus the campaign acted as a catalyst to organisational change. The network of local centres was greatly expanded to bring the Trust more closely into contact with its members. The system of regional committees was established to decentralise the Trust's administration. At the same time, the managerial function of the headquarter's staff was strengthened. In 1968 the post of secretary, previously the highest staff position in the Trust, was replaced by that of director-general. The first appointee was Sir John Winnifrith. Having recently retired as Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, he was well equipped to effect the internal reforms which were required as well as to restore any temporary loss of Whitehall's confidence in the Trust.

The accountability of the Trust

The Rawnsley affair highlighted the issue of the representativeness of the Trust's leadership. The wider issue of accountability arises because of the sheer size of the Trust, its extraordinary powers, its receipt of official funds and its key role in aspects of public policy. However, just as the Trust's leadership enjoys considerable internal autonomy, so it has been anxious to preserve its independence from any external control or interference.

The recent trend towards circumscribed grants (in particular by the Countryside Commission) suggests that official concern exists for the accountability of government aid to the Trust. Reg Hookway, then the principal planning officer (subsequently director) of the Countryside Commission, complained that 'the National Trust . . . is not responsible to their public for their management policies' (Hookway 1967). The Countryside Commission now requires a management plan for all the properties it grant-aids, and presses for increased public access to them. Specifically, it has attempted to ensure public 'value for money' in the Trust's use of the £100000 fund made available to the Neptune Appeal in 1973. At Noss Mayo in Devon, finance was withheld until provision for access had been extended.

In general, the Trust tries to avoid this sort of financial dependency. Immediately after the Second World War, it refused an offer from the government of an annual subvention, fearing that this might jeopardise its independence. Instead, the National Land Fund was set up which made regular gifts of property to the Trust. Equally, the various tax concessions it enjoys represent a considerable public subsidy to the Trust, but not in a form susceptible to bureaucratic or political pressures. The Trust has preferred to limit its commitments rather than become too heavily dependent on direct government support.

In keeping with its policy of declining historic properties not endowed to cover future maintenance costs, the Trust even became reluctant to receive such properties via the National Land Fund. An amendment promoted by the Trust to the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 allowed for endowments for buildings transferred to the Trust, but this amendment was accepted by the government only to ensure passage of the Bill, and was never implemented because of the costs which would be incurred. (In 1977, it was estimated that perhaps between one and three million pounds would be the

appropriate endowment for a major historic house – Commons Expenditure Committee 1978.) Instead, in a number of cases in which high running and maintenance costs were expected, the Trust was persuaded to accept a property on the understanding that the deficit would be met by a grant each year from the Historic Buildings Council.

By the early 1970s, the Trust had grown disillusioned with this arrangement because of the long-term dependency on government largesse and it refused any more historic houses from the Fund without sufficient income-producing assets. This decision effectively froze the Fund's operation, because the Treasury was unwilling to allow the Revenue to accept any historic properties unless there was a willing recipient (which had almost always been the National Trust). One consequence was the private sale and dispersal of the contents of Mentmore in 1977, the public outcry about which led to the reform of the National Land Fund (see p. 78). Significantly, one of the first grants from the new National Heritage Memorial Fund was £500000 to help the Trust restore Canons Ashby in Northamptonshire, followed by £1 million towards the endowment of the property. The demise of the National Land Fund reveals the Trust's jealous regard for its own independence and the extent to which parts of the government's heritage policy are critically dependent on its co-operation.

The Trust explains its stance in the following terms: 'growing annual dependence on public funds could affect the support the National Trust receives from its members and the public and, particularly in times of national economic difficulty, could lead to management interference from government departments anxious to safeguard public funds. The National Trust feels that it must remain the sole judge of priorities and standards at its properties, on which its reputation and continuing support depend' (Commons Expenditure Committee 1978). In addition, the Trust feels, with some justification, that 'the nation gets good value very cheaply as a result of the Trust's ownership of land open to the public' (Commons Expenditure Committee 1976). However, this does not exempt the Trust from behaving in a responsible manner, nor does it dispose of a legitimate public interest in its work. An organisation of the Trust's size and power invites scrutiny. Moreover, because of its central role in countryside planning and heritage preservation, its management decisions have far-reaching implications which cannot be ignored and which raise questions about the Trust's responsiveness to public needs.

It is perhaps in its attitude towards recreation that the Trust has attracted most criticism. With the spread of car ownership in the 1950s and 1960s, and the enormous growth in those seeking informal recreation in the countryside, the Trust's open spaces have had to accommodate more and more visitors on fine, summer weekends. A tally on a bank-holiday weekend at Clumber Park in 1955 recorded 50000 visitors; on the equivalent weekend in 1964, the number had risen to 106000. In the following year at Hatfield Forest there were 28300 cars, and at Runnymede 80000 (Benson Committee 1968). By 1959, there were a million visitors a year to the Trust's houses. By 1966, this figure had doubled; and it doubled again by 1973 (Fedden 1974). In 1978, over six million people visited its properties. One result has been the enormous growth in Trust membership (three-quarters of the Trust's members are recruited at its properties). However, the Trust has been slow, if not reluctant, to respond to the challenge of mass leisure. It has been particularly concerned at the 'threat'

posed to the beauty and attractions of its properties by the sheer pressure of visitors. In grudging tones, the Trust's report for 1965 remarked that 'for the gregarious visitor the Trust can offer little and suffer fewer'.

Undoubtedly, the Trust faces a real dilemma. It firmly believes that preservation must be its first task and must take precedence over public recreation. The maxim coined by its chairman in the 1920s is still repeated: 'Preservation may always permit of access, while without preservation access becomes for ever impossible' (quoted in Fedden 1968). A more recent restatement of the same theme is that its open spaces 'are held in trust for future generations and must not be sacrificed to short-term pressures' or transformed into 'popular playgrounds' (Fedden 1974). Some would argue, however, that the emphasis on preservation for future generations may be too costly for the present (Bracey 1970). Moreover, the opportunity costs fall selectively on lower income groups when, as in Enterprise Neptune, properties are acquired specifically to restrict the spread of caravan and camp sites and other forms of cheap holiday accommodation.

The number of people wanting to enjoy the countryside and the coast is in any case likely to increase in the long term. So the sooner the problems created by intensive visitor pressure are tackled positively, the better, both for present and future generations. Yet the preservationist attitude of the Trust has also inhibited its acceptance of modern techniques of recreational land management promoted by agencies such as the Countryside Commission which are seeking to reconcile in an imaginative manner the many diverse demands for countryside recreation. Only 11 Trust properties figure among the 158 designated country parks in England and Wales. Most regions suffer from a considerable shortage of amenity land, and much of what is available, certainly much of the best, is owned by the Trust. It is therefore vital that the Trust's leadership should not be out of touch or sympathy with the recreational needs of ordinary people.

In contrast, in the management and maintenance of its historic buildings, the Trust enjoys a deservedly high reputation, worldwide. It has been a pacesetter in the development of techniques for conserving historic houses and their furnishings, and presenting them to the public. In this, it shows fastidious attention to detail and a fine sensitivity towards the character and period of a place. Best of all, its houses feel lived in, not like museums.

The inalienable status of Trust properties raises additional questions of accountability. The effect of inalienability is to place the Trust beyond the normal compulsory purchase powers of local authorities and other statutory bodies. This may constrain their operations, particularly in areas where Trust ownership is concentrated, such as the national parks and the coast. As we have seen, nearly a quarter of the Lake District is owned by the Trust; and in some coastal districts in the South-West, most of the open coast is now in its ownership. Elsewhere, there are other sizeable holdings. For example, over 3% of Surrey is held by the Trust.

Inalienability inevitably restricts the scope of land-use planning and excludes development which may be in the national interest or in the interests of local people. The Trust is aware of this and it consults local authorities before declaring land inalienable. As the secretary of the Neptune Appeal, Mr Corbett, stated: 'We cannot freeze the countryside or coast; we are aware of

the nuisance value of inalienability and therefore sensible about our defences.' (Personal communication 1976). Even so, it has been drawn into fighting a series of protracted rearguard actions mainly against public authorities, for example, over electricity projects and schemes for water extraction and road construction which would encroach on its land (Lowe 1972). Usually, however, both public and private developers carefully avoid Trust property.

The Trust's duty to defend its land against any development proposal, whatever its merits, has rendered it politically vulnerable to such criticisms as being inflexible, anti-progressive and 'above the law' (Fedden 1968, Heseltine 1968). Critics have argued that inalienability was never intended to be used in this way, and certainly not to frustrate public ends. In addition, it has been suggested that the post-war planning system, with its democratically accountable mechanisms for protecting amenity and determining the public interest in the use of land, has made the Trust's special status an anachronism (Buchanan 1968). That extensive areas of land, some of it quite undistinguished farmland, should be outside the planning system does seem unacceptable. Equally, it seems unrealistic that the use of 407 miles of coastline, amounting to a fifth of the undeveloped coast, should be 'frozen' in perpetuity. On the other hand, Trust ownership is undoubtedly a more certain means of landscape protection than are planning controls.

Only on one occasion has the Trust had to invoke its power of appeal to Parliament – in 1968, in an attempt to prevent the Ministry of Transport constructing a bypass encroaching on Saltram Park in Devon. A select committee of both Houses, after carefully considering the issue, declared in favour of the Ministry and the Trust's inalienable powers were overridden. The incident would seem to indicate that, ultimately, the Trust is no match for a determined government department. A second incident raised more profound doubts about the future of inalienability. It arose in connection with the government's insistence on the utmost urgency in the development of North Sea oil. At a protracted public inquiry, which began late in 1973, the National Trust for Scotland successfully resisted a plan to build massive concrete oil production platforms on its inalienable land at Drumbuie. The government reacted by introducing the Offshore Petroleum Development (Scotland) Bill (enacted in 1975) to enable the Secretary of State for Scotland, compulsorily and expeditiously, to acquire land for certain oil-related purposes, including inalienable land. The National Trust, fearing that the legislation might one day be extended to cover the rest of the United Kingdom and to apply to other types of development, joined forces with the National Trust for Scotland to fight the Bill (National Trust 1974). The two trusts succeeded in winning the support of the House of Lords for an amendment which would have exempted inalienable land, but the government stood firm. Though the Act's procedures have not been employed, its enactment demonstrates that government is not prepared to allow inalienability to obstruct matters of overriding national importance. The two incidents were a blow to the Trust. Yet it remains committed to its inalienable powers and is fully prepared to use them to defend its land against development threats, as in its recent opposition to another bypass proposal which would cross Petworth Park in Sussex.

The final issue of accountability concerns the Trust's openness in justifying its policies and actions. The land, money and powers entrusted to it place at

least a moral obligation on the Trust to provide as much information and explanation as possible regarding its stewardship of these assets. Yet it has been wary of too much publicity. Of course, being largely dependent on voluntary contributions, the Trust welcomes increased support and, following the Benson reforms, it has one of the most professional public relations of any environmental organisation. Too much attention, though, could bring demands for greater accountability and a loss of autonomy. It therefore avoids political controversy or public debate about its priorities and decisions. This may prove counterproductive, however, when sensitive issues are involved, and the Trust has found itself embroiled in prolonged wrangling in the aftermath of decisions it has taken internally without reference to its membership or wider public discussion. These include allowing seal culls on the Farne Islands in the 1960s and the leasing of land at Bradenham (Buckinghamshire) in 1981 for the construction of a NATO command bunker.

Assessment

Much of the criticism of the National Trust and the internal conflicts it has experienced stem from its dual nature. As a semi-public agency, it maintains a closed and centralised structure of authority and prefers to keep a low profile rather than indulge in eye-catching and controversial campaigning. However, as a voluntary body, there are pressures on it to have a more open organisation, in closer touch with its members. There are also occasions when, inevitably, it finds itself acting as a pressure group. When, in Enterprise Neptune, it did take on a strongly promotional stance, there were repercussions for its organisation which resulted in an internal reappraisal.

Whereas issues of internal representativeness arise in relation to the Trust's role as a voluntary body, its role as semi-public agency raises questions of external accountability. The control it exercises over large areas of land and the considerable sums of public money it receives could lead to calls for governmental regulation of its activities. Yet, even then, its ambivalent nature poses an awkward problem, for part of the National Trust's very attraction and success lies in its independence from government and especially with its inalienable powers.

9 *The Royal Society for Nature Conservation*

Inherent in many statements and studies of pressure groups is the notion that they are the crystallisation of some value or interest within society which they seek to represent to government. In this 'bottom-up' model of the political system, groups are seen as arising and existing independently of government. In some cases this is too simple a model. There are instances of the government itself creating pressure groups (see p. 45), and in this chapter we focus on the complex relationship and interaction between a voluntary group and a statutory body – the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the Nature Conservancy – in which each has profoundly influenced the development of the other. It is also a relationship characterised by a high degree of administrative and political co-ordination which has as its basis common interests and shared goals.

The Society's early years

The Society was formed in 1912 as the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (SPNR). The prime mover was Charles Rothschild of the famous banking family, a prominent Edwardian patron of natural history who became concerned at the extinction of wildlife and the shrinking area of land in its natural state. He had already acted privately, buying 300 acres of Woodwalton Fen, the largest surviving tract of fenland in Huntingdonshire, and anonymously donating funds to enable the National Trust to acquire Blakeney Point, the shingle spit on the Norfolk coast. In establishing the new society, Rothschild sought to harness the assistance of other influential naturalists in encouraging the creation of nature reserves (Rothschild 1979).

It was intended that the Society would assist the National Trust in acquiring threatened sites (*The Times* 18 December 1912) and its potential strength would rest on its ability to secure the patronage of benefactors and landowners through the personal contacts and prestige of its members. The entire control of the Society was vested in a council limited to 50 members, to which some of the leading figures in social, political and scientific life were recruited (SPNR 1914).

For a number of reasons the SPNR achieved little during its first thirty years (Sheail 1976). Dominated by members of the artistic establishment, the National Trust was concerned more with amenity preservation for aesthetic reasons than with the protection of wildlife, and it proved reluctant to accept properties that were only of interest to naturalists. So, the SPNR was obliged to become a landowner itself, acquiring a number of sites rejected by the Trust.

However, it was not equipped to manage them. Indeed the notion that management might be needed to perpetuate their wildlife interest was foreign to the original motive for their acquisition, to secure them from human interference. At Woodwalton Fen, for example, the cessation of grazing, hay-making and peat-cutting quickly led to the invasion of sallow bushes to such an extent that over a few years the reserve became an impenetrable thicket. The SPNR, to whom Rothschild had donated the reserve, had to sell another of his benefactions, Ray Island (Essex) in order to afford the necessary remedial action and upkeep for the Fen.

The consciously elitist structure of the Society, enshrined in a Royal Charter, also proved to be something of a straitjacket. Though perhaps well suited to the relatively small and tightly knit society of Edwardian London, the SPNR has had to live with it through 60 years of considerable social change and a transformation in the style of environmental politics. Members of the council were appointed for life and there was no mechanism for replacing inactive members or bringing in fresh talent. The Society's vitality was too dependent on the personal commitment, public stature and private generosity of a few individuals. It was particularly unfortunate in the death in 1923 of Charles Rothschild after a prolonged illness. He was in his mid-forties and had provided the Society with much of its status, funds and inspiration.

Deprived of effective leadership, the Society was also handicapped in its ability to generate public interest. There was provision in its constitution for people to be invited to register their support by becoming associate members, but the link was nominal – associates were accorded no formal authority within the Society, not even the power to nominate or elect council members or officers. In its early years, associate members were not even informed as to what the Society was doing, though this was remedied in 1923 when it began issuing an annual handbook. However, prevented by its charter from levying a subscription, the Society found servicing its members a financial liability. There was no incentive therefore to extend the membership which stood at less than 300 in 1939.

It was in no position, therefore, to tap the first real glimmerings of popular interest in environmental protection which arose in the inter-war period (Rickwood 1973). Whereas issues such as national parks and rights of access to open country were built up by the CPRE and the Ramblers' Association as popular causes, the case for nature reserves received little publicity and generated no widespread interest. Instead, it remained an esoteric matter, viewed even by naturalists as a costly and impractical expedient only to be contemplated as a last resort when a unique spot was threatened by an improving farmer or speculative builder, and certainly no substitute for protective wildlife legislation. This was not entirely due to the failure of the SPNR to make better use of its opportunities and funds. Farming was still depressed and the technological revolution in agriculture which was to pose such a comprehensive threat to wildlife was only just beginning by the late 1930s.

The Second World War and preparations for post-war reconstruction brought an unexpected change in the Society's fortunes, providing an unprecedented opportunity to influence the formulation of long-term government policy. In 1941, on the initiative of its secretary, Herbert Smith, the SPNR

convened a conference on the preservation of wildlife after the war. The conference's recommendations, including proposals for nature reserves, received much favourable publicity and aroused official attention (SPNR 1941). Within government, there was already a growing commitment to a comprehensive land-use system. Interest in wildlife protection followed as a corollary of the general responsibility embraced at least in principle by the government for preserving the British countryside. This was a cause which had gathered momentum in the twenties and thirties, and which now commended itself for its obvious symbolic value in helping to sustain morale during a period of intense national sacrifice (Cherry 1975).

At the invitation of Sir William Jowitt, Paymaster General and chairman of the Committee on Reconstruction Problems, a Nature Reserves Investigation Committee (NRIC) was appointed under the auspices of the SPNR to develop the case for nature conservation and to draw up a list of proposed reserves. Despite the difficulties of war time, regional sub-committees of local naturalists were set up to nominate potential sites throughout the country, and the SPNR played a key co-ordinating role in the lobbying which led up to the appointment of the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee by the government in 1945. Of the ten-man committee, six were members of the SPNR. The government acted on the recommendations of the committee by creating the Nature Conservancy in 1949, to acquire and manage nature reserves, to give advice on nature conservation, and to conduct ecological research.

The SPNR may fairly be described as the midwife of the Nature Conservancy. Somewhat paradoxically, its slim organisation and network of connections proved well adapted to the peculiar conditions of war-time lobbying. It was able both to respond quickly and sensitively to favourable initiatives within government, and to co-ordinate a staggering amount of groundwork prior to official action. Herbert Smith, being retired, was able to devote much of his time to the considerable amount of organisation and co-ordination that was required.

Though the case for nature reserves entered official thinking in 1941 as something of a footnote to the case for national parks, it emerged fully fledged in 1949 as a recognised and independent function of government. In contrast, the national park movement was able to achieve only token action from government. The National Parks Commission was little more than a sop to the amenity and preservation interests. Unlike its contemporary, the Nature Conservancy, the Commission was merely an advisory body with no executive powers or responsibilities (Cherry 1975, MacEwen & MacEwen 1982).

Somewhat ironically, the SPNR benefited from the fact that nature reserves, unlike national parks, had never emerged as a popular cause during peace time. Consequently there was no entrenched opposition to them and no internal factionalism amongst their tiny band of supporters. In contrast, the Standing Committee on National Parks had to co-ordinate a coalition of diverse organisations, amongst whom there were different and indeed conflicting conceptions of the objectives of national parks (Sandbach 1981, Sheail 1975). It also faced opposition from the County Councils Association, agricultural and landed interests and the Treasury. Such conflicts were particularly damaging given the overriding government objective of maintaining national unity. The SPNR and NRIC avoided controversy by divorcing the case for nature reserves

from that for national parks and by concentrating on the scientific aspects of nature conservation (Adams & Lowe 1981).

The Nature Conservancy and the Society's reform

The creation of an official agency to establish a national system of nature reserves, with its own statutory powers, access to public funds and a professional conservation and research staff was an achievement which far outstripped the original hopes and intentions of the SPNR's founders. Moreover, the Society seemed assured of considerable influence in the development of the Nature Conservancy. In its early months, the Conservancy was overseen by the Agricultural Research Council whose secretary, Sir John Fryer, was a leading SPNR member. The Conservancy's first director-general was Cyril Diver, a member of the executive committee of the Society, who had played a key part in both the NRIC and the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee. In addition, five of the original fifteen council members of the Conservancy, including its chairman, Sir Arthur Tansley, were on the council of the Society.

What future now remained for the SPNR itself was far from clear. Something of a new role had been sought in co-ordinating the early British contribution to the International Union for the Protection of Nature, established in 1948. Following Herbert Smith's death in 1953, the Society seemed well set to return to its pre-war state of limbo. The Nature Reserves Investigation Committee and its network of regional sub-committees were, at Cyril Diver's direction, dismantled and the Society's largest practical commitment, the management of Woodwalton Fen, was passed on to the Nature Conservancy. Yet any impression that the intervention of government in nature conservation thereby rendered voluntary action redundant was soon dispelled by the Nature Conservancy itself. Max Nicholson, who in 1952 succeeded Diver as director-general, fully realised that the Conservancy was a weak and vulnerable agency. In seeking to build a strong constituency for official conservation policies, Nicholson became increasingly impatient at being unable to count on the active assistance of the voluntary wildlife organisations, some of which seemed slow to grasp the changed context and new opportunities presented by the existence of the Conservancy. Some years later he described the state of the conservation movement during the 1950s as 'one of low morale, weak leadership, elderly and largely passenger memberships, feeble finances and ignorance of the mounting threats to the biosphere' (Nicholson 1976).

Nicholson was an active member of the SPNR council and he pressed on it the need for reform. He was not prepared to tolerate it as a conservation cabal, particularly given the influence within it of his predecessor Cyril Diver and their mutual hostility. Instead, he wanted an organised lobby that would 'guide, stimulate and educate opinion' and do for conservation what the CPRE did for amenity (Nature Conservancy Report 1957). The older members of the Society's council were reluctant to see it transformed from a coterie of leading naturalists. However, with the encouragement of Lord Hurcomb, the Society's president and chairman of the Nature Conservancy's England Committee, the Society agreed to sponsor the creation of a new body, the Council for Nature, to represent all wildlife and natural history organisations in public affairs and to

publicise and win support for nature conservation. This was launched in 1958 with Hurcomb as its president. The Nature Conservancy (Report 1958) enthusiastically welcomed its creation, according it recognition as 'the national representative body for consultation on those natural history and nature conservation matters which are of joint concern to many of the participating societies'.

Having played the part of midwife a second time, the Society still lacked a long-term role. However, a new source of initiative in nature conservation, arising from the local level, began to expand rapidly with profound implications for the Society's future. The county trusts for nature conservation, which now cover the whole of the United Kingdom, emerged as a co-ordinated movement in the late 1950s, although three had been formed earlier (the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust in 1926, the Yorkshire Trust in 1946 and the Lincolnshire Trust in 1948). They had aims similar to those of the SPNR, but being local bodies were better placed to acquire and manage reserves and to arouse local interest in nature conservation.

A. E. Smith, the energetic secretary of the Lincolnshire Trust, had been a member of one of the regional sub-committees of the NRIC. He had written to the SPNR urging that these should not be dissolved but kept in being to watch over the sites they had recommended for protection. His advice had not been heeded, but he was not deterred. Seeing the potential of local activity and support for conservation, Smith initiated a drive for a national network of county trusts. This led to the setting up of the Leicestershire Trust in 1955, followed by the Cambridgeshire Trust in 1956. Smith, an extra-mural lecturer for the University of Nottingham, was joined in his promotional work by Christopher Cadbury, a philanthropic industrialist and businessman, who had been a council member of the Norfolk Trust since the early 1940s. The two of them travelled extensively giving advice to those wishing to set up new county trusts, their efforts encouraged by the Nature Conservancy.

With the support of Nicholson and Hurcomb, Smith and Cadbury were co-opted onto the SPNR council where they spearheaded a transformation. In the late 1950s, the SPNR resembled an empty shell – it had a constitution, name and, most important, considerable financial reserves (over £50 000 from pre-war bequests), but lacked any clearly defined purpose. To the rapidly growing county trusts, it offered the tempting prospect of a ready-made central organisation and a vital source of funds. In response to pressures from the trusts, the Society established a liaison committee with them in 1958. The work of the county trusts committee, with Cadbury as chairman and Smith as secretary, loomed larger and larger in the affairs of the Society, eventually forming the core of a radically different SPNR. Whereas the Society's council had resisted efforts to have the SPNR absorbed into the Council for Nature, the reforming efforts of Cadbury and Smith were supported because, in giving the Society a new role, they ensured its continued existence and independence. Later, Nicholson (1976) was to complain that this 'infighting behind the scenes . . . did . . . seriously weaken the intended centrepiece of the structure, the federally constituted Council for Nature'.

The county trust's committee set about promoting and assisting in the formation of trusts in new counties. In 1960 it organised the first national conference of county trusts, at which 14 were represented, some just formed

and others still in the process of being formed. Four years later, there were 36 trusts in existence, with a combined membership of 17700. Each new trust was given a place on the committee, which thus became the forum for discussing common problems of finance, administration and reserve management, as well as an increasingly powerful force within the Society. In addition, the county trusts committee became an important point of contact between the trusts and the Nature Conservancy as the latter continued to use its influence to promote the Society's internal reform.

In 1962, Cadbury became president of the SPNR and Smith its honorary secretary. Over the following years, the provincial takeover of the Society was completed. In 1969, associate membership was offered to all county trust members. In 1973, the SPNR officially moved from its back room in the Natural History Museum in London to new headquarters in Lincolnshire, close to the offices of the Lincolnshire Trust which, as Smith's base, had been the Society's effective centre for some time. These changes were formally recognised in a new Royal Charter issued in 1976 which reconstituted the Society as a federation of the county trusts with a governing council comprising a representative from each trust.

In partnership, the SPNR and the county trusts have flourished. There are now 43 trusts – the most recent, for Cleveland, joined in 1981 – and their total membership stands in excess of 140000 (see Fig. 5.2). Together, they manage 1300 nature reserves covering about 45000 hectares. Increasingly this has demanded a corps of professional conservationists. Until 1964 the work of the SPNR had depended entirely on the spare-time commitment of its honorary officers. Now it has a full-time staff of 26; almost all the county trusts have full-time administrative or conservation officers, and more than half employ both.

Administrative co-operation

The Nature Conservancy was quick to realise the potential of organised local interest in conservation in complementing its own work and compensating for a considerable shortfall in official resources. During its first decade (the 1950s), the planned build-up of the Conservancy's programme was inhibited by two factors: a shortage of suitably qualified staff, and severe restrictions imposed on the growth of its budget (Duff & Lowe 1981). A major casualty was the development of the Conservancy's regional conservation staff. It was not until 1953 that officers could be posted in different regions of the country to conduct all the local management and advisory functions of the Conservancy. Some of these officers had to cover as many as ten or a dozen counties without any supporting staff. Not until 1958 could the majority be given even a single assistant (Nature Conservancy Report 1959). Not surprisingly, they had to rely on whatever local help was available.

In its annual report for 1961, the Nature Conservancy noted the 'spectacular growth in the numbers and influence' of the county trusts, adding that:

> In consequence, the Conservancy's Regional Officers now have the keen interest, active support, and in some cases informed criticism, of local naturalists and others

> interested in the countryside, working as a team. Insofar as conservation is essentially something which must be done by local people with local goodwill and understanding, the importance of this trend can hardly be overrated.

The Conservancy was keen to see an effective partnership and division of labour between its regional staff and the county trusts, with the latter assuming responsibility for 'the on-the-spot watchdog and caretaking aspects of conservation' (Nature Conservancy Report 1962). It began to take full account of the trusts in the deployment of its own staff and resources, and moved to place its working relationship with the trusts on an established footing to 'enable them to take over an increasing range of local conservation functions while receiving from officers of the Conservancy a number of vital supporting services in technical and administrative fields' (Nature Conservancy Report 1962).

By 1963 its relationship with the county trust movement was proving so fruitful that the Nature Conservancy felt able to record that:

> responsible naturalists are taking their share as citizens in the practical tasks of conservation instead of leaving them to the Conservancy and the taxpayer . . . far from depriving the voluntary bodies of their role, as was once widely expected, the Conservancy are opening up for them much wider and more important fields.

The following year, the relationship was formalised with the creation of a Joint Liaison Committee between the Nature Conservancy and the SPNR, represented primarily by its county trusts committee.

The SPNR and the trusts took over much of the responsibility for sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) from the Nature Conservancy, which, though responsible for their designation, lacked the manpower or financial resources to keep them under surveillance or to reach agreements as to their management. The trusts undertook to carry out much of the survey work on SSSIs and to prepare management plans with the co-operation of owners and the Conservancy's regional staff. The system of SSSIs also formed the basis of their acquisition programmes. A fifth of the SSSIs in England are now safeguarded in whole or in part by the trusts and the Society (SPNC 1979). They also maintain a watching brief for many other sites where acquisition or formal agreement with the owner has not been possible. Thus, with the trusts attending to wildlife sites of mainly regional importance, the Conservancy has been able to concentrate on its programme of acquiring and managing national nature reserves.

The county trusts fulfil other useful purposes. They conduct field studies and monitor the local flora and fauna. They are well placed therefore to advise planning authorities, water authorities, landowners and farmers on the implications for wildlife of changes in land use and management practices. They are also involved in providing education, including nature study facilities for schools and colleges, and visitor centres and nature trails which interpret wildlife for the general public. These functions of interpretation, education and advising local organisations have complemented the Conservancy's emphasis on conducting research and advising national bodies.

The Nature Conservancy has backed its delegation of duties with financial

support. It has funded various projects by the SPNR – including, recently, a study of the status of the otter and a review of the trusts' nature reserves – as well as using the Society as its agency to grant-aid the trusts. In 1978, the Conservancy announced its intention to step up its support by making funds available to expand the general capacity of the county trust movement. Over a three-year period, the Society was allocated £32000 per annum, the Scottish Wildlife Trust £8000 per annum and each of seventeen other trusts £5000 per annum. After this initial period, funding was continued, on a modified basis, for various organisational developments.

Political co-ordination

Being an official agency, the Nature Conservancy is restrained in the extent to which it can openly campaign for changes in legislation and policy or oppose another government department. The SPNR has therefore been a useful political ally for the Conservancy, often raising in public debate issues which the Conservancy is pursuing in Whitehall, pressing for additional resources and powers for the Conservancy, and being able to sponsor wildlife legislation, lobby politicians, and seek support for conservation through the media.

The association with the county trusts has not only extended the power and resource base of the Society, but has also given it access to local government. Chapter 5 has shown how the trusts enjoy an 'established' status with local authorities through membership ties, formal representation and consultation. This too has proved of benefit to the Conservancy, for example in pressing local authorities to establish local nature reserves, as they are empowered to do under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Significantly, the first local reserve in England was created in 1952 by Lindsey County Council at Gibraltar Point, an area of dune and salt marsh, at the initiative of the Lincolnshire Trust, which then undertook the management of the reserve. Other authorities that have followed this lead have usually been prompted and assisted by their county trusts. In 1958, Nicholson conceded that, in the Conservancy's experience, 'it is useless to try from the centre to convert local authorities to the idea that they ought to form and maintain local reserves. It is something which must arise in the locality from public opinion there.' (Commons Select Committee on Estimates 1958).

With its new authority as the national spokesman for the county trusts, and with its expanded resources, the SPNR has sought to broaden its role, diversifying away from the promotion of nature reserves. The new charter dropped any specific reference to nature reserves and defined the objects of the Society as: 'to promote the conservation of nature for the purposes of study and research and to educate the public in the understanding and appreciation of nature, the awareness of its value and the need for its conservation'. In 1981, its name was changed to the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. The Society now sees itself as 'the only voluntary body concerned nationally with *all* aspects of nature conservation'. This is very much the role that Nicholson envisaged for it in the mid-1950s. It is ironical, therefore, that the Society led the move to wind up the Council for Nature in 1979. As the former appropriated various co-ordinating functions, the latter had steadily become redundant.

The Society's Conservation Liaison Committee now brings together all the major statutory and voluntary organisations to discuss their common concerns. The political co-ordination formally exercised by the Council for Nature has been taken over by Wildlife Link Committee of CoEnCo, on which the Society is represented. The Society also services the All-Party Parliamentary Conservation Committee which is the main point of contact between MPs and peers concerned with wildlife and the various environmental groups. At the regional level, the Society co-ordinates the representation of conservation interests to such bodies as the regional water authorities and the regional councils for sport and recreation. Examples of its wider promotional activities include the magazine *Natural World*, and its joint sponsorships: with *The Sunday Times* of the Watch Trust for Environmental Education, and with the RSPB of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

Between the Society and the Nature Conservancy, there is much consultation over the development of policy and co-ordination of promotional and legislative strategies. The Society's Conservation Liaison Committee acts as a forum between the Conservancy and the voluntary conservation groups. As well as regular working contact between officers of the Conservancy and the Society, there are strong personal links. Until the mid-1960s, usually half of the Conservancy's appointed council and an even greater proportion of its advisory committees were members of the SPNR.

In 1965, the Nature Conservancy lost its status as an independent research and advisory body and became a constituent of the new Natural Environment Research Council. In 1973 it was again reorganised, regaining its independence as a statutory body under the Nature Conservancy Council Act, losing however its research arm which remained in the Natural Environment Research Council as the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. While not as numerous as in earlier years, the personal links between the Nature Conservancy Council and the Society have continued. A. E. Smith, for example, was a member of the Conservancy from 1966 to 1978 and between 1971 and 1978 occupied the influential position of chairman of the Conservancy's England Committee. This link has been maintained as the position is now filled by Walter Lane, a member of the Society's executive committee and its chairman from 1976 to 1981. Smith's successor as general secretary of the Society, Dr Franklyn Perring, has other personal links with the Conservancy, having been in its employment. Indeed he, the present director-general of the Nature Conservancy Council and the present director of the RSPB, were colleagues in the 1960s in one of the Conservancy's research institutes, and remain personal friends. These and other links, such as the close working relations between the Conservancy's regional staff and the county trusts, ensure both practical co-operation and political co-ordination.

Of course, the two organisations have different priorities and constraints, and this can lead to disagreements over political tactics and objectives. For example, the Society has always taken the lead in pressing for stronger safeguards for SSSIs. The Conservancy has been markedly less enthusiastic. The implementation of any new controls would greatly overstretch its staff and resources, and draw it into constant confrontation with farmers and landowners. This difference in outlook between the Society and the Conservancy came to a head during the consultations that preceded the Wildlife and Countryside

Bill (enacted in 1981). A new statutory order, to be applied to a limited number of SSSIs to hold up any detrimental agricultural changes, was agreed between the Conservancy and officials of the Department of the Environment. When the government's proposals for the Bill were published, this provision attracted considerable criticism from conservation groups. The Royal Society for Nature Conservation argued strongly that losses to SSSIs from farming and forestry operations were so great that more had to be done. On its own, the proposal to protect only a few 'super-SSSIs' seemed to downgrade all the remainder, in effect abandoning them to the stringency of agricultural intensification and afforestation.

As it was unlikely that the government would contemplate a change of mind while still supported by the Conservancy, much of the Society's lobbying during the period of public consultation was directed at shifting the Conservancy before the Bill reached Parliament. Otherwise the government would be able to counter any criticism or attempts to introduce stronger measures, by reference to the backing it enjoyed from its official conservation advisers. In the event, just four days before the Bill's second reading, the Conservancy was won over, following intense pressure from a combined front of nature conservation groups, acting through the Wildlife Link Committee. With the Conservancy's support, which included publication of an SSSI survey indicating a rate of destruction and damage of 13% per annum, the Society and its allies did achieve important concessions in Parliament. Not least was a requirement for *all* owners and occupiers of SSSIs to give three months' notice to the Nature Conservancy Council of their intention to carry out specified operations inimical to wildlife (Cox & Lowe 1983).

Assessment

'Clientelism' is the term used to describe the relationship between a government department and its lobby in which there is a close identification of interest between the two (Richardson & Jordan 1979). It is not uncommon in the environmental field (see p. 67) nor in other policy areas. On the contrary, it seems to be an integral element of the 'departmental pluralism' of British policy making in which government departments adopt an advocacy role in relation to client groups, mobilising their political support in the interdepartmental competition for administrative responsibilities, legislative time and resources.

The example of the Nature Conservancy and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation illustrates how complex such a relationship can be, with, in this case, common historical roots, administrative co-operation, political co-ordination, overlapping personnel, transfer of staff and formal and informal liaison. It should be added that the Conservancy's position as an independent statutory body has allowed it to develop a closer partnership with its client lobby than if it had been a government department. Undoubtedly, the relationship has been mutually beneficial, enabling the Conservancy to tap a large reserve of voluntary labour and popular support and giving the Society access to the Conservancy's expertise and administrative resources.

The case study also demonstrates some interesting facets of the relationship between a statutory body and its client group. For example, the direction of

influence may not always be that implied by the pressure group label attached to the latter. During the late 1950s, the Conservancy put sustained pressure on the SPNR in an effort to reform it to suit the Conservancy's needs. It is evident also that the relationship need not be harmonious even when a voluntary organisation and a statutory body have common objectives. Professionals may resent what they regard as interference by amateurs, whereas amateurs may be sensitive to any hint of professional arrogance. Rivalry and tension may ensue while the two sides sort out their respective functions and relative authority. This was the case between the SPNR and the Conservancy in the 1950s with the latter eventually asserting its pre-eminence. There have been similar, but more pronounced, conflicts in the late 1970s between the voluntary Central Council of Physical Recreation and the statutory Sports Council over which was the representative body of British sport and recreation. Interestingly, in this instance, the voluntary organisation had been even more closely involved in the establishment of the statutory organisation which took over much of the former's administrative structure at its inception in 1965 (Evans 1974). There are historical parallels also. For example, for several decades, the relationship between the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Ministry of Works was tense and strained, even though the former had campaigned for the legislation which, in 1913, had established the latter (Harvey 1972).

Conceivably, the tensions between the Nature Conservancy and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation could re-emerge, particularly if the former found itself with reduced staff and resources through public expenditure cuts, and the latter continued to grow. The idea has been put forward, for example, of a transfer of responsibility for some of the Conservancy's reserves to the county trusts. If this were to occur, it would have major implications for the relationship between the Conservancy and the Society.

Finally, the history of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation is a fascinating example of organisational adaptation. It has gone from being a promotional to an emphasis group, and this change has involved not just a transformation in aims but also in personnel, composition and structure.

More than 200 000 hectares of Britain are maintained as nature reserves and for this achievement the Society can take much of the credit. When it was set up, the very concept of a nature reserve was novel. The Society provided the lead in convincing naturalists that the creation of reserves offered a practical means of protecting wildlife, and persuading government and public opinion that this was a desirable objective, worthy of support.

However, the history of the Society has not been a chronology of steady advance: sometimes progress was halting; for long periods the Society lapsed into inactivity; but at a few important junctures it has been able to seize the initiative with impressive results. The success of its war-time lobbying demonstrates how dependent the fortunes of a pressure group can be on changes in the political context quite beyond its control. This does not detract from the Society's undoubted achievements, but merely emphasises the point that an important attribute of a group's leadership must be the ability to see and exploit the new opportunities created by the course of events.

10 *The European Environmental Bureau*

The growth of organised concern for the environment in Britain has been mirrored in other advanced capitalist countries. In Western Europe, North America, Japan and Australia, environmental pressure groups have come to play a significant role in domestic politics. Expressions of environmental concern are now a standard feature of the manifestos of the major political parties in these countries, and in some countries separate ecological candidates and 'Green Parties' have emerged. In response, Western governments have introduced new legal and institutional safeguards to protect the environment.

One corollary of the growth of concern in different countries has been a trend towards environmental internationalism. This has been associated with an emerging appreciation of the global dimensions of the ecological crisis and the need for a concerted international response, culminating in the publication of *The world conservation strategy* by the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (1980).

This chapter examines one of the small but growing number of international environmental groupings, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), established specifically to represent environmental interests to the European Economic Community (EEC). Before commenting on its structure, function and relationship with the EEC, attention will be drawn to the forces that created and sustain the Bureau, in order to illuminate the dynamics of supranational awareness and action on environmental matters.

The dynamics of international environmentalism

In Western democracies, the pressure-group network forms a system complementary to government institutions. Each tier of government has a corresponding phalanx of groups which help to keep government informed, responsive and in check. Traditionally, the apex of both governmental and pressure-group activity has been the nation state, but since the Second World War new international institutions have emerged either for collaboration on specific issues, or for economic and political coalescence within a geographic area (as in the case of the European Economic Community). It is logical to assume that, as governments agree to form higher levels of decision making, non-governmental organisations will similarly regroup to meet the new level, and indeed international non-governmental organisations have multiplied over the past thirty years (Jütte & Grosse-Jütte 1981).

What is not so obvious is how this regrouping occurs. We can discern some of the possible contributory factors in the evolution of the Bureau. A necessary

condition must be the existence of parallel concern in different countries. In Chapter 2 it was suggested that all the advanced capitalist countries had experienced environmental movements in the 1960s and 1970s. One aspect of this has been the rapid spread of imitative groups, such as FoE, Europa Nostra, Keep Europe Beautiful, Greenpeace and anti-nuclear groups.

Earlier environmental eras, however, did not yield the degree of sustained international co-operation that emerged in the 1970s, with the notable exception of the International Council for Bird Preservation (formed in 1922), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (1948) and its offshoot, the World Wildlife Fund (1961). These organisations point to another essential ingredient of international co-operation – the recognition that there are problems in common between national groups and that they require a co-ordinated response. The need for concerted action to protect migratory birds was the motive behind the establishment of the International Council for Bird Preservation (Barclay-Smith 1973); and the need for co-operative effort to save endangered species, the motive behind the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Boardman 1981).

The most recent environmental era has been strongly internationalist in outlook, emphasising problems transcending national boundaries. Concern over a global environmental crisis has been fuelled by the mounting incidence of marine and atmospheric pollution, shortages of natural resources and world population growth (Meadows *et al.* 1972). The 1970s witnessed a spate of international events and conferences which vented such concern, beginning with European Conservation Year 1970. The most influential was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, which initiated the United Nations Environment Programme. Over 600 organisations from 113 nations were represented at the Stockholm Conference. In parallel with the meetings of government spokesmen, there was an Environmental Forum which, in bringing together some 200 non-governmental organisations, acted as a powerful catalyst to the development of mutual understanding and alliances between leading environmentalists from different countries. This represents another necessary ingredient to international co-operation: the opportunity for national representatives to establish contact. International conferences play a vital part in this.

A number of joint ventures followed the Stockholm Conference, including the creation of the European Environmental Bureau. Julian Lessey of the Conservation Society (UK), who first suggested the idea of an agency of European environmental groups, met members of the Sierra Club (US) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (UK/US) at Stockholm. Subsequently, in 1974, these two organisations convened a meeting in Brighton of some twenty representatives of environmental groups from North America and Western Europe. At this meeting the representatives of the Conservation Society (UK) and the Gents Aktiekomittee Leefmilieu (Belgium) proposed closer co-operation between environmental groups in Common Market countries, with the argument that 'the European Community is progressively becoming more important for environmental matters' (EEB Report 1975/6). This led directly to the formation of the Bureau.

Thus, although the Bureau was created on a wave of environmental internationalism, it was specifically a response to the assumption of environmental

responsibilities by the European Community whose first Environmental Action Programme had been launched the previous year. In Chapter 2, it was suggested that new groups often arise in response to new functions and the changing structure of government. The Bureau would seem to be an example of this. Pre-war attempts at environmental internationalism, such as the Advisory Commission for the International Protection of Nature (set up in Berne in 1913) and the International Office for the Protection of Nature (set up in Brussels in 1928) were notable failures (Boardman 1981). What was lacking was any international authority that they might lobby. In contrast, the contemporaneous International Council for Bird Preservation established a permanent role with less ambitious aims, seeking transnational co-ordination rather than international integration. Significantly, it never attempted to act as an international pressure group but worked internally in each country through its constituent groups (Ripley 1973). It was not until the emergence of political internationalism and the creation of international governmental organisations that international non-governmental organisations achieved any contextual relevance and permanence.

National groups within the EEC have a choice of four strategies when pursuing matters of more than national significance. The first is for a group to maintain pressure on its own government to seek international action, for example, via national representatives to the Council of Ministers. The second choice is to liaise with similar organisations abroad so that each reinforces the others' separate national campaigns. Third, it can mount its own national lobby to the EEC, though the Community's institutions do not accord consultative status to purely national pressure groups. Fourth, it can form a coalition with groups from other countries (such as the EEB) to represent their transnational concerns. The four strategies are not mutually exclusive. Groups can, and sometimes do, pursue more than one simultaneously. Friends of the Earth, for example, has its own network of bases in Europe and beyond. Though each pursues its own national campaigns, these are often linked together. In addition, the British, Dutch, French and Belgian Friends of the Earth all belong to the Bureau.

It would be wrong to imply, however, that groups involved in lobbying the EEC are necessarily internationalistic in outlook. As we shall see, this is often far from the case. Because member states have transferred some of their sovereignty to the Community, groups with purely national concerns have had to establish a European presence simply to safeguard their influence in national affairs. This explains the involvement in the Bureau of a group such as the CPRE.

The organisation of the Bureau

The creation of the EEB in December 1974 gave a direct channel of access to the European Community, initially for 39 environmental groups (see Table 10.1). Brussels is full of similar bureaux bringing together interest groups from member states. The EEB however, is the only one representing environmental interests.

Table 10.1 Membership of the European Environmental Bureau.

Country	*Original members*	*New members*
United Kingdom	(1) Civic Trust (2) Conservation Society (3) Council for Environmental Conservation (4) Council for the Protection of Rural England (5) Friends of the Earth (6) International Institute for Environment and Development	(7) Town and Country Planning Association (8) Council for the Protection of Rural Wales (9) Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (10) Green Alliance (11) Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (12) Scottish Civic Trust (13) Royal Society for Nature Conservation
Belgium	(1) Bond Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen (2) Fonds de Sauvegarde pour la Nature (3) Gents Aktiekomittee Leefmilieu (4) Inter-Environnement Bruxelles (5) Inter-Environnement Wallonie (6) Les Amis de la Terre Belgique (7) Natuur 2000 (8) Raad Voor Het Leefmilieu Brussel (9) Reserves Naturelles et Ornithologiques de Belgique (10) Stichting Leefmilieu	
Denmark	(1) Dansk Komite for Miljobeskyttelse OG-Forureningsbekaempelse (2) Friluftsrådet	(3) Dansk Ornithologisk Forening
Eire	(1) An Taisce (The National Trust for Ireland)	(2) Irish Wildlife Federation
France	(1) Comité Français pour le Droit de l'Environnement (2) Fédération Nationale des Associations des Usagers des Transports (3) Fédération Française des Sociétés de Protection de la Nature (4) Jeunes et Nature (5) Les Amis de la Terre (6) Nature et Progres	(7) Espaces pour Demain (8) Fédération Nationale d'Agriculture Biologique (9) Ligue Francaise pour la Protection des Oiseaux (10) Coline (11) Crepan (12) Environment et Santé (13) Sepanso
Germany	(1) Bundesverband Bürger-initiativen Umweltschutz	(5) Bund Naturschutz Bayern (6) Komitee gegen Vogelmord

Table 10.1 – *continued*

Country	*Original members*	*New members*
Germany	(2) Bund Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (3) Deutscher Naturschutzring (4) Öko – Institut	
Italy	(1) Agriturist (2) Associazone Italiana per il WWF (3) Fondo per L'Ambiante Italiano (4) Italia Nostra (5) Kronos 1991	(6) Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli
Luxembourg	(1) Natura	
Netherlands	(1) Landelijke Vereniging tot Behoud van de Waddenzee (2) Nederlandse Vereniging tot Bescherming van Vogels (3) Stichting Natuur en Milieu (4) Vereniging Milieu-defensie	(5) Greenpeace Nederland (6) Stichting Mondiaal Alternatief.
Greece		(1) Elliniki Eatiria (2) Ereya (3) Hellenik Society for the Protection of Nature

The stated objectives of the Bureau are:

- to promote an equitable and sustainable life style;
- to promote the protection and conservation of the environment, and the restoration and better use of human and natural resources, particularly within the EEC countries;
- to make all necessary information available to members and other organisations likely to assist in the realisation of these aims;
- to use educational and other means to increase public awareness of these problems;
- to make recommendations in pursuit of the objectives of the Bureau and to submit these to the appropriate authorities.

In addition to grants from the EEC Commission and the Belgian, Dutch and British governments, the Bureau has received money from private foundations in Holland, Belgium and the USA. Its other main source of income is membership fees. Total income for 1979 was £30000. Shortage of finance places a severe restriction on its activities.

Financial difficulties, exacerbated by delays in receiving some membership subscriptions, precipitated a review of the Bureau's functions during the winter of 1978–9. A key issue was whether it should limit its size or strive for a larger membership to include specialist environmental groups and accommodate the

trend towards regionalism and devolution. The decision taken was that 'the EEB should be representative of all tendencies of the environmental movement' (EEB Executive Committee Minutes 2 May 1979). Subsequently, additional groups have been admitted (see Table 10.1) bringing the membership in 1981 to 63. Many more groups are involved indirectly in the EEB through the membership of national umbrella bodies such as CoEnCo and the Fédération Française des Sociétés de Protection de la Nature.

Each constituent group generally nominates one of its own members or officers as its 'EEB contact'. Some, often with quite specific interests or expertise in European environmental affairs, are very active; but others are much less involved. The initiative rests very much with the member groups and their representatives. Often the Bureau acts merely as a communication channel for groups operating singly or collectively. Bureau secretary Hubert David refers to the Bureau as 'a chain as strong as its strongest link' (EEB Report 1975/6).

The Bureau is run by an executive committee which meets about five times a year. Its 13 members, drawn from the constituent groups (including one from each member state) are committed Europeans as well as leading environmentalists. They articulate the Bureau's stance on particular issues, subject to the overall determination of policy by the annual general meeting.

Issues originate either from informal meetings, frequently of each country's Bureau member groups, or at executive committee meetings, in response to Commission draft proposals, aspects of existing Community legislation, or current environmental topics. An individual EEB member, sufficiently qualified or interested, then offers, or is asked, to write a report. Alternatively a working party comprising interested members is set up. Proposals from either source are discussed and amended by the executive committee; they are then submitted to the Commission. Feedback to Bureau members is officially through its bi-monthly newsletter, *Ecoforum*. In addition, individual groups carry reports of EEB business in their own newsletters.

Most commentators refer to the Bureau as a pressure group, but this description is not entirely accurate. The EEB is a forum for its members who are the true pressure groups. It aims to 'act as spokesman on behalf of its membership' and 'involve member groups and other organisations concerned with European Environmental Policy, mainly by the distribution of information' (EEB Report 1975/6).

In the context of a study of agricultural organisations, it has been claimed that the European Community has become an effective instrument in the mobilisation of resources for nationalist purposes (Peterson 1979). This would be too sweeping a judgement of the EEB, though it has been used by its constituents as an extra point of leverage in their respective national politics. As the Bureau's first report explained:

> As long as the decision making in the EEC in reality takes place at a national level, environmental lobbying too must happen at the national level and the EEB can merely be of assistance to the affiliated associations. . . . Much too often in the past, 'Europe' has been used by national governments and vested interest groups to introduce measures and regulations which are unsuitable for a good environment. Environmental organisations were powerless to react to these arguments because

> they did not have the information and they were not in sufficiently close contact with their sister-organisations in the other countries. (EEB Report 1975/76.)

It is instructive to examine some examples in which British environmental groups have pursued their specific national concerns through the Bureau.

Within the Bureau, British groups have been to the fore on transport issues, reflecting the strength of interest in Britain on such issues. The Treaty of Rome calls for 'the adoption of a common policy in the sphere of transport' and declares that 'the objectives of the Treaty . . . shall be pursued by the member states within the framework of a Common Transport Policy'. The translation of this general objective into a detailed code of workable regulations and directives has made slow progress. This is to the advantage of the EEB which, though relatively new on the scene, is still in a position to influence the formulation of the Common Transport Policy (Thomson 1976).

At their first meeting in March 1975, the Bureau placed transport high on the agenda. Irene Coates, of the Conservation Society, offered to prepare a report on the principles of an environmentally sound, European transport policy. She was able to draw on the experience of the Conservation Society in challenging the British motorway programme, her own opposition to rail cuts through Transport 2000 and the campaign against the introduction of heavier lorries into Britain. Six months later, after discussion and circulation among members, her report was accepted as the EEB's official transport policy and forwarded to the Commission as an alternative to their draft proposals. There followed several meetings with the Commission's Directorate General of Transport, which eventually agreed that no specific commitment would be made to meeting future traffic demands, that the private car would be included in future policies, and that attention should be paid to the social and environmental costs of any new measures.

As well as influencing the Commission's outlook, the Bureau's initiative established valuable contacts with the Transport Directorate which have proved useful in subsequent lobbying. British representatives, in particular, have used these contacts to raise issues of concern to them. For example, the British government's prevarication over the EEC regulation requiring the fitting of tachographs to lorries was raised with the Commission. Other regulations covering grants and accounting procedures for transport infrastructure were examined for the contribution they might make to easing British Rail's financial stringency. British environmentalists have also pressed for a rail-only channel tunnel, in this instance in concert with their French counterparts.

The transport issue that has occasioned the greatest amount of lobbying has been the Commission's attempt to harmonise the maximum gross weights and axle weights of lorries permitted by member states. Since the late 1960s, the British government, with the support of road haulage interests, has been trying to raise the limits applying within Britain, but has been thwarted by environmental opposition, orchestrated by the Civic Trust and the CPRE (Wootton 1978). British representatives on the Bureau have sought to counter the influence of lorry manufacturers on the Commission and to ensure that their own government is unable to use the excuse of new EEC regulations to force through an increase in the limits. In 1978, however, the Commission published

a draft directive on lorry weights which would have affected Britain and Ireland most, increasing their limits by 15% for axle loads and 35% for gross weights.

The Bureau set up a working party on heavy lorries, chaired by Nigel Haigh of the Civic Trust. Irene Coates was also a member and once again she took the lead in drawing up a document challenging the Commission's proposals. This was used as the basis of the Bureau's case to the Transport Directorate, that harmonisation should not be at the highest prevailing national limit but at the lowest, i.e. that the existing British limit should be adopted by the Commission. Though not accepting this objective, the Transport Directorate did agree to publicise the Bureau's evidence that heavier lorries would cause more environmental damage, increase energy consumption and detract from other transport modes.

In September 1981, the Commission issued a revised draft directive which made some concessions to the environmental opposition that the earlier draft had encountered. Though it proposed lower limits, this still would have entailed much heavier lorries for Britain (as well as Ireland, Germany and France). With little prospect of further concessions from the Commission, and the publication (December 1981) of a White Paper by the British Department of Transport proposing new limits similar to those advocated by the Commission, the focus of opposition for British environmentalists has shifted back to the domestic scene. The government came under such pressure from the CPRE, the Civic Trust and Transport 2000, via its back-bench MPs, that the Secretary of State for Transport was obliged to back down. In November 1982 he introduced a smaller increase in the maximum gross weight than had been planned and, as this was to apply to five axles rather than four (as previously), it involved only a marginal increase in maximum axle loads. This decision effectively checked the Commission's efforts to harmonise lorry weights. Thus, British environmental groups have used their involvement in EEC transport policy as a means of influencing the context in which domestic policies will be determined, putting indirect pressure on the British government, and ensuring they are not outmanoeuvred by opposing interests operating at the European level.

The Bureau and the EEC

In considering the relationship between the Bureau and the EEC, it must be borne in mind that the Bureau starts from the position of an outsider group. The interest that it represents is not entrenched in the basic policies and institutions of the EEC as are agricultural and industrial interests. Indeed, the overriding economic remit of these policies runs counter to the objectives of the Bureau. Even so, the European Commission recognises the Bureau as a source of information and advice, and supports it financially. During the early 1970s, before the Bureau's creation, the EEC was already receptive to environmental ideas. At the October 1972 Summit Conference in Paris, the nine heads of government declared that:

> economic expansion is not an end in itself . . . it should result in the improvement in the quality of life as well as in standards of living. . . . particular attention will be given to intangible values and to protecting the environment so that progress may really be put at the service of mankind. (Johnson 1979.)

This declaration was followed a year later by the EEC's first Environmental Action Programme (Ellington & Burke 1981).

A number of factors prompted this new emphasis. It occurred during a period when the Community was expanding both its membership and its functions, and when federalist sentiments were at their height. With the growing significance of the EEC for domestic economic and political affairs, there was concern among national leaders and within the Commission that the Community should present a more human face to European electorates. At the time, concern with the environment was highly topical in all the member countries and the Stockholm Conference gave this an international focus. Moreover, environmental matters were of increasing salience to the EEC in its primary task of promoting mutual economic development. The continued growth of the economies of Western Europe was threatened by common pollution problems, epitomised by the state of the Rhine, which the Council of Europe (1966) described as 'a gigantic open sewer'. At the same time, increasingly stringent environmental regulations in member countries posed a challenge to free trade and business competition within the EEC. In the words of the Commission, 'If the same requirements and regulations are not applied in all Common Market countries, competition will be distorted and some countries may benefit whilst others lose jobs.' (Commission of the European Communities 1979.)

To achieve fully the Bureau's objectives would necessitate fundamental reform of the EEC. Indeed, it has called for revision of the Treaty of Rome, with its overriding commitment to economic growth, and the Euratom Treaty which calls for 'the speedy establishment and growth of nuclear industries'. However, for much of the time, such radical intentions must remain implicit rather than explicit, for the Bureau has a number of constraints on its operations. First, unlike groups representing business or labour interests, the Bureau cannot resort to negative sanctions against disputed policies. Second, it is partly dependent on the financial support of the European Commission which, though unconditionally granted, effectively establishes the style of advocacy as one of reasoned and moderate argument rather than open confrontation. Third, the EEB's registration under Belgian law as an 'independent organisation with scientific and educational purposes' means it must avoid overt political stances. Finally, the Bureau must accommodate the divergence in aims between radical groups such as Friends of the Earth and the more conservative groups such as the Civic Trust (United Kingdom) and Inter-Environnement (Belgium), and different national political styles, ranging from the confrontational approach favoured by the French to the insider lobbying preferred by the British.

The Bureau treads a path carefully balanced between the disinterested and propitiatory role imposed by the above constraints, and the committed philosophical stance which environmentally sound policies demand. Bureau strategy is to co-operate as closely as possible with the institutions of the EEC, so as to insinuate its viewpoint into the Community's decision making and to make the Community as environmentally aware as possible. Its main target has been the European Commission. This is, in effect, the civil service of the EEC, charged with administering its treaties and initiating Community policy. It comprises twenty directorates general covering the Community's major func-

tions. The Bureau closely scrutinises those articles and conditions in the Treaties and any policy proposals that emerge from the Commission with environmental implications. After internal discussion, it usually forwards a statement of its views to the directorate general in question. Meetings may then follow between a nucleus of the Bureau executive and the directorate, when the Bureau can learn the reaction to its views and discuss the implications at length.

This style of advocacy depends upon the Bureau building up a reputation as an authoritative and representative agency. Lacking sanctions, it can only begin to succeed through persuasion on the strength of its case, drawing on the technical expertise of member groups and their potential as a Europe-wide intelligence network. Diplomacy is the other major ingredient. Most of the Bureau's lobbying is conducted by its executive members who have experience in dealing with government officials at national level. The continuity of established links between the Bureau and Commission departments is crucial because consultation can be protracted. A directive, which is the usual instrument of the EEC, can go through as many as 20 drafts and take more than three years before being presented to the Council of Ministers for their final decision. The Bureau is reluctant to introduce many new personalities into its own inner circle of activists lest informal relationships and understandings built up through personal contacts be disrupted through brashness or individual ambition.

Through this combination of careful and sustained diplomacy and quality of argument, the Bureau hopes to nurture its reputation within the Commission. For its part, the Commission is pleased to gather views on its proposals. The Bureau provides it with a convenient link to the environmental movement through which it can acquire supplementary expertise or data which may give a new perspective to its proposals. The process of consultation and feedback, moreover, helps forestall later public criticism. It has also been suggested that Bureau participation is welcomed because it facilitates the extension of the Commission's competence and authority into environmental areas. Sidjansky (1967) maintains that 'the action of groups on the Commission is the tribute paid to its genuine importance'. Certainly, the Bureau believes that the Community is 'the major factor in promoting policies to shape Europe's environment' (EEB Report 1979). Such legitimation is particularly significant given that the environmental programme is an organic development of the Euopean Community and is not derived from a specific treaty commitment. Indeed, it has been suggested that an environmental policy founded on the Treaty of Rome may be *ultra vires* (Von Moltke 1977).

Naturally, the EEB's closest relationship is with the Commission's directorate general for the Environment, Consumer Protection and Nuclear Safety. It was set up in 1971 as a minor service department in charge of developing the EEC's environmental programme and did not achieve directorate general status until 1981. It clearly values the support of the Bureau in its internal battles within the Commission and in its efforts to develop a more secure and salient role for itself. In contrast, when the Bureau was established, the then Energy Commissioner, Henri Simonet (the Belgian Socialist) forbade his staff to have any contact with the Bureau on the grounds that 'some of its members are anti-Community organisations, others are anti-nuclear' (David, personal communication 1980). Since Simonet's retirement in 1976, the Bureau has

established links with the Energy Directorate, though the atmosphere of suspicion has not been entirely dispelled.

Though the Bureau has inevitably concentrated its attention on the Commission, it has not neglected other Community institutions. For example, in the campaign preceding the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the Bureau issued its own manifesto, *One Europe – one environment*, which attracted considerable publicity (EEB 1977). Tens of thousands of copies were printed in all the Community languages and distributed throughout Europe. Bureau members wrote to their national candidates asking them what stand they would take on the various views expressed in the manifesto, and a number responded with an undertaking to consider it as guidance in preparing their policies. Since the election, efforts have been made to maintain contacts, forged during the campaign, with sympathetic members of the new Parliament.

One of the early initiatives of the directly elected Parliament was to vote to set up a European Environment Fund. The Environment Committee of the Parliament has been particularly active, giving a new prominence to environmental issues in the plenary sessions. The Bureau has given evidence to this and other committees. Its evidence to the Transport Committee was influential in determining the Parliament's opposition to the Commission's 1977 draft directive on harmonising lorry weights. The Bureau's lobbying activities are severely constrained, however, by its limited resources. In 1980, it appointed a resident representative in Strasbourg to liaise with both the Council of Europe (with which the Bureau enjoys consultative status) and the European Parliament when in session in Strasbourg. In a separate initiative, British MEP Ken Collins, who is chairman of the Parliament's Environment Committee, has urged the British government to create a fund to support the lobbying efforts of British Bureau members.

The Community's supreme decision-making bodies are the Council of Ministers and the European Council. The latter brings together the heads of government and the former their different ministers (for example, all the agriculture, or foreign, or environmental ministers). The Council of Ministers is a legislative body. Although the Commission has the exclusive right to propose a directive, only the Council of Ministers can agree to it – in the case of environmental directives, they have to act unanimously. In the Council process, Commission proposals are almost always modified, sometimes substantially. Via its national representatives, the Bureau arranges meetings with the relevant national ministries to explain its position on pending issues and to seek support in the Council of Ministers. Members of the Bureau are kept informed on the positions of member states during negotiations in Brussels, and are therefore able to apply appropriate pressure on their respective governments. British members of the Bureau have also given particular attention to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, which scrutinises proposals emanating from the Commission. Their evidence on a number of draft directives has influenced the Select Committee's deliberations. For example, the draft directive on environmental impact assessment, which the Bureau has strongly promoted, won the Select Committee's broad approval, though the British government opposes it in its present form.

Assessment

It would be premature to attempt an assessment of the EEC's environmental programme in terms of practical achievements, although it has been suggested that it 'is a much more adventurous and forward-looking package of objectives than any single member state can claim to have' (Levitt 1980). The time taken to implement a single directive, once agreed, is inevitably substantial. Two years are allowed for its translation into national law. There follows a period, perhaps prolonged, during which legal norms have to be implemented before any practical effects are realised. Evaluating the achievements of the Bureau, therefore, is doubly hazardous, requiring us to unravel its precise contribution from the many other influences on policies whose eventual impact on the European environment is problematic. It is important to bear this caveat in mind in reaching an interim judgement of the Bureau and its prospects.

The Bureau has at least played a part in keeping the environment high on the EEC's agenda. Against the background of a general stagnation in Community policy making since the mid-1970s, environmental policy has made substantial progress. By co-ordinating national groups, the Bureau has kept up the pressure on the Council of Ministers. Every presidency (of six months' duration) has seen at least one meeting of the relevant Council, much more than in some other areas specified in the Treaty of Rome, such as transport.

Within the Commission, an environmental service has been established. Attempts to diminish its independence have been countered. Instead, it has grown in status and staff (from a staff of seven in 1973 to over one hundred in 1981). Significantly, the environmental programme has flourished much more than the consumer programme which is also the responsibility of the directorate general for the environment, consumer protection and nuclear safety. Over 50 directives and recommendations have been agreed covering air and water pollution, toxic wastes, marine pollution and noise. The EEB has been involved in the detailed consultation over their preparation.

A directive covering the protection of wild birds, finally agreed in 1979, is the first outside the pollution field and it represents a significant broadening of the EEC's environment programme. Though endorsed by the Bureau, its progress to the statute books was due mainly to the lobbying of national wildlife groups (Boardman 1981). Some of the latter have since joined the Bureau to make use of its services in promoting other conservation measures and to be closely involved in their implementation. Significantly, the RSPB's representative to the Bureau was appointed to the Commission's expert committee which is overseeing the implementation of the Birds Directive. This venture by the EEC into the field of nature conservation has been followed by a ban on commercial imports of whaling products which the Bureau and its member groups helped to secure.

The EEC is even more compartmentalised into separate policy areas than are national governments. Though their impact is indirect, other established policy areas, such as agriculture, transport, energy and industrial affairs are of greater consequence for the European environment than the Community's environmental programme. It is important, therefore, for the Bureau to establish an environmental voice in these other directorates. In doing so, it is having to contend with some powerful vested interests.

In a number of instances, the Bureau has been able to persuade officials to draft or to amend proposals. It succeeded, for example, in altering five articles in the body of secondary legislation covering transport policy. The amendments were subsequently ratified by Council decision in 1978. The Bureau has also made tangible progress in the energy sector, in helping to persuade the Commission to give serious consideration to renewable power sources and energy conservation. Until now, the Bureau has not managed to dislodge any established commitments. It would like to see a major reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to take account of landscape and wildlife conservation. This would be a real test of the Bureau's influence, because it will have to contend with the formidable farming lobby.

There is, however, considerable disparity in power between the Bureau and major economic interest groups. Agricultural, industrial, business and trade union interests are entrenched in the Community's institutions and policies. Europe-wide organisations representing these interests are formally recognised by the Community as the so-called 'social partners'. They make up over two thirds of the membership of the Economic and Social Committee, an official agency of the Community, which must be consulted on any new initiatives. Through the Bureau of Social Partners, they have their own special point of access to the Commission. Merely in terms of technical resources, they far outstrip the EEB. For example, the Comité des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles, the European expression of farming interests, has a secretariat of about 30, compared with the Bureau's two full-time staff (Averyt 1976).

Yet, through the quality of its technical argument, the Bureau hopes to influence Community policy at a formative stage and, by presenting itself as an earnest and knowledgeable organisation, to dispel any incipient hostility to its views. In the long term, it aspires to reorientate Commission thinking through sustained and regular discussion with the different directorates. It will have to mobilise much greater support, however, if it is to achieve any of its more ambitious objectives, such as the introduction of a procedure to assess the environmental impact of all EEC projects and revision of the Treaty of Rome and the Euratom Treaty.

This could mean cultivating the support of other interests. For example, initial talks have been held with consumer groups, to explore common ground in the reform of the CAP. In general, however, the EEB is at a disadvantage in coalition-building, because it lacks links with the Economic and Social Committee. The Bureau is not represented on it, nor does it consult the Bureau when reporting its views on proposed directives or regulations affecting the environment.

The EEB would also like to publicise itself more, though it lacks the finance. The Community's environment programme, like many other aspects of the EEC, has developed in a context which is fairly remote from the pressures of public opinion. This is not to the advantage of the EEB, given that it is a relatively new and weak interest in Brussels but one which enjoys considerable popular support throughout Europe. If this support were effectively harnessed, it could prove to be the Bureau's most valuable asset in dealing with the EEC whose pressing need is to counter the widespread hostility and indifference it faces amongst national electorates. The experiences of European Conservation Year (1970) and European Architectural Heritage Year (1975), both

initiated by the Council of Europe, indicate the potential for Europe-wide campaigns. The Bureau's own campaign for the European elections achieved extensive publicity and stirred up interest among the political parties and the candidates.

With this one exception, the Bureau has not yet begun to exploit its potential as a coalition of 63 national environmental groups with several million members. Its proceedings rely too heavily on the energies, qualities and interests of a tiny group of committed Euro-environmentalists. This was perhaps inevitable in the initial period when the EEB was establishing itself and its contacts with the Commission. However, it does not best use the resources potentially available to it in the knowledge, expertise, contacts and support of its overall membership. Moreover, there is a danger that, in the rarified atmosphere of Brussels, national environmental leaders will fail to carry their supporters with them. Before demonstrating to the wider public the importance of concerted European action on the environment, those active within the EEB face the task of convincing their members 'back home' of the relevance of the EEC.

11 *Conclusions*

In looking at environmental groups in politics, we have been concerned with three main themes: their organisation both internally and externally; the implications of their political involvement for other interests within our society; and the reasons for the development of this relatively new force in British politics.

Central to our first theme has been the dialectic between the internal and external relations of voluntary groups. The way a group organises itself internally has an important bearing on its relations with the political system. There is a strong connection between the objectives of a group, its tactics and political style, and its access to government bodies. Thus, emphasis groups tend to have a close relationship with a particular government body, usually operating to support that body in its own battles and endeavours and enjoying a favourable response in return, including regular consultation, and sometimes financial and technical assistance. Of the case studies, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC), the National Trust and the Henley Society fit into the category of emphasis groups. Seldom do these groups depart from their normal tactic of close consultation with officials and indulge in public campaigns, and then only if an intractable disagreement arises over an important point of principle. Examples include the National Trust's parliamentary campaigns against threats to inalienability, the conflict between the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSNC over proposals for the Wildlife and Countryside Bill, and the Henley Society's response to the attacks made by the local Conservative Party on planning policies for the area.

Promotional groups, in contrast, challenge existing policies and procedures; their relations with the executive are accordingly more distant. In seeking to change the context in which decisions are made, they tend to have greater contact with politicians and the media than with civil servants. Among our case studies, Friends of the Earth is the most confrontational. Through its campaigns and media publicity it has secured attention as a group which has something important to say and knows what it is talking about. Recently, it has been consulted by government on a number of occasions. If a promotional group does prove successful at arousing popular or parliamentary opinion, government will attempt to draw it away from open confrontation into formal consultative processes. Though this gives a group additional opportunities to exert influence, it also imposes constraints upon it.

There are costs, as well as benefits, involved in participating in government and these will vary according to the form and extent of participation (Olsen 1977, Richardson & Jordan 1979). Naturally, group leaders will seek to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs. The main benefit, of course, is the opportunity to influence policy, but participation also confers public recognition and gives the various groups and organisations involved in a policy

sector the opportunity to co-ordinate their private and public activities to mutual benefit. A prevalent example is clientelism, in which official agencies articulate the views of their client groups who, in return, provide the agencies with external political support. The case study of the RSNC and the Nature Conservancy Council illustrates the possible ramifications of such a relationship. Participation in government also provides access to vital information available only to government and other participating groups. This may be technical information that a group needs to evaluate official policy and propose viable alternatives; or political intelligence on which to base its tactical decisions. Finally, participation sharpens a group's technical proficiency by requiring it to submit its ideas to the detailed scrutiny of civil servants and other participating groups.

The costs of participation include a certain loss of freedom, through implicit understandings that agreements will be honoured and that a group will show restraint in its public behaviour. For a promotional group, the choice may be between moderating tactics and objectives to secure access to power, and a continuation of radical opposition and dissent. Another cost is a loss of purity. Participation involves compromise, which may dilute a group's ideology or image. Olsen (1977) suggests that this is of particular concern to radical groups. Certainly, amongst our case studies, FoE has been most exercised over the issue. However, the other group especially concerned about its purity is the National Trust. In this case, the group is anxious to preserve not its ideology (the Trust does not have one), but its image. In its promotional literature, the Trust is always at pains to stress that it is independent of government. This image would be difficult to sustain if its close links with government were formal links. As the secretary of the National Trust commented:

> It would be unfortunate if the Trust ceased to appear independent to the public. If the Trust and government acted too much in concert, this could lead to a loss of public goodwill. This is why we are not anxious to increase our formal links with government. We work very closely with government but these are intentionally informal links, intentionally on both sides.

To seek *informal* participation is the typical response of groups wishing to avoid the loss of purity or manoeuvrability that formal participation implies. Significantly, this has been the course FoE has followed since its involvement in the Waste Management Advisory Council. On the other hand, government is usually eager to ensure that pressure groups accept responsibility as they gain influence.

Another cost of participation in government is that of responsibility. Through involvement in the system, a group is associated with the actions of the system and, as a consequence, it may have to share blame as well as praise. To refer again to the example of FoE – its achievement in getting the Windscale inquiry held and its performance at the inquiry were widely acclaimed, and greatly enhanced the group's stature at the time. However, much of the subsequent criticism of FoE arose precisely because it had so closely identified itself with the inquiry. When the inspector, Lord Justice Parker, reported in favour of proceeding with the nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, many environmentalists heaped their disgust at the outcome on FoE, as well as on Lord Parker.

Finally, participation in government may involve some loss of control. As the case studies of the Henley Society, the National Trust and the EEB demonstrate, a close, consultative relationship with government favours the concentration of a group's effective negotiating power in the hands of a small, stable leadership. As a group is drawn into closer dealings with government, this may have considerable repercussions for its internal organisation. The study of FoE serves to demonstrate that there is nothing mechanical or automatic about the changes induced by a degree of political acceptance of a group and its aims. Disagreement about the choice of tactics has been associated with internal conflicts over the group's structure, between those preferring a decentralised structure to support local activists and those seeing the need for a strong central organisation to deal effectively with government. Ultimately at stake may be who controls the group and to what purpose.

Delegation of responsibility to specialised representatives is not the only way in which loss of internal control can occur. Government may seek to intervene in the internal affairs of groups with which it is closely involved. As we have seen, the Nature Conservancy in the 1950s exerted considerable pressure on the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (now the RSNC), to reform its organisation and objectives. More recently, the Conservancy has funded the Society's development in specific directions. Likewise, the EEB study suggests that its annual grant from the European Commission effectively establishes its style of advocacy as one of reasoned and moderate argument. In contrast, the National Trust, as a group very closely involved with government, is particularly anxious to avoid increasing its vulnerability to bureaucratic or political interference. This has led it to reject certain forms of financial aid and to limit its overall dependence on government funds.

Normally, the benefits to a group in terms of influence on policy are so attractive as to outweigh the costs of participation in government. However, the decision is never a simple tactical choice between degrees of participation and between the available channels. Choosing one option forecloses others and may imply consequent modifications to a group's objectives and organisation. Indeed, the relationship between objectives, tactics and access is not static but evolves. Over the course of time, and with the partial achievement of original objectives, many promotional groups become emphasis groups. As the case study of the RSNC shows, this may involve a complete transformation in personnel, composition and structure.

The second theme of the book has been the impact of environmental groups on the balance of interests represented in society. Environmental groups are not the only interests seeking political influence over decisions affecting the environment. Their success in achieving their aims is therefore partly dependent on the relative strength of other pressure groups. Locally, nationally and internationally, environmental groups often find themselves in opposition to strong economic interests. Trade unions, business and industrial organisations, private transport interests, energy utilities, the construction industry and agricultural interests present formidable opponents in many endeavours to change official policy and achieve environmentally benign decisions.

In the main, environmental groups have less influence with government than the major economic interest groups. They have fewer political resources and lack powerful sanctions. Unlike these other groups, they are not of central

importance to the effective performance of government, the economy or various sectors of production. As a result, they do not enjoy the close, symbiotic relationship that prominent interest groups have with senior civil servants. Thus the major, development-orientated departments – the ones that typically have strong corporate links with leading sectional interests – remain relatively unreceptive to environmental pressures.

One way in which government has sought to manage and contain pressures from environmental groups is to deflect them away from the centre of government where the major decisions are made about the direction of the economy, the legislative programme and the allocation of resources. Participation has been encouraged instead in a number of peripheral environmental agencies and in the administration of planning powers by local government. It should be stressed that these are not the places where the major decisions affecting the environment are made. These decisions are made in the Treasury, the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Industry, the Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment, as well as in Brussels.

To a certain extent, environmental groups have been able to compensate for their relative lack of influence with senior officials through media and parliamentary pressure, and on occasions, public censure has proved an effective political weapon for them. Through coverage of their concerns, environmental groups have been able to take the offensive against recalcitrant government departments or industrial interests, and so win important concessions. Our evidence of the importance of the media for environmental groups qualifies much of the literature which characterises the media as an essentially conservative force, upholding orthodox values. The media constitute a valuable ally for most environmental groups, including those which challenge dominant beliefs as to the value of economic growth and technological advance, and official policies in such fields as energy, transport and agriculture. If there is a cultural bias in the media, then environmental groups seem to be among the beneficiaries.

In considering other interests in the political system, it is necessary to consider not only those presenting major obstacles to the achievement of environmental objectives, but also those interests, often poorly represented, for whom environmentally favourable outcomes may themselves pose certain difficulties. Environmental decisions involve costs and benefits which may be differentially distributed amongst the population. Some of these costs, such as the loss of housing and employment opportunities through a policy protecting an area from further development, may fall most heavily on those least able to afford them. Other costs may be unevenly distributed spatially if unwanted development is located in areas of least opposition. Environmental groups may therefore reinforce a regressive distribution of costs and benefits.

The planning system is responsive to such political pressures. Thus the spatial pattern of conservation designations reflects the geography of social and political influence as well as the geography of environmental quality. These designations not only bring extra safeguards and resources to privileged residential areas, but also enable the residents to dress up the defence of their self-interest in the guise of environmental conservation. Local conservation policies simultaneously enhance the attractiveness of an area and restrain new

development. The consequent shortage and high cost of housing tend to restrict residential access mainly to higher-income groups. The net effect is to reinforce the geographical segregation of social classes and to exacerbate spatial and social inequalities in environmental standards.

The book's third theme has been the reasons for the emergence of environmentalism as a relatively new force in British politics. We have suggested that environmental groups are part of a wider social movement which has its origins in a major shift in values in society. The values they espouse are part of a defensive reaction to unwelcome aspects of economic growth and technological advance and at the same time an assertion of the importance of the social and non-material aspects of the quality of life. The causes of this value shift are complex. It reflects fluctuating economic circumstances and is related to people's experience and expectations of affluence and material security. It has also been associated with changes in the structure of occupations in society, particularly the growth of professional and service occupations, and with the large middle-class exodus from the cities into the suburbs and the countryside. What is evident is that the environmental movement derives from intrinsic changes in public consciousness and is not simply a result of encouragement by political elites and the media attention given to environmental issues.

In the early 1970s, there was a gathering sense of impending environmental crisis with a number of pundits predicting imminent ecological collapse. Many of the groups springing up questioned the direction of society and tended to view individual environmental problems as having a common cause in economic and population growth. Since then the whole climate of opinion has changed with the onset of recession – economic pessimism has displaced environmental pessimism as the downturn in the business cycle has set its own limits to growth. Groups that campaigned against 'growth mania' have been one of the casualties of the recession, and the more doomful groups of this period – such as the Movement for Survival, Population Stabilisation, the Street Farmers, Planners Against Growth and Green Survival – have proved ephemeral.

The groups concerned with over-population also declined with Britain's falling birth rate. Indeed, public issues and pressure groups have arisen recently over problems which are a consequence of our ageing population, such as school closures. By 1977 the Conservation Society, which more than any other had campaigned on the population issue, found itself having defensively to allay alarmist reactions to the falling birth rate. The Society managed to survive the death of the population question by shifting the focus of its interest to other environmental issues. Other groups similarly have adapted their objectives. Friends of the Earth, for example, no longer proclaims its opposition to economic growth. Instead, recent campaigns, such as the promotion of house insulation, stress their contributions to job creation and to energy conservation. The more radical exponents of alternative technology disdain such pragmatism. Economic decline has confirmed them in the view that industrial capitalism is close to collapse. A few have 'taken to the hills' to seek private salvation in alternative communities. Others have become more politicised. For them, nuclear power, as a potent symbol of the Faustian bargain of technological society, has come to be a focus of militant opposition and protest (Elliott 1981a).

It is not only the newer groups that have found the climate of opinion harsher since the mid-1970s. Most of the established groups have been able to hold their own in terms of membership, but only two have continued to record the spectacular growth rates of the early 1970s. These are the National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Significantly, with one million and 300 000 members respectively, they are by far the largest environmental groups and they generate sufficient resources to be able to afford very effective promotion. Compared with the 'gloom and doom' message of some of the new groups of the early 1970s, their appeal seems escapist. Both eschew the image of pressure groups. Instead, they have succeeded in marketing conservation as leisure, as well as a good cause. Members are offered an attractive package deal: their subscriptions support practical conservation work and in return they receive the tangible benefits of a glossy magazine and privileged entry to their societies' properties.

Economic recession has had an adverse effect on most other environmental groups which goes beyond the impact of inflation on their meagre finances. The collapse of the property boom, the squeeze on local-authority house building and redevelopment programmes, the low level of industrial activity, government cancellation or postponement of major capital projects such as the third London airport and the Channel tunnel, the slow-down of public works such as road building and reservoir construction – have all served at least to delay major threats to the environment. Environmental groups involved in fighting such threats have also faced stagnation. The energy sector alone has continued to generate major projects, and public inquiries over such as the THORP reprocessing plant for Windscale, mining in the Vale of Belvoir and the PWR for Sizewell have provided an outlet for the energies of environmental activists.

Among the wider public and in the political arena, concern for the environment has to an extent been supplanted by the more immediate material and physical concerns of finding security in employment and housing, devising long-term solutions to an ailing economy and combating social disorder, violence and crime. On an international level there is anxiety not only over the world economy, but over the failure of arms limitation and the growth of international tension – questions not only of economic and physical security, but of survival.

Should the economy revive and a period of growth be re-established, this trend may be reversed. If, however, the economy continues on a low level of employment and growth, there are two alternative possibilities. The concern with material welfare could be strengthened and the relative decline in environmentalism continue. On the other hand, long-term changes in the structure of employment – such as the continued shift towards service occupations – could contribute to a resurgence of environmentalism. Moreover, the experience of unemployment over an extended period of time may, as in the 1930s, turn people away from the workplace as a source of fulfilment. Resigned to the absence of work, they may look to non-economic spheres for self-fulfilment and political expression, and begin to exhibit some of the post-material values, including concern for environmental conservation. Government encouragement of various forms of community service to alleviate long-term unemployment may reinforce such a tendency.

Whatever happens, environmental groups are unlikely to be dislodged from

their established positions in local and national politics. They may lose some of their influence and have to concentrate their efforts on defending and implementing previous reforms. For major new reforms, however, they will have to bide their time until the resurgence of environmentalism as a social movement.

Appendix *National environmental groups surveyed 1979–80*

Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea
Airfield Environment Federation
Ancient Monuments Society
Anglers Co-operative Association
Botanical Society of the British Isles
British Association for Shooting and Conservation, formerly the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland
British Deer Society
British Field Sports Society
British Horse Society
British Mountaineering Council
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)
Building Conservation Trust
Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland
Caravan Club
Central Council of Physical Recreation
Civic Trust
Coastal Anti-Pollution League
Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society (abbreviated to the Commons Preservation Society, which was its original name)
Conservation Society
Conservative Ecology Group
Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo)
Council for Environmental Education
Council for National Parks
Council for Nature (now the Wildlife Link Committee of CoEnCo)
Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
Cyclists' Touring Club
Ecology Party
Farm and Food Society
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)
Field Studies Council
Friends of Friendless Churches
Friends of the Earth (FoE)
Georgian Group
Green Alliance
Green Ban Action Committee
Greenpeace
Historic Churches Preservation Trust
Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects
Keep Britain Tidy Group
Lawyers' Ecology Group
Liberal Ecology Group

Men of the Trees
National Association for Environmental Education
National Housing and Town Planning Council
National Playing Fields Association
National Society for Clean Air
National Trust
Pedestrians' Association for Road Safety
Planning and Environment Group of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Political Ecology Research Group
Population Concern
Professional Institutions' Council for Conservation (PICC)
Pure Rivers Society
Ramblers' Association
Rescue Trust for British Archaeology (Rescue)
Royal Forestry Society
Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC), formerly the Society for the Promotion of Nature Conservation (SPNC), formerly the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (SPNR)
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Royal Society of Arts, Environment Committee
Salmon and Trout Association
Save Britain's Heritage (Save)
Seabird Group
Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA)
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
Soil Association
Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)
Transport 2000
Transport and Environment Group
Tree Council
Victorian Society
Watch Trust for Environmental Education (Watch)
Wildlife Youth Service
Woodland Trust
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Youth Hostels Association (YHA)

The following groups declined to take part in the survey:

British Naturalists' Association
Fauna and Flora Preservation Society
Inland Waterways Association
Noise Abatement Society

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