

## Title Page

### Project title:

'Voice Your Choice' Teaching Pack

### Category:

Environment

### Client company:

BGCI (Botanic Gardens Conservation International) - Education division

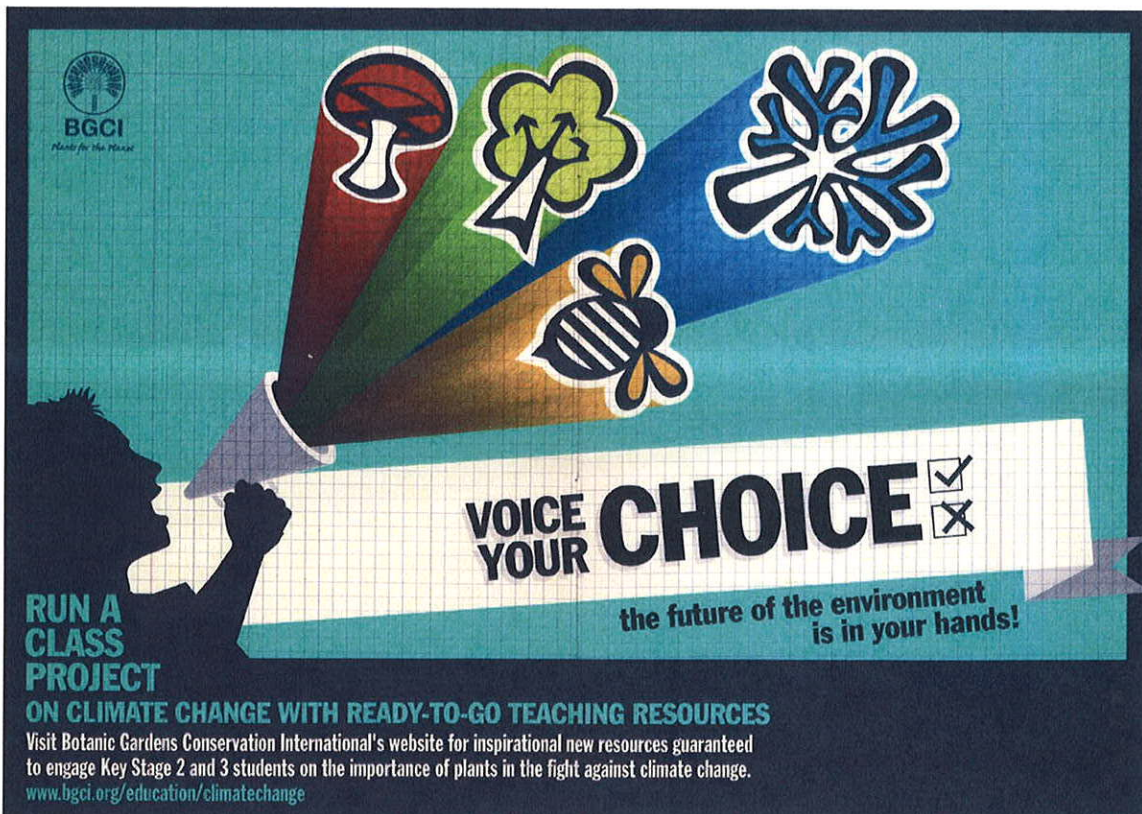
### Design consultancy:

Design Bridge

### Current date:

18<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Fig 1: 'Voice Your Choice' Poster / postcard



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## Executive summary

### Challenge

BGCI's global mission is to raise the profile of plants and promote the role that they have in maintaining eco-systems. We were asked to create an on-line resource for teachers that would stand out and inspire them to use with their students – telling a unique story about the role of plants and sustainability rather than the big picture view of climate change.

### Solution

'Voice Your Choice', aims to create a debate within the classroom: promoting global sustainability and encouraging creative and critical thinking.

The BGCI came to us and asked us to design a poster to promote the resources. A relatively simple task but we wanted to go further than that and so developed an approach which allowed plants to take 'centre stage' so that everyone can experience the importance of them in wide and diverse eco-systems. The design of the poster advert for the teaching resources feature stylised modern and bright illustrations of key plant species that demand to be championed for their survival!

The resources themselves were designed specifically to be down-loaded from an on-line location. Each individual aspect was considered in terms of layout and made use only of black and white elements so that printing costs were kept to a minimum and teachers could quickly prepare the resources for use in class.

### Key achievements

- With the poster driving over 750 website hits, the resource reached approximately 11,000 children in the first 6 months.
- The BGCI report a 335% increase in downloads compared with previous educational resources on their site.
- Having started as a UK only initiative, due to popular demand, the resources are now available in the top three languages of the world.

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## Overview of market

Key challenges included:

- The BGCI are widely respected by peers in the global plant conservation field, but they wouldn't necessarily be the first port of call for teachers to consult for resources. Raising awareness of the resources and driving potential users to the web-site to download the resources was a key part of the challenge.
- Getting the word out to teachers. Teachers are swamped with teaching resources about climate change and sustainability so we had to say something new. How would this new resource be different to carbon, waste, energy and resource consumption messages put out by WWF (World Wildlife Fund) – the BGCI's biggest 'competitor', per se?
- Teachers need the resources to be quick, cost-effective and easy to implement. They also need to understand the learning outcomes and ensure they fit with agreed National Curriculum content.
- Young people are more likely to respond to a 'tell me what I can do; rather than what I can't do' approaches so this needs to be reflected in the solution.

## Project launch date

August 2009

## Size of design budget

Pro-bono

## Outline of design solution

The methodology

- The assigned creative team (including the full complement of placements working at Design Bridge at the time!) visited Kew Gardens on a beautiful, sunny day and literally immersed themselves in the fascinating world of plants! They went on a climate change tour of the gardens and had a Q&A session with the client.
- We took ourselves back to our own school days and recalled the lesson formats, teachers and topics that inspired us.
- The parents amongst us provided examples of the times their children had come home from school inspired by a particularly exciting lesson or event that day that had help them change the way they behave.
- We reviewed the media channels that teachers might access to locate teaching resources.
- The project was steered through by our Client Director for Sustainability to ensure all key insights on the subject were captured and interpreted.
- We maintained a single-minded approach focusing on:

*"We are all interconnected – humans are part of nature not separate from it."*

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## Outline of project brief

### The client

The BGCI are based at Kew Gardens and are represented throughout botanical gardens in the UK. They also have strong alliances with partners all over the world. Their overall mission is to support the conservation of plants (hence the affiliation with Kew Gardens) and promote the important role that plants in supporting ecosystems that ultimately provide us with items, tools and services to go about our daily lives.

### Background

The BGCI had just completed an extensive research report that:

- confirmed the significant impact climate change is having on plant life
- emphasised the role plants play in our daily lives.

The BGCI wanted to use this newly established data to raise the profile of plants amongst schools and educators so that they grasp the key role plants have in maintaining important eco-systems. They asked us to design a poster to promote the resources, however ...

When it comes to highlighting the 'bigger picture' impacts associated with climate change, animals – and the affects on their habitats - hog the lime-light as they are easier for consumers to connect with emotionally. Plants are often over-looked even though they are just as much a living, breathing entity.

### The challenge

Help teachers and educators to convey to children that we are wholly reliant on plants, even in our daily lives: we are all inter-connected.

How can we help elevate plants to a higher status in people's minds and promote the crucial role they play in supporting eco-systems and threats posed by climate change? ... Ultimately, get people to care and make a change in behaviour.

## Description

- Creation of visual stimulus for an on-line resource pack for educators and teachers to access, which boosts the profile of plants and the fundamental role they play in the fight against climate change.
- Establish BGCI as a provider of imaginative, innovative and effective educational materials about plants. Something for which they are not traditionally seen as core providers.
- Provoke debate, raise awareness and create an 'aha' moment of connection for participants.
- Convey the complex nature of eco-systems and climate change effects whilst keeping it positive, empowering action, and inspiring change.



## The final design

- 'Voice Your Choice' is a whole new way to mobilise the next generation to get behind plants and champion change.
- The resources set a future scenario whereby global leaders are only prepared to pay for the conservation of one species of plant, insect or mammal. Teachers divide the class into 4 x groups and assign each group a species. The activity involves each group fighting for the survival of their particular species. They research the key benefits the species brings to maintaining eco-systems and develop a manifesto and presentation pitch that conveys this. A voting system is then used to pit one species against another like political parties!
- Given that all species need to co-exist, it is essentially an unwinnable debate that links to the Science and Geography National Curriculum for both Key Stage 2 and 3, providing opportunity for students to acquire personal, learning and thinking skills through investigating, collecting and presenting evidence and working together in groups.
- The advertising material which drives potential users to the web-site takes its inspiration from 1950s political party propaganda posters and acts as a completely new, unexpected way for the BGCI to position itself with teachers.
- The resources are only available digitally, online and there is no central printing of resources by BGCI. This keeps costs and impacts low to produce and use.
- All of the download documents are single colour designs set up as A4 double-sided and, where possible A5 pages laid out on an A4 pages.
- The 'Voice Your Choice' scenario aims to create debate amongst young audiences: a great opportunity to promote not just global sustainability issues but also creative and critical thinking at a young age.

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## Summary of results

- The resources went live in August 2009. The BGCI published the poster as postcards for use at shows, seminars and conferences and sent an illustrated press release to teachers and educators at end of August to coincide with the start of the new academic year.
- Even before the final route was finalised the client was delighted with the outcomes, sharing them at international botanical teaching conferences (e.g. 7<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Education in Botanical Gardens in Durban in November 2009) where they were met with equal enthusiasm and requests for translations into other languages! The client received funding to translate the resources into Spanish and simplified Chinese; and then a further request and funding to translate the resources into Traditional Chinese too. This means the resource is now available in the top three languages of the world.
- During finalisation, we tested the proposed concept, design and content with teachers and children that we knew. The overall consensus was that the resources would really bring a class alive and excite students.
- During this feedback period, one teacher ran the activity with her class, providing great feedback that was later featured in the TES:

*"I loved the look of the project! What a success! The children absolutely loved it. I set out the task as per the Teachers' notes and put up some other ideas on the interactive whiteboard. The [groups] quickly got to work designing badges, posters, researching on the Internet and using books. It was a hive of activity. Even the algae and fungi groups, who were a little lost for info to start off with, quickly found loads of facts and data they could use. The resources are great! The notes are simple and straightforward - providing enough information without giving them everything! Perfect for Year 6 - after SATs."*

- We gained useful insights into the practical requirements from teachers and from the students' point of view, they wanted to ensure that as a result of the activity, they really could 'voice their choice' and let the right people know which species they care about and why. From this, the BGCI have now set up a blog on their web-site which allows teachers and students to post their outcomes and truly help lobby in the fight against climate change.

## Reaching the audience

The client estimates that within the first 6 months, the poster / postcard drove around 750 hits on the website and therefore engaged approximately 11,000 children across the UK.

## Increases in market distribution

Since launch, the resources have been downloaded 1471 times, compared to 439 downloads for the other teaching activities in the Education for Climate Change portal, delivering a 335% increase.

The bright, positive approach in terms of graphic design and the bold call to action on the postcard has helped the BGCI gain coverage in a number of different channels. Traditional stakeholders such as the Geography



## Appendix

Fig 2: The 'Voice Your Choice' download page on the Education portal of the BGCI website

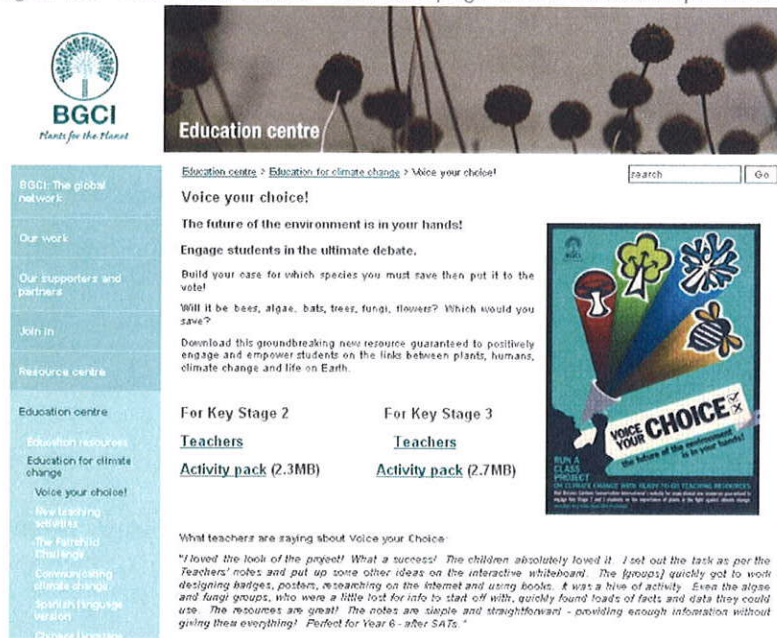


Fig 3: The 'Voice Your Choice' resources in use, 1

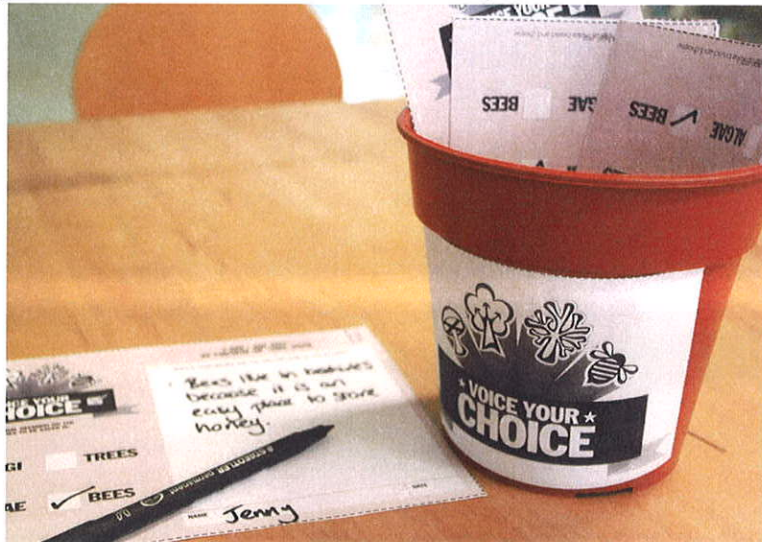


Fig 4: The 'Voice Your Choice' downloadable children's activity pack

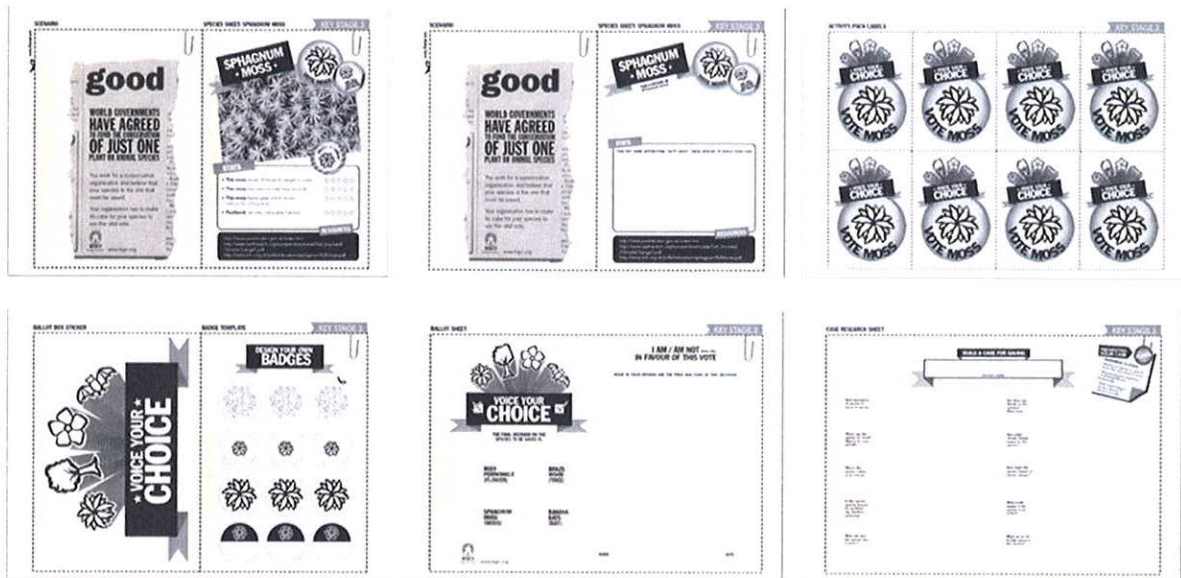


Fig 5: The 'Voice Your Choice' resources in use, II

