

Communication for Change

**Building the interpersonal skills needed for
effective seascape restoration**

A case study



Why communication matters

Restoration depends on people as much as ecology.

Practitioners regularly meet and work with people with different priorities, values and perspectives.

Technical expertise alone does not always equip people to navigate disagreement, frustration or resistance.

The Challenge:

How do we create
constructive dialogue when
perspectives differ?

Shifting the focus from communicating more information, to *how* we communicate

Our approach

Eight modules over 6 months. Practical skills. Evaluation embedded throughout.

LISTEN

**Empathetic
listening**

PAUSE

**Self-awareness
& regulation**

SPEAK

**Assertive
communication
& feedback**

NAVIGATE

**Conflict,
boundaries &
de-escalation**

Evaluation combined module surveys, a final evaluation and 10 participant interviews conducted during Module 6.

What changed?

Confidence rose straight after the module and participants reported applying the learning later on in the course.

2.73 →
3.86

Empathetic listening
Module 1

3.27 →
4.22

Setting boundaries
Module 6

“I give myself time to respond and may delay a response. I look for common ground and wins.”

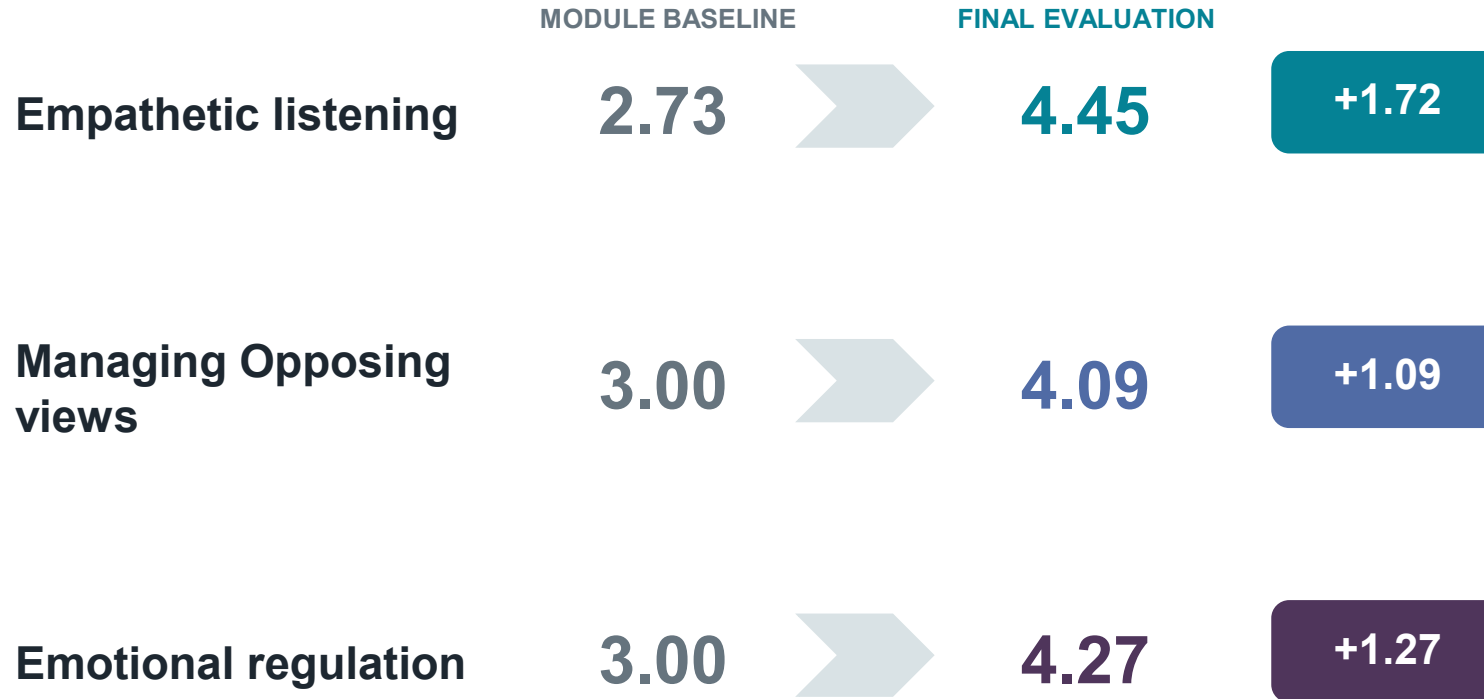
Participant reflection

By Module 6, interviewees described **pausing** rather than reacting, **listening** instead of automatically advising, **recognising** their own responses, and **trying different approaches** to disagreement and conflict.

Caveat: this is evidence of emerging, self-reported behavioural change. Behaviours were not independently observed.

Confidence grew across the programme

Selected repeated questions show progress from module baseline to final evaluation.



Why this matters

Participants finished the training more confident in skills needed for challenging conservation conversations:
Listening, staying regulated and engaging with opposing perspectives.

Group-average confidence scores /5. Module and final response groups differed, so comparisons show programme-level direction of change rather than matched individual change.

From communication skills to conservation action

Two examples showed learning moving beyond the training room:

ACTION 01

A participant reported joining Greenpeace to “put what I have learned in Communication for Change to good use”, then began sharing environmental information with others.

ACTION 02

Another participant used the skills with a RIB charter company about seal disturbance, listening to their perspective while explaining impacts on seals. The participant reported a positive response.

Create space to pause, listen and understand before responding.

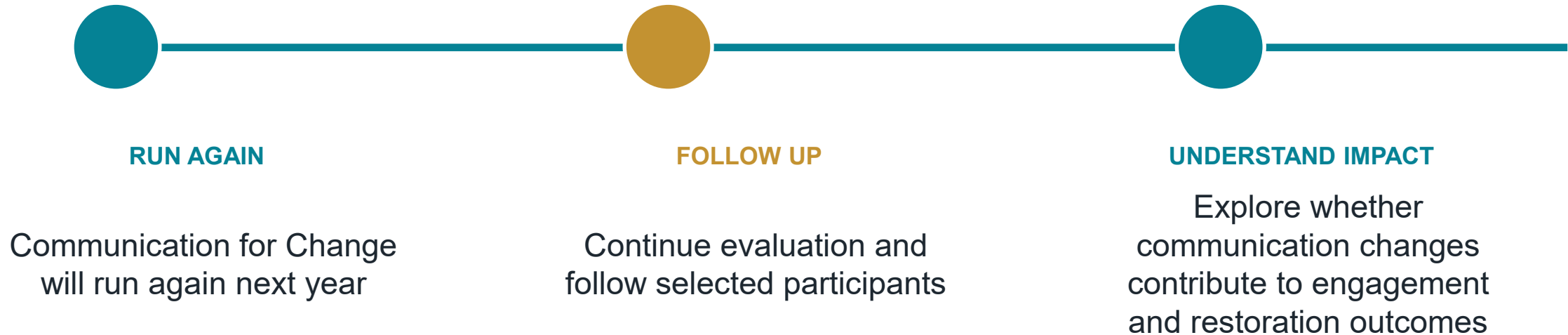
Our **key learning** for restoration practitioners is therefore:

Invest in the skills that create the conditions for change, not only the information intended to create it.

"Without understanding stakeholder views and opinions, the solution is unlikely to be successful." *Participant quote*

What next?

Testing whether early changes are sustained over time.



Next Course starts January – Book now
emily.stroud@hiwwt.org.uk