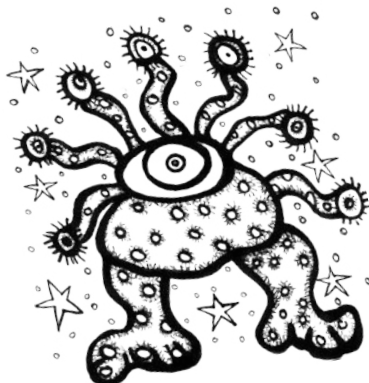


The Hubcraft communicates with Planet Earth

20,000m up, the Hub-shaped spacecraft sailed noiselessly through the stratosphere of Planet Earth, observing all human life, but unseen by the people beavering away below. Inside the Hubcraft, there was a vigorous debate going on among the three craft commanders about how best to approach the inhabitants of this little blue-green world.

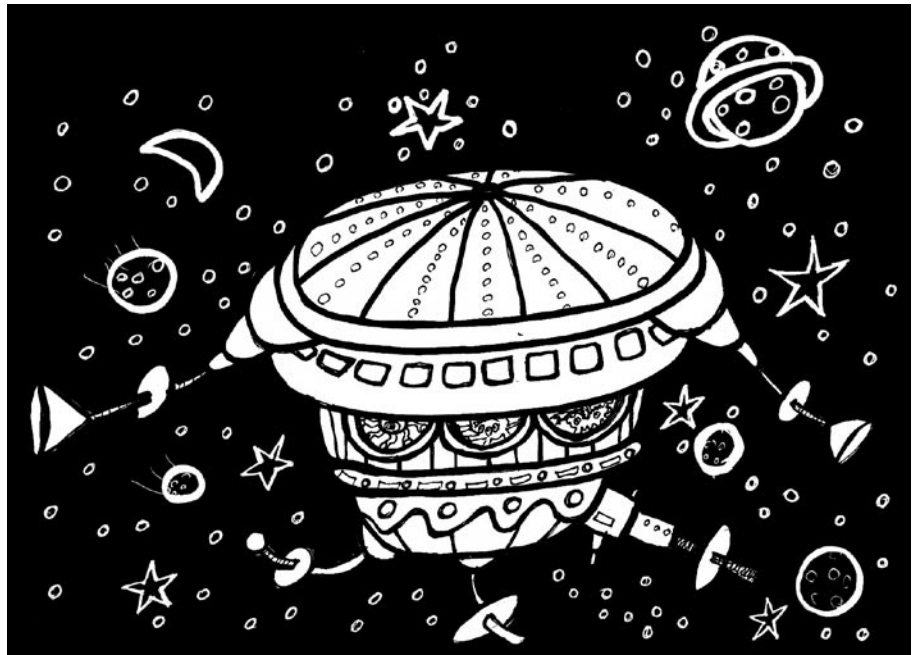
"We are clearly higher beings," said the Superior One, "And we have a duty to pass on the fruits of our advanced learning to these poor Earthlings."



"Why bother with that?" said the Destructive One, "I say, let's blast them all and set up a new world order!"

The Listening One did what he was best at, as the argument raged back and forth. At last there was silence and he spoke quietly into it,

"We still know very little about this race. How can we be so sure that we are more intelligent or that they deserve



to die, before we have listened to what they have to say?"

Several orbits later, the commanders still could not agree, so they decided that each would try out his own approach in different parts of the world and compare notes afterwards.



The Superior One chose a settlement and beamed down, exuding wisdom. The Earth people simply ignored him for a while and then, when he grew more insistent, shut him up in their asylum and assigned him a full-time counsellor.

The Hubcraft communicates with Planet Earth

The Destructive One zoomed down, all guns blazing, but having wiped out his chosen destination, found that in his zeal, he had damaged his landing craft and destroyed all possible sources of sustaining his own life. Many years later, desert explorers were to discover a strange alien skeleton half-buried in the sand.



The Listening One adopted a human guise and went down to do what he

always did: simply listen. As he travelled from place to place, he heard stories of human endeavour, success, failure... stories that made him laugh, stories that made him cry.

Gradually, it dawned on him that all the secrets of the universe were already present, only scattered widely. He began to draw together the humans that he felt could learn most from each other and so spread the wisdom more rapidly. He soon became a trusted, respected member of the community; people would come to him with their questions and he would simply point them to their fellow humans, knowing that they would discover a better answer together than the one he might give them.

When at last it was time for him to return to the Hubcraft (where he waited in vain for his fellow commanders and finally moved on to Mars...), the Earth people were truly sorry to see him go.



WAYS OF WORKING

- There must be serious respect for the views of those who work on the ground, along with a realistic view about how quickly they can respond to government directives, given that they are already fully occupied doing the work for which they are employed, or which they undertake voluntarily. Mistakes have already been made from the pressure to make decisions and spend money before the local consortia were ready.
- The commitment, belief and drive that makes voluntary organisations effective, and, therefore, attractive to government, could be lost if insufficient time is given to building the relationships between Capacity Builders, the Hubs and the regional/local consortia. It should also be recognised that some VCS organisations will neither want, nor be able, to serve the statutory sector.
- Nevertheless, these often small, highly specialised organisations that exist to help vulnerable or marginalised groups will still have a role to play, and will still need money if they are to continue their work.