

Media Release

Caring for our environment is caring for Scotland – say Scottish Environment LINK Members to candidate MSPs ahead of 2016 elections

13 April 2016 - “From the land reform debate to vital questions about health, energy policy, sustainable jobs, and the future of Scotland’s magnificent landscape and wildlife, environmental matters are at the very heart of Scottish political debate, as we approach the Holyrood elections in May”, said **Scottish Environment LINK President Joyce McMillan** opening LINK’s “Environment Matters” hustings on 13 April.

The event offered a chance for each of the five main parties in the Scottish Parliament to debate their 2016 manifestos with an audience that cares passionately about our environmental future, and about the potential for good policy in this area to enhance all our lives. At the end, Joyce summarised discussions noting **there was a lot of consensus on where we need to be by 2030 or 2050 but what is lacking is a common agreement on how we can get there.** “The conversation is likely to be heated at times, but we can be sure that it’ll also throw light on some of the most fundamental issues facing the Scottish Parliament over the next five years - and beyond”, added Joyce.

LINK Chair Helen Todd commented: “People and the environment are inextricably linked. To create a flourishing Scotland where people can prosper we need to take good care of our environment. The six asks included in our LINK manifesto provide a solid basis for doing so. We urge Scottish political parties to take forward our manifesto proposals and call on voters to support our efforts for creating a better environment.”

“We sincerely hope that the next government and parliament will work on the basis that our environment is just as important as other policy areas and we look forward to engaging in a meaningful and regular way with our government, MSPs and other stakeholders. In this respect, LINK will be seeking an early meeting with the next Environment Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment”, added Helen.

In providing their views on what needs to happen in the next term to put Scotland on a more sustainable path candidate MSPs highlighted:

“Our environment is the only place we have to live so we need to take care of it. We have been good on the technical side, on targets for emissions and renewables. We now need to focus on developing sustainable food systems and farming”, said **Heather Anderson, SNP List Candidate for South of Scotland.**

“For Scottish Labour the next Scottish Parliament needs to deliver on both Environmental and Social Justice. We need a Warm Homes Act which will help tackle fuel poverty, a big expansion in the number of community and cooperative and community renewables schemes. We also need to see investment in green infrastructure, whether its public transport and active travel or affordable housing which will enable people to make low carbon lifestyle choices and business decisions. We're the only party with fairer tax and investment policies at this election to make that happen”, noted **Sarah Boyack, Scottish Labour Environmental Justice Spokesperson and Candidate MSP for Edinburgh Central.**

“Scottish Conservatives support measures to decarbonise our economy and protect our environment. At this election we are putting forward a number of key asks: from making the case for new Scottish National Parks to investing in £1billion in making Scotland’s homes warm and reduce carbon emissions. Scottish Conservatives will support communities in safeguarding green space and community land and we will work to build a sustainable Scotland for all Scots to live, work and grow up”, said **Miles Briggs, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Candidate MSP for Edinburgh Southern.**

“With new powers coming to Holyrood we have the opportunity to protect and regenerate our environment and put wellbeing rather than pure economic growth at the heart of government, it will need a bolder greener Scottish Parliament to deliver this agenda in the next 5 years”, highlighted **Mark Ruskell, the Scottish Green Party’s spokesperson for Rural affairs, Food and Environment and candidate MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife Region.**

“The Liberal Democrats are keen to put our future on a sustainable path and willing to work issue by issue with other parties to achieve this”, added **Martin Veart Scottish Liberal Democrat Candidate for Edinburgh Northern and Leith.**

Notes to editors:

- LINK Holyrood 2016 Manifesto: <http://www.scotlink.org/public-documents/scottish-environment-link-urges-parties-to-put-sustainable-development-at-the-heart-of-holyrood-2016-elections/>
- Environment Matters hustings event page: <http://www.scotlink.org/holyrood-2016-elections-2/environment-matters-holyrood-2016-hustings/>
- Wildlife Proclamation: <http://www.scotlink.org/holyrood-2016-elections-2/the-wildlife-proclamation/>

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Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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