



Annual Report
for July 1996 - June 1997
incorporating
Summary of Accounts for April 1996 - March 1997

Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link



Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the liaison body for voluntary organisations in Scotland interested in ensuring a sound future for Scotland's environment.

Established ten years ago (1987), Link provides a forum and network for its member organisations, enabling informed debate, assisting cooperation amongst the voluntary environmental sector and communication between it, government bodies and other bodies with a role and/or interest in Scotland's natural and cultural heritage.

Link publishes a quarterly newsletter (The Link Newsletter) for members and for a network of Subscribers and Supporters.

The Association is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity. Scottish Charity Number 000296.

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President	Seaton Baxter
Chair	Michael Scott
Vice-Chair	Penny Edwards
Treasurer	Jill Harden
Coordinator	Jen Anderson
Secretary	Alice Walsh
Administrative Officer	Nancy Waddell

Link is grateful to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK), the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Departments Special Grants [Environmental] Programme, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Maurice Laing Foundation and Member Bodies of Link, for their support towards core costs during the last year.

Chairman's Foreword

The development and activities of Scottish Link are entirely shaped by the representatives of member bodies who attend our agenda-setting quarterly meetings, serve on the management team or contribute to the various working groups and task forces. Our greatest strength has always been that these individuals - whilst continuing to represent their respective organisations - are all prepared to forego purely sectoral interests to pursue the greater good of the common cause. That remarkable and enlightened synergy continues to drive Link into new approaches and areas of work, and ensures that we have a distinctive role in the environmental debate, separate from, but building on, the roles of the member bodies that are our constituent parts. It ensures that, acting together, we can achieve even more than we could independently - and this annual report can only touch on the resulting achievements in the last year. Sometimes, the heavy workload of the directors and chairpersons of our member bodies means that they are less attuned to the work of Link than we would like: I hope they will take time to read this report and discover just how much has been achieved by Link with the tremendous assistance of their representatives.

The faces around the Link table have changed over the years (some new faces, some merely ageing!). It was good therefore that many of the "old hands" were able to join us for a dinner to celebrate our 10th anniversary in February. It was a time to reflect on the many changes since Link evolved out of the "round table" of key individuals that met each month to "chew over the environmental fat" in the aftermath of Lurcher's Gully Public Inquiry. That informal origin has helped us to ensure that Link meetings retain the relaxed familiarity of shared purpose - we all have to attend enough tedious formal meetings as it is, without entangling Link in red tape - and certainly there were more than a few scurrilous tales at the dinner from the old days. Yet it was appropriate that the dinner followed our highly successful and challenging 1997 Environmental Conference, which again saw Link driving the environmental agenda into new areas. Inspired by the work of

the *Real World* coalition, it showed that environmental degradation, poverty and social injustice are all symptoms of the same malaise and suggested that new partnerships might be needed to address these deep-seated problems. These are areas that Link will continue to develop in the coming year, and no doubt the new Labour government will present new opportunities and challenges in these areas also.

This commitment to widening our agenda does not come without problems, as we are invited to put forward representatives for more and more committees, forums and partnerships, adding to what is already a heavy workload. We continue also to develop our excellent working relationships with our sister Links (Wildlife & Countryside Link, which has an English, and, on some issues, a GB remit, Wales Wildlife & Countryside Link and Northern Ireland Environmental Link). Although the Secretariats of the four Links regularly work together, the main contact is in the twice-yearly meetings held around the four countries and linked to a liaison meeting with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and countryside councils. It was desperately sad to hear, just after our last meeting based in Inverness in May 1997, of the death of David Stanbury, chair of Welsh Link. David was a dedicated advocate of the joint working of the Links and their members, and a large personality in every sense. He will be sadly missed - and not just in Wales.

As always, Scottish Links' tremendous achievements over the last year could not have been achieved without the hard work, commitment and flexibility of Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh and Nancy Waddell in the Link office, but I would also like take this opportunity to thank our president, Seaton Baxter, the members of the management team - and particularly Penny Edwards who is about to retire as vice-chair - and all the convenors of working groups and task forces for helping to ensure that Links' accomplishments continue to more than match up with the tasks that we face in Scottish environment.

Michael Scott, Link chair