



# **Towards a Sustainable Europe**

**The Scottish Environment LINK Manifesto  
for the European Parliamentary Elections 2014**

# Introduction



*"We want to live in a Scotland where we learn from, and play our part in, the rest of the world. We want a Scotland that is outward looking, internationalist, co-operative and ready to learn from other nations, societies, and states – and ready to share our ideas, successes, and the lessons from our mistakes, with the rest of the world. We want Scotland to implement international obligations properly, and our attitudes and behaviours to be set in full awareness of the global ecological impact of our lives and activities."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

The raison d'être of LINK is for Scotland to reach the relationship between social, economic and environmental interests required to achieve truly sustainable human development. We argue that a failure to achieve sustainability will seriously threaten human society, the environment we share with all forms of life. At present economic interests have far greater power and influence than social or environmental interests, and economic considerations dominate development. We need balance. This manifesto seeks to address this problem within the European context.

Next month the people of Scotland will elect the six, new, Scottish members of the European Parliament. In their five year term of office, they and the other 760 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will have the opportunity to make this a better continent to live in – in a more sustainable world. This manifesto lays out the priorities that Scottish Environment LINK think they should concentrate their efforts on.

In the next five years we want to see our MEPs:

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# Working towards sustainable development and fighting climate change



*"We want to live in a Scotland where we are successfully tackling climate change, and using a precautionary approach to all development. We want to live in a world where average temperatures have been kept below dangerous levels and where Scotland has played a leading role in the delivery of this aim. We want to have learned from climate change, damage to the ozone layer, and other environmental near disasters, that we must take a precautionary approach to all economic, social and environmental development, and weigh the consequences of developments with great care."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

Politicians from all shades of the European political spectrum have told us that "climate change is the most serious threat we face". LINK agrees. We want to see the European Union (EU) regain its position as a world-leading force in the fight against the increasing threats that climate change is bringing. We want to see the EU take measures that will:

- re-affirm in practice and principle, across all policy areas, its commitment to the Brundtland definition of sustainability - **"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."**
- mitigate the overall extent of climate change, and lessen its impacts on Europe and the world; and
- develop the best strategies for adapting to the impacts we are already beginning to feel – and to share these with the rest of the world.

To succeed in these aims, the EU will need to become a beacon of ingenuity and generosity for the planet. The people of Europe are comparatively rich, and climate change will have the greatest impact upon the poorest people and countries beyond the EU (and First World) borders.

Within the next 5 years we want the EU to genuinely and seriously apply the principles of sustainable development to fighting climate change, halting the loss of biodiversity, and pursuing good governance. We want to see the EU resume its former world leadership position – and to throw off the backsliding into the simple pursuit of economic growth which has characterised the period since the collapse of the financial system in 2008. In the longer term, we want the EU to ensure rigorously that sustainable development principles underlie all directives, regulations and policies.



## Mitigation

We want to see the EU agree a package of three binding 2030 targets, from a 1990 baseline. For:

- emissions reduction (-55%),
- energy savings (-40%),
- and renewable energy production (45%).

The EU should finalise the short-term back-loading of EU-ETS allowances as soon as possible, as a first step, and speed up the longer-term structural reform process by ending allowances, tightening caps and restricting international offset credits.

The EU should do everything in its power to help all the nations, globally, to agree an international treaty on climate change – with fair, ambitious and binding emissions reduction targets.

## Adaptation

We want all EU policy to recognise the need to protect the Natura network of sites designated for nature conservation – and for this to be observed beyond the simple letter of the law. We want to see more effective implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives to ensure effective nature conservation in response to a changing climate. We do not want to see the EU falling for short-term, economically motivated calls for any weakening of the directives or their underlying objectives.

## Soils

As a hugely important step toward achieving sustainability, a European Union Directive on Soils should be passed. (The 2006 proposal from the EU Commission for a Directive on Soils has so far been rejected by the Council of Ministers.) In the medium to longer-term, all financial support, through the CAP, should be dependent on compliance with a Soils Directive.



European Parliament Strasbourg  
Photo Credit: Gerry Balding

# Working towards a sustainable economy



*"We want to live in a Scotland where economic, social and environmental success is equally valued – and where they all are measured in terms of their long-term sustainability and our living within environmental limits. We want to escape from the position where economic 'growth' is given primacy. We want our prosperity to be related to the common wealth of the planet we live on."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

In the past few decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has become not just a measure of economic growth but also a proxy for societal progress in much of our political discourse. As such, it has become a hugely powerful driver of Government decision-making across the world.

The consequences of chasing GDP growth whilst externalising environmental and social costs are stark. In the last 30 years the global economy has doubled, while greenhouse gas emissions have risen by at least 40% (since 1990) and over 60% of the world's ecosystems have been degraded. Unless we develop and standardise alternative indicators to GDP and use these to foster more responsible and sustainable decision making, we are in danger of a global economic and environmental collapse.

## Measuring success

Over the next 5 years, we want the European Union to fully implement the five actions in the European Commission communication on 'GDP and beyond' COM(2009)433:

- complementing GDP with environmental and social indicators;
- near real-time information for decision-making;
- a Sustainable Development Scoreboard;
- thresholds for environmental sustainability; and
- extending National Accounts to environmental and social issues.

We want to see the United Nations, OECD, WTO, G8 and other global institutions work together to develop high level alternative and complementary indicators to GDP.

We need the EU and its member states to implement an alternative high level indicator to GDP, which either significantly adjusts GDP to encompass environmental and social externalities, or replaces GDP entirely. We want the international community to do the same.

## Energy

Energy policy is a key to achieving sustainability and fighting climate change, and is thus a major factor in the economic success of the EU. Europe is at a crossroads, however, with immense pressure having built after the financial crisis of 2008 for short-term solutions to our energy problems. Europe has become the only continent which is a net importer of energy - and the temptation to go for the "cheapest" solution possible has been great. The EU itself and the governments of the member states have met this situation with a confused response and much prevarication.

LINK believes that the time has come to cease dawdling and set Europe on a comprehensive path to:

- reducing our demand for energy and to using it more efficiently;
- concentrating on the removal of carbon emissions from the energy equation as swiftly as possible; and
- producing the energy we require from renewable resources across a decentralized grid with an emphasis on developing micro and community generation.

## Unconventional Gas

Much of the planet's natural, fossilised, hydro-carbon gas is trapped underground and was considered unrecoverable as it is scattered throughout layers of shale rock, and other geological formations which are difficult and expensive to mine. Today these are known as Unconventional Gas (UG) reserves and there are vast such reserves across Europe.

Several industrial techniques have been developed to access these fossil fuels, including (i) 'fracking' - a drilling technique to bore horizontally through shale rock, blast it with explosives, and force into the cracks, under enormous pressure, millions of gallons of water laced with a proprietary mix of toxic chemicals to further fracture the rock and release the gas; and (ii) drilling into and de-watering coal seams to release methane.

These, and other methods of extraction, have been pioneered in the United States, but there is huge pressure to follow suit in the EU. But limiting global warming to under 2°C will mean leaving most of the known fossil fuel reserves in the ground. We believe the EU should eschew the short-term attractions of "cheap" gas, and develop the long-term security of clean, non-polluting, readily available renewable energy.

We believe Europe should be at the forefront of efforts to apply the precautionary principle as per international law and the Brundtland principle. We are bound by the terms of the Rio de Janeiro Treaty - and should do all in our powers to observe them. ***"In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."***

We are opposed to the development of unconventional gas in the EU.

## Offshore Renewables

As is suggested above, we urge the EU to agree a package of three binding 2030 targets for emissions reduction (-55%), energy savings (-40%), and renewable energy (45%). We are confident that, sensibly developed, marine energy (wind, wave and tidal) can be a significant contributor to these targets, and Scotland can make a particularly important contribution. This should be a major part of the EU's Renewable Energy Roadmap for the post-2020 era. We see the EU as a major player in developing an international treaty on climate change with fair, ambitious and binding emissions reduction targets designed to limit global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees in 2015. This way the EU could cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050.

## Transport

The EU has a vitally important role to play in co-ordinating transport policies for the continent. Within the next five years we want to see the development of policies which lead to:

- the strongest possible signals that vehicles on our roads are moving away from fossil fuels and towards electric power;
- the railways and other public transport systems being increased and improved;
- all EU nations having signed the Brussels Charter (and the Toronto Charter) and strongly supporting active travel, with more short journeys especially being made by walking or cycling;
- in the longer-term, a modal share of 20% for cycling throughout the EU; and
- reductions in the use of short-haul aviation.



Photo credit: Eoghan OLiinnian

# Working towards a sustainable environment



*"We want to live in a Scotland where we protect and enhance our ecosystems and all the species in them. We want a proper appreciation of the importance of all the species that share our land, sea and air. We want to see an end to species extinctions and the degradation of ecosystems at home and abroad and, instead, a concentration on the manifold benefits of protecting and enhancing the fullest possible biodiversity."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

Within the next five years we want to see the EU sharpen its environmental performance as we work to repair the damage of past centuries – and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We believe our priorities would enhance the lives of Europe's peoples and improve their economy.

## **Agriculture**

In the next five years we want our MEPs to wring every ounce of environmental possibility out of the newly agreed, but seriously disappointing Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). We need the European Parliament to prepare the ground for further CAP reforms which will better reward the provision of environmental public goods. We want to ensure that all public money allocated to land management is directed towards securing long-term sustainability.

## **Forestry**

We want the EU to explore and find mechanisms that support the existing woodland protection measures of member states. We want to ensure that the spread of plant diseases is limited by introducing a careful system of seed accreditation and regulations for the transport of seeds, saplings, trees and timber. To succeed in these objectives we must ensure that forestry funding remains an integrated part of the CAP's delivery mechanisms.

## **Landscape**

LINK believes that caring for, and improving, our landscapes are a vital tests of our commitment to the environment. We want to see the MEPs, and the EU generally, give greater weight to the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in EU policy and decision making. We want the European Parliament to explore the possibility of a Landscape Directive and to draft and adopt it if judged desirable



*"We want to live in a Scotland where we value and nurture our landscape and cultural heritage. We want to live in a country where landscape, both immediate and distant, is seen as a vital asset for every citizen, and a nurturing feature for all of society. We want Scotland's rich cultural heritage to be protected and nurtured within such a landscape."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

## **River basin management**

We want the EU member states to have ambitious targets for the River Basin Management Plan cycle (RBMP) and to see significant progress towards achieving those and all other targets under the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). MEPs should scrutinise the delivery of the WFD to ensure swift progress towards meeting 'good ecological status' objectives across the EU. The EU institutions should also ensure that climate change adaptation is fully embedded in the WFD processes.

## **Sites designated for nature**

LINK hopes that our MEPs will assist in eliminating the muttering and threats to Europe's network of 'Natura' sites. We want designation of sites to be completed and to see the active pursuit of the measures required of member states to ensure the good condition of these hugely important designated sites under the Birds and Habitats Directives. In the longer term, we believe the EU must integrate the 'Natura' approach with the enforcement of the wider countryside provisions contained in policies such as the CAP.

## **Marine Planning**

We want to see all member states contributing fully towards the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in Europe's marine environment. This requires continued cooperation between the EU member states sharing the same marine waters on a regional basis.

We believe that the EU's marine strategies must be kept up-to-date and reviewed every 6 years through taking an adaptive management approach. Properly applied, this course can lead to the achievement of GES in the EU's marine waters by 2020

*"We want to live in a Scotland where the uses we make of our land, seas and air are integrated and sustainable. We want to live in a Scotland where – at the same time – people enjoy and explore the world around them; carefully utilise the riches and benefits of the land, sea and air; and protect and enhance the ecosystem we share with all other forms of life."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

## **Marine Protected Areas**

We need MEPs to monitor the species and habitats to be protected under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and ensure adequate protection and appropriate management is provided. Where necessary, this will mean member states designating further inshore and offshore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPA) sites to complete the fully representative network of marine protected areas. This requires action in the next five years, and once attained, the European Parliament must continue to monitor the capacity of the designated networks to meet GES under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS), should be able to halt the loss of marine biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and contribute to meeting the goals of the Aichi biodiversity targets.

## **Fisheries**

With a reformed Common Fisheries Policy recently in place, we want to see efforts made to successfully coordinate the member states' management and enforcement of regulated fishing activities within existing and forthcoming marine protected areas.

## **Marine Litter**

Within the next five years we want to see the marine litter problem effectively tackled – including in the Celtic Sea and North Sea. Europe must aim to achieve the MSFD Marine Litter Qualitative Descriptor such that “properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm”.

## **Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)**

LINK wants the European Parliament to adopt and oversee the implementation of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation, as already improved during the co-decision process. The cap on the number of Species of Union Concern should be removed, species native to parts of the EU marine waters included, and an independent scientific advisory body established. The legislation should not be allowed to provide opportunities to weaken domestic arrangements. An EU-wide programme of island restoration is under way and should be continued. In the longer term, we want to see the rates of transport and establishment of INNS in Europe, and exports of INNS from EU countries to the rest of the world, to be both measured properly - and shown to be in decline. The EU should highlight its record of successes, where it has become a centre of excellence in island restoration activity, with the number of predator free islands increasing.

## **Ecosystem Services**

Europe can be proud of its record in the development of 'The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity' (TEEB) within a global process. We want to see this work continued and for it to become more central to the legislative and administrative processes inside the EU.

# Working towards a sustainable society



*"We want to live in a Scotland where our natural and built environment benefits people's health. We want our natural and built environments to promote good health amongst the people of Scotland. We want threats to health prevented and a strong appreciation of the huge and diverse benefits to physical and mental health that come from an unpolluted, accessible, high-quality natural environment and a built environment that promotes activity and well-being."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

Within the next five years we want to see the EU sharpen its environmental performance as we work to improve the resilience and sustainability of our society – and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We believe our priorities would enhance the lives of Europe's peoples and improve their communities and economy.

## **Waste**

We want MEPs to develop European policy on product design, in pursuit of the phasing out of residual waste. We want to see an extension of producer responsibility to support the introduction of a circular economy that eliminates pollution and residual waste. The EU Waste Framework Directive creates a new route map for waste and resource use policy in Europe. This Directive has set targets to recycle 50% of some streams of household waste (glass, paper, plastics, metals) and 70% of construction and demolition waste by 2020. The Directive also mandates prevention plans to be produced and these had to be transposed into law by December 2010. We want to see these targets extended and made more ambitious in the run up to 2020.

## **Food**

We want to see MEPs assist in the process of improving people's health and food by:

- directing more support and investment towards sustainable farming systems - especially organic and High Value Nature (HNV) farming and food production;
- introducing a more coordinated and precautionary approach to allowing cultivation of GM crops across the EU, with long-term decision being made in the public interest and not corporate interests;
- ensuring compliance with minimum EU environmental and animal welfare requirements;
- introducing true sustainability criteria for biofuels production and use;
- ensuring agricultural support is not negatively impacting other countries and incentivising best practice within EU itself;

- ensuring that the next CAP reform better supports agro-ecological farming and delivers more public goods; and
- supporting the development of environmentally sustainable aquaculture that provides a net fish-protein gain and, therefore, becomes a significant contributor to future food security.

## **Historic environment**

We want our MEPs to actively pursue a directive dealing with cultural heritage and the historic environment. This Directive should encompass both marine and land-based heritage, and a concordance between them.

*"We want to live in a Scotland where education reconciles economic, social and environmental issues. We want all levels of education and lifelong learning in Scotland to underline the importance of our society, economy and environment, locally and globally, as part of the curriculum and in practice."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

## **National Parks**

We want to see MEPs carry out EU-wide research into role and value of National Parks – and to promote the value of ecosystem services provided by the Parks. We want the EU to encourage member states to designate more National Parks in under-represented areas.

## **Arts and Culture**

Across the EU we want to ensure that the production of art works or props is not harmful to the natural environment and complies with environmental and animal welfare legislation where applicable. In addition, we hope that the construction of new art museums, concert halls, theatres or cinemas as well as artistic interventions in the urban or rural environment, and even the organisation of art fairs and biennials, become subject to regular environmental impact assessment by government agencies. We want MEPs to encourage art institutions and art, music, dance, literature or film festivals and biennials to take measures to reduce their carbon footprints.

## **Crime and Policing**

We want the European Parliament and institutions to be vigilant with regard to new threats to people's safety from pollution, INNS, and the loss of biodiversity. We want to see the EU take the lead in the strengthened implementation of the CITES Convention and the fight against the illegal trade in wildlife.



# Working towards sustainable governance



*"We want to live in a Scotland where openness and public participation are central features of our governance. We want the methods and processes of government at all levels in Scotland to be open and properly transparent and, as a matter of course, to include genuine representatives of our communities of place and interest in all political decision-making."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

Over the next five years we want to see the EU continue to embed the environment and sustainability within the governance of Europe. We all benefit from institutions which have a clear direction to ensure that environmental improvement is written into legislative and administrative processes. In turn, governance improves when citizens are fully able to know what is being done in their name – and to participate in the decision making processes. We believe that our priorities will help progress towards good governance.

## **Environmental Justice**

Within the next five years we want to see the EU to adopt the "Access to Justice Pillar" of the Aarhus Convention as a Directive. This will ensure that citizens have proper access to environmental justice, and follow the similar Directives for the information and participation 'Pillars' of the Aarhus treaty. We want the EU Commission to take member states to the European Court of Justice if they continue to fail to fully implement Aarhus. In the longer term we want to see MEPs monitor the consistent interpretation and implementation of these Directives and push for an international treaty to extend their benefits across the planet.

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

We want to see MEPs support the retention of strong Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment Directives. We look for improved synergies being found between SEA and other environmental directives, policies and legislation (while retaining requirements for specific assessments and resisting the review of individual directives).

*"We want to live in a Scotland where decisions are taken as close to people as possible. We want to see real subsidiarity, where decisions are taken at the nearest appropriate and practical level, and where communities of place and interest can assess the long-term economic, social and environmental consequences for their lives and the lives of future generations before decisions are made."*

LINK's Referendum Challenge (2013)

## Further details

Further details of these, and other policy areas, are available in the LINK Rolling Manifesto - where they are integrated with policy ideas for the local, Scottish, UK and international levels of government. The Rolling Manifesto is published at <http://www.scotlink.org/publications/rolling-manifesto/>



European  
Parliament  
Brussels  
Photo Credit: Xaf

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a wide community of environmental interest, sharing the common goal of contributing to a more sustainable society. LINK provides a forum for these organizations, enabling informed debate, assisting co-operation within the voluntary sector, and acting as a strong voice for this community in communications with decision-makers in Government and its agencies, Parliaments, the civic sector, the media and with the public.

Acting at local, national and international levels, LINK aims to ensure that the environmental community participates in the development of policy and legislation affecting Scotland. LINK works mainly through Taskforces –groups of members working together on topics of mutual interest, exploring the issues and developing advocacy to promote sustainable development, respecting environmental limits.

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