

Minutes of the Scottish Environment LINK Annual General Meeting held on 26 June 2008 at AK Bell Library, Perth

PRESENT

Trustees	John Mayhew (Chair), David Downie, Ian Findlay, Andrew Fairbairn, Lloyd Austin, Deborah Long
Member Reps	Craig McAdam Buglife, Jenny Mollison SAGS, Roger Powell SCRA, Gordon Gray Stephens SNW, Beryl Leatherland MCoFS, Helen McDade JMT, Peter Bickmore-Dundas & Charles Strang APRS, Alistair Beeley NEMT, Elaine Reid NTS, Robert Maund SCNP, Calum Duncan MCS, Paul Gallagher SWT
Staff	Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh, Eilidh Macpherson, Hugh Green, Ylva Haglund

John Mayhew (JHM) opened the meeting and welcomed all participants.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Fred Edwards (Hon Fell), Eila Macqueen (Trustee), Anne Youngman (Bat Conservation Society), Paul Kirkland (Butterfly Conservation Society), Ian McCall (Ramblers Association Scotland), Martin Spray (WWT), Susan Guest (Staff).

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 15 June 2007

These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were proposed by John Mayhew and seconded by Beryl Leatherland.

3. Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts for the Year 2007/08

JHM presented the trustee's report and accounts which had been produced in accordance with the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and SORP. In terms of membership over the period, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland had resigned as an associate member preferring not to sign up for full membership in the wake of members' decision to close the associate category. Other ex-associate members were now reviewing their positions; for the year 2008-09 these would be eligible for the introductory subscription rate of two-thirds of the full rates. The Soil Association Scotland had demitted for a year and hoped to take up active membership again from 2009. The LINK Board had just endorsed an application from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and would be recommending this to members shortly.

Amongst other highlights the year had included:

- Publication of *LINK Vision to 2011* autumn 2007 promoting LINK's asks over the range of policy areas LINK covers for the new administration in Scotland
- Delivery of a marine campaign made possible in Scotland and throughout the UK by generous funding from the Tubney Trust and Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. For Scottish LINK this had meant the additional support of two dedicated project staff (Alan Wells and Ylva Haglund), a campaign strategy overseen by the marine task

force and including new website, DVD and other promotional material – all calling for sound legislation for Scotland

- Working with Scottish Government, other networks and other sectors on climate change; development of best practice climate emissions guidance for members (thanks to Jolin Warren and the LINK steering group). This had also involved task forces in reviewing where their positions impact on climate and revising and updating LINK's climate and energy positions for this autumn (thanks to steering group, convenors and staff)
- A very successful Scottish Environment Week around the theme of climate and sustainability in February (thanks to parliamentary staff and steering group)
- Twentieth birthday celebrations which had included publication of the report by Michael Scott OBE on LINK's first two decades (*A Strong Coherent Voice*, available at http://www.scotlink.org/LINK_information/publications.php) and a Reception at Edinburgh Castle hosted by Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead MSP in November
- A very good Congress in November also allowing opportunity to consider the network's collective potential and aspirations on climate related work
- The establishment of a new series of LINK meetings with the Environment Minister. This had followed extensive discussion at the AGM in 2007 about the need for LINK-led liaison separate from the eNGO heads' series of meetings known as the G6 (including FoES, RSPB, SWT, WWFS, more recently BTCV and now also NTS). Under the new arrangements LINK had met on a quarterly basis with Mike Russell MSP; sometimes meetings had involved other Ministers also (on energy issues) or the Cabinet Secretary. This was working well in terms of fielding access round LINK members. The 'LINK' place at G6 meetings was also still available and JHM intended to delegate this as much as possible in the coming year.

JHM reminded the meeting that the membership's aim is to raise at least 50% of essential LINK costs from membership subscriptions, and that the Board was committed to pursuing this. In addition, as LINK's current corporate strategy covered the period to March 2009, the Board had agreed to revisit and re-set strategy from 2009 to 2012. The work would be carried out with the help of Bruce Britton during 2008. The Board believed current objectives were still relevant.

David Downie reported that the accounts had been scrutinised by the Board's funding subgroup who had worked with Morris & Young Accountants to ensure that everything was sound. The subgroup involved several trustees and staff who gave more time to financial aspects of LINK's work than had been the case in the past. He thanked staff, particularly Hugh Green. Picking up on the earlier mention of associate membership he reminded the meeting that this category had been phased out and subscriptions reviewed for parity, with the primary concern of allowing and sustaining membership of smaller organisations in LINK. So far the outcomes were good – maintaining diversity in the membership. The need to balance sources of LINK's funding would continue; and the importance of membership income had been highlighted at an OSCR meeting during the year which had noted that for membership organisations would continue to need their membership income in the face of challenges to and competition for trust and other funding. Fundraising was going well (thanks to Alice Walsh and others) and LINK attempts to make its activities as fund-able as possible. DD noted that this had been a busy year especially with the marine project running. The organisation had coped well and he recommended the report and accounts for approval.

There were no questions from members. Charles Strang proposed and Lloyd Austin seconded the report and accounts.

JHM reported that the Board had agreed to review LINK's own environmental policy in the wake of the network's discussions on climate and production of emissions guidance and looked forward to reporting against this at the next AGM.

4. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiners

DD recommended that LINK once again appoint Morris & Young in Perth as LINK's financial examiners, with whom LINK now had a well established and satisfactory working relationship. Deborah Long seconded the proposal and the meeting agreed.

5. Annual Subscriptions for the year 2008/09

DD explained that LINK was pursuing the schedule members had set to meet 50% of essential costs by 2011. This was reviewed regularly by the Board's funding subgroup who would be looking at subscriptions again in the coming months and considering options and policy for the period beyond 2011. This would involve consultation with members with as much information available as is currently provided. LINK was not quite on target at this point, in terms of existing membership and changing patterns there. The Board was aware that subscription rates cannot be adjusted too significantly and that changes and timescales must be reasonable. JHM supported the proposed review and indicated that recommendations would come to members for approval.

There were no questions from members. DD proposed the 2008/09 schedule for approval, Helen McDade seconded this and the meeting approved the schedule.

6. Election of Board of Trustees, Office Bearers; appointment of President

6.1 Trustees - JHM reported that LINK can have up to twelve trustees, ten of whom are elected by member bodies and two co-opted by elected trustees. Over 2007 to 2008 all elected places had been filled and the Board had co-opted Ian Findlay (CEO of Paths for All Partnership) and Mike Robinson (Chair of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, Head of Development with RBGE) for their skills in governance, development and fundraising.

No new nominations had been received in response to the request circulated. Those trustees who were standing down by rotation were willing to stand again: they were Francoise van Buuren, David Downie, Andrew Fairbairn and John Mayhew. A Chair to succeed John himself would need to be identified; the Board preferred to find this from existing trustees.

JHM urged that with LINK a members' network, designed to serve that network and needing member participation, members should consider putting themselves or their colleagues forward. Although the situation was healthy for the coming year, the Board was keen that one or two new nominations come forward for 2009 to ensure fresh blood.

JHM had left employment with the NTS over the year and the Board had unanimously supported his continuing as LINK Chair; this was also acceptable in constitutional terms. JHM was happy to continue in office for a further year. If a successor from the existing Board did not emerge from the Board's exploration, someone would need to be identified from the wider network and invited to Board meetings during 2008-09 as an observer.

JHM proposed that the four trustees named be re-elected and this was seconded by Calum Duncan and Beryl Leatherland and agreed by all.

6.2 Office bearers - JHM asked if the meeting would approve the proposal to elect from the trustees himself, Deborah Long and David Downie to the offices of Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, respectively. The proposal was seconded by Alistair Beeley and agreed by all.

6.3 President - JHM reported that the search-group set up to identify a successor to Fred Edwards had continued since last June and did not have a candidate to recommend to members. It had not been possible to include the recommendation (constitutionally speaking) in the papers for the AGM; however a Board recommendation would shortly circulate and members would be balloted electronically (a practice confirmed as acceptable by LINK's lawyer, Colin Liddell).

The recommended candidate was Helen Zealley, just retired as FoES Chair, committed to the environment and to ensuring strong links between environment, sustainability and the public health sector and debate. JHM was delighted to recommend Helen Zealley, whom the search-group and Board had earlier unanimously approved. Helen was willing in principle to serve for up to three years and aware that the appointment needed to be renewed annually.

The meeting was pleased that the search had concluded so positively and it was agreed that further biographical detail should be sought from Helen and circulated in advance of her first engagement with LINK. The recommendation was noted and there were no further questions.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 National Parks Review and LINK - The Landscape Task Force wished to know if there were any plans for LINK work in relation to the 5-year review of national parks in Scotland. JHM indicated that this had been discussed by the Board that day, raised by Francoise van Buuren and separately by Bob Aitken (Hon Fell). Given members' and wider voluntary role in the debate which had led to the establishment of Scotland's parks, there was likely to be LINK-wide interest in the next phase. A one-day seminar for LINK members was therefore proposed, which the Board would be asking the LTF to coordinate to explore the issues and potentially discuss collective action.

7.2 Gathering on climate change and behaviour change – A one-day LINK gathering in later August was being planned (date to circulate shortly) for discussion of members' and any LINK-wide initiative on lifestyle changes in relation to the climate challenge.

7.3 Acknowledgements - JHM acknowledged the work of all LINK's staff over the year, with thanks on behalf of the network. He also thanked LINK's trustees for all their inputs, and in particular those of Vice-Chair and Treasurer; trustee investment was widely appreciated by all. A vote of appreciation was also recorded to LINK's Honorary Fellows, hard-working task force Convenors and other project leaders, member body Reps, other Reps on task forces and steering groups, and external forums. And the ongoing support of Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Trust was warmly acknowledged.

Alice Walsh thanked the local rangers for an excellent field trip to Magdalen Hill in Perth, enjoyed by several members and some staff that afternoon.

The meeting recorded a vote of thanks to John Mayhew for his commitment and work over the year; members were glad to see John staying on as Chair for the coming year.

7.4 Training Day 28 July - Eilidh Macpherson reminded members of the parliamentary training planned for 28 July in Edinburgh. Details would circulate shortly. Members were encouraged to flag interest a.s.a.p.

7.5 Marine campaign postcard and e-action - Ylva Haglund distributed copies of the marine task force campaign postcard calling on First Minister to deliver sound legislation. She would make these, and the e-action going live from 14 July, widely available to all LINK members.

7.6 Beachwatch (MCS) - Calum Duncan encouraged members, especially those with coastal properties and local area groups around Scotland's coasts, to encourage action during this year's Beachwatch on 20-21 September. Details at http://www.adoptabeach.org.uk/pages/page.php?cust_id=2 and review of Beachwatch 2007 available from Calum on email scotland@mcs.org.uk

Drafted by JA, July 2008

