



Report of the LINK Members' Congress 2011

Scotland's place in the world: sustainability and success in leaner times

Deborah Long welcomed the gathering and introduced the review of highlights of the year.

Introduction

The theme covers Economic decline and the solutions to our debt ridden age is sustainable development: not sustained economic growth but sustainable growth. LINK has so far developed our ideas in the [Environment in a Time of Cuts](#) paper. Today is our opportunity to build on this, take account of the discussions we had at our Greening Economics seminar in August and pool our ideas for future development through working with the Scottish Government and contributing to the IUCN Europe priorities for 2013 – 2016.

We have three speakers to inspire and inform our discussions.

What are we hoping to achieve this afternoon?

The amazing thing is that we've got to the early 21st century without having written nature into our accounts.

1. Work in Scotland, in the Beyond GDP - [Measuring what Matters](#), a report by the Carnegie Round Table suggests we should be measuring the key attributes of the environment which signal its long term health and the long-term sustainability of our activities, through the Government's National Performance Framework.
2. In the UK, the UK's [National Ecosystem Assessment](#), the Domesday Book Plus of our age, a record of where we are now and how fast we are, in many cases, sliding towards environmental chaos.
3. And across the world, [The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity](#) (TEEB) which actually calculates the relative costs and benefits of acting, or not acting, to protect the 'services' of nature – the providing and regulating, as well as cultural and supporting services. The benefit: cost ratios are so staggeringly positive that we would be not just negligent but barking mad to ignore them. It's a powerful tool, this, because it speaks the language of economics which dominates decision-making. **In short, we've got to get smarter at measuring real progress – the things that really matter.**

These are all useful tools that we've begun work on to help us put the sustainability into sustainable development. There are a couple more:

4. The [Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public services](#) has put a strong emphasis on preventative spend – a long term strategy for improving outcomes for people and tackling inequalities. LINK made a point in our [submission to the Commission](#) that regulation – social, economic and environmental, - are all aspects of public services. Inequalities in society cannot be reduced without protection and enhancement of the environment. Often it is the poorest people who are forced to live in the poorest environments: the quality of the physical environment and the benefits to society and economy which a healthy environment supports should underlie all public services.

Preventative action and spend is an ideal vehicle to address inequalities and protect the environment on which we all depend. Yet this idea remains underdeveloped in Scotland. Maybe we can help turn this round today

5. IUCN: draft programme. This is your chance to identify any gaps in priorities, contribute to their development, using examples of work in Scotland and identify where IUCN Europe work might help or support LINK's priorities in the next 4 years. This may be through developing work in Scotland to maximise our use of TEEB and the National Ecosystem Assessment (IUCN Objective 1: reflect the full value of biodiversity to enable action at all levels to achieve conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity), or developing our environmental justice work (IUCN objective 2) or delivering multi-functional land and seascape management both to deliver stable ecosystems resilient to climate change and food security for example (IUCN objectives 3 and 4) and of course continuing to develop and deliver our greening economic policy work (IUCN objective 5). All of this is there for discussion.

IUCN's Developing Action Plan in Europe

Dr Hans Friederich, Regional Director for the IUCN Pan-European Programme

[Presentation available here](#)

The World Congress in September 2012 will agree the new programme for 2013 to 2016. Meantime discussions continue and the draft develops, the focus is on ecosystems and nature based solutions.

As a network, IUCN needs to know if it is doing the right things, engaging with members and knowing what capacity there is within the membership, where the expertise is – there is scope for secondments/staff exchanges to help the knowledge flow.

The IUCN Peatland Programme is a good example of how members and national committees can use the IUCN to achieve more local objectives; it links to the overall work and objectives of IUCN.

Questions after the presentation covered:

Living North Sea Initiative came out of discussions between the oil & gas industry and NGOs. OSPAR rules of decommissioning 700+ installations are questioned for being the correct ecological action in all cases. There is scope there for saving money and using it for additional work in the North Sea, where much restorative work needs to be done. Discussions between the parties continue, there are some difficult issues.

Evidence base does include **knowledge of indigenous peoples**. There is an indigenous peoples' council, which strong effort is made to ensure information is integrated, also within the member's programmes, can be a challenge, and also an issue of governance.

With the role of nature in tackling questions of climate change and food security, what is IUCN's engagement in policy work overlapping with social agendas eg poverty, **reflecting the broader sustainability agenda** rather than the narrower nature silo? This is a

fundamental issue, most governments' spend on international development are targeted to poverty alleviation, and this integration is embedded in IUCN's mission.

The UK Committee aims to keep the Peatland Programme going beyond its current funding to 2012. Members of the Committee (Stuart Brooks and Jonny Hughes) encourage members to attend the UK Committee meeting in **April 2012**, or input to the LINK reps; **an opportunity to influence the UK work programme.**

Preventative Spend – reflections of a Christie Commissioner

Alison Elliot, Christie Commissioner and Convenor of SCVO

[Presentation available here](#)

The Commissioners have a strong sense that the process has opened up discussions that need to be further developed.

Prevention means stopping bad things happening in the future and enhancing quality of life now, because it will save money and because it is the right thing to do. On biodiversity, we should focus on what is there to enjoy, not just the treat of what will happen when it goes. Not everything can be prevented; we need to develop language around this not be hoist by that petard. Although money is a major issue, and is forecast to drop until 2015, this will be to 2007 levels, which suggests room for manoeuvre.

Turning the tanker analogy – prefer evacuation of the tanker to smaller vessels. It is important to remember that good and bad practice generally exist in the same organisations (from recent SOLACE conference).

The Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill has little content at present, so an opportunity for the sector. Change Funds will need to be carefully monitored.

Preventative Spend – what it means for the Environment

Dan Barlow, WWF Scotland

[Presentation available here](#)

Spending on environment offers considerable preventative spend opportunities. Spending now to tackle climate change will save money in the long run. Many immediate and win win opportunities now from pursuing a stronger preventative spend approach to the environment. Spending on sustainable transport, eg cycling infrastructure or on improving the energy efficiency of our homes offer not only opportunities to cut our climate emissions but improve health (e.g. preventing fuel poverty, tackling obesity) and save money for households e.g. from lower fuel bills, reduced transport costs.

Issues around focus on big projects and political timescales/short termism risk hindering our ability to make appropriate decisions for the longer term

National Performance Framework – not perfect but the focus on outcomes is welcome and looking at spending through similar outcome approach could help.

LINK's [Acting Locally](#) manifesto for local government has preventative spend linked in to each area.

Can we be more sophisticated about mixing budgets to get better outcomes, aligning the spending review better to the National Performance Framework?

Questions and comments to both presentations covered:

Christie Commission did not address difficulties of devolution wrt UK and Scotland funds, except for employment.

Change Fund – needs spend across the entire programme of government.

40% 'failure spend' is the cost of short termism. Politicians are well aware of problems and need help in selling the longer term case to constituents. This also needs space in the media. Evidence now of decisions made in the 70s and 80s.

Needs and difficulties of integration across budgets.

Some local authorities consulted the public on 'hard choices' and got useful feedback.

The Draft budget is going the wrong way on Active Travel, opportunity to influence now by writing to Ministers and MSPs.

Panel Discussion – with Alison Elliot, Hans Freiderich, Dan Barlow, Iain Macwhirter, chaired by Stuart Brooks,

How do we move Scotland's measures of success to reflect our progress in becoming a more sustainable country?

Iain Macwhirter made some points at the beginning.

The [Sarkozy Commission](#) focussed on the benefits of the 35 hour week as these were not reflected in increased GDP.

GDP increase is no longer such a useful or meaningful measure of progress; internet vs newspaper, travel vs videoconferencing, equal a decline in GDP. In recession we re-focus on GDP; eg car scrappage scheme in 2008, road building projects which increase GDP.

We need to look again at the working week. Technological improvements are reducing jobs. The National Performance Framework is not well known, and could be used better by the opposition.

Preventative spend – is this asking government to spend twice now, to correct previous bad policy decisions – how can you actually sell it?

We need to factor this in and decide how we do want to spend the budget that we have, leveraging in private money also. In transport, for instance, spend a little less on roads, a bit more on active travel infrastructure. We need to think more about the outcomes we want from our spending.

Question about measures and outcomes. We face big challenges around population, health, climate change; systemic problems, it is very difficult to deal with these in piecemeal fashion. Indicators are simplified, targets can lead to perverse outcomes. Public service has to demonstrate the impacts of specific interventions. How do we shift the evidence needed from simplistic reductionism to more sophisticated indicators.

We are in an evidence based culture, blame culture. Alison Elliot is uneasy about this as a healthy way of going forward, concern about evidence at the expense of explanation and understanding. All kinds of social thinking need to be challenged. Universities could be asked to come up with models. We seldom ask for other expertise or theory that would explain a particular outcome.

Need to challenge the tyranny of indicators like GDP and why they became there in the first place. Linked to growth and employment 1% change equals half million more on the unemployment register. A problem we all have to face up to. Find some way to reconcile needs of environment and needs of economy, ultimately need to be a focus on the working week. Introductions of efficient computer process is destroying whole areas of work. 40% of failure spending is a classic case, will reduce GDP, very difficult to challenge it.

One of the reasons GDP become so dominant is the ways the capitalist model has developed into corporatism, giants in a globalized world, particularly in field of energy – growth of corporatism across the world. Do you think we can move to a situation where we have new indicators for political success, so that corporates have a genuine responsibility for environment and social impacts and not just for their stakeholders.

Political masters have a shorter term perspective, companies have a long term perspective. Some of these arguments today resonate better with CEOs; concern not just about profit, includes risk assessment.

Range of accountability tools; tougher regulations, stronger fiscal penalties and incentives, which still enable those companies to exist but make a level playing field. The NPF sets out at a high level some good ambitions for a Scotland we want to live in, those principles haven't translated down into policies which ensure businesses necessarily operate in compatible ways.

The Occupy movement is an example of a small intervention that can focus widespread discontent. It is important to not feel overwhelmed by corporations because they can be challenged – student demonstrations made it politically unacceptable to bring tuition fees into Scotland. The NPF is the level at which we can make a difference.

Making an impact, on the issue of the budget and the balance between expenditure on active travel and roads, LINK should write to John Swinney that the draft budget is completely unacceptable. In the 1930's the US spent funds on walking and cycling in job creation schemes, which Obama is also doing. A link can be made to the Olympics and Commonwealth Games for a physical activity legacy to which they have committed. There will be no change unless they increase spending on infrastructure. Force the hand of

government to increase the active travel component to more than 1%, and to 10% by 2014 for CW games. (for later discussion).

Outcomes – very complex – can imagine an outcome index replacing GDP. There are the essentials and then the additional, not so difficult to connect (eg RPI). It is essential that we include employment – basic things like sharing out the money equally is important in a society. Early retired can do voluntary work though this should not be at the expense of the younger generation's jobs. Technological development is making many areas of work unnecessary. The green economy will create jobs, also restoration of ecosystems will require human labour. There is a difference between volunteering and jobs –there is plenty to be done, the issue is how many are paid for this and how many done by volunteers. There are massive opportunities to make more sophisticated, different decisions. We can choose between win-wins in a relatively short timeframe (eg broadband across the country), above vanity projects that might benefit one area.

Corporations, taking a long term view, are legally obliged to make as much money for stakeholders. If they are presented with something legal they will do it, they have no choice.

This is what shareholders expect, and corporates are starting to look at risk reduction. There is a big difference between Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate accountability. We can be much tougher on tax and regulation, but as long as profit is number one demand, there is a weakness in the system, but still quite a lot can be done.

Inequality – we have not done a good job of sorting out inequalities in Scotland, eg health. Our use of resources, using 3 times per capita of our global share (ecological footprint), how do we go about reducing that in a long-term and constructive way.

A sizable chunk of our footprint is climate pollution, major impacts are associated with homes, transport and food. We can achieve progress through range of means - technical innovation, individual choices, it is possible - we can wean ourselves off fossil fuels, as long as there is political will. Greater decoupling of our impact from GDP growth possible but it will be a major challenge to see the scale of footprint reduction

Currently in Scotland we are making good progress on energy, some encouraging potential to cut emissions on homes but transport policy is still heading the wrong way.

We are going up a down escalator as regards GDP, measure of the economic paradox is that it is virtually impossible to restore GDP via a consumer society. It is astonishing that Government is still completely locked into it.

The role of the individual and consumption, and in making decisions. There is a groundswell of support for Occupy though relatively few people out there. When people do mobilize around an issue they feel that politicians don't listen. Nothing seems to happen or change. We have problem with our model in that it almost forces down democracy and people get disillusioned.

Chair: Is anyone thinking this isn't relevant to my organization? Anyone struggling to see the relevance?

We have not discussed the role of civil society. GDP is still there because it is easy to count. Alternatives are there, not clear which one to back – maybe need something to set against it. Only civil society can provide more long term thinking.

Our experience is that power is shared across the community, question is do the politicians have the power to do it and do we need to discuss who has the power and open up the discussion. Currently we don't have the civic space to have these discussions and change the paradigm.

Last SCVO AGM heard Richard Wilkinson (co-author of The Spirit Level) on the role of inequality indices as basis of predictions. Scottish measure of inequality is a very small part of the UK picture, it is a lot smaller than we think of it, not skewed by great wealth in London, so dropped a project to develop a Scottish case. SCVO had a conference on civil society, with discussion of roles, one is to prepare the ground of public opinion to enable politicians to do the right thing, not the role we usually think of.

Congress 2009 discussed economics and environment; we need to offer a solution and back one of the alternatives. It is an area that LINK can help with as most member bodies do not work in this big picture area. This is happening, the Economics Forum will be moving this forward, producing a coherent narrative.

Many groups have signed up to the [National Performance Framework briefing](#) prepared by WWF, FoES and Oxfam on high level indicators for the NPF. LINK already has got some traction on economics; with evidence to the budget, finance and environment committees.

We are a civic society. What members do to inform and engage their individual members. CEOs are tending to hold back – can they think about how to engage their members? Froglife considers it important for the sector to get its house in order, to behave ethically across the board.

Remember the achievements of civil society, eg Constitutional Convention leading to the Scottish Parliament and the commitment of changing to renewables by 2020.

We have a model predicated on consumption. Can we rise above this and reconnect with things that are important to us. We won't get there just through regulations – we'll get there if individually and collectively we think about what is important to us. We can move on from it and put it back in its place, with informed interaction between sectors, bravery and honesty from all sections of society.

Individuals need an 'a-ha' moment. Making it socially, making that commitment joint with people. No one can predict or generate it.

Umbrella bodies give added values to what individual organization find hard to do. LINK is looking at underlying drivers rather than responding to short-term pressures, such as

sourcing funding. That is one of the reasons why member bodies have umbrella body like LINK working on these issues

Getting it as specific as possible is the way to do it.

Chair summary

- Agreement that it is relevant to our network .
- Initiative across LINK network to communicate to our own membership in a way that is relevant to them.
- Over and above our own memberships we need to draw a more coherent framework related to outcomes, a challenging piece of work in itself to see if we can agree it without losing impact.
- Agreed that we would write to the Minister about the balance between active travel and roads in the transport budget (also asks on the RPP and Agri budgets – for Friday).

What are the Key priorities for IUCN in Europe? How can LINK benefit from IUCN membership?

Jonny Hughes opened by asking why LINK is a member of IUCN, what do we get out of it, suggesting, Investment, Ideas and Influence.

Initiatives like the Living North Sea can bring in significant funds. To encourage IUCN to pick up on our top priorities, we need to set up some kind of mechanism, bring our ideas together (starting with our rolling manifesto) and feed into the AGM. We can offer staff from member organizations to Brussels. Most of our members have no representation at the EU and we could use IUCN more effectively.

Dave Morris supported this, reminding the gathering of the 90s, when he and Kevin Dunion (then FOES) represented LINK at the IUCN World Congress at Montreal, where 3 resolutions (access to enjoy nature, the Cairngorms Funicular and the Harris Superquarry) were powerful factors in getting these issues high up on governments' agendas.

Dan Barlow The more ways we can point to things that are working in other parts of the world, the better. Concrete examples are useful and hard to ignore.

Stuart Brooks The IUCN brand is valuable and we should be looking to it to open doors, eg [Peatland project](#). Sometimes it carries more weight as a single logo – think of possibilities of IUCN projects or programmes. Find your own route through and engage with it.

Iain Macwhirter: Government needs a reason to listen to this sector. With a brand you get a response. Need to get on more equal terms with the commercial lobby.

Gus Jones: Invertebrates strategy for Scotland. Could IUCN help – we have species of international significance that are being treated as though they are unimportant. Also does IUCN have any engagement with sustainable tourism, eg awards to National Parks.

Stuart Brooks IUCN UK Committee is suffering from lack of engagement, make a proposal.

Lloyd Austin: RSPB and WWF are members of IUCN in their own right. Endorse Jonny's points and the impact of the resolutions at Montreal, which had a big impact in terms of Scottish Office responding. It is a very interesting way to lobby. We can use these opportunities to achieve things at national level under IUCN, eg the Peatland Programme.

Deborah Long summarized next steps for LINK

1. Our challenge was to get smarter in the way we measure progress, to measure what matters.
2. We have explored ways of approaching things and identified some ways forward – harnessing the power of networks, both LINK and IUCN.
3. We will use today's discussions to inform our priorities and plans for LINK and member bodies, how to make these issues relevant to our informed and wider public audiences, our members and supports.
4. Building public support and preparing the ground for politicians to act, the gauntlet Andrew Thin threw down for us at last year's Congress.
5. Identifying the right measures for progress and which ones we back, building on the briefings on the NPF.
6. National Performance Framework - its Government's hostage to fortune. And a means of challenging the predominance of GDP.
7. Our role of guardian of sustainable development, we need to keep reminding decision makers, public, business and parliamentarians of the longer term needs of future generations.

Deborah thanked all the speakers, especially Hans Friederich, who had travelled from Switzerland, and the panel all who gave their time freely, Stuart Brooks for chairing, the Congress steering group (Jonny Hughes, Deborah Long, Aedan Smith, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh), and Kate MacColl. Thanks also to **Perth & Kinross Council** for a grant which enabled LINK to keep the cost of attendance at a reasonable level.

Attending

Charles Strang	Trustee	Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Charles Millar	Trustee of APRS, Director SIFT	APRS/Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust
Eila Macqueen	Director	Archaeology Scotland
John Mayhew	Director	APRS
Gus Jones	Convenor	Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group
Francoise van Buuren	Communications & Engagement Director	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Sue Walker	Chair	CAMERAS
Martine Miller	Policy Officer	Carnegie UK Trust
Alison Elliot	Speaker	Convenor of SCVO
Mary Church	Campaigner and Researcher	Friends of the Earth
Kathy Wormald	CEO	Froglife
Silviu Petrovan	Conservation Coordinator	Froglife
Kat Jones	Asst to Patrick Harvie	Green Party
Denis Mollison	Trustee	Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust
Dr Hans Friederich	Regional Director Pan-European Programme	IUCN
Helen McDade	Head of Policy	John Muir Trust
Rohan Beyts	Trustee	John Muir Trust
Stuart Brooks	Director	John Muir Trust
Iain Macwhirter	Journalist	Sunday Herald
Ross Finnie	President Designate	LINK
Helen Zealley	President	LINK
Deborah Long	Conservation Manager	LINK Chair, Plantlife
Simon Pepper	Honorary Fellow	LINK
Lindsay Roberts	Senior Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer	LINK
Sarah Archer	Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer	LINK
Alice Walsh	Development Officer	LINK
Andy Myles	Parliamentary Officer	LINK
Jen Anderson	Chief Officer	LINK
Kate MacColl	Information Officer	LINK
Rea Cris	Parliamentary Administration Officer	LINK
Beryl Leatherland	Member	Mountaineering Co. of Scot
David Gibson	Chief Officer	Mountaineering Co. of Scot
Hebe Carus	Access and Conservation Officer	Mountaineering Co. of Scot
Ron Payne	Trustee	Mountaineering Co. of Scot
Vicky Cairns	Policy Officer	National Trust for Scotland
Ian Findlay	Chief Officer	Paths for All Partnership
Iain Thom	Trustee	Planning Democracy
Dave Morris	Director	Ramblers Scotland
Helen Todd	Development Officer	Ramblers Scotland
Mike Robinson	Director	Royal Geog Soc of Scot
Lloyd Austin	Head of Conservation Policy	RSPB
Vicki Swales	Head of Land Use Policy	RSPB

Jenny Mollison	Secretary	Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society
Eddie Palmer	Vice-chairman	Scottish Badgers
Steve Jackson	Trustee	Scottish Badgers
Katrina Marsden	Senior Researcher	Scot Parl Information Cre
Alex Kinninmonth	Policy officer - Living Seas	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Paula Charleson	Unit Manager Science & Strategy	SEPA
Clive Mitchell	Programme Office Manager, Strategy Development	SNH
Laura Stewart	Director	Soil Association Scotland
Lillian Kelly	Development Manager	Soil Association Scotland
Gail Wilson	Coordinator	Stop Climate Chaos Scot
Tom Ballantine	Chair	Stop Climate Chaos Scot
Jonny Hughes	Director of Conservation	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Tony King	Head of Policy	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Andrew Fairbairn	Policy & Communications Manager	Woodland Trust Scotland
Angus Yarwood	Policy & Campaigns Officer	Woodland Trust Scotland
Carol Evans	Director	Woodland Trust Scotland
Chris Byrne	Woods under Threat Officer	Woodland Trust Scotland
Dan Barlow	Head of Policy	WWF Scotland

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