

“...The time for equivocation is over. The science is clear. Climate change is happening. The impact is real. The time to act is now...”

“In [a] sense, climate change is as much an opportunity as it is a threat. It is our chance to usher in a new age of green economics and truly sustainable development.”

**Ban Ki-moon**  
Secretary-General, UN  
Bali, December 2007

“Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today... The science is clear. Climate change is happening, and it is caused by human activity. The question is no longer whether to act, but how much to do and how quickly...”

**Gordon Brown**  
Prime Minister  
*The Scotsman*  
7 November 2007

## CLIMATE – LINK'S BIGGEST EVER CHALLENGE

**Report on outcomes of the  
Scottish Environment LINK Congress  
November 2007**

“If the causes of climate change that are within mankind’s control are left unchecked, then everything that sustains our environment will be damaged, and economic and social well-being will suffer enormously. Climate change is the biggest threat that will face Scotland this century...”

“We may be a small nation, but we can make a big difference. Many of the solutions to global problems can be found locally, right here in Scotland.”

**Richard Lochhead**  
(now Cabinet Secretary for  
Environment & Rural Affairs)  
SNP Spring Conference 2007

“It is time to encourage environmental bodies to think and act out of the box, be exciting, take risks, attract attention, challenge shibboleths, expose the bogged down for being bogged down, loosen up the white-knuckle grip on precious old issues, and think of ways of generating new alliances of support for fresh, new, creative approaches.”

**Simon Pepper**  
LINK Honorary Fellow  
quoted in  
*A Strong Coherent Voice*,  
October 2007

## THE THIRD AGE

In compiling *A Strong Coherent Voice* (Scottish Environment LINK, October 2007), it was clear that LINK has gone through two distinct phases in its history. In the early days, LINK had to work with Westminster Ministers who had no strong democratic mandate in Scotland. Their major focus was on economic development, and environment was a low priority. LINK member bodies protested and complained, and occasionally they won small victories.

As the membership of LINK member bodies grew, politicians began to recognise their influence, and LINK's relationship with Ministers began to change. Ministers began to adopt the cause of sustainable development, and recognised the political benefits of being seen to work in partnership with LINK. LINK representatives were welcomed to more regular meetings and invited onto more committees, especially after the advent of the Parliament. LINK's role changed to one of ensuring that Ministers lived up to the rhetoric they adopted.

But as several interviewees for *A Strong Coherent Voice* pointed out, rising to the challenge of climate change will require LINK to address itself to new audiences in new ways: a Third Age in the history of LINK. Many politicians now accept the scientific evidence that climate change is a reality, and that it presents a major threat to future stability, yet they do not feel they have a public mandate for action. When it comes to hard policy decisions on climate-sensitive matters, they revert to short-term political expediency, whether it is on the fuel-tax escalator, airport and motorway extensions, or removing bridge tolls. They argue that the public is not ready to accept lifestyle penalties, and so they opt for votes rather than offering strong leadership.

This lack of a perceived public mandate presents a major challenge and opportunity for LINK, which will have a vital role in taking the message of climate change to the public. It will need to work through the LINK network, and with other networks, to encourage a major change in public attitudes and behaviour. It will need to lead by example, and use the half-million members of LINK organisations as ambassadors in the climate crusade. As Simon Pepper identified in *A Strong Coherent Voice* (see cover) that will require LINK to take risks that are too difficult for politicians, to challenge shibboleths, and to form new alliances to drive fresh, creative approaches. Sometimes it will mean working with Ministers and the Parliament, but it will also mean challenging Ministers when they duck the difficult decisions.

LINK has already done much thinking about this new approach, which was endorsed by a meeting of member bodies in September 2007. The aim of the 2007 LINK Congress was to develop joint thinking on the way forward. Congress, and this report derived from it, therefore take forward the conclusions of *A Strong Coherent Voice*, building on the experience of LINK's first 20 years so it can rise to the challenge of the next 20 years.

## PRESENTING THE CASE

The Congress opened with a presentation by Dan Barlow of WWF Scotland updating delegates on the scientific consensus on climate change. The International Panel on Climate Change had concluded that climate change was a scientific reality, that its primary driver was anthropogenic, and that its global consequences were dire. While it was not possible to state with scientific certainty that any flood in southern England or any hurricane was the direct result of climate change, it was possible to predict that the frequency and severity of such extreme weather events and wider climate impacts would increase progressively in coming years. This would have serious consequences for the environment, for the world economy, for Scottish society and for the work of LINK member bodies.

John Mayhew, Chair of LINK, then outlined the work that LINK had already done on its approach to these issues, including commissioning work from Simon Pepper, a LINK Honorary Fellow, to engage with wider networks on how to address public behaviour change. This initiative had been welcomed by the Scottish Government, and had helped stimulate a joint meeting on climate change, hosted by the Government in December under the title *Making it Easy* (although Congress noted that the lifestyle changes required would *not* be easy, and the best aim would be to make these *easier*).

This led to the keynote presentation by Simon Pepper highlighting why public behaviour change would be the vital element of any Scottish response to climate change, and how this might in turn revitalise the political response. He emphasised existing knowledge on how to stimulate mass change in public behaviour, and challenged LINK to learn from these lessons. His paper is summarised in Appendix 1.

Mike Robinson, Chair of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, then outlined some of the behavioural changes needed to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. He argued that a major shift in culture is needed within 8-10 years. However he said that, in order to effect change, we don't need to convince everyone, only a critical mass, who will then provide leadership for others. Many of Mike's challenges made uncomfortable listening even for committed environmentalists, and would not be easy for the public to accept, but the consequences of failure would be even more unthinkable. His presentation is reproduced in Appendix 2.

## A CLEAR CONSENSUS

Anne McCall of RSPB Scotland then facilitated a discussion on the issues raised by the presentations. During the discussion, some concern was expressed by delegates about the speed at which LINK was moving on this issue, and about the implications for LINK's 'traditional' areas of work (John Mayhew explained that there was no plan to abandon these, although some switching of resource priorities will be inevitable). However, nobody demurred from the scientific consensus, from the belief that this was a vital issue for LINK to tackle, or from the proposal that this would require new ways of working and new partnerships. Some delegates suggested that, while they accepted the arguments, their organisations were not yet ready for such a major step forward. However, there was agreement that those organisations which were moving fastest on these issues had a responsibility to help those who were finding it more difficult to be fleet of foot – a mode of partnership working that has always been a great strength of LINK in the past.

Notes on the discussion session have been filed with the LINK Secretariat (on members' website), but a few key points are worth recording here:-

- There is a political window of opportunity at present, but this may well be short-lived.
- LINK simply cannot be a bystander on behaviour change. We must use our unique connections with a significant segment of the public, and mobilise our (and their) potential to influence behaviour.
- We must be realistic about the limits of this potential, but develop it to the full, just as we demand from other sectors, and collaborate with others to maximise synergies.
- We don't need to talk to *all* of the public. We should begin with our core audience within Member bodies and their communities of interest, then build networks from there. We should share experience, resources, and even supporters to take this forward.
- We need to ensure that we link climate change work into core agendas, with sophisticated approaches and the full engagement of member body trustees.

- We should consider whether there's a single iconic thing we should promote, if Ministers ask us, to address the issue of climate change (comparable to the ban on smoking in public places in the health agenda). Would a simple message like 'slow down' work?
- We need to clarify our vision on what an affordable, low carbon, high-quality lifestyle would look like.
- We need to work with Stop Climate Chaos, in which many LINK member bodies are already involved. Stop Climate Chaos has a much broader membership, but may be looking to organisations like LINK to give leadership on environmental priorities.

## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The second day of Congress was based around a series of workshops, masterminded by Drennan Watson, to explore how LINK might begin to influence public behaviour in response to the challenge of climate change. The workshops considered the needs and constraints for such action, and canvassed commitment for a programme for action. The combined recommendations from the workshops, with some interpretation by the author of this report, offer a proposed work programme, outlined below in rough chronological order, for consideration by the LINK Board and member bodies.

**Pledging action:** It was agreed at the September LINK meeting, that one important first step would be for all member bodies to sign up to a pledge, committing them to take action within their own organisation to reduce their carbon footprints, and to encourage their members to do likewise. A proposed draft pledge had been circulated amongst member bodies before Congress. There is strong support at Congress for developing this pledge / declaration, but some feeling that the draft which member bodies had been invited to sign was not entirely fit-for-purpose. LINK should do more work as a high priority on a pledge which all member bodies would feel happy to sign, since complete or near-complete sign-up of LINK organisations will be important if the pledge is also to influence other partners.

**Making it easier:** There was agreement that LINK should continue to engage with the Scottish Government, other networks and stakeholder groups in the proposed joint working on climate change, as this could be the key to significant critical mass. This might also allow cross-network partnerships to develop on particular issues, independently of the broader initiative. However, it was important for LINK to maintain its independence in this process, and to reserve the right to criticise Scottish Government actions and policies if it felt that the climate implications of these had been considered inadequately or that progress towards a low-carbon economy was too slow.

**Sharing expertise:** There was strong support at Congress for those member bodies who had done most with respect to their own internal policies on travel, procurement, energy etc to share their ideas and approaches with other member bodies, so that appropriate templates would be available for other member bodies to adopt or adapt as appropriate. It was also suggested that specific Member bodies should act as champions for particular areas (eg NTS on building issues, Sustrans on transport plans). This will involve considerable liaison work, but could ultimately enhance the efficiency with which these issues are addressed.

**Coming up with the FAQs:** One immediate proposal towards achieving consensus and promulgating the message was to agree a range of statements in response to 'Frequently Asked Questions' which could be put onto the LINK website, with links from other member body websites. Compiling this would perhaps best suit an outside contractor, but a start could be made quickly with statements on existing issues already agreed in LINK publications. These should include a concise summary of the scientific consensus on climate change,

neutralising the myths promulgated by the ‘denial industry’. It will be essential to ensure full agreement with LINK member bodies on the published response on some delicate issues (eg ‘What is LINK’s view on windfarms and power transmission?’, ‘What is LINK’s view on the role of nuclear power in reducing carbon outputs?’) before these ‘go live’, to avoid any potential for mischief by journalists or the energy industry.

**Celebrating best practice:** To counteract negative perceptions, the workshops suggested it would be beneficial for this website also to include some ‘shining examples’ of good practice. This also will require resources, either for a contractor or the possible part-time officer.

**Activating memberships:** LINK member bodies have tremendous potential to activate their own membership, to encourage and assist them in making their own individual ‘low carbon journeys’, and thereby to encourage their friends and neighbours to follow suit. To help this, it would be important for LINK to develop a strong shared message at the national policy level, and then for member bodies to take this and tailor it to their own memberships. Marketing and communication colleagues would need to be fully engaged in this work.

**Leading and guiding:** One suggestion was that an environmental champions from member bodies should get together as a group to drive work within LINK and its wider networks. In effect this would be a Public Attitudes Task Force. The LINK Board should consider carefully how this would blend with the existing Climate Change Task Force and the present ‘2020 Steering Group’ (which has led the public attitudes work to date) to avoid a plethora of overlapping groups. The ideal might be two groups: (1) the existing Climate Change Task Force, with an overview of technical expertise and how this relates to the ‘traditional agendas’ of Member bodies and (2) a ‘Political Climate’ Steering Group, evolved from the present 2020 group, driving the public attitudes work at the wider policy and political level, and providing ongoing inspiration and guidance for LINK and its member bodies.

**Thinking together:** The workshops recognised the need for member bodies to align their public messages and organisational priorities more closely, if public perceptions and thus public behaviour were going to be affected significantly. This can be achieved by joint seminars and workshops, by cajoling and by leading by example. The LINK Board and the ‘Political Climate’ Steering Group will need to take the lead on this. In doing so, the LINK Secretariat will require additional support, either using the services of an external contractor (noting the excellent work that Simon Pepper has done to date), or perhaps by a part-time officer, if resources can be identified for such an appointment.

**Influencing attitudes:** The workshops suggested that it would be helpful to carry out initial research on the attitudes of the members of at least a sample of LINK member bodies, to assess their views on personal responsibilities for addressing the climate change challenge. This could only be done through an external contract, which would require resources.

**Counting down to 2016(?):** One suggestion from the workshops was for the development of a Countdown Plan, outlining what needs to happen in the 8/10 years we now have to ‘save the world’. This will need to include specific (SMART) targets for LINK member bodies (eg reducing organisational footprints by 8% per year). If LINK is truly to lead by example, this will need to be challenging and ambitious. It was suggested that the Energy Saving Trust might provide external benchmarking for such a programme. Taking this forward will require the full agreement of member bodies (because backsliding by any LINK organisation would diminish the power of the message). If the LINK Board approves this as an idea, and the membership is in agreement, then the ‘Political Climate’ Steering Group might lead its development, although further support would be needed, perhaps from the part-time officer.

## Acknowledgements

*Scottish Environment LINK is grateful to Awards for All for a grant which funded this report. Thanks also to the '2020' Steering Group of LINK Trustees, Honorary Fellows and staff, to all the speakers and workshop facilitators, and to the 68 participants (mostly from LINK member bodies) who contributed so thoughtfully to the discussions and workshops.*

*The report was compiled by LINK Honorary Fellow, Michael Scott.*

## Appendix 1: Key points from the presentation by Simon Pepper

In considering how we can help to encourage the much-needed change in public behaviour in relation to the climate, we have to understand firstly how behaviour is influenced, and secondly what particular attributes we have, as NGOs, that might help us to wield our influence most effectively. In this, we have a great deal to learn from the field of social marketing (influencing voluntary behaviour to achieve social objectives) and decades of its experience in fields such as smoking, obesity and road safety campaigns.

Key lessons seem to be roughly as follows: People change their behaviour in stages, so we have to be careful to assist them in a way which is relevant to the stage which they are at. They respond to a mix of stimuli, some personal, some peer-related. About 40% of people are 'inner directed' personality types, are motivated to change their behaviour largely in response to information and knowledge. We can continue to feed their interest and commitment with our usual supply of facts and guidance. But a majority are more influenced by social pressures – especially from immediate friends, family, colleagues and community. Social norms, along with obvious carrot-and-stick moderators such as convenient alternative options, price signals, regulation, etc, are therefore a very important influence on widespread behaviour.

NGOs have a number of attributes which make them well suited to contribute to these changing norms, complementing the obvious roles of government and business sectors. We have a direct line to a quite substantial segment of the population as our supporters, and an indirect one to many more as visitors to our properties, literature or websites. We are trusted much more than government or business, and we occupy a position of ethical leadership free from the motivations of power or profit. We should use these attributes to challenge the forces driving our consumption culture in the wrong direction, and to present climate-friendly behaviours as 'the right thing to do'. And we'll do that better if we show first that we do 'the right thing' ourselves – ie get our own house in order. Also, we'll be more effective if we do it together, and in concert with efforts by other sectors to create an enabling context for change.

Finally, we must recognise that people will only change their behaviour if there is a benefit for them, whether in terms of convenience, cost-saving, or just a good feeling – in short if it is worth their while. Encouragement, support, praise and facilitation are important, and solutions are often best found at a community level, with help from the centre.

The benefits of these changes will be found not only in the direct reduction of emissions *per capita*, but in raised levels of support for measures - essential if the necessary reduction targets are to have any likelihood of being met - which government and business can't introduce without public support.

## Appendix 2: Call to Action by Mike Robinson, Chair of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS)

Despite the environment sector growing since the 1970s from a marginal activity to perhaps 5 to 6 million supporters in the UK alone and environmental awareness being at a zenith, we have struggled to convert this into meaningful action and commitment. Our populace have drifted further and further from nature, despite us. And now we have a crisis in front of us which is several scales larger than anything we have ever faced.

The science of climate change has been around for 40 years, but we haven't communicated it properly yet. Over 56% of the UK population still thinks there are two schools of science on whether climate change even exists or not. Would we find the same split amongst our visitors and supporters? The science is unequivocal, so we cannot use this as an excuse. So why have we held back? Why are we still holding back?

Do we think it's not 'core' and there are other more pressing issues to prioritise? If so, what exactly is it that is 'more pressing'? Are we avoiding talking about it, avoiding addressing it, because we don't really know what to do, and it takes us out of our comfort zone? Are we hampered by political familiarity? Are we scared of alienating our supporters?

People are holding onto the doubt surrounding the issue to justify inaction. Uncertainty, disagreement, half heartedness and other pedantry leave debate and manoeuvre room for everyone who would rather not accept this truth. And let's face it, that is every one of us. The truth is unpalatable.

But, of course, it is only by confronting it that we can hope to do something about it. We need to mobilise more of our supporters than ever before and perhaps in a more direct way than ever before. We need to flex our muscles as a collective body. We need to change our behaviours, and encourage our supporters to change theirs. We need to herald good practice, laud positive role models and case studies, demystify the issue and explain our possible futures. Without this our politicians will not move.

LINK is uniquely placed to play a role – our supporters represent the largest single niche group of people who can lead this charge towards a new sustainable future. People who have a sympathy to the environment for whatever specific reason – whether it is humanitarian, religious, mountains, plants, birds, butterflies, cycling – these are surely the most likely people in society to understand and accept the need for behaviour change. Politicians will not act if they don't think people will accept the change. We don't just need to tweak people's behaviour, we need to lead a significant change in culture. And we need to do it fast. We have 8 years and counting! That is only two terms of political office.

Whilst some people claim to welcome solutions to this issue, in my experience we are resistant to almost everything proposed. Some solutions – and there need to be many – are simple, effective and cheap to do and could improve our quality of life. But even these require change, and people don't want that unless they really, really have to. And by the time it is so bad that it is unavoidably obvious to us in the west, it will be too late – in the developing world some people think it already is.

We urgently need to underpin the consensus so people understand the need for change. We need to provide evidence that people will accept different measures, curtailment of certain activities and limits on others. We have to encourage politicians to act, and then lobby them to be brave and to ensure compliance. In short, the environment sector has to up its game. This thing is bigger than all of us.

Even SCCS isn't big enough. Our members have around 1½ million supporters in Scotland. But if we called for change, action, response – how many of your, and our, supporters would respond? The level of genuine understanding of this issue is poor, and we risk losing this debate into small ineffective but well intentioned gestures, rather than meaningful change. But we all have this unique niche support. And we have something else. The people who support us trust us and, importantly, expect us to lead.

I do not believe we will see genuine progress until at least our supporters are behind the need for change. In order to affect change we do not need to convince everybody, we just need a critical mass. The hundredth monkey effect, if you will. SCCS supposedly has influence through you to perhaps 20–30% of the population of Scotland! Think what we can achieve if we can start to introduce an appetite for change.

Isn't climate change what we've been building towards? We've been battling unsustainable practice for years and we've been losing. And, lo and behold, we're now in a crisis. Are we ready for it? And are we prepared to do what is necessary? The environment sector is in an ideal place to grab this and lead the charge. Yet how many of you have tried to mobilise or effect real change in more than a few of your members.

We can risk doing nothing, and see how quickly things happen. Or we can risk doing something. Maybe we will lose some popular support in the short term, but in 5–10 years time we will have no credibility if we haven't done everything we can to persuade people to act. This is the most urgent environmental issue ever. In its resolution lie paths to a lonely selfish crisis strewn collapse, or a brilliant shift in consciousness, cohesion and social responsibility. Are we going to stand up and lead this charge or are we to sit fumbling uncertainly on the side lines?

## Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

SCC is a UK-based coalition of faith, humanitarian and environmental charities. SCC Scotland has one and a half million supporters in Scotland including many of the faith and church groups, unions, community councils, mental health bodies, environment NGOs (including many LINK member bodies), humanitarian and aid agencies and others. It is currently helping establish a cross-party group on climate change in the Scottish Parliament and will provide the secretariat, it runs training and presentations on climate change, has written and published many articles and a series of FAQs, runs a web site and separate volunteers web site, has spoken at fringe events and party conferences, helped organise workshops and conferences with Edinburgh Council, ran a month-long series of talks, works with a host of organisations, and is continuing to bring high profile and expert speakers to Scotland to encourage greater understanding of the issues.

SCCS is also developing links between academics, NGOs and organisations involved in implementing solutions and ran the first network event for these groups during a climate weekend at the Royal Botanic Garden this November. Representatives have met with politicians at all levels and continue to work through the policy and advisory group (chaired by Clifton Bain of RSPB) to lobby over both the UK and Scottish climate bills. A media and events group (chaired by Clare Shelley of Christian Aid) is also established to maximise coverage of the issue and help move the debate towards solutions. In the new year we are working with the collective galleries to encourage arts groups throughout Scotland to adopt the messages and help interpret climate change. Details will be available in early January.

SCCS is run by one member of staff (Ruth Dawkins based out of the RSPB office in Edinburgh). Please contact her on 0131 311 6512 or email [ruth@stopclimatechaosscotland.org](mailto:ruth@stopclimatechaosscotland.org).