



Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Charity Number SC000296

Operating Principles

Updated April 2015

References in these Operating Principles to "LINK" means the Scottish charitable guarantee company known as Scottish Environment LINK and to any "Article" means reference to the Article of that number in LINK's Memorandum and Articles of Association adopted in November 2014.

These Operating Principles have been promulgated in terms of Article 50 and are reviewed from time to time by LINK's Board of Trustees. Though always subordinate to LINK's Memorandum and Articles of Association, they are intended to provide additional explanation of some constitutional points as well as guidance to members and potential members on what LINK can and cannot provide, what this 'collective' requires of its individual members to be effective, and definition of its 'modus operandi'. In case of doubt, interpretation and development of these Operating Principles is a matter for decision by the Board of Trustees, in the interests of LINK as a whole.

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1. WHAT DOES LINK DO?

LINK was founded to ensure that collective work amongst NGOs achieves something additional to the individual efforts of member bodies. LINK's record demonstrates the advantages of a collective approach, not replacing individual action or challenging members' sovereignty, but adding value to members' work and progressing the environmental objectives in common. LINK works best where members recognise that the value of consensus on the common ground amongst them outweighs the importance of differences between them; the extent of common ground - even on what may initially appear to be contentious issues, is often enough to merit advocacy work with decision-makers. For those new to LINK, Michael Scott's history of the first 20 years *A Strong Coherent Voice*, is a short, often entertaining account very much worth reading.

LINK is most usefully seen as 'enabling' - a vehicle through which the environment movement in Scotland can share ideas, skills and information, develop common approaches and take collective action where this offers benefits not apparent through other avenues. For those not involved directly in the environment movement (in Scotland and further afield) LINK also offers a way in to the movement, a network of contacts and information.

The LINK 'vehicle' allows its membership to network, pursue issues and employ tactics which, as collective initiatives, can achieve more for the movement and the environment than individual action alone. In determining its key priorities LINK reflects its members' collective concerns: it should not be seen as an organisation with a life over and above these. On the other hand, the value to members of a LINK voice, flagging up collective concerns, developing consensual positions ahead of the game, and representing these in dialogue with other players, is evident. The operational role which LINK staff play in this ever dynamic context can be key; their experience and overview of what works should be respected and exploited.

2. WHO CAN JOIN LINK AS A MEMBER?

2.1 Guidance on Membership Criteria

LINK's Memorandum & Articles of Association state that full membership "shall be open to any voluntary organisations (as defined in the version of the Operating Principles operable from time to time in terms of Article 50), whether corporate or unincorporated, who shall apply for full membership in writing to the Secretary and can confirm when so doing that they meet the following criteria (which the existing full members shall determine whether they do so meet), namely that:

- (a) they are voluntary non-profit-distributing organisations; and
- (b) they are either Scottish organisations, or have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity; and
- (c) their main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with Clause 3(b) of the Memorandum; and
- (d) they can demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland.

LINK's charitable purposes are specified in Clause 3 of Its Memorandum of

Association, namely:

- (a) to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of voluntary organisations involved with the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage;
- (b) to advance the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability; and
- (c) to advance the education, understanding and responsible awareness of the natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability;

Applicants must meet (b) above and may meet either or both of the other purposes.

By 'voluntary organisations' LINK includes the following:

- which are voluntary, non-profit-distributing organisations
- which are either Scottish organisations, or which have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity;
- whose main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with Clause 3(b) of the Memorandum;
- which demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland
- which are autonomous and independent of government or its agencies, and of primarily commercial interests
- which have been established by an initiative of citizens or other voluntary organisations
- which demonstrate clear citizen-driven ethos
- where deployment of the resources of the organisation is overseen by a committee of citizens (trustees, council, management committee etc) working for the organisation's objects
- whose objectives are guided or approved by their wider memberships at least annually
- Applicants are required to meet sufficient of these criteria to demonstrate the voluntary way in which their organisation is managed and directed and a Scottish locus for determining policy in Scotland.

2.2 Process for Application

Applicants for membership (for Organisational and Business Supporters - see 3 below) should complete the membership application form on the website and submit this with relevant background material to the LINK office. Applications are considered first by LINK's Board of Trustees which conducts any background enquiries before making a recommendation to the existing members.

It is important that existing members consider the details of applicant bodies and the recommendation of the Board in casting their vote.

Membership applications are determined by the existing members: approval by a two-thirds majority of all existing members is required to admit new members (Article 5). In most cases the period between submission and decision is about 3 months. In some cases, the applicant organisation may be asked to attend a

meeting involving LINK members to support its application. In these cases, the application process can take up to 6 months.

2.3 Introductory Membership

During the first year, new members enjoy Introductory Membership at 2/3 of the normal cost (details of LINK subscription bands are on the website). Over that time the new member can participate in all LINK areas gaining familiarity with the network, its current concerns and *modus operandi*. Before the year ends Introductory members should decide whether to continue as Members, giving written notice of its intentions to LINK's Board at least one month prior to the expiry of the introductory period. If the member decides not to renew its membership, the date of termination will be one calendar month after the date of the notice given.

3. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTERS (including Business Supporters)

In accordance with Article 14 of LINK's Memorandum & Articles organisations not eligible for membership but which desire to support LINK and receive certain benefits, including regular information updates (Advocacy monitoring) and invitations to LINK events, may apply to become an Organisational Supporter of LINK. In applying for affiliation organisations must fulfil certain requirements and pay an annual subscription (see website for current details). The affiliation is being trialled.

The Organisational Supporter affiliation includes the Business Supporter category of affiliation.

Decisions on the eligibility of businesses are made at Board level in the interests of the network, on a case-by-case basis. From April 2015 member bodies (main reps) will have the opportunity to comment on an application received, and on plans to actively recruit any new BS, within a 2 week timeframe.

If there are no concerns raised the Board will come to its decision based on the judgement of trustees as formerly.

If concerns are raised, this will prompt further investigation to assess the concern addressed by the member(s). The Board will then determine the outcome of the application.

Network members should encourage others interested in LINK's work and not eligible for membership, to become Organisational Supporters.

Organisations which *are* eligible for membership cannot be affiliated in this way.

This affiliation is broader in scope than the former 'Subscriber' category, which ended in September 2011.

4. INDUCTION

Induction is a must for new representatives of existing members and incoming main representatives of new member bodies. Induction is advised within at most 2 months after an organisation has joined. In addition, a presentation by LINK to the new organisation can be arranged. New members are really encouraged to pursue these opportunities.

Outgoing representatives should normally induct their successor representatives to LINK, with support if they wish from a member of LINK staff or Board. LINK staff can also provide a list of points to cover.

Task Force Convenors and Deputies will be inducted by LINK Staff or a Trustee as they take up convenorship. In person induction is recommended. The need for ongoing guidance and training for Convenors is kept under review. Convenors or their nominated representatives (who may be their normal Deputy) are expected to attend networking meetings.

5. THE CONTRACT BETWEEN MEMBERS AND LINK

It is crucial to see the relationship between members and LINK as an informal contract, with serious commitments on both sides. The key principles of this relationship are set out here for the benefit of members, Board and staff.

Amongst the benefits to members are:

- skills benefits, added credibility, long-term investment
- sharing intelligence and broadening each other's agendas
- strengthened roles of smaller groups (from information, update, contact with others working on same issues, opportunities to raise concerns and seek broader support)
- avoiding overlap and duplication
- getting on the movement's agenda an issue which your organisation cannot take forward on its own
- developing a more informed approach for individual NGOs
- collectively moving environment up the political and social agenda
- collective benefit from variety of approaches and tactics applied in concert
- contact with government, agencies, and other parties
- spawning of effective campaigns (everyone, marine)
- being part of a respected network the value of whose contribution is recognised (as demonstrated by invitations to be represented on various forums and to give evidence to Parliament)
- personal development of individuals involved in LINK and increased contacts for all
- development of trust within the movement
- bridge to other sectors
- work opportunities

What does the contract require of LINK Staff, Officers, Trustees?

- respect time commitments of members as indicated in the Network & Strategic Plans
- help members understand each other and the added value which the network can provide to them
- help members understand LINK operations and current guidance
- enable members to set new agendas informed by all
- avoid representing the membership where this is inappropriate
- understand that not all members can take a view on all issues
- enable members to address challenges in good time

What does the contract require of members and their representatives to LINK and its task forces, campaigns and projects?

- familiarise themselves with LINK, its background and *modus operandi* and range of work;
- be clear about what LINK can and cannot do; for example, LINK cannot take on an issue where the expertise and willingness of the membership to engage is not evident (though where the will does exist, we can move mountains!); it is largely the responsibility of the member bodies to ensure that LINK delivers;
- think LINK, e.g.:
 - in relation to briefing own staff/colleagues/contacts on LINK's *modus operandi*, in relation to its own work programme and resources allocation, current opportunities to use LINK as a tool in their work; and ensuring that agreed LINK positions are observed within the signatory bodies.
- prepare for, attend and use meetings of LINK, its task forces, campaigns and other groupings;
- help to determine and review the LINK work programme, and try to establish a dynamic between that programme and the work plans of their own organisations;
- make explicit in its own forward plans the intended staff-time commitment to each LINK work area in which it is involved
- bring to LINK positions on which members can confidently engage in developing consensus within the movement;
- contribute to the running of LINK, fielding appropriate personnel for the Board, offices of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Convenors of task forces, and Steering Groups.
- take responsibility for representing LINK at events, in briefings to parliamentary committees, on forums where the movement has a place and ensure the necessary input/feedback with the membership;
- respond promptly and clearly to internal LINK consultations and requests for information so that staff know whether to continue including them in these initiatives;
- recognise the value of 'signing up' to policy statements to ensure widest consensus, where this does not conflict with the member body's own objectives and is not explicitly ruled out by its constitution, even if the policy area may not be specifically relevant to their remit.

Co-opted organisations (See section 19 below) participating in LINK work will be expected to observe these principles where relevant.

LINK offers a range of information services to its member bodies and organisational supporters, notably the weekly Advocacy Monitoring. These are intended for those working or volunteering on behalf of the member body, and are not for onward

distribution to individual members of organisations. If the information service helps them fulfil a *role* within the member body, they may be added to the distribution list. It is preferable if individuals have an organisational email address.

6. REPRESENTATION ON LINK

6.1 Role of Representative

The 'named representative' referred to in Article 6 in LINK's Memorandum & Articles is the person appointed by the member body to represent it on LINK and help the member body engage appropriately. It is important to keep LINK informed when this representation changes.

The representative should attend networking meetings, act as first point of contact for circulation of material to others in their organization and respond to various requests for participation or feedback. It is important that the representative is able to help develop LINK policy by representing their organisation's views across a wide range of issues. The more informed the representatives, the more informed the debate. The network can need to respond fairly quickly to an external agenda, and this requires a degree of autonomy on the part of the named representative, therefore it is important that s/he is fairly senior.

6.2 Deputies

A well-briefed deputy can attend in the main representative's place and should be able to present the views of their organisation on matters likely to arise in discussion. Please ask LINK staff to email relevant information if necessary. From experience, it is useful to have continuity of representation by members.

6.3 Representatives to Task Forces and other groupings

Members can appoint the most appropriate person to contribute to the work of task forces and other sub groups, recognizing the desirability of consistent representation in any area of LINK's work. It is essential for integration that an organisation's representatives on various groupings keep themselves well-informed of all areas of their organisation's engagement.

The same applies to any Co-opted Organisations (See section 19 below) participating in a LINK work area/Task Force.

7. ACTING AS A DELEGATE FOR THE MOVEMENT

7.1 Where should LINK be represented?

Whilst it is not possible to 'represent' a network, there is an expectation that LINK will field at least a delegate to events, new forums, working groups (set up by government, industry, other NGOs)

LINK is also regularly invited to give evidence to parliamentary and other inquiries.

It is usually beneficial to put forward the environmental perspective of policy debate, formally and informally. This requires flexibility for staff and other representatives of the network.

However, all need to be clear about the difference - sometimes a fine line - between instances where it's important to field a delegate, and others where this isn't necessary, e.g. where the presence of a LINK delegate would imply a common LINK position on the issue where there is none (in which case it may be more appropriate to field such an invitation to members in LINK known to be active on the issue, or for the function of any LINK delegate to simply listen and report back) or where there are plenty of environment NGOs already involved to carry the relevant messages and therefore no need for a LINK delegate per se.

There is a resource implication - for members and LINK - in attending meetings and the associated 'dialogue' with LINK members which requires monitoring. An evaluation of the range of 'stakeholder' activity is carried out within reporting on the corporate strategy.

7.2 Accepting invitations or overtures to represent environmental views/the environment/the environmental sector/the ENGOS on stakeholder groups/forums/events

LINK explicitly seeks opportunity to provide broad environmental and sustainable development (SD) expertise to forums set up, often by Government, to address issues relating to the environment and SD. This is an important part of network advocacy strategy, and LINK aims to widen its representation beyond current 'boxes'.

The collective preference in LINK is to receive invitations via LINK, and as LINK, and to choose delegates through existing protocols. We cannot assume our protocols are commonly known across the civil service and beyond; Scottish Government (SG), for example, seeks input to these groups in various ways, frequently not directing invitations via LINK (staff or chair) although usually seeking broad environmental expertise of the kind developed through collective work within LINK.

Please therefore be aware that the sometimes ad hoc nature of SG's invitations can be challenging for the network and for invitees; that, ideally, any invitation to represent environment/SD, however it is extended, should be shared with the network, and a network decision made on best person for the job. If you accept an invitation to represent more than just your own personal, or organisational expertise, you may be breaking with LINK protocols. LINK has raised this formally with SG at early 2013.

LINK will best operate if, when –

- you are approached as an individual, to join a stakeholder group to bring the environment view point (as opposed to expertise on specifics for which your expertise is known and which LINK does not pursue, eg track maintenance, wading birds, sea mammals, cycle path network, electric cars), or

- your organisation is asked to field someone to bring the environment viewpoint (rather than specific expertise such as the above examples for which your organisation may be known to be expert) – please share the information a.s.a.p. with LINK senior staff (or chair) so that the network can consider best possible representation for the role.

You may feel an invitation you've received is in fact more relevant to your or your organisation's expertise, than it would be to LINK; relevance of forums to LINK work should be clear from your knowledge of current LINK areas, as represented on LINK's website, LINK discussions in which you've been involved recently. You can easily check this with senior LINK staff and it's anyway useful for them to be aware of where member bodies/individuals are to be involved on forums so that other LINK members can be informed via the bulletin.

For the avoidance of doubt, LINK's representatives are ONLY appointed through LINK. If a person finds themselves in the position where they are appointed as an individual, or for their own organisation, and then seem to be being considered as a wider, LINK, representative by some sort of osmotic process, they should firmly correct external misapprehension and resolve the situation within LINK at the earliest stage possible.

People within the LINK network are asked to keep LINK informed of ANY relevant appointment they accept, in order that LINK can keep some sort of track on what is going on and not end up blind-sided.

7.3 Accepting invitations to represent LINK/environment/the environmental sector at parliamentary and other inquiries

Convenors of Task Forces clearly related to issues on which an invitation to give views or evidence on behalf of LINK should determine whether it is appropriate to take up such opportunities. Where the issue at stake in the invitation is central to a Task Force's (or Task Forces') agenda, a delegate can be identified as at 7.3 below.

There are occasions, however, where the presence of a LINK delegate may imply a common LINK position on an issue where in fact there is no consensus. In such cases, the Convenor(s) implicated should consider the wisdom of accepting as LINK. In cases where Convenors are doubtful about that, there may be a number of LINK members working on the issue and it may be more appropriate to field the invitation to them.

7.3 Representation through the Officers, Task Force Convenors and Staff

The President carries out a considerable amount of 'representational' work in their role as ambassador. The Chair is usually heavily involved in heading up strategy for LINK, liaising over issues that arise, chairing Members' meetings and meetings of the Board. However, LINK needs to set its own agenda over a wide range of issues, and, given time constraints on President and Chair, there are gaps to plug. This can be done by the Vice-Chair, Task Force Convenors or other appointed spokespeople from relevant task forces; in some cases staff may take a representational role.

7.4 Election of Delegates

LINK has agreed criteria for selection of delegates:

- that delegates to new forums, or replacement delegates to forums on which LINK already has a place, should be elected by ballot
- where the subject/focus of the forum is specific and a relevant LINK grouping exists (eg active task force), that group should be the focus of the ballot
- where the focus of the forum is broader and where a relevant LINK grouping does not exist, the ballot should encompass all Members.
- ballots are held by e-mail, giving members 14 days to respond; no response taken as an abstention
- all such ballots should include information about (a) the forum in question, (b) the 'candidates' for the LINK place(s), (c) LINK agreed guidance to delegates (section 7 of these Operating Principles,)
- The opportunity to review LINK representation is available to the delegate or to the membership any time after the first year in order to ensure that delegates are fulfilling the terms of the guidance and that the range of roles is shared among interested members.

7.5 Responsibilities of LINK representatives on external forums, events

Individuals acting as a delegate for LINK are required to:

attend forum meetings or find an appropriate deputy within the network

- be proactive in expressing the range of, as opposed to their own body's, concerns; or, if acting in a dual capacity, indicate clearly to the meeting/forum when they are speaking on behalf of their own body and when on behalf of LINK
- regularly invite input from other LINK members via the appropriate TF or the general membership on the issues under discussion. The members bulletin circulated at the beginning of each month is a useful mechanism for this.
- ensure feedback to members after each meeting (bulletin again), flagging any urgent matters requiring their immediate attention or that of the LINK Board
- provide a report on and evaluation of LINK's role in that Forum as required.

LINK staff will:

- provide delegates with this guidance in writing at the start of their tenure
- keep them informed of any key LINK concerns prior to meetings
- keep them in touch with LINK activities through the Bulletin and other mailings
- coordinate LINK-wide ballots

8. PUTTING TOGETHER A LINK DELEGATION

8.1 LINK needs a means of quickly and relatively easily identifying the 'right' line-up from within the movement for external meetings. Meeting opportunities can arise from an initiative of member bodies working together (e.g. in task forces) though some are unsolicited. Opportunities include meetings with Ministers, senior civil servants or Agency staff, politicians, and senior figures from other sectors. For consistency, the rationale is to relate opportunities to the relevant LINK work area or

task force, and for LINK members to trust colleagues to select fairly, represent the 'complete brief', and make a good case.

8.2 Where a TF or other subgroup is selecting the delegation

- The group convenor should discuss with colleagues in the group coming to agreement about the purpose and objective of the meeting before determining the delegation. Delegations should be drawn from the pool of regularly participating members, and there may be a case to include rep(s) of other TFs in the delegation.
- In this way, selection of delegations will normally be led by a TF convenor who should consider with other convenors and/or LINK staff the need to integrate relevant points from other LINK work areas.
- LINK should match the seniority proffered by the external party, from within the relevant technical LINK forum, where the common ground and detailed case are well rehearsed. In LINK terms therefore, a TF convenor will quite often be more relevant than the member body CEO/Officer.
- As the meeting is for LINK purposes, it should not be confused as an opportunity for individual organisations to promote individual views or for TF members' organizational colleagues to replace them (unless there is an over-riding case for substitution).
- Where a TF believes higher-level representation is crucial, the TF convenor should discuss this with LINK Staff. Inclusion of the LINK President or Chair in some delegations may be important, for example, and Staff can arrange this. There will be occasions when it is important to include another LINK figure not involved in that TF (but whose organisation is) for specific expertise which s/he can provide
- Delegations should be appropriately sized to ensure effectiveness. It is not normally effective or professional to field a large delegation for strategic discussion with 2 senior officials for time-limited discussions of key points¹
- In any delegation, the maximum number of people which any one organisation can reasonably field is one person.
- Where it proves impossible for the Convenor to reach a satisfactory conclusion, the responsibility for helping to resolve the issue reasonably swiftly will be that of the Chair or other nominated Trustee.

8.3 In preparing for the meeting

- TF convenors are responsible for ensuring that the LINK agenda is prepared, for keeping TF colleagues informed as it develops, and for integrating with other TFs on it before the meeting.
- TF convenors should ensure that relevant LINK Staff are informed of the opportunity and the developing delegation so that they can advise about others who should be invited to input.

¹ There are exceptions - e.g. liaison meetings with agencies where a primary aim is to offer several smaller bodies the chance to meet agency staff whom they cannot easily meet as single operators.

8.4 In presenting the case

- All delegations are required to represent LINK, and the agreed LINK case, at such meetings. TF convenors are asked to ensure fair and unbiased representation of the LINK brief² at the meeting, whatever the particular expertise of the delegation.
- Delegates should seek adequate briefing on the case which they will represent (especially where this does not directly correspond to their professional expertise/interest) and also on the background to, and objectives of, the meeting.
- Each delegation should ensure prompt and accurate feedback to the wider LINK constituency, if appropriate, via LINK Staff.

8.5 Ministerial meetings - Guidance on LINK involvement

Since May 2007 LINK has had regular quarterly opportunities to meet the Environment Minister, with other ministers attending if needed. Dates are agreed with the minister's staff in advance (see the website for known dates) and are also forwarded to other relevant ministers should the agenda require their presence. In practice meeting dates can be changed at fairly short notice.

LINK's agenda for these quarterlies is derived from consultation with task forces and discussion at networking and board meetings for network wide relevance. The meetings are also an opportunity to raise timely issues from members that would benefit from being raised. Please contact the Chief Officer if you have an item to raise.

Representation at these meetings depends on who is best placed to speak to the agenda, although staff rigorously attempt to ensure these opportunities are shared around the membership. Representatives are introduced with their 'LINK hat' (ie LINK xy task force) as well as their member body. Normally the Chair or Vice-chair will head the LINK delegation.

Additionally, a LINK representative, normally the President (or Chair, Vice-Chair or relevant Convenor) attends the quarterly meeting between ENGO heads and the Minister (the 'G6'). The network has discussed the pros and cons of continuing LINK representation at these meetings, initiated by the 2003-07 administration, concluding that these liaison opportunities should continue to be taken. A report of that meeting is also put on the members' website.

In preparation for regular Ministerial meetings:

- Staff need to prepare a briefing on each issue for Scottish Government with input from relevant task forces/members and Chair.
- Actions from previous meetings are checked – these are mainly the responsibility of the task force or member to pursue.
- A telecon call or pre-meeting is organized for LINK participants. It is essential that all attending the main meeting take part in the pre-meeting.

² Including key points from other LINK TFs in the spirit of integration.

- After the meeting the staff member attending prepares a note and action points for network circulation and liaises with Scottish Government on generic follow-up.

Active LINK Task Forces can also organize meetings with their Minister if the issue is beyond the scope of a quarterly meeting, though it generally useful to get agreement in principle for it at a quarterly. Please liaise with LINK staff for integration purposes.

9. CONSENSUS

LINK operates on the basis of consensus - 'signing' up to the area of common ground. An acknowledged vital function of LINK is developing consensus amongst members and with others. Consensus is invaluable as a lobbying tool, and the relative strength of collective LINK positions is hugely important in our advocacy to decision-makers.

Like any coalition, we rely, for public credibility, on an attitude of mutual respect and trust amongst our member bodies. So, for example, whilst some members may not necessarily support the belief or approach of all other members on given issues, the cohesion of LINK is acknowledged by dealing with these differences within the LINK forum, and by avoiding conspicuous public disagreements on key issues, as far as possible.

It's also vital that where members are signed up to a LINK position, they reflect to external audiences the actual extent and limits of that consensus; it is not appropriate for any member to imply that the collective consensus is wider, or goes further, than is the case. See also section 7 above.

Equally, the individual positions which members take in their own right should not be at odds with any LINK position to which they have also voluntarily signed up; no one benefits from divergences which can also undermine our reputation.

Where consensus has not been achieved or is not possible, mutual respect for members' divergent views remains equally important.

The role of the main Representative, and any representatives on task forces and subgroups, is pivotal in ensuring the desired coherence!

9.1 Disputes between member bodies

There will be occasions where member bodies have profound differences of opinion, or see that in future the potential for conflict may arise, on issues to do with their or another member body's internal operations and which are not directly relevant in the context of taskforces / network meeting discussions. In these instances the LINK Board offers the following guidance and where necessary can act as 'honest broker'.

Explicitly seek talks with other protagonist(s) in time to seek a way through that does not culminate in division of view negatively presented in media. Diversity of

views can be presented positively and it's in the sector's interests to show public and government that the sector knows how to handle differences maturely.

Identify a sub in your organisation who will be available also for dialogue/contact as the process moves forward and may heat up.

Let LINK Chair/Chief Officer know that the discussion/process is starting and what the differences in view are, in brief.

Avoid 'green on green' attacks, explore the differences, consider outcomes which are least damaging for the issues and for the sector's reputation.

If talks/contact make insufficient progress, break down or could be helped by facilitation, seek LINK board advice on facilitators and on handling the forward process including any media/public commentary.

Ensure that your organisation's main player (or their sub) remains in good communication with the other protagonist(s) even when views may be polarised (the more polarised, the more contact is likely to be important). Identify and use other envoys.

If and when planning media release / response to journalists around the issues, inform other protagonist(s) of your planned line of comment and proposed timing, with time to allow further discussions, and for other party/ies to have time to develop their own commentary / responses.

Keep the situation and relationships under review as part of the bigger picture of what the sector aims to do, and its wider reputation.

LINK Board will also keep such situations under review and keep in touch with those concerned given potential impacts on the trust on which the network relies.

10. STATEMENTS

10.1 Why make joint statements?

The power of the collective voice is part of the original appeal of networking. The potential for the network, under LINK auspices, to make a strong case is important. Having argued for a right to be heard by decision-makers, we face consistent demand from parliamentarians, government, its agencies and other sectors for views and/or involvement on a wide range of issues. This requires a mature style of working by LINK (where it decides to respond/act) by which members can quickly agree consensus as far as possible and submit this as verbal or written briefing within a deadline that is set by the external context or for LINK spokespeople (President, Chair, TF Convenors, staff) to advocate the movement's general position or concerns.

10.2 What form do statements take?

Statements may sometimes be verbal (e.g. by Office bearer or Staff to media on behalf of the movement), or expressed through written outputs (press releases, reports, briefing papers, letters and submissions – see guidance below on publications). Members should guard against implying unanimity (unless this clearly exists and can be demonstrated) and should present or report the consensus so that it can be well defended by the movement. The guidance below is designed to safeguard these two objects, and in cases of doubt, members should consult the Chair, Chief Officer or other senior staff members for advice.

10.3 Guidance on issuing statements

- (a) Statements issued on behalf of LINK as a whole should be approved and signed off by the President or Chair (Vice-Chair, if the Chair is unavailable) where s/he is satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the membership. Some of the opportunities for this will on occasion be identified by staff using their antennae³, and notifying relevant Office Bearer(s), with recommendations for action, as LINK, within the context of the guidance in this section.
- (b) Statements issued on behalf of a group of LINK's Members should be approved and signed off by the Convenor of that group (or Deputy) only if satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the relevant member bodies. These statements should include a list of the bodies on whose behalf they are being made.
- (c) Statements should refer to 'LINK member bodies' rather than 'LINK' e.g. LINK member bodies believe, LINK members' views are, etc. Members are also reminded to use the short form LINK (preferably not 'SEL') and to use LINK letterhead (and not those of a member body) for statements issued on behalf of groups of members.

When issuing press releases please copy these to relevant contacts in government agencies, departments, parliamentary contacts, as well as media. Where LINK is being supportive it is useful that they are aware of what we have tried to promote, even if it has got into the papers/media.

If releasing a report, the Members (or Task Force) responsible for the publication should give Scottish Government, SNH, or other target audience, appropriate³ advance sight of it before the media cover it, particularly where the content is critical of progress or is likely to require their comment at time of release. It is the responsibility of the lead person issuing a LINK statement to ensure that LINK's pertinent grant conditions are met. Please contact LINK staff if in any doubt.

Quotes can be used from relevant LINK players if these are cleared by the organizers with the person/people to be quoted in good time.

For written 'products' use LINK's press release template, letterhead and logo as appropriate. For verbal comment be sure to explain which part of LINK you represent

³ In some cases e.g. where documents are very technical, or very critical, the coordinating Task Force may wish to give their target audience(s) more than the minimum period of advance notice, as part of their advocacy strategy.

(eg., the XY Task Force). If representing LINK in total, introduce it, eg, the forum for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations, the voice of Scotland's environment community, or similar.

Signatures - normally the TF Convenor. If the occasion requires the Chair or President signature instead, please advise staff in good time to arrange for this.

Disclaimers are not normally used though are an option where the group sees a particular need eg, "This statement represents the general consensus amongst LINK's XY TF members, but should not be taken to represent the detailed policy position of every one of those members." If drafters feel it is important, statements can also include "In case of doubt regarding individual bodies' views they should be contacted direct."

10.4 Individual responsibility

Staff, officers, members, convenors, co-opted members of task forces, and other spokespeople have a clear responsibility for:

- (a) working within the spirit of LINK's constitution and operating principles;
- (b) following the guidance given above;
- (c) ensuring that any statements they make or publish on behalf of LINK member bodies, or relating to joint work under LINK auspices, are accurate and appropriately researched (in terms of information given) and give a reliable reflection of the nature, strength and breadth of view on the issue(s) within the network, and;
- (d) not purporting to act as a delegate for LINK unless they have a clear mandate from LINK to do so.

This is vital in protecting LINK's credibility for members in the future, and ensuring there are no legal grounds for claims against LINK and/or its membership. Where there is any doubt, or even just a lack of clarity about what is best, key players should request guidance or a meeting with staff or Board.

11. PUBLICATIONS

This guidance is for when LINK is publishing a document, paper, report, briefing or media release and covers the 7 steps from pre-publication through to final dissemination.

Step 1 Pre-Publication

1. Ensure that there is a single person in charge of the final editing, authorisation and publication of the document – and that it is clear to all concerned who that person will be as well as which LINK body is commissioning and responsible for the document.
2. Ensure that the wider LINK network is made aware of the intention to publish on this issue – through LINK bulletin/newsletter or direct communication with the network.
3. Make sure that procedures are in place for the document to receive proper authorisation from the commissioning group, task force or Board (or sub-group), as a publication to be issued formally in LINK's name.
4. Offer adequate early warning of publication (one week minimum for position papers, 24 hours for media releases or briefings) to any of our strategic

partners affected or mentioned (such as* Scottish Government, SNH, SEPA or operating or funding partner organisations) in order to ensure that they are not taken by surprise.

5. Offer adequate early warning to staff who will be proof-reading, publishing and disseminating.
6. Make sure that any funding grant conditions (if applicable) relating to the project have been fulfilled.
7. Draw up a preliminary external distribution list for the document upon publication and seek input on this from the commissioning group.

Step 2 Text Sign-Off

1. Ensure that all appropriate LINK members concerned have had adequate opportunity to amend, correct and comment on the document (ie, commissioning group and relevant other members or task forces).
2. Ensure that no appropriate LINK member within this identified circle of interests objects to the substantive content of the final draft.

Step 3 Required Technical Details

Ensure all publications, media releases, briefings carry:

- the LINK logo;
- a short description of LINK (i.e. the forum, its sizeable membership, voice – as per website);
- detail on LINK's status (including: address and website, charity and company numbers);
- relevant information about our funding or specific funding of this work, and, where appropriate, funders' logos;
- copyright, if appropriate;
- ISBN/internet publishing numbering, if appropriate; and
- credit for pictures, graphics, design, if appropriate.

Step 4 Proof Reading

After adding the required technical details, ensure that the final draft (including covers, index, summary, introduction, and page-numbers) has been proof read – preferably by a member of staff, - and that all errors, amendments are addressed in the final version.

Step 5 Internal Publication

Arrange for electronic copies to be sent to LINK officers groups and members in the following categories, as appropriate.

- Board
- Task Force Conveners
- Member Organisations' main LINK Representatives
- President and Honorary Fellows
- Staff

Step 6 Web Publication

Ensure that the LINK staff have an electronic copy of the document and press release, together with brief covering text in order to publish the document in the appropriate part of the LINK website.

Step 7 General Publication & Dissemination

Circulate electronically a link to the document on LINK's website, to all parties on the target distribution list. Email all LINK contacts notice of publication, media release and weblink. If hard copies are required, plan printing or inhouse copying with the help of relevant LINK staff and distribute as required.

12. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board comprises Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and up to 6 other Trustees familiar with LINK's modus operandi. The Board can co-opt 2 further individuals during any one year. Trustees are elected at the AGM with nominations invited in advance. Members are positively encouraged to take a part in the Board. The Board works in close co-ordination with the President, selected as an individual and able to act on behalf of LINK. The President, whilst not a Trustee, is invited to attend and contribute to all meetings of the Board.

The Board is responsible for an overview of management and strategic direction as agreed and taken forward by member bodies, working to the Strategic Plan and the annual Network Plan; it also prioritises allocation of staff and other resources on an ongoing basis and is responsible for other areas remitted by the membership of LINK including legal matters and HR. The Chief Officer and other Staff participate in Board meetings, contributing to these, progressing action points and keeping a record of decisions which are posted on the members' website. The Board meets at least quarterly and reports to members at the AGM. Member bodies and Task Force Convenors are encouraged to be freely in touch with Trustees, and a networking meeting of Trustees, Task Forces and members follows Board meetings in January, April and August.

11.1 LINK Officers

President - has an ambassadorial role, helping to identify and pursue important openings for LINK, attending functions where generic representation of LINK is important and helping to develop external perceptions of LINK. S/he also has an important role internally in helping to build relationships at senior levels, to ensure LINK reaches decisions through consensus and to help the movement to develop its forward thinking. The President does not need to be, nor would usually be, a Trustee, nor involved in the day-to-day running of LINK; neither is s/he the nominated representative of a Full Member. S/he attends most Networking and Board meetings, hosts various public events and takes part in key receptions and liaisons. S/he works closely with Chair, Vice-Chair and senior staff to ensure co-ordination of LINK's operations.

Chair - the main role of the Chair is internal management, including chairing the Board and close involvement in organisational development. Either the Chair, or Vice-Chair or Treasurer line manages the Chief Officer. The Chair normally chairs Networking Meetings and AGM, though s/he may share this role with the Vice-Chair. There is an expectation that the Chair will be drawn from the pool of representatives regularly involved in LINK who have excellent, up-to-date, hands-on knowledge of the organisation. If s/he is a representative on LINK of a member body, the Chair has the normal right to vote on behalf of her/his organisation at Networking meetings. The Chair liaises closely with President, Vice-Chair and senior staff to

ensure a co-ordinated approach internally and externally and may be expected on occasion to carry out representational work. The Chair, along with Treasurer, Vice-Chair and one other Trustee, form the Employment Sub Group responsible for advising the CO on staffing and HR issues.

Vice-Chair - the Vice-Chair complements and supports the role of the Chair in terms of representational work where President and Task Force Convenors are not appropriate or not available. The Vice-Chair may substitute for the Chair at Board meetings, Networking Meetings and other plenary meetings. If also a representative on LINK of a Member, the Vice-Chair has the normal right to vote on behalf of his/her organisation. The Vice-Chair takes part in the Board's Employment Sub Group responsible for advising the CO on staffing and HR issues.

Treasurer - advises the Board and LINK on financial issues supporting relevant staff on financial aspects of LINK's operations. All day-to-day book-keeping and management of monies is the responsibility of the CO and the Finance Officer in conjunction with the Board, which reviews LINK's financial situation in detail each quarter. The Treasurer is part of the Board's Employment Sub Group responsible for advising the CO on staffing and HR issues, and of the Funding Sub Group, which advises staff and Board on more detailed funding issues.

Company Secretary - The Chief Officer acts as the Company Secretary to LINK.

13. THE SEEKING OF VIEWS (OTHER THAN BALLOTS)

As a network dispersed across Scotland, 'canvassing' (by phone, post, e-mail) for views and suggestions of members is normal practice. LINK relies on this to progress and respond to issues. Timescales for response are dictated normally by deadlines set to LINK (e.g. through external consultation, through LINK task force deadlines for achieving tasks). There are occasions where the pace needs to be fast: experience indicates that this is worth it for those who want active engagement and to be in on the action. The LINK process relies on prompt responses.

14. LINK WORK PROGRAMME

The annual Strategic Planning Meeting (involving office bearers, trustees, Task Forces Staff and members) determines key priorities for collective work and the content of LINK's annual Network Plan. Participation of members at senior level is important to ensure integration with members' own plans and best focus for the network.

15. PROJECTS

Projects are another way in which LINK has successfully worked over the years. Some of these have involved employment of project staff, others commissioning of reports, or holding conferences.

15.1 Project definition

A project, in strict accounting terms, is any activity carried out by LINK Staff and / or Task Forces, which requires Restricted or Designated funding.

Restricted funds have external donor-imposed restrictions on where the money can be spent (eg sponsorship of Scottish Environment Week), whilst Designated funds are set aside from LINK's unrestricted funds by the Board for a specific purpose (eg LINK funding support for Congress or one-off events, or longer term such as Marine). In either case, the expenditure of these funds has to be accounted for separately from LINK Core activities.

Depending on the size and complexity of an individual project, the project manager should adhere at an appropriate level of detail to the following project lifecycle template:

15.2 Project initiation

a. *Project proposal* should be drawn up, to include:

- i. Identification of project manager and project team
- ii. Statement of project objectives
- iii. Timetable / project plan
- iv. Project budget as per LINK template, including:
 1. Budgetted costs including requirement for any LINK staff time for support or financial administration
 2. Budgetted income stream to meet these costs, from:
 - a. members & sponsors (confirmed)
 - b. requested LINK funding
 3. For projects extending beyond a single LINK Financial year, the budget must include a Whole Project Life summary, showing income and expenditure plans across the whole lifecycle of the project

b. Project approval

- i. If LINK funding from any available Discretionary Project Reserve is required, an application should be made to the LINK Board Funding Sub-group (a form is available on the LINK website)
- ii. Fully funded projects to be carried out using the LINK name need to be taken to LINK Board for final approval, whether or not LINK finances or staff resources are required

15.3 Project execution

a. Progress reporting

- i. Project manager to send Quarterly reports to Staff for various needs.

b. Financial management

- i. LINK Finance Manager responsible for invoicing and banking of income, and payment of expenses, as approved by the Project manager
- ii. All invoices to be addressed to LINK office in Perth fao Finance Manager
- iii. LINK staff to notify Finance Manager monthly about the number of days support given to the project, for allocation of internal salary and overhead costs

- iv. LINK Admin officer to maintain the Actual financial status of the project and send updates to the Project manager as they happen
- v. Project manager to provide LINK Finance Manager with quarterly Forecast updates, including explanatory notes if necessary, in time for inclusion in the LINK Budget Out-turn for each LINK Board meeting
- vi. Projects which Forecast a deficit during project execution must freeze and go back through a Stage 1 funding review with the LINK FSG before continuing
- vii. Project Manager to ensure that all project costs can be met and, where a shortfall is forecast, that appropriate savings can be made on expenditure, or additional fundraising carried out by the project group

15.4 Project completion

- a. Final reporting
 - i. Project manager to send final project report to LINK Development Officer, and provide appropriate reports required by any project grant funding bodies
- b. Financial management
 - i. Project manager to finalise the project accounts with LINK FinanceManager, including agreement on release or repayment of any remaining project funding surplus
 - ii. Project surpluses cannot be held past the end of the project life, or over a LINK financial year, without a definite and agreed expenditure plan
- c. Final review (cf. Corporate Strategy)
 - i. Project manager responsible for ensuring evaluation (along lines of After Action Reviews recommended in the strategy) by project steering group and communication of lessons learned to others in the network

16. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

15.1 The network relies on email for communications. Member bodies are therefore expected to be able to receive e-mail. Only where absolutely necessary will hard copy be used.

15.2 LINK's main website (www.scotlink.org) carries links to members' websites; members changing website names, logos, etc, should keep LINK informed. The LINK website will continue to be developed as the main repository for information, diary dates, and progress reports for LINK members, and as an obvious source of information about LINK work and contacts for LINK member bodies, for other audiences.

15.3 Social Networking Protocol

For fuller information on the LINK policy see the website under Guidance.

Any social networking site or new media service in LINK's name should be started on behalf of LINK only with the agreement of the Board (by email where a response is needed between meetings), and run in line with existing protocols. In agreeing to

such a service the Board should outline the function of the service and the personnel within LINK who will do the broadcasting.

As a general rule all should be aware that comments are public, unless it is specified otherwise. New media might in future include equivalents of the LINK website's 'public' and 'members only' services, and appropriate controls should be in place to ensure that the distinction is made and the 'members only' services are kept within the designated privacy settings available.

LINK social networking and new media services must convey messages that are entirely consistent with LINK's organisational views, activities and events. LINK's senior management will be responsible for ensuring that this is the case.

LINK members, officers and staff are fully entitled to broadcast in a personal capacity on social networking and new media sites. It is requested that when they are so broadcasting that attention is paid to ensure that no inference could be drawn that they are speaking on behalf of LINK – and, if necessary, that attention is drawn to LINK's own broadcasting. The guidance on Statements (section 10) applies.

17. LINK POLICIES

In relation to LINK staff and office(s), LINK has developed policies on equal opportunities, health and safety, green office, environmental matters and travel. Again in relation to its own staff, LINK has developed an employment policy, a performance management system and a staff handbook. These may be of interest to members (contact the Chief Officer).

18. SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members pay an annual subscription to LINK. Subscriptions are tiered according to member bodies' income: the main criterion is the proportion of total income relevant to Scotland. The rates are reviewed annually by Board in association with the membership. The Corporate Strategy sets out the rationale for increasing the percentage raised for the core budget from subscription income. It is important to other funders that members demonstrate this commitment to LINK. Subscriptions are set at the AGM and members are invoiced each summer. Where subscriptions are not paid within 3 months of the invoice date, voting rights will be deemed to have lapsed, although the defaulting member may continue to receive LINK information and other services until the financial year end. Members who wish to explore subscription issues should write to the Board.

19. GUIDANCE ON LINK TASK FORCES

The 'task force' mechanism is a key way for members to work together to develop and promote common positions on areas of mutual interest. Since LINK's inception they have been a means of improving understanding and developing collective views

and promoting these as written submissions, delegates to external forums, seminars and briefings for decision-makers and stakeholders, media work, evidence to parliamentary committees, publications, conferences and campaigns.

Task Forces are largely self-supporting and self-regulating with collective responsibility for the TF workplan within the LINK Network Plan and for keeping the wider LINK audience informed. Proposals for a new Task Force or further plans for existing TFs should be endorsed by the wider membership at the annual Strategic Planning Meeting or by other agreed means.

A Task Force should involve a minimum of 3 member bodies. The convenor, deputy convenor, and delegates to external forums must be representatives of member bodies. Any member body may participate in any LINK TF, either actively, or be included in the e-group for information, and should let the Convenor know their status. TFs may also involve Co-optees (see below).

TFs must keep LINK informed of progress, plans, etc, by communicating as necessary with Staff, Board, and with other TFs, and by participating in LINK's Strategic Planning and Networking meetings (quarterly) which require forward planning of objectives, rationale, targets, timescales, resourcing and evaluation of effort/after action reviews. TFs plans should state the intended resource commitment of participating members and support needed from LINK Staff.

Fundraising for TF projects is largely the responsibility of the TF with guidance available from LINK staff. The Board may have allocated available funding via a Discretionary Project Fund for which TFs may apply.

19.1 Leadership

Good leadership of TFs is vital. TFs working on long-term tasks should plan succession of convenorship, nominate deputies and ensure smooth transition. New Conveners should arrange an early induction meeting with LINK Staff.

The Convenor's role is to:

- chair and lead the TF, help it to achieve objectives and stick to timetables
- ensure induction of new TF members (including Co-optees)
- ensure action points are progressed by members and all views taken into account appropriately
- submit TF plans and progress reports in time for LINK cycle of meetings and reporting
- actively liaise throughout the year with other TFs and LINK Staff to ensure co-ordination with other work at an early stage and that planned outputs/meetings/statements are consistent with, and complement, other TF outputs.
- attend or arrange alternative TF representation at Networking meetings
- ensure outputs are consistent with LINK protocols regarding branding, sign-up procedures
- keep up-to-date list of active and 'information only' TF participants, sharing these with staff and ensuring all TF members are circulated with relevant information in good time.

19.2 Taskforce membership

Any member body can sign up to one or more TFs either 'actively' or 'for information only'. Active participation signifies a resource commitment by the member in terms of developing consensus from a sound knowledge of their organisation's viewpoint, sharing of the TF's workload and responding promptly and clearly to deadlines. TFs should review members' commitment annually when forming their work programme.

TFs operate on the assumption of trust between members in fulfilling the TF's aims and objectives, in sharing information and agreeing tactics. TF members should have full confidence in each other as individuals representing their organisations, and where acting as a delegate for the TF representing a rounded LINK perspective. Any difficulties experienced by members with any of these aspects should be discussed at an early stage with the Convenor, Staff or Board. TF activities are subject to LINK's Memorandum and Articles, Operating Principles, Policy on Co-optees and LINK's Corporate Strategy. In this context Convenors and Members are expected to be familiar with and abide by/apply these.

Any member body may sign up to a TF output where the TF wishes to widen the scope of signatories beyond TF members.

LINK Staff will

- Keep a list of TF Convenors and Deputies on the members' website
- Provide a regular bulletin to LINK contacts on key activities of active TFs to help co-ordination between TFs and with the broader LINK operations
- Organise and prepare for the Strategic planning and networking meetings for TFs, member bodies, Board and Staff
- Assist TF liaison where outputs cross several TF interest areas, as resources permit
- Report on TF activities for Network Plan updates, Strategic Plan updates, newsletter, funding reports, bulletin, annual report, and website
- Liaise regularly with Convenors regarding TF members' contact details and review participation of member bodies in all work areas annually
- Advise Convenors on relevant LINK protocols
- Provide support to certain TFs and/or certain elements of TF work as determined at networking/Strategic planning meetings

19.3 Co-optee involvement on task forces

Co-optees are bodies whose participation a TF seeks for a specific purpose. If the approach is instigated by a non-member organization interested in the TF, the TF should recommend membership from the outset where the organization is eligible. If the organization is not eligible the TF should decide whether its involvement is likely to add value. If the TF wishes the organisation to take part in its work, the request should be considered by the LINK Board. LINK's Board has agreed that in order to avoid operating a 'double standard', LINK should be clear and consistent about respective distinctions between members and co-optees –(given the financial contribution required of members) so ineligible co-optees should be encouraged to apply to become LINK Organisational Supporters from the outset. This becomes a requirement after one year's participation in the TF.

Entitlements for co-optees are that they can:

- occasionally participate in the relevant TF (once or twice in a year);
- receive related information from LINK staff (including bulletin, relevant advocacy monitoring, newsletter, etc);
- contribute to and support that TF's position statements, submissions and other outputs; and
- take part in that TF's liaison meetings and events.
- Co-optees may not stand for election as TF Convenor/Depute or in represent LINK in other ways, as they are likely to be less aware of the wider operations, interests and ethos of LINK at any one time and, in addition, may not necessarily belong to the voluntary sector.

The policy relies on TF Convenors to differentiate between organisations which the TF approaches and those which approach the TF, and to inform potential Co-optees of the policy. The policy also relies on TF Convenors to inform the Board of Co-optee requests and abide by its decision, and to keep staff informed of all Co-optees so that they can (a) maintain up-to-date e-lists for information purposes and (b) ensure appropriate charging.

20. ORGANISING EVENTS

When organising events in LINK's name please observe LINK's environmental policy. In short, ensure locations are accessible by public transport or car share arrangements are in place, that refreshments are sustainably sourced, with at least equal vegetarian option and that LINK's carbon accounting sheet (on the website) is completed by those attending.

21. USEFUL LINKS

See the members part of the website for diary, strategic plan, network plan and contact details for LINK reps, trustees, taskforces, staff and delegates.