

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'PATCHY' COUNCIL COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT PUTS NATIONAL TARGETS AT RISK

The patchy coverage of environmental issues across local authorities could be putting Scotland's chances of meeting its national targets on issues such as climate change, public transport, biodiversity and active health at risk, Scottish Environment LINK said today.

A new report, 'Delivering for the environment in our communities: An Audit of Single Outcome Agreements' released today, shows many local authorities, along with their Community Planning Partnerships (CPP), are failing to see sustainable development as a priority.[1] This is leading to missed opportunities to capitalise on joining up health, environment and the economy, for the benefit of their local area.

The audit carried out by LINK has found that although environmental issues feature in a number of Single Outcome Agreements (SOA), they tend to cover quite narrow statutory necessities, such as waste and street cleanliness. By taking this approach, significant gaps remain in addressing national priorities such as climate change adaptation, landscape, the historic environment and the sustainable management of water resources. LINK argues that financial constraint means now more than ever, local authorities need to seek solutions which maximise the economic and social benefits of a healthy environment.

The audit identifies several good practice examples – such as Fife, Inverclyde, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire and East Lothian - where local authorities recognise the benefits of strong environmental policies in terms of adding value to health, jobs, and pride in the community.

Commenting on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK Members, Elizabeth Leighton (WWF), said:

"There is a danger that environmental priorities may be increasingly overshadowed by economic ones, particularly in the current financial crisis. This is despite evidence that we can achieve more by joining up economic, social and environmental services. Priority for sustainable transport also results in lower levels of obesity and a promoting a quality environment supports a stronger economy."

Maggie Keegan (SWT), also involved in this LINK work, added:

"Local authorities and their partners have such a key role to play in improving Scotland's environment - whether it be for wildlife, reducing climate emissions, adapting to climate change, or protecting our beautiful and historic landscapes. We would like to see more local authorities take on this challenge, with the clear direction, support and backing from the Scottish Government.

“With local authority elections just over a year away, it is vital local authorities make clear how they will do their part for Scotland's environment. The Single Outcome Agreement is an important step in making it a priority.”

Ends

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Contact details

For more information please contact:
Elizabeth Leighton, tel 01350 728200
Maggie Keegan, tel 0131 312 4762
Jen Anderson, tel 01738 630804

Notes to Editors

[1] Link to report: <http://www.scotlink.org>

[2] Link to *Working for Sustainable Development through Single Outcome Agreements*
<http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/SOAreportJanuary2010.pdf>

[3] Single Outcome Agreements are agreements between the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships which set out how each will work in the future towards improving outcomes for the local people in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities, within the context of the Government's National Performance Framework.
<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/single-outcome-agreements/>

[4] LINK is the network for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations, with a combined membership of around 500,000 people. LINK is funded by its Members and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org