

Scottish Environment Festival 2012 Reviewed

2012 saw the first **Scottish Environment Festival** (SEF). Due to event overload, the Scottish Parliament's new guidance stipulated that only one themed week per year can take place in Parliament, therefore Scottish Environment LINK will now be alternating years between hosting an Environment week or festival, so for example next year, 2013, will revert back to Scottish Environment Week (SEW).

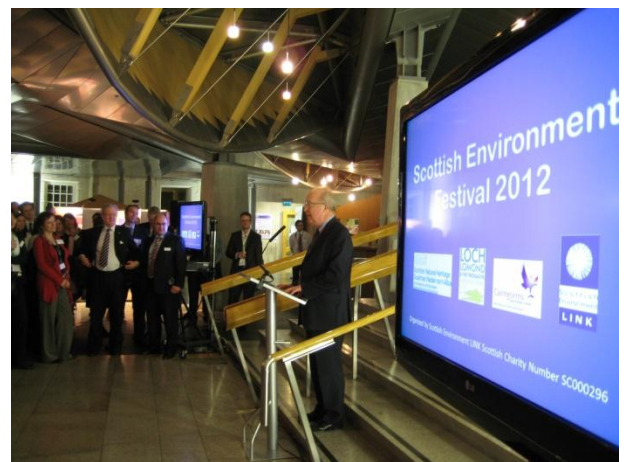
As with the previous SEWs, SEF still provides parliamentarians opportunities to engage and find out what's important to LINK's member organization and their members out there in Scotland's environment. The first Scottish Environment Festival's theme was **Exploring the Environment**, whether in a professional or personal capacity, within parliamentary walls or offsite.

The sponsors this year were Scottish Natural Heritage, with an overall annual grant (which also supports LINK's wider core work); Historic Scotland, currently in the second year of a three year funding period for SEW/F; and Calor Scotland. In addition, the Evening Reception was kindly sponsored by the Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.



The Programme offered four events, two in Parliament and two offsite. The Festival was launched by the Historic Scotland sponsored seminar **Exploring Scotland's Past** on February 29th 2012, sponsored by Claire Baker MSP. The seminar celebrated how the past informs the present and how it can be used as a tool to empower people in Scotland. Three short presentations showed the diverse way this is being done. Dr. Alan Calder, Chairman of Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society (a society member of Archaeology Scotland) gave an illustrated talk on the work of this long-established and very active voluntary society. Deborah Long from Plantlife Scotland showcased their work on pinewood management, specifically for twinflower, and using the past to devise schemes for develop appropriate forestry management techniques for today's foresters as outlined in their recent publication *Quality and Quantity; Revitalizing Scottish Woodlands*. Derek Alexander, Head of Archaeology for the National Trust presented information on recent work at NTS battlefields around Scotland and in particular at Culloden.

The second event at Holyrood, the midweek Evening Reception was hosted by Sarah Boyack MSP (for a seventh year) in the Garden lobby at Holyrood, with brief speeches from Sarah herself, acknowledging LINK's advocacy role, the Minister for the Environment Stewart Stevenson, suggesting that the Olympic Games in 2012 should leave a lasting legacy and newly appointed LINK president, Mr. Ross Finnie, who spoke of LINK's continuing pursuit of sustainable development. The next evening was followed by a Pub Quiz at the Canon's Gait pub in the Canongate, sponsored by Calor. Winners were a miscellaneous team formed on the evening and including Paul Riding from Calor.



The closing event of the programme was **Exploring the Environment in your Constituency**, where MSPs, their families and friends were invite to choose a site visit in or near their constituency offered by the LINK

members. 11 LINK members participated putting forward visit offers around Scotland with a total of 30 individual visits offered. 16 MSPs then participated in visits and members found the opportunity useful to show the MSPs first-hand what they do as well as get local media coverage for important campaigns they are running, as WDCS did, with Richard Lochhead MSP's visit. Following his visit, Drew Smith MSP has offered to lodge a motion in the Scottish Parliament about The Hidden Gardens and the John Muir Trust. Overall feedback from MSPs was that they found the visits very beneficial, to see what work was being done by the various projects and members and that constituency visits were an important part of Scottish Environment Week.



"Nothing beats seeing for yourself what is happening on the ground." **Alison McInnes MSP, North East Scotland**

"The visit was very interesting and I appreciated the opportunity to participate. It was useful to learn what activity is being undertaken by Froglife in my constituency, and how they have assisted with developing the amenity of Cumbernauld Community Park." **Jamie Hepburn MSP, Central Scotland**

"I was very well looked after by representatives of the local Butterfly Conservation group and by Stirling Council Ranger Services. They gave generously of their time and were very informative as to the work that is going on. I would be very happy to participate in a similar visit in future." **Murdo Fraser MSP, Mid Scotland and Fife**



Sponsorship and thanks

LINK Board and members are pleased to acknowledge the support and active cooperation of the Festival's financial sponsors: Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, Calor Scotland, Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. We would also like to extend our acknowledgment and thanks to our MSP sponsors, Sarah Boyack and Claire Baker, for all their help and support of our work, as well as the Events Management Team at the Scottish Parliament.

Moving forward

At the detailed level, LINK will continue to improve its advance planning timeline, develop the guidance for those who organize events, briefing for speakers and presenters, programme development, running order for events, role of host MSPs and/or event sponsors and circulation of invitations –adapting these further for future Weeks and Festivals.

Next year we revert back to Scottish Environment Week though no theme proposals have been put forward at this time.

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