

The LINK Newsletter

Scottish Environment LINK update
Spring 2012



Exploring Scotland's Environment

LINK's initiative to celebrate the environment and for member bodies to communicate the range of their work to Parliamentarians, reached its 7th anniversary this year. Due to an overload of themed weeks in the Parliamentary calendar Scottish Environment Week took a year off, evolving instead into the Scottish Environment Festival, with some focus away from Holyrood. We organised a programme of visits for MSPs to see members at work in their constituencies, a popular move, with 16 MSPs taking up offers in their patch. Richard Lochhead's visit gave a local media boost to the WDCS campaign to protect Scotland's whales and dolphins. Jamie Hepburn, visiting Froglife, was interested in their contribution to development of the amenity in Cumbernauld Community Park. Drew Smith, guest of John Muir Trust was so inspired by his visit to Glasgow's Hidden Gardens that he returned the favour by inviting staff and volunteers to the gardens at Parliament. As Alison Innes (guest of Scottish Countryside Rangers Association) put it: "nothing beats seeing for yourself what is happening on the ground." LINK hopes to continue with this programme for Scottish Environment Week 2013, now in next year's Parliamentary calendar for 18 February.

One seminar *Exploring Scotland's Past* was held in Parliament, funded by Historic Scotland and sponsored by Clare Baker MSP. Presentations by Plantlife, the National Trust for Scotland and the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society showed how the past informs the present and how it can be used as a tool to empower people. Dr. Alan Calder, Chairman of EAFS (a society member of Archaeology Scotland) spoke

about the work of this long-established and very active voluntary society. Deborah Long from Plantlife Scotland described work on pinewood management, specifically for twinflower, using historic information to devise schemes for appropriate forestry management techniques, outlined in the publication [Quality and Quantity: Revitalizing Scottish Woodlands](#). Derek Alexander, Head of Archaeology for NTS presented information on recent work at battlefields around Scotland.

On 7 March the reception in Holyrood's Garden Lobby was an excellent networking opportunity, with short speeches from Minister Stewart Stevenson, LINK President Ross Finnie, and Sarah Boyack MSP, the event host, who commended LINK's scrutiny role across government. LINK is grateful to SNH and to Scotland's National Parks for supporting this very popular event.

The Festival ended with a Pub Quiz, sponsored by Calor Scotland, which rounded off a month of activities that helped demonstrate the value of Scotland's environment to our social and economic well-being. LINK is grateful to all involved in making it successful. The [full report](#) is available on the website .



Corporate Strategy Refresh

A survey of operations and effectiveness among members and trustees, and a commissioned report on the views of key audiences and partners have been considered by LINK's Board in the context of revisions needed to the corporate strategy and scenario planning. The survey feedback showed that the LINK mechanism is highly valued by members and that the core role of providing a forum for members is as relevant as ever after 25 years. LINK's key functions: to share information, facilitate discussion and to undertake joint action where value will be added, are reaffirmed.

Members were asked to comment on the network's key achievements over 3 years. Work around the Marine Act (which has project funding for two officers until 2013) scored highly, with our contribution to the development of the Land Use Strategy, our initiative around Environmental Governance, engagement with Local Government on sustainable development duties and our contribution to the Climate Act ranking strongly. Some members noted the contribution LINK makes to environmental legislation, the way in which the sectors' views have been represented and our proactive positioning with government and other audiences. Vibrant taskforces, building consensus, strength of voice, and political horizon scanning, are all valued, in addition to specific concerns of member bodies which LINK has helped take forward. Overall there was a strong recognition of LINK being 'its members working together', not an entity operating on members' behalf, a vital nuance when considering the total resource available in future. LINK is fortunate to have core funding in place until March 2014.

The review of our external audiences was carried out by Bruce Britton, who reported that it is clear that LINK is viewed as an effective and valued voice on environmental issues in Scotland. The refreshed strategy is being updated and will be circulated to members and partners over the summer.

Carbon Accounting

LINK's [carbon accounts for 2011-12](#) were prepared by Hugh Green (LINK Finance and IT Officer) for the March year end and are on the website. LINK began carbon accounting 4 years ago, recording employee travel on business and commuting, energy emissions from the Perth and Edinburgh offices, waste and recycling in the main Perth office, and (intermittently) travel by others to LINK meetings. Since 2008 emissions per employee have reduced by 42%, 35% excluding commuting. Overall, the emissions trend per employee continues to fall. We are now very close to the Carbon Trust's best practice for a typical office of the same size, a good performance considering the limitations of an old rented building.

Some improvements this year were due to a milder winter and an upgrade of IT equipment which uses less electricity. Hosting a staff member from another organisation continues to help make efficient use of space in Perth. LINK's meeting room is well used which has impacts on waste and heating. Business travel (routinely by public transport) is a harder nut to crack, much is inevitable due to nature of the jobs, though we aim to continue to reduce it where possible by web and phone communications. For 2012-13 we will also implement a more robust process for measuring Board and membership travel to LINK meetings.

LINK did not make these considerable improvements from a standing start, having always tried to 'practice what we preach'. Carbon accounting is an educative process showing clearly where the gains are and where more effort is required. Hugh Green's regime is well integrated within our administrative and cleaning routines, and relatively simple for all. The tools are available on the members' website where a discussion facility for administrators was set up in 2011.

As ever, Hugh is happy to discuss LINK's experience with those keen to embark upon, or improve, their own carbon accounting.

News and Views from Members

The next four pages contain articles from LINK member bodies and guest contributors

Planning Conference The People's Perspective *Clare Symonds, Planning Democracy*



[Planning Democracy](#) is a relatively new member of Scottish Environment LINK. We are a small organisation that formed three years ago to campaign for a fair and equitable planning system. Last month we held a conference called Planning: The People's Perspective where we launched our [Manifesto for Change](#).

Since the 2006 planning reforms, those of you interested in such issues may have attended the policy conferences on planning and community involvement, where the impact of the new legislation on public involvement in planning is debated. Frequently these are attended by professionals and developers and the podium hosts a range of experts on planning, mediation and public participation. However few who attend these forums are members of the general public, the discussions about planning and community involvement are all too frequently about the community, not with them.

Planning Democracy decided to host our own conference (pictured) where the real experts on public engagement in planning could share their experiences as case studies. The speakers were ordinary people whose lives have been impacted by developments and who have become, all of them, reluctant experts on the planning system. Their experiences chimed with many others in the audience of 80 delegates, from all over Scotland, many of whom said it was "good to speak to others who were in the same boat" and to meet others who

"shared their experiences of feeling disempowered and disillusioned".

We also used the opportunity to tell people about our research and Manifesto for Change which outlines key recommendations for making the planning system in Scotland more equitable and transparent, where decision makers are held to account and where the public voice is as influential as that of developers.

We invited people to send a message to politicians in a [vox pop video](#) that we made on the day (which can be viewed on our website). Many people also wrote comments to send to politicians on their feedback forms, including one delegate who said: "The case studies session will live in my mind for a very long time and most definitely has inspired me to participate further." His message to politicians was: "They are responsible for what the planning system does. They must read the manifesto, consider the case studies and challenge both the Scottish Government, and their own local authority to meet the concerns expressed in a well researched and balanced document."

We ask members of Scottish Environment LINK to do the same and to endorse and support our [Manifesto for Change](#) which can be read at the Planning Democracy website www.planningdemocracy.org.uk

Hilltracks Consultation: Your Response is Important by 22 June

David Gibson,
Mountaineering Council for
Scotland



Creating a legacy from the Olympic and Commonwealth Games: Ramblers Scotland's Medal Routes Project

Helen Todd,
Ramblers Scotland



LINK colleagues will hopefully recall the valuable work done by Hebe Carus, when MCoS Access and Conservation Officer, to raise the profile of the damage done to the upland landscape by bulldozed hill tracks. A subsequent petition led by two MSPs and discussion in Parliament has finally resulted in the Scottish Government announcing the long-awaited '[Consultation on the General Permitted Development Amendment Order 2012](#)'.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on draft legislation for 'a number of refinements and amendments to the non-domestic elements of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)'.

Landowners currently enjoy Permitted Development Rights (PDR), which means that a planning application and consent is not required prior to bulldozing a track. The Consultation is seeking views on a proposal to remove PDR for the formation of access tracks for forestry and agriculture purposes.

Under the proposals, development would not be permitted if it is within a National Scenic Area, a conservation area or National Park, without prior planning approval.

The MCoS welcomes these proposals and will respond to the Consultation accordingly. In the meantime we strongly encourage LINK colleagues who wish to support the proposal to remove PDR to respond to the Consultation by the closing date of Friday 22 June 2012.

You can find out how to respond by going to the [Scottish Government website](#)


International sporting events do not have a great track record of creating any lasting legacy, beyond the construction of new facilities. However, given the cost of hosting the forthcoming events in London and Glasgow, it is not unreasonable to expect wider legacy benefits to flow from that investment. The creation of a lasting legacy was a major part of the London bid, and Alex Salmond promised that the Glasgow Games would "inspire people to take up a sport or embrace a healthier lifestyle". The Scottish Government's 2014 legacy plans are focussed around four themes: Active, Sustainable, Connected and Flourishing.

So what would an Active legacy look like? Given Scotland's woeful physical activity and obesity levels, there is a real need to encourage more activity. Inactive people are unlikely to take up a new sport, but outdoor recreation has a much greater potential for increasing levels of participation across the whole population. A massive increase in the proportion of people who spend much more time walking or cycling, whether for active travel or for recreation, must be the best way to achieve a legacy.

To help achieve this legacy and encourage the inactive to be more active, we have developed a range of initiatives in our Walk the Path to 2014 plan. One of these, our [Medal Routes project](#), supported by SNH, Paths for All and Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust, is currently funded for one year. Working in partnership with communities and organisations across Scotland, Medal Routes are developed by volunteers who identify a walking 'hub' along with 3 circular routes of different lengths – Bronze, Silver and Gold (eg, 15, 30,

60 minutes) based on the hub and using existing paths. Potential walking hubs could be schools, community sports hubs, cafes, health centres and railway stations. Any number of walking hubs can be established in every city, town and village, along with promotional material about the routes. People are encouraged to visit their local greenspaces and enjoy the areas where they live, or are visiting. Medal Routes will be located across Scotland, promoted through community led events, and available for download from the Ramblers Scotland website.

Medal Routes are a start, but it remains to be seen whether Scotland can learn from the lessons of the London 2012 Olympics and use the next two years to focus on building a real physical activity legacy from 2014.

<p>My Wild Life Project Launched in Scotland</p> <p><i>Jodie Coomber, Froglife Trust</i></p>	
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An innovative wildlife project began this year in Glasgow as part of a wider project being run by national conservation charity [Froglife](#). [My Wild Life](#) is an intergenerational reminiscence project bringing different generations together to share memories about wildlife and playing outdoors. After successful events in Peterborough and London last summer, the project was introduced in Scotland in January.

The first session, held in Glasgow's Hillhead Library, coincided with the start of Faith Hillier's BTCV placement with Froglife. Faith is employed by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers as part of their Natural Communities programme, which aims to increase community environmental engagement skills. She will work with Froglife for 12 months engaging with communities and involving them in



conservation work. BTCV, supported by HLF, will provide training and expertise to Faith to help her with this role.

Faith's first day saw her helping to set up and run a wildlife reminiscence session between pupils from Balornock Primary School and members of the Scottish Natural History Society. Pupils aged ten and eleven met with adults aged 64 to 76 and rummaged through wildlife reminiscence kits, asking questions and listening to stories. Groups of pupils then interviewed some of the older participants on film.

One pupil was particularly engaged by the session as he dreams of becoming a zoologist and got the chance to quiz zoologist Roger Downie (pictured) who has a wealth of experience. Roger enjoyed the session much more than he expected to: "The My Wild Life project is an excellent opportunity for older people to chat informally with schoolchildren about our enthusiasms and to appreciate the potential of the next generation."

More recently Faith has been instrumental in organising an event held at Palacerigg Country Park in Cumbernauld as part of National Science & Engineering Week. "It was great leading children through the 'new world' and teaching them about native wildlife" says Faith. "Once children had explored the newt habitats, we asked parents and grandparents to share their childhood memories of wildlife. We heard some lovely stories and the children learnt a lot."

The project will create a permanent record of

people's wildlife memories in the form of a book and film. Froglife will be hosting more reminiscence events in and around Glasgow over the next year.

For more information or to get involved in the My Wild Life project, please visit www.froglife.org/mywildlife or email jodie.coomber@froglife.org.

Unconventional gas and Fracking

*Hannah Kitchen,
Campaigner at
Friends of the
Earth Scotland*



Fracking is one of a number of new technologies that allow the extraction of harder-to-reach sources of gas. As Dart Energy plans to begin commercial extraction of Coalbed Methane near Airth, in the Falkirk area, [Friends of the Earth Scotland](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk) is trying to speak to as many people in affected areas as possible, to give them a clear picture of the potential risks.

We are also asking questions about the push towards riskier, more extreme forms of fossil fuel extraction that are taking place across the world. For example, the oil industry is moving towards methods of extraction, such as the tar sands in Canada, which are unavoidably destructive at the extraction stage.

Unconventional gas extraction is in a similar category of inherently risky and more extreme fossil fuel extraction. Fracking and coalbed methane extraction come with the risk of methane leaking into surrounding water and air, and the problem of a great deal of contaminated wastewater to dispose of. The chemicals used in fracking present further risks of water contamination. All risks are multiplied because of the number of wells required to extract gas in one area.

Energy companies like to promote shale and CBM as natural gas, claiming that they are cleaner than conventional fossil fuels and a

crucial 'bridging fuel' to ease the transition to a low carbon economy. However, not only are unconventional gas extraction techniques very energy hungry, but an additional risk lies in the possibility of methane leakage. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, with a global warming potential 25 times that of carbon dioxide over a 100 year period.

Professor James Hansen – NASA's top scientist – has said that in order to stabilize our climate at a safe level we need to:

- Phase out coal entirely by 2030;
- Cease oil and gas exploration immediately, and only use what we know we have;
- Stop mining the tar sands now.

In Scotland perhaps we should take his advice, invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy, and steer clear of risky gas extraction. The decision is not entirely up to those at Holyrood though – the Department of Energy and Climate Change at Westminster will issue new licenses for exploration later this year, and a large part of the central belt is up for grabs. Communities will need to be alert to new planning applications, and may wish to send a warning to companies by declaring themselves 'Frack and CBM free'. Friends of the Earth Scotland will be giving talks in potentially affected areas and sharing information and advice in the coming months.

More information can be found at www.foe-scotland.org.uk/fracking



Photo courtesy of Friends of the Earth England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

More Network News

Agriculture CAP reform and the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) continue to be the taskforce (TF) focus. LINK [responded](#) to Scottish Government consultations on the European Commission Future CAP Reform Proposals 2014-20 in May and has been taking an active role on all of the SRDP working groups. These are due to end in June, when a report will be submitted to the Minister, in anticipation of a public consultation in the autumn. The outcomes will be dependent on EU decisions on both funding and interpretation of the Commission's proposals. The TF continues its close liaison with the UK Links and NGO colleagues in Europe.

The key issues for LINK are a holistic approach to the agricultural resource in terms of the principles of the Sustainable Land Use Strategy and public benefit for public funding. LINK has commissioned research on the benefits of such an integrated approach both for the public benefit and for those who make their living off the land, due in June. The TF has been considering its own advocacy strategy in terms of widening the public debate on these issues.

Climate Adaptation The TF published a position statement [5 Principles for Adapting to a Changing Climate](#) in January as a contribution to the Scottish Government's Adaptation Programme, due in 2013 as required by the Climate (Scotland) Act. LINK considers it vital that Scotland has a robust programme and members are engaged with the process of developing most sectoral plans. The TF is alert to the need for proper scrutiny by Parliament as the Programme develops, and [briefed](#) MSPs on key issues in April. Concerns are resourcing and prioritisation of the necessary work. The TF will carry out some analysis of gaps between Scotland's climate adaptation plan and the UK Risk Assessment in the coming months.

Economics Building on LINK's seminar last August on the contribution of environment to life and the economy, and the

way in which this is currently valued in strategic decision-making, LINK set up a members' Forum to promote collective concerns and ensure a clear environmental voice in this debate, critical to Scotland's future health. LINK has now commissioned Simon Pepper to bring together members' views and set out our high level vision of a flourishing Scotland, what this means for the nature of Scotland's economy and how we best measure progress towards achieving this. A workshop for members on 18 June forms part of the process. The product will be a succinct accessible report that should strongly underpin members' advocacy.

Marine The TF has been busy with responses to consultations on the [Aquaculture & Fisheries Bill](#); on [Proposed Introductions of New Statutory Scallop Fishing Management Measures](#); and on [proposed new marine Special Areas of Conservation](#). The TF awaits publication of the consultation on the National Marine Plan, is fully engaged in discussions on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and is working with colleagues in the other Links to respond to the consultation on the Marine Strategic Framework Directive. Marine Renewables is a very live issue. LINK is engaged on the steering group for the Habitats Regulations Appraisal of the Wave and Tidal Energy Plan. LINK is contributing to the Offshore Wind Strategy, currently being refreshed. The TF is also preparing resources for public support of MPAs to be more clearly vocalised.

Local Governance LINK's suggestion of working jointly with Government and CoSLA, perhaps via a secondment, to clarify local authorities' environmental and sustainable development duties and monitor their delivery was not taken up by Government, though LINK was encouraged to submit views to a review of Community Planning Partnerships and Single Outcome Agreements. The TF is considering how to secure appropriate scrutiny of environmental delivery at local level.

LINK's [Acting Locally](#) document, setting out environmental and sustainable development

issues at local authority level was welcomed by several of the political parties nationally. The TF plans to brief new councillors on relevant issues in June.

Access to Justice LINK's [response](#) to the Scottish Government's consultation on legal challenges to decisions by public authorities under the Public Participation Directive 2003/35/EC was prepared by Mary Church (FoES), convener of LINK's Legal Governance subgroup, and supported by 11 member bodies. The comprehensive response concluded that Scottish Government is in breach of its obligations under the Aarhus Convention to provide fair and effective access to justice in environmental matters that is not prohibitively expensive. Protective Expense Orders can form part of an Aarhus compliant cost regime, however the proposals outlined in the consultation will do very little to bring Scotland into compliance, leaving the UK open to continued legal action from the EC.

LINK has allocated funding to support the Legal Governance Group's liaison with DG Environment over the fundamental differences in access to justice in environmental matters between Scotland and the rest of the UK, while current legal proceedings continue against the UK for infraction of the Aarhus Convention.

Membership Members heartily endorsed Scottish Ornithologist Club's application to re-join LINK in April. Since January LINK has lost three member bodies; financial considerations an inevitable factor. The Rivers and Fisheries Trusts left at the end of March, Scottish Native Woods ceased operating in January, and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland withdrew in May after carefully considering its membership over the last year.

Liaison This has been a busy period for high level meetings involving the Board, with SEPA, SNH, both National Parks, Forestry

Commission and with Bob MacIntosh in his new role as Director of Scottish Government's Environment and Forestry Directorate. LINK's May meeting with Minister Stewart Stevenson covered the Sustainable Land Use Strategy, Woodland Expansion and CAP reform. LINK has concerns about the pace of embedding sustainable land use principles cross sectorally, and suggested formation of a well directed stakeholder group. The Minister was not convinced, and invited LINK to provide evidence of any gaps, to which LINK will respond.

Looking ahead In the run up to the referendum in 2014 LINK is looking to those promoting the various constitutional options, to explain how their proposals will ensure good stewardship of the environment and better environmental governance. LINK will promote the environmental community's position at an event on 27 June, where our Referendum Challenge will be launched.

Further Information

For information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit www.scotlink.org Task Force outputs are listed under 'Work Areas' accessible from the home page.

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