



Scottish  
Environment

**LINK**

# **Corporate Strategy 2009-2012**

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LINK is a Scottish Charity SCN 000296 and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company number SC 250899.

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## Foreword by Helen Zealley OBE, President

Six months into my presidency of LINK, I welcome this strategy for the LINK network and commend it to staff in our member organisations; to decision-makers in Parliament, government, local government and the agencies; and to the other organisations and sectors with whom we work.

A survey of our member organisations and other partners has confirmed that our strategic goals should remain unchanged – to make Scotland sustainable; to provide a strong voice for Scotland’s environmental movement; and to act as an effective, efficient and accountable network. This strategy develops these goals to ensure that they remain relevant to the challenges that face us today.

Our mission is to contribute to sustainable development in Scotland. As a coalition of environmental NGOs it is rightly the environmental dimension of a sustainable Scotland which concerns us most. We worry that the profound economic downturn could jeopardise action to protect the environment while political leaders, understandably, seek to protect jobs and the economy. But we are heartened by the growing international recognition that action to address climate change can contribute to a different economic focus in the future. We remain hopeful that these two major challenges will result in considered decision-making in the interests of long-term sustainability – in Scotland and throughout the world.

The LINK network and its members are keen to engage with those responsible for Scotland’s government – with political parties, government agencies, local authorities, business and communities. We aim to be a strong voice in support of truly sustainable growth over these critical years to 2012. We will work with the current and any future administrations to ensure that choices made to support economic growth are genuinely sustainable in terms of our environment and the communities and activities that rely on it.

Where it may make a difference, we want to work with others - with organisations or networks with goals in common - not re-inventing wheels, nor duplicating voices, but making best use of diminished shared resources.

In the coming three years LINK will build on its track record in promoting sustainable options for policies affecting the environment and the health and well-being of local communities. We will keep priorities under review in relation to needs here in Scotland as well as the wider UK, European and international contexts. We will remain open to new ideas, encourage debate and engagement. With more calls on our time than we can respond to, we will be focussed and firm about our choices. Our members will support common ground, as well as pursuing their own particular priorities.

LINK could not operate without the hugely significant contribution of its member organisations in staff-time as well as subscriptions; this applies across the considerable range of NGOs, small and large, in our membership. Our strength as a network remains our diversity and sense of purpose. I have every confidence that we will continue to be effective, efficient and accountable in all our activities.

**Helen Zealley OBE, LINK President**  
**March 2009**

## Strategy Summary

### Introduction

This summarises Scottish Environment LINK's corporate strategy for the period 2009-2012. The strategy was prepared following a strategic review involving LINK's members, staff, Board, Honorary Fellows and those with an interest in the network - politicians, funders, civil servants, journalists, partners and others.

The Corporate Strategy describes the LINK network's vision, mission and values, our strategic objectives and how LINK works. The document also explains LINK's systems for governance and management, addresses how LINK will be resourced and describes how the network will monitor and evaluate its performance and progress in achieving its strategic objectives.

### 1. About Scottish Environment LINK

LINK is the collective voice of Scotland's environment movement. Established in 1987, LINK is a member-led network of over thirty non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working together in the interests of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage. Member organisations are involved in a diverse range of work addressing these issues.

Through LINK, member organisations have developed an authoritative collective voice based on their combined expertise. LINK enables increased efficiency, reduced duplication of effort, and a focal point for contact in Scotland's environment movement. As a network, LINK benefits from the involvement of member organisations with unpaid, passionate and knowledgeable supporters as well as those employing professional staff with specialist expertise. Together, the member organisations engage with almost half a million supporters.

### 2. Our Vision, Mission & Values

**Vision** Our vision is to secure, through the collective efforts of our members and by inspiring others, the sustainable development of Scotland where all aspects of the country's environment are valued to enhance the quality of life for all.

**Mission** LINK strives to be a dynamic network that helps members to achieve their own aims and their collective goals by sharing knowledge; building consensus on key concerns and taking action together.

**Values** Central to LINK's strength and identity are our shared values – the fundamental beliefs that underpin the network. LINK's values shape our identity as a network, the way we engage with others and establish high standards for member and staff cooperation in the pursuit of our goals. In our work together we believe in the importance of democracy, diversity, realism and mutual accountability. In all our work, we believe in valuing and respecting all aspects of our shared environment; treading lightly, acting sustainably and considering the environment holistically.

### 3. Scottish Environment LINK Strategic Objectives

Three strategic objectives set the direction and focus for the network.

- Making Scotland sustainable
- A strong voice for Scotland's environment movement
- An effective, efficient and accountable network



### 3.1 Making Scotland sustainable

**Strategic Objective:** Promote policies that will place sustainability at the heart of Scotland's approach to sustainable development. Sustainability should be at the core of Scotland's approach to sustainable development. By 'sustainable development' we mean " ... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"<sup>1</sup>. Through LINK, members play a crucial role in ensuring that sustainability is understood and kept high on the agenda of government and other key decision-makers and reflected in their decisions.

### 3.2. A strong voice for Scotland's environment movement

**Strategic Objective:** Build capacity and create opportunities for LINK members to speak authoritatively on issues of collective concern.

As environmental NGOs in Scotland, we need to ensure that our messages influence the debates and decisions that will shape Scotland's future. These messages will have greater influence if we speak in unison, with authority and together with other interest groups on the issues about which we care passionately.

### 3.3 An effective, efficient and accountable network

**Strategic Objective:** Ensure that LINK is well governed, managed, and resourced with active member participation and strong mutual accountability.

As a network, we are most influential when member organisations play an active role in shaping the direction of LINK's work, governing the network's operations and contributing staff expertise and other resources in the pursuit of agreed priorities.

## 4. How Scottish Environment LINK Works

We work with three main groups: governments and other key decision makers, wider civic society including the media, and our own network. Our three main ways of achieving our mission as a network are: sharing our knowledge; building consensus on key concerns and taking action together and we have put in place the systems and structures required for effective networking.

## 5. Leadership, governance, management and resources

LINK aspires to be a dynamic member-led network. To make this a reality all members are required to take an active role in creating a vision for the network and setting its direction, providing resources and expertise, and implementing activities to enable the achievement of agreed objectives. Members are also required to hold themselves and each other accountable for taking agreed action - either directly or by delegating to others the authority to act on the members' behalf. Through LINK's structures of governance and management members delegate the authority to others for the leadership roles of vision, inspiration and momentum.

## 6. LINK's structure and systems

LINK has evolved a suitable structure, staff team and efficient systems to enable the network to achieve its objectives. We have developed our network structure to provide an effective framework for LINK's governance and management. Given the complexity of LINK as a network, we have evolved effective and efficient structures and procedures for planning

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<sup>1</sup> WCED (1987) Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford: OUP - "The Brundtland Report"



and setting our priorities. LINK members jointly set objectives for the network and take collective responsibility for their achievement. Coordination is particularly important in our network as there is a high degree of decentralised authority delegated to task forces and campaign groups. Our systems balance decentralisation with coherent and integrated thinking. Finally, we will continue to develop creative ways of communicating clear and well-targeted messages to specific audiences.

Treading lightly and acting in a sustainable way are core values for our network. It is important for us to lead by example by showing how individuals and organisations can translate these values into practice.

## **7. Evaluating our progress**

We believe strongly in the importance of monitoring and evaluating progress towards the achievement of our strategic objectives. We have put in place robust systems for monitoring and evaluation to: strengthen our performance; learn from experience and improve the quality of our work; enable mutual accountability within the network for the achievement of agreed goals; become more adaptable; be accountable for the use of our resources.

We will use and further refine the procedures we have developed for planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating our work. These procedures include the development of an annual operating plan with agreed objectives, key performance indicators and targets that enable monitoring and review of performance on outcomes.

We will carry out a strategic review of our network and operations every three years, involving independent experts whenever possible. A major focus of the strategic review will involve assessing progress towards our three strategic objectives using indicators that have been developed for this purpose.

## The Strategy

### Introduction

This document describes Scottish Environment LINK's corporate strategy for the period 2009-2012. The strategy was prepared following a participatory strategic review involving LINK's members, staff, Board, Honorary Fellows and those with an interest in the network: politicians, funders, civil servants, journalists, partners and others. We found during this review that key elements of our previous strategy covering the years 2006-2009 were resilient enough to continue to guide our strategic direction in 2009-2012. Some changes have been made to take into account progress achieved, new challenges, changing circumstances and re-thinking on issues but the main elements our strategic framework emphasise continuity.

The Corporate Strategy describes LINK's vision, mission and values; our strategic objectives and how LINK works. The document also explains LINK's systems for governance and management, addresses how LINK will be resourced and describes how the network will monitor its progress in achieving its strategic objectives.

### 1. About Scottish Environment LINK

LINK is the collective voice of Scotland's environment movement. Established in 1987, LINK is a member-led network of over thirty non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working together in the interests of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage. Member organisations are involved in a diverse range of work addressing these issues.

Through LINK, member organisations have developed an authoritative collective voice based on their combined expertise. LINK enables increased efficiency, reduced duplication of effort, and a focal point for contact in Scotland's environment movement. As a network, LINK benefits from the involvement of member organisations with unpaid, passionate and knowledgeable supporters as well as those employing professional staff with specialist expertise. Together, the member organisations engage with almost half a million supporters.

Among LINK's collective achievements are:

- Proactive engagement in the development of sound environmental policy across a range of issues including climate, flooding, landscape, the outdoor agenda in relation to physical health, and the importance of Scotland's nature
- Professionally staged events allowing advocacy, discussions amongst policy stakeholders, and celebration of the role which the environment plays in Scotland's society and economy
- Fostering of mature relationships with decision-makers on environmental and related themes at all levels in Government and Parliament
- Effective coalition with other partners on key issues, notably with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
- Informed collaborative approaches to the cross-border responsibilities surrounding the UK's marine legislation via coordinated advocacy with the other Links in the UK and, through this partnership, with UK government
- *Scotland 2011: LINK's Challenge to the new Scottish Government* - the network's manifesto, based on Government's own objectives



LINK is a registered Scottish Charity and in June 2003 became incorporated as a Company limited by guarantee. The network is governed by a Board of Trustees who work closely with the network's President, convenors<sup>2</sup> and staff.

LINK has a complex structure so for the sake of brevity throughout this document, the term 'LINK' refers to all parts of the network – member organisations, Board and staff. Where the terms 'we' and 'our' are used, these refer to the LINK network as a whole.

LINK employs a small staff<sup>3</sup> team based in Perth and Edinburgh who provide core services to member organisations. Staff help to keep members informed about and coordinate the work of task forces and campaign groups; they arrange LINK's annual Congress and AGM; organise network planning and other meetings; provide support for members' parliamentary liaison; organise receptions, seminars and site visits; organise conferences and internal workshops; produce publications and raise funds.

LINK's collective work is dependent on the active participation of member organisations in the network's 'task forces' and campaigns, representing LINK members' interests in a wide range of stakeholder groups and other bodies, providing evidence to inquiries, and in LINK's governance and planning mechanisms.

Funding for LINK comes from a number of sources: from member subscriptions and project-funding, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Government and independent grant-funding. The funding leverages a significant multiplier effect in LINK's capacity as a result of the time and expertise contributed by member organisations through their involvement in LINK's structures and activities.

## 2. Our Vision, Mission & Values

### Vision

Our vision is to secure, through the collective efforts of our members and by inspiring others, the sustainable development of Scotland where all aspects of the country's environment are valued to enhance the quality of life for all.

### Mission

LINK strives to be a dynamic network that helps members to achieve their own aims and their collective goals by:

- sharing knowledge
- building consensus on key concerns
- taking action together

### Values

Central to LINK's strength and identity are our shared values – the fundamental beliefs that underpin the network. LINK's values shape our identity as a network, the way we engage with others and establish high standards for member and staff cooperation in the pursuit of our goals.

***In our work with others, we believe in the importance of:***

1. Balancing a **long-term perspective** unhampered by political horizons with the need for urgent action when this is necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> In this document, 'convenors' refers to convenors of task forces and other steering groups operating under the LINK name.

<sup>3</sup> At early 2009, 6.8 full-time equivalents including two full-time temporary project staff.



2. **Quality of life** and not simply economic growth as an indicator of national well-being.
3. **Justice, participation and transparency** in public governance and decision-making.
4. Acting with **integrity** and **professionalism**.
5. Integrating **local, Scotland-wide and global perspectives**.
6. Maintaining **independence** from party-political or funder agendas.
7. The **legitimacy** that comes from representing the members' joint supporter base

*In our collective work as a network, we believe in the importance of:*

8. **Democracy** – We are a member-led network and each full member organisation has an equal opportunity to contribute on issues of governance and strategic direction.
9. **Diversity** - a major source of our strength comes from the range of member organisations involved in terms of size, experiences, areas of expertise, supporter base and approach to work.
10. **Trust, respect and mutual learning** as a basis for effective and healthy member relationships.
11. **Equal opportunities** in the network's governance, operations and as an employer.
12. An **action-orientation** based on an in-depth understanding and analysis of issues.
13. **Realism** - balancing ambition with collective capacity in order to make the best use of resources.
14. **Mutual accountability** to maintain standards and ensure co-operation in the pursuit of agreed goals.

In all of our work, we believe in:

15. **Valuing** and **respecting** all aspects of our shared environment.
16. **Treading lightly**, acting **sustainably** and considering the environment **holistically**.

### 3. Scottish Environment LINK Strategic Objectives

Three strategic objectives set the direction and focus for the network.

- Making Scotland sustainable
- A strong voice for Scotland's environment movement
- An effective, efficient and accountable network

#### 3.1 Making Scotland sustainable

**Strategic Objective:** Promote policies that will place sustainability at the heart of Scotland's approach to sustainable development.

Sustainability should be at the core of Scotland's approach to sustainable development. By 'sustainable development' we mean "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"<sup>4</sup>. Through LINK, members play a crucial role in ensuring that sustainability is understood and kept high on the agenda of government and other key decision-makers.

*To achieve this, we will ...*

- a. Ensure that members have a shared understanding of sustainability<sup>5</sup> and sustainable development and recognise their importance to the environmental and associated cultural heritage of Scotland's people.

<sup>4</sup> WCED (1987) Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford: OUP – "The Brundtland Report"

<sup>5</sup> Sustainability embraces all aspects of the environment with which LINK works.



- b. Identify and act on opportunities to influence key decision makers concerning the development and implementation of policies which support sustainability and hold government, its agencies and local government to account in terms of their decisions and commitments relating to the environment and sustainability.
- c. Strengthen the understanding of members' supporters and the Scottish public about sustainable development and its importance to the country's environment, economy, culture and well-being.
- d. Maintain the issues of sustainability on the policy agendas of all the main political parties and hold these parties to account in terms of their commitments on the environment and sustainability.
- e. Build alliances with a carefully selected range of interested parties (including government agencies, local authorities, businesses, land owners, other networks, faith-based organisations, trades unions and civil society organisations) which share a commitment to sustainability.

### 3.2. A strong voice for Scotland's environment movement

**Strategic Objective:** Build capacity and create opportunities for LINK members to speak authoritatively on issues of collective concern.

As environmental NGOs in Scotland, we need to ensure that our messages influence the debates and decisions that will shape Scotland's future. These messages will have greater influence if we speak in unison, with authority and together with other interest groups on the issues about which we care passionately.

*To achieve this, we will ...*

- a. Identify and prioritise members' collective concerns.
- b. Create added value by encouraging members to invest their expertise, experience, access, profile and funds for the joint achievement of a common vision.
- c. Encourage and support the active involvement of member organisations in all aspects of the network's activities.
- d. Influence the development of a conducive funding environment for eNGOs.
- e. Facilitate, coordinate and evaluate the work of LINK's task forces and other working groups.
- f. Maximise the benefits of LINK's parliamentary advisory and liaison work.
- g. Use carefully targeted campaigning as a way of informing and engaging with supporters and the wider public to encourage them to take action on the environment.
- h. Strengthen the capacity and confidence of members to engage in public policy development through information exchange and policy workshops.
- i. Develop members' consensus-building capacity by nurturing mature and robust strategic relationships between member organisations.
- j. Network and build strategic alliances with organisations working in related fields such as international development, social and economic enterprise, health, community-building and education where there are opportunities for joint action and mutual benefit.

### 3.3 An effective, efficient and accountable network

**Strategic Objective:** Ensure that LINK is well governed, managed, and resourced with active member participation and strong mutual accountability.

As a network, we are most influential when member organisations play an active role in shaping the direction of LINK's work, governing the network's operations and contributing staff expertise and other resources in the pursuit of agreed priorities.

***To achieve this, we will ...***

- a. Ensure that the network remains relevant and accountable to members through our systems for governance, planning and implementation.
- b. Ensure that the leadership roles of the Trustees, President, Chief Officer and Convenors are clear and mutually supportive.
- c. Use creative systems of communications that enable everyone involved in LINK to keep each other informed and enable the network's action to be coordinated and efficient.
- d. Ensure LINK evaluates key activities and applies the results to improve corporate performance.
- e. Seek resources from a diverse range of sources that enable the network to demonstrate a high degree of leverage to all funders whilst avoiding over-dependence on external sources.
- f. Maintain levels of member subscriptions that are equitable whilst enabling us as a network to maintain our autonomy and fulfil our agreed objectives.
- g. Ensure that everyone actively involved in LINK but particularly member representatives and all task force and group members receive an adequate induction to LINK and its work.
- h. Ensure that our staff employment, management and Board governance practices are consistent with recognised good practice in the voluntary sector.
- i. Ensure that all our operations as LINK are carried out in an environmentally sustainable way.
- j. Invest in the professional development of staff and Board-member development of Trustees.

## **4. How Scottish Environment LINK Works**

### **Who we work with**

We work with three main groups: governments and other key decision makers; wider civic society including the media; and our own network.

#### **4.1 Governments and Other Key Decision-Makers**

LINK works with the Scottish Government, the UK Government and European Union institutions and bodies. Through its carefully targeted work:

1. LINK celebrates the environment and highlights its importance.
2. LINK is a source of practical and innovative thinking on environmental issues, contributing to and influencing the development and implementation of public policy by:
  - advocating an integrated approach to policy-making and well-resourced implementation
  - raising issues of concern with politicians and government and, wherever possible, proposing innovative solutions to identified problems
  - promoting governance and the execution of public office consistent with the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament



- promoting processes for genuine participation by those affected by government plans and decisions
  - monitoring and assessing whether policy, funding and implementation measure up to intentions
  - taking collective action where this is necessary to counter specific threats to the environment
3. LINK provides a gateway into the Scottish environmental NGO (eNGO) movement, providing politicians and other decision-makers with access to members' knowledge and expertise.

#### **4.2 Wider Civic Society**

1. LINK is a source of innovative thinking on environmental and related issues, informing and influencing civic debate.
2. LINK provides an accessible entry point to the knowledge and expertise of the Scottish eNGO movement.
3. The network builds alliances and partnerships with individuals, networks and organisations that share its concerns and are willing to collaborate to bring about positive change.
4. LINK works with the media to increase coverage and public awareness of environmental and related issues.

#### **4.3 As a Network**

1. The network uses a range of mechanisms including task forces and working groups to enable members to speak with a united voice by building consensus on issues based on member expertise and understanding.
2. LINK members and their supporters are encouraged to advocate for change directly through collectively organised initiatives and campaigns.
3. Networking through LINK builds the collective capacity of the eNGO movement to contribute to and influence public policy development through mutual learning based on sharing knowledge and expertise; developing shared positions on priority issues; joint planning of collective action; cooperative implementation of plans and monitoring of progress and outcomes.
4. Whilst retaining their corporate identities and focus, through LINK, members are encouraged to adopt a wider perspective in their work, taking a holistic view of environmental issues, making links to social and economic agendas and placing a local and Scotland-wide focus in the context of an international dimension.
5. Agreed standards for working through LINK are set out in the network's Operating Principles and members hold each other to account for achieving agreed objectives.
6. As a network, we raise resources from a range of sources including members to enable us to achieve our collective priorities; these are administered on behalf of the membership by the Board.
7. LINK staff support the work of the network by providing complementary skills and coordinating LINK activities.
8. Use LINK's diversity, expertise and vision to inspire and inform integrated policy making.
9. Demonstrate an integrated approach to policy through the development of our collective positions on issues, our responses to consultations and our contributions to inquiries and stakeholder groups.

## How we work as a network

We have three main ways of achieving our mission: we share our knowledge, build consensus on key concerns, and take action together.

### 4.4 Sharing knowledge

Knowledge sharing is essential to keep the network informed, stimulate innovative thinking, identify opportunities for taking action and develop integrated solutions to issues of common concern.

***We will:***

- a Strengthen mechanisms for horizon-scanning so that issues relevant to LINK's work identified by members, task forces, groups and staff are brought to the attention of others.
- b Use monitoring by staff, members, Convenors and officer bearers to keep the network informed of potential threats to the environment and opportunities for influence.
- c Strengthen our system for documenting our work and disseminating lessons learned from task forces, campaigns and case work to ensure that the whole network benefits from our collective achievements and learns from our shared disappointments.
- d Share our knowledge about environmental issues with other organisations, key decision makers and the public.
- e Enlist the help of innovative thinkers and provocative speakers to generate debate at the annual members' Congress and other LINK events.

### 4.5 Building consensus

For Scotland's environment NGOs to have influence, we need to give strong and confident voice to our carefully considered messages.

***We will:***

- a Use members' diverse areas of expertise to enrich our analysis of issues and demonstrate an integrated approach to policy development and implementation.
- b Take care to ensure that collective positions add value to the contributions to policy discussions made by individual member organisations.
- c Avoid the problem of 'lowest common denominator' positions by allowing adequate time for discussion, listening carefully and patiently to each others' views, engaging in robust debate, and building in 'devil's advocate' roles during discussions. We will consider the use of external facilitation to assist us in achieving consensus on controversial areas of policy.
- d Invest in building and maintaining mature, trusting and respectful inter-personal working relationships in order to maintain a healthy, supportive and robust forum for discussion and consensus-building. We will bring breaches of these principles to each others' attention in a supportive and collegial way.

### 4.6 Taking action together

Mature discussion and achieving consensus will only lead to change when we take action together. Collective action is most effective when it is carefully targeted, timely, based on a thorough understanding of the issues and well-organised.

***We will:***

- a Demonstrate ownership of the network by collectively providing financial and human resources to ensure that agreed aspirations are adequately resourced.



- b Use task forces as the main mechanism for identifying issues, achieving consensus on positions and taking collective action. Each task force and group will be required to develop a strategy to inform who it will work with in terms of audiences and partners.
- c Develop a coordinated approach to taking action, ensuring that positions on issues are consistent with our values, strategic objectives and are mutually coherent.
- d Identify and mobilise the tactical strengths of each member organisation to ensure their contributions are mutually supportive.
- e Integrate agreed network objectives into member organisations' forward plans.
- f Make it clear to our audiences which of the member organisations have signed up to specific LINK position statements. Require member organisations to clarify their own stance to LINK's audiences if their stance goes beyond or differs from the LINK position.
- g Take a strategic approach to the use of campaigning and ensure close relationships between task forces and any campaigns we take forward.
- h Review LINK representation on all external groups and assess the value of continued involvement.
- i Build strategic alliances with carefully selected networks, individuals and organisations in other sectors when doing so will help us to achieve our strategic objectives and demonstrate an innovative and integrated approach to issues of common concern. The development of each strategic alliance will be carefully planned and monitored, with regular reporting on progress and outcomes.

## 5. Leadership, governance, management and resourcing

LINK aspires to be a member-led network. Members are, therefore, the source of the network's leadership but also its subject since without members' active participation, the network is unable to function. To make a reality of being member-led requires all members to take an active role in creating a vision for the network and setting its direction, providing resources and expertise, and implementing activities to enable the achievement of agreed objectives. Equally importantly, being member-led requires members to hold themselves and each other accountable for taking agreed action - either directly or by delegating to others the authority to act on the members' behalf. It is through LINK's structures of governance and management that members delegate the authority to others for the leadership roles of vision, inspiration and momentum.

### ***In order to make a reality of being a member-led network we will:***

- a Ensure that opportunities are created for the voices of all members to be heard and contribute to decision-making on key network issues.
- b Encourage Board membership that is representative of member organisation diversity.
- c Encourage member organisations to support and enable existing Board members to stand for election and carry out LINK office-bearer responsibilities.
- d Use the annual LINK Congress as a means of engaging with a range of people from member organisations (including CEOs and members' trustees) in order to strengthen members' awareness and ownership of the network and its plans.
- e Restate our trust in the Board to take a leadership role on behalf of the membership in overseeing the implementation of the corporate strategy.
- f Build our capacity to take difficult decisions and acknowledge the role of the Board and Chief Officer in ensuring that we hold each other accountable for their implementation.
- g Strengthen the delegated management authority of the Chief Officer and other staff to ensure that Board decisions are implemented - holding all those responsible to account

for their role in the timely execution of agreed decisions taken by or on behalf of the membership.

- h Build on the successful ambassadorial role of the President.
- i Ensure that all convenors are offered time-efficient training opportunities to support them with their network responsibilities.

In order to be a genuinely autonomous voice, LINK needs to have a secure, diverse and independent funding base

***In order to develop a secure and independent base for funding we will:***

- a Maintain a system of accounting that distinguishes "essential services" from other work, and seek to ensure that a significant - and rising - proportion of the cost of essential services is covered by income provided by or generated by members or, at least, from sources independent of Government.
- b Operate a 'band' system for member subscriptions in accordance with LINK's Subscriptions Policy and update member subscriptions in line with agreed increases in annual percentage increments.
- c Seek funding from external sources supportive of LINK's purpose and strategic objectives in accordance with LINK's Fundraising Methodology.
- d Review the categorisation of LINK activities as part of the forward planning and review process every year.
- e Encourage member organisations to invest time in LINK activities - through member representation, task forces, campaign groups, and representation of LINK on other bodies, governance structures and other meetings.
- f Demonstrate the benefits of membership to member organisations and communicate our achievements to all.

## **6. LINK's structure and systems**

LINK needs a suitable structure, staff team and efficient systems to enable the network to achieve its objectives.

### **6.1 Structure**

We have evolved our network structure to provide an effective framework for LINK's governance and management.

*We will:*

- a Retain the overall network structure as described in the LINK Operating Principles and elsewhere.
- b Develop the use of LINK's Operating Plan to afford an appropriate level of horizon-scanning, analysis of needs and opportunities, and consideration of fresh approaches.
- c Maintain an office that is geographically convenient given our widely distributed membership and a base for our parliamentary officer that provides ready access to the Scottish Parliament.

### **6.2 Planning and priority-setting**

Given the complexity of LINK as a network, it is essential that we have effective and efficient structures and procedures for planning and setting our priorities. LINK members, using the corporate strategy and annual planning process, set objectives for the network and take collective responsibility for their achievement

*To ensure efficient planning and priority-setting we will:*



- a Use our three strategic objectives to provide the overall structure and rationale for LINK's annual plans and priorities.
- b Use our established planning cycle as the focus for forward planning, integration of work and regular reviews of progress, feeding into the developing Operating Plan.
- c Ensure that the Board provides members with an overview of current issues and thinking at each forward planning meeting.
- d Collectively ensure that decisions reflect consensus on issues and tactics as well as realism about the resources available to the network as a whole.
- e Clarify priorities for the use of staff time as part of the forward planning process and communicate this to task forces and political strategy discussions, project steering groups, members and staff.
- f Communicate regular reports on all activity to all those involved in LINK via the operating plan.

### 6.3 Decision-making

The principles that govern LINK decision-making are participation, transparency and accountability.

*In order to apply our principles in practice we will:*

- a Promote to members the range of opportunities for member participation in decision-making through the LINK governance, management and planning mechanisms.
- b Ensure that Board decisions are communicated clearly and promptly to all those actively involved in LINK and that key points are communicated to member CEOs.
- c Promote user-friendly protocols for all with clearly agreed 'non-negotiables'.
- d Regularly review the implementation of agreed decisions and develop mechanisms for strengthening mutual accountability.

### 6.4 Staffing

LINK staff play a vital role in supporting and coordinating the work of the network.

*We will:*

- a Make the most efficient use of staff time by providing clear guidance about their priorities and their delegated authority to act.
- b Seek the advice and guidance of staff concerning the network's capacities and agreed priorities when considering proposals for new initiatives.
- c Ensure that all LINK staff work to realistic agreed individual work plans that reflect LINK's strategic priorities and have individual staff development plans, involving training, regular supervision and annual appraisal.

### 6.5 Coordination

Coordination is particularly important in our network as there is a high degree of decentralised authority delegated to task forces and campaign groups yet we must also demonstrate coherent and integrated thinking through our work.

*To strengthen coordination we will:*

- a Ensure that the planning and review process and the Operating Plan result in adequate coordination between task forces, project steering groups and political strategy discussion.
- b Make creative use of the LINK Bulletin and the LINK websites to keep each other informed of achievements, developments and the need for coordinated action.

- c Encourage member body, task force, political strategy and Board level representation and involvement in the quarterly networking events to strengthen coordination, encourage mutual learning and support and develop an integrated approach to issues.

## 6.6 Communication

Communications – both internal and to external audiences – are crucial to LINK’s effectiveness.

*We will:*

- a Develop our collective capacity to communicate clear and well-targeted messages to specific audiences.
- b Refine our agreed understanding of sustainability and how we believe it can be placed at the heart of Scotland’s approach to sustainable development.
- c Ensure that all those actively involved in LINK and member CEOs are made aware of the Corporate Strategy.
- d Use LINK websites, newsletter and promotional materials to inform our audiences (including the internal players) of the value of LINK’s work. Keep the design of communications channels, and distribution, under review to ensure messages are communicated to the right audiences in an engaging way.
- e Consider ways of celebrating and highlighting the importance of the environment with a range of our audiences.
- f Keep network media avenues under review.
- g With the support of member organisations, engage where possible with members’ Trustees to raise their awareness of LINK and its work as well as benefit from their knowledge, contacts and expertise.
- h Encourage members to share views of how their involvement in LINK helps them to achieve their strategic goals.

## 6.7 Induction

All those involved in LINK (and particularly new member representatives, Board members, convenors and staff) need to be aware of the network’s purpose and strategy; its structures and systems; the people who are involved in the network and its achievements.

*We will:*

- a Provide all newcomers to LINK with a comprehensive induction to the network. The induction will reinforce the importance of the Corporate Strategy by using it as a framework for introducing LINK objectives, plans, structure and systems.
- b Encourage anyone currently involved in LINK to update their understanding of the network by providing regular ‘update sessions’.

## 6.8 Acting sustainably

Treading lightly and acting in a sustainable way are core values for our network. It is important for us to lead by example by showing how individuals and organisations can translate these values into practice.

*We will:*

- a Develop and implement good environmental policy and practice as much as possible in relation to network operations in support of our aspiration for a sustainable Scotland.



- b Encourage all member organisations involved in our network to develop and implement their own procedures for acting as far as possible towards our aspiration for a sustainable Scotland.

## 7. Evaluating progress

We believe strongly in the importance of monitoring and evaluating progress towards the achievement of our strategic objectives. Monitoring and evaluation are needed in order to:

- strengthen our performance
- learn from experience and improve the quality of our work
- enable mutual accountability within the network for the achievement of agreed goals
- become more adaptable
- be accountable for the use of our resources.

### *We will*

- a Use and further refine the procedures we have developed for planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating our work. These procedures include the development of an annual operating plan with agreed objectives, key performance indicators and targets that enable monitoring and review of performance on outcomes.
- b Use our system of After Action Reviews following key interventions of task forces (and particularly after case work interventions such as major government inquiries).
- c Use our system of two-yearly peer reviews for task forces to assess the progress of each against its objectives using a set of agreed criteria. The continuation of each task force will be dependent on: demonstrating the continuing need for its work; adequate levels of member participation; its ability to work relatively autonomously and the achievement of its planned objectives.
- d Carry out a strategic review of our network and operations every three years, involving independent experts whenever possible<sup>6</sup>. A major focus of the strategic review will involve assessing progress towards our three strategic objectives using indicators that have been developed for this purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> The findings of the most recent strategic review (conducted by the independent consultancy Framework) in August 2008 are documented in 'Scottish Environment LINK Strategy Refresher, 2008'



## Annexes

### Annex One: Key Performance Indicators

LINK has developed these Key Performance Indicators (KPI) as measures to help the network define and assess its progress toward the organizational goals set out in its Strategy under three strategic objectives. The KPIs in turn relate to lower level objectives, set out in the Annual Operating Plans for each of the three years.

#### Strategic Objective 1, Making Scotland Sustainable: KPIs

Number and activity level of task forces.

Number of collective position statements produced.

Percentage of external stakeholder groups in which we are involved, relating to our key policy priorities, where LINK's opinion is that the group has been valuable.

Number of face-to-face exchanges on agreed key policy priorities with decision-makers and opinion-formers facilitated by LINK core staff.

#### Strategic Objective 2, Strong Voice for Scotland's Environment: KPIs

Number of internal seminars/workshops/trainings on current issues arranged for members.

Percentage of member bodies involved annually in either the Board, Task Forces, or contributing to annual Congress.

#### Strategic Objective 3, Efficient, effective and accountable network: KPIs

Quality of annual reports and accounts and returns in accordance with OSCR and Companies' regulations.

Preparation of an Annual Operating Plan of the network's with Member, Taskforce and Board input which is subject to regular review and six-monthly evaluation.

The percentage of funding sourced from members holding steady by 2012 at 50% of the cost (annually reappraised) of 'essential services' with no over-reliance on any other single source of funding.

### Examining the KPIs

Given LINK's key role of facilitating members' discussions and collective action, in evaluating progress against strategic objectives the network has to focus largely on its outputs.

Measuring numbers will continue to be important – numbers of statements, meetings and workshops, consultation submissions, evidence given to inquiries, and more, as evidence of LINK's intelligence exchange, formulation of joint policy positions, and efforts to promote policy positions to decision-makers.

At the same time, some degree of measurement of outcomes is important - of the impact of things done collectively. These are difficult judgements to make objectively and LINK recognises that this will not necessarily give clear indications of the extent of its influence: there are many organisations, and factors, at play.

However, LINK will introduce a cycle of surveys into its evaluation process, designed to elicit an external rating of the effect of network advocacy on decision-making. The intention is to survey the membership on elements of the strategy at least once in the three years of the strategy and to survey decision-makers and opinion-formers on how LINK's contributions are perceived/affect, in 2009 and again before the end of the strategy in 2012, measuring the differences. Results will be brought back to Board, members and task forces through the planning and review cycle.

**Annex Two: LINK Member Organisations at March 2009**

Archaeology Scotland (Council for Scottish Archaeology)  
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group  
Bat Conservation Trust  
Buglife  
Bumble Bee Conservation Trust  
Butterfly Conservation (Scotland)  
Cairngorms Campaign  
Friends of the Earth Scotland  
Friends of Loch Lomond  
Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust  
John Muir Trust  
Marine Conservation Society  
Mountaineering Council of Scotland  
The National Trust for Scotland  
North East Mountain Trust  
Plantlife Scotland  
Ramblers' Association Scotland  
RSPB Scotland  
Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society  
Scottish Council for National Parks  
Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association  
Scottish Native Woods  
Scottish Raptor Studies Group  
Scottish Wild Land Group  
Scottish Wildlife Trust  
Soil Association Scotland\*  
Sustrans Scotland  
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society  
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust  
Woodland Trust Scotland  
WWF Scotland

*\* Demitted at March 08 for 09/09, with intent to re-enter 09/10*

**Annex Three: LINK Task Forces and other Groups at March 2009****Board subgroups**

Employment and Human Resources  
Funding  
Operational Planning

**Active task forces**

Agriculture  
Biodiversity  
Climate  
Deer  
Freshwater  
Fundraising (Scottish Environment Fundraisers Forum)  
Landscape  
Marine  
Planning  
Woodlands

**Temporary policy focussed groups**

Climate Communications Steering Group  
Single Outcome Agreements Steering Group  
Wildlife & Natural Environment Bill Team

**Other standing steering groups**

Congress Steering Group  
Parliamentary Forum  
SEW Steering Group