



Building Better Bridges between local communities and LINK organisations. Report on the LINK Members Congress held on 28 November 2013

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Introduction Deborah Long, LINK Chair

We are all here today because we share a vision of Scotland: today's Scotland and tomorrow's Scotland; a country that is flourishing. This is not just about money – it is about wellbeing and those difficult to define things that make life good: happiness, health, fulfilling work, strong relationships, good red wine and chocolate. The White Paper reflects this wider ambition and its great to see environmental protection featuring in the constitutional discussions. Scotland has always been a country that has looked outside its borders to make the world a better place. Scotland is still striving to be a 'better global citizen'. And to do that there are a number of things we need to do:

We need to take better account of the national and global environmental realities upon which our future depends. We need to engage people's hearts and minds. We need to show or own personal commitments to drive change and leave a positive impact on the planet.

These are three things personified by John Muir. It is not unsurprising that the father of today's conservation movement, in many ways, came from Scotland. We will hear many quotes from John Muir over the next year, but one that the First Minister used very recently and that is particularly appropriate for today is "not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress". That is what today is all about.

So, how do we do that?

We work together, we help people talk to each other and learn from each other. Communities of place and communities of interest are stronger when they can work together – that is why politicians and officials sometimes try to keep us apart. Today is about learning from our successes in working together in the past and learning lessons from when things did not go quite so well.

Why now?

In today's world, power has been sucked upwards: the response to economic globalisation has been for states and supra national organisations to assume more power. While Scotland has had more power devolved to it recently, and is expected to see even more over the next year or so, we are still living with the concentration of power away from communities. In our view at LINK, decisions should be taken at the practical level nearest to the individual if we are to attain sustainability. This means in Scotland, returning real powers of decision to localities well below the units of our local government, which will require both the decision making powers and the control of assets of local communities to be increased. Community empowerment (and the Bill) is the start of this process and one we are engaged in and welcome (briefings available on LINK website).

Apart from that and today's Congress what else are we doing?

The LINK Board has commissioned Elizabeth Leighton to find out what local community groups with an environmental interest might want of national organisations like LINK and its members. This is a small piece of work to find out what the issues are - a gap analysis. We are not going to build new networks, but need to understand what we can do better. Our investment in this does not mean we have capacity at the moment to deal with any of the issues raised, so if this identifies a demand for some kind of infrastructure, we will need to build a business case for that. This means aligning scarce resources with needs, which today should help clarify.

Today we will hear from two speakers with a great deal of experience of making this happen at a practical, operation level, who will share some of their wisdom on the issues. In the four workshops we have more experts from local communities and eNGOs who will give an introduction to the issues that concern each sector and then it is over to you to share your ideas and experience.

Presentations

The presentations were circulated to all delegates shortly after Congress. They are available on request to alice@scotlink.org. Text is below.

Local Communities Perspective: A worm's eye view - Pauline Gallacher, Neilston Development Trust

I will speak as an individual community activist from the experience of working in one community for 10 years with a particular holistic and strategic approach to sustainable place-making, with some experience of the policy environment, good contact with national & local government, and national representative organisations (DTAS, CES, A+DS etc). However, relatively little work with eNGOs.

Different kinds of leadership for change

Risk-taking

Visionary - longer view

Focus on results

Single-mindedness
Tough-skinned!
Individual/vanguard group

OUTCOME: an innovative product, an historic political moment

LIMITATION: The vision can depart along with the visionary

Community leadership

Builds inclusion

Relies on consensus

Deals with negative forces (whilst listening to critics)

Democratises vision (is this possible?)

De-personalises leadership in democratic and accountable structures

OUTCOME: widely embraced, incremental (and possibly unsystematic) change. Mainstreamed behaviour/attitude change, however small.

LIMITATION: radical/visionary moves not deliverable 'head-on'. Depends on continuing leadership from elsewhere (carrot and stick?)

Shared Ground - climate change

LINK recommends that five principles are followed during the development of Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme:

Develop knowledge – of climate impacts and the impacts of our adaptation actions - and then make decisions based on it.

Plan strategically - with a flexible, long-term view and in a joined-up integrated way.

Build resilience – in the infrastructure, systems and environment we currently have.

Accommodate and enable change – so people and wildlife can transition and thrive in new ways and in new places in response to climate changes and impacts.

Adapt sustainably – to avoid maladaptation and detrimental impacts on other elements of the environment

Shared Ground: empowerment

Each unit of Scottish "local" government has a larger population than any other country in Europe. Scottish councils are dependent for over 85% of their funding on higher tiers of government and are tightly constrained by several layers of legislation. Power has been centralised

We believe that to re-empower communities it will be necessary to return power to the social and environmental fields from the economic, but also to seriously pursue subsidiarity. Decisions should be taken, in our view, at the practical level nearest to the individual if we are to attain sustainability. In Scotland this includes returning real powers of decision to localities well below the units of our local government. This will require both the decision making powers and the control of assets of local communities to be increased.

Shared ground: community assets

LINK regrets the limitation of the term "community assets" to only the physical assets of local communities of place. We believe that the property and capital of councils and both Scottish and UK Governments should be considered a "community asset" too. We deplore the idea that local and national government are corporate entities, somehow separated from the community. At the same time we welcome, warmly, ideas to bring unused physical assets into use for local communities.

What are communities of interest good at?

Capturing passion!

Championing specific agendas

Mobilising membership. Membership based in commitment/interest/passion of individuals

Vertical lines of communication: centre > members the binding and motivating force (local groups also exist – to still communities of interest rather than place?)

Lobbying government and other power sources

Promulgating ideas more widely through campaigns

Keeping ahead of the curve (policy, specialist info, research) High levels of expertise

Massive membership base - 500,000

Question: to what extent are ENGO members temperamentally thus (ie joiners in this mode rather than at community level?)

What are communities of place good at?

Responding to membership (which will be broadly based) Acting on behalf of members but assuming a mandate from a wider population (until told otherwise!)

Generalist – local issues of every kind

If aims & objectives include SD, can integrate at all levels

Leadership and facilitation across community

Reaching the indifferent, hard to reach, full social spectrum

Understanding the complexities of implementing change - micro politics, people's lives

Playing the long game, building capacity and social capital

Diverse scales and characteristics. Some comm-based orgs have near-statutory functions (HAs)

SFHA 400 members, DTAS 200 members - these both largely communities of place - massive population base

Limitations on communities of interest

Not reaching the indifferent or unconvinced

Not synching with communities of place

Limitations on communities of place

Perceived 'single issue' or minority interests unlikely to be priority (unless stimulated by a local emergency)

Lack of core funding for environmental expertise (funds project related, don't allow for slow burn)

Not synching with comms of interest

Leadership and climate change at community level

Neilston a good average case - Totnes it ain't! But we do have plans..

Affordable warmth will be a big issue for many; other challenges make Climate Change tomorrow's problem, if at all

Car-use behaviour difficult to change in a commuter settlement AND

For those cash savings made by energy efficiency measures - the 'rebound effect'

What have we done in Neilston and how could it be built upon?

CCF funded Power down : need for mainstreaming; good work not sustained

CCF/Cares Funded energy efficiency/renewables in Bank; need for replicability/better dissemination

Built a wind farm: unique platform for education; great for Neilston, but raises equity issues for wider communities' ability to access similar benefits

Town Charter: carbon reduction/renewables/green economy as key ambitions

Go Neilston! Programme: Cycle hub, walking groups

Food growing and café menu

The ISM approach: how does it fit?

Individual factors -

Values, beliefs, attitudes: the long game

Cost and benefits: Power down

Emotions and Agency: Power down support

Skills: Power down support

Habits: sum of initiatives at all levels, normalising alterations in behaviour

Social factors -

Opinion leaders: NDT pushing climate change agenda in every aspect of work

Roles and identity: NDT community-building

Institutional: The Bank as demonstration and NDT's own culture evidencing commitment

Norms: Go Neilston! normalising walking and cycling

Tastes: Bank programme; Café menu, gardening and cookery

Meanings, Networks and relationships: All we do!

Material factors –

Rules and regulations: top down, supported by bottom-up

Infrastructure: Wind farm development contributes to community owned renewables targets, platform for awareness raising. Town Charter sets climate change as major driver of physical and economic change

Technologies: Town Charter aspirations provide for wind farm income to be directed towards innovative locally impacting technologies (smart grid, ESCos) and investment in local transport, housing

Objects: NDT anticipating change with hard and soft provision

Time and schedules: we're on our way!

Challenges at community level:

Sustainable Development not seen as a community priority in 'ordinary' places

Still (impressionistically) a matter for minority interests

Behaviour change most demonstrable in relation to waste (heavily funded campaign, potential for visual, social reinforcement - bins collection)

Energy costs will drive energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures and behaviours - reducing consumption by limiting use, perhaps, but how much voluntary investment in behaviour change (appliances, insulation, car and air travel, shopping patterns)?

Capacity and expertise needed to champion SD in core organisations

Better Together?

"Empowerment requires, essentially, full recognition of the complex nature of community, and a full recognition that communities are strongest when the elements of place and interest are taken together. Sadly, we have witnessed an increasing tendency to divide and separate these aspects of community, as when the Climate Challenge fund excluded any participation by communities of interest".

Shared ground: a new democratic?

...We are also inviting views on other ways to reflect local democracy principles, and considering how communities might benefit from legislation to strengthen the national and local focus on improving outcomes" SG, CER Bill consultation

We need your help!

Building Better Bridges – ENGOS Anne McCall RSPB Regional Director South & South-West Scotland

RSPB is part of Birdlife – operating in 120 countries around the globe.

The power of working together - First involvement with LINK was about 15 years ago – arrived at RSPB Scotland and became involved in the Lingerbay Superquarry planning case – WWF, RSPB, Friends of the Earth, Ramblers, among others. The Planning application in 1991 (original 1965), two public inquiries, at least a couple of court cases and in 2004 Lafarge withdrew. Mutual support, expertise, guidance, financial assistance, common front testing sustainability arguments. When there is a common goal we can work together really, really effectively.

Sometimes working together is agreeing about what not to say or how not to say it. Eg Lewis Peatlands SPA/Ramsar & SAC. Sensitive subject – large wind farm proposal on a heavily designated peatland site. Idea of scale we used with the media – local Fife station (used map of Fife to illustrate the scale of the proposals) was fairly alarmed. Proposal rejected by Scottish Ministers and the ENGO movement avoided any significant public disputes despite quite concerted attempts by the Developers AMEC to secure a divide and rule approach. We talked, we agreed where our differences lay and we also quietly agreed not to air these in public.

Trump - This particular 4 week inquiry pushed me over the edge of tolerance of our planning system. The process – collaborative working between RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, BSBI, Local opposition and SNH – a good case which I'm afraid was never going to succeed. High profile – good example of where even when you lose you can generate a lot of support for your cause – we made members from the media coverage around this case.

Hunterston - Proposal for a new coal-fired power station on top of a Site of Special Scientific Interest in North Ayrshire which was identified as a National Development in the National Planning Framework. Friends of the Earth, RSPB, WWF amongst others – importantly a very effective local community opposition group called CONCH (communities opposed to new coal at Hunterston) – pursuing innovative campaign approaches, collaborating to maximise objections from the UK and internationally, drawing on our experience of previous cases to try and turn round what looked like a fairly desperate situation. Volume of objections was staggering – fair play to Aedan Smith who took over my previous job in RSPB – it smashed all my previous records of mass objections to planning proposals. And we succeeded – the application was turned down by the Council and it was one of the most extraordinarily effective bits of campaigning I've seen in a long time – at no point did I realistically think North Ayrshire Council would decide to reject this but they did.

Becoming a regional director in RSPB about 5 years ago allowed me to develop some of my joint working experience into other areas, in particular operation work. This map (Loch Lomond reserve) of a newish reserve which RSPB bought with funds from SNH and the National Park amongst others – we've now set up a Board to oversee the joint management of the site. Wonderful site at the bottom of Loch Lomond just below the Highland boundary fault it has long been a location for university field study trips and research. Talking to Plantlife, Buglife and Butterfly Conservation – amongst others to maximise the opportunities provided by this site – whether that be via training, monitoring etc or as it also contains a working farm – also looking at how to perhaps use it as a test bed for advisory work.

Another example of strong, long-term operational working is the Great Trossachs Forest. Partners are RSPB, Woodland Trust, FC and BP through the Scottish Forest Alliance. Large landscape scale project - Creating 16,650 hectares of forest and open ground, over 1 million trees already planted.

Futurescapes initiative- Another contribution to Landscape Scale Conservation. **The Inner Forth Landscape Project** – large area with a number of projects working with other ENGOs. £4m over 4 years. **State of Nature** report, a call to arms from 25 organisations launched in May 2013. Over 60% of species recorded are in decline. Need to recognise and accept the scale of the task we share.

Where could we go next?

Define the problem we want to solve/outcome we want to achieve

Develop form to suit function

Policy/Political/campaign collaboration strong and effective in Scottish LINK

Scope to grow:

More operational joint working?

Back office – share resources?

Funding?

Communication and marketing?

Advisory, Research, Monitoring?

Workshop reports

Fighting the Blights – leaders Clare Symonds, Planning Democracy, Cllr John Wincott, facilitator Lloyd Austin, RSPB.

John Wincott explained how he had become an activist or ‘nutter’ in the eyes of the authorities. A poorly consulted upon quarry application, sited very close to housing, resulted in the residents experiencing high levels of noise and vibration. John joined the local activist group and informed himself on planning matters. In time he was elected chair of the community council (rising to influential nutter) and then to the council in June 2012. Throughout the process the activists’ case was not given serious consideration, though in the end the council appointed a mediator after a case review, and residents were offered counselling for the trauma suffered .

Planning application language is not clear on what effects there will be on communities (ie fragmentation = blasting), and even where developments are sited (using old names instead of current names for locations).

The activists had sought assistance from some NGOs , including RSPB for impact on sand martins though RSPB could not do a site visit (capacity issue). Statutory bodies had been contacted, to no result. Communities need a smarter way of accessing expertise. Councillors need access to expertise as it does not often reside within the council/ planning dept. EG how many deaths of a species is acceptable? Baseline data is mostly not available for commenting on whether a site is important or not.

Section 75 agreements: pitfalls - need to make sure what is agreed to go in actually does go in, and is enforced. All ‘guidance’ can be easily ignored.

Current collapse of the coal industry exemplifies what is wrong with the planning system. Where is the moral outrage?

John's is a typical story heard by Planning Democracy. The personal impact on activists within communities is huge. People need support at different levels, including emotional / moral support, as well as technical environmental and process expertise. By the time people have formed an action group they are already traumatised to a degree.

NGOs are contacted by communities all the time, many with hope that development can be stopped by impact on habitat/wildlife. Can be seen as a silver bullet. They get far more requests than capacity allows. NGOs have to pick their battles. They are not statutory consultees. Both communities of place and of interest are currently disempowered.

Planning system is top down, remote from communities. By the time consultation gets to communities decisions are already made. The process favours developers. Applications turned down can be appealed, and Government can approve. Local authorities have few resources and withdraw.

One community, with no trust in the community council or local authority, fighting a wind farm development, put resources into involving all people within a 1.5 mile radius, is having some success. Important to build alliances, ways of mobilising. A few people do most of the work, and they tend to have good contacts.

Issues for consideration:

Gap in understand of what communities want and what eNGOs can deliver.

Some communities are angry at eNGOs either as interlopers (when objecting on environmental grounds), or blighters (supporting renewable targets).

eNGOs could streamline FAQs/packs for communities via a database of resources.

Alliances. Got to know what you need. Membership reach, donations from eNGOs to communities. In early days you need to reach out to like-minded people /organisations. An action group can get respect from being associated with an eNGO, which is helpful.

The fragmentation of the sector can work against it – build coalitions of the willing – eg Hunterston.

Noted that eNGOs get involved for different reasons than communities – eg climate targets. At Hunterston they worked with the community group as it helped with the bigger picture, helped set a precedent. This means that only some causes are chosen. LINK is currently seeking feedback from communities to see what support can be given at a more generic level.

Neilston's community charter is positive – a relief from negativity.

Planning Task Force could see what better product to offer communities who need help.

Signposting to resources via Planning Democracy.

Support in person can be a lifeline for isolated individuals. Do the necessary skills exist within eNGOs? Case studies would be helpful, like when FoES was working on coal.

Some communities are already devastated, dumped on, and difficult to mobilise – need outreach.

Councillors making decisions are in a position to demand evidence. eNGOs can assist with guidance to Cllrs, where specialist advice can be found.

NSA map, poorly done, could be done at macro level where NGOs could help.

NGOs work together to improve policy and procedures. We could do more joint lobbying to make the system better and redress the balance of power between communities and corporate interests. LINK is pressing for environmental courts, as one means.

Climate Change Action leaders Richard Dixon, Friends of the Earth, Suzy Goodsir, Greener Kirkcaldy, Facilitator Gail Wilson, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland.

Introduction: There are some good examples in Scotland, and beyond, of communities taking action on climate change – whether that be to reduce carbon footprints or taking political action to influence relevant policies. There is also good work done by NGOs working on climate change.

The Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) has provided funding for community action, though until this point NGOs have been not been eligible to apply for that funding.

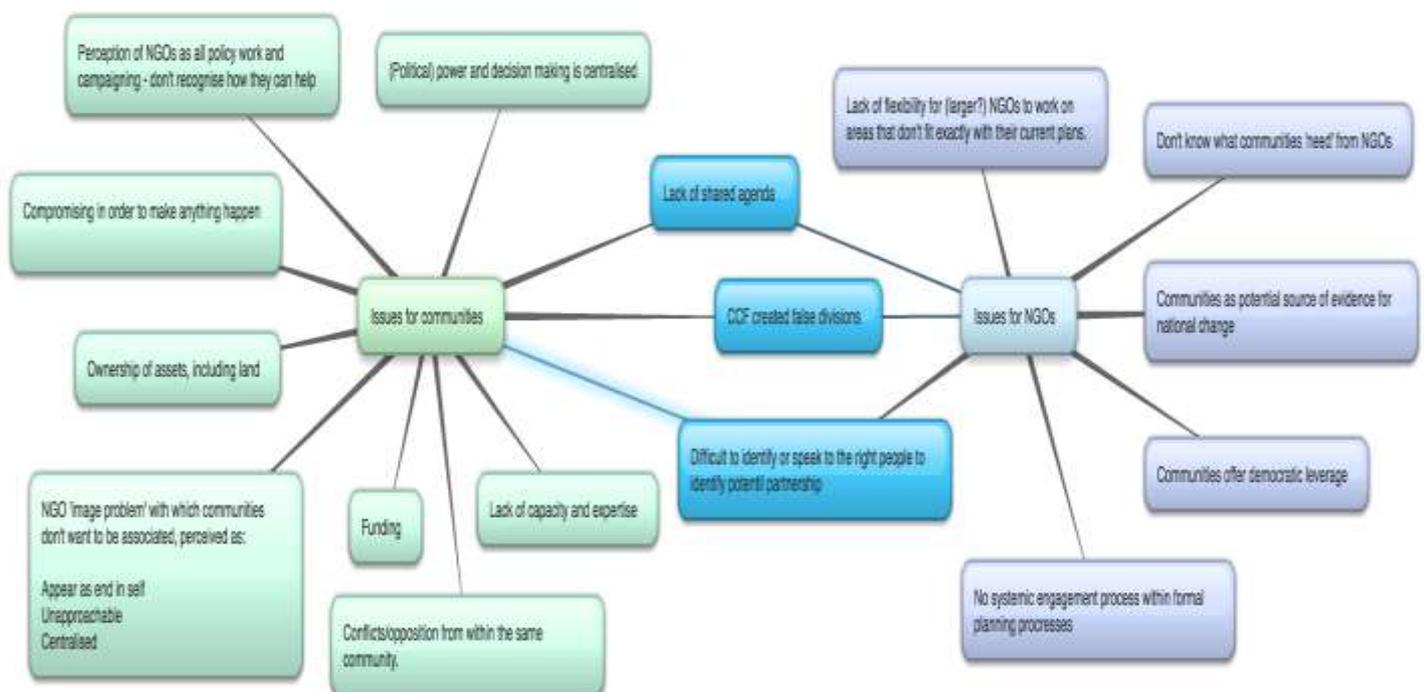
Scottish Government has produced the Behaviours Framework and the ISM tool to help reduce carbon emissions through low carbon behaviour change. How can NGOs and communities embed this in their work?

There are not many (though there are some!) examples of communities and NGOs in Scotland working in partnership on this issue. The CCF Ideas Bank is currently seeking applications from partnerships of an NGO/community seeking to work together. This may go some way to providing more positive examples of working partnerships.

Working together could provide considerable opportunity for both parties e.g. NGOs need examples at community level to do policy work effectively; communities need NGOs to provide national direction and strategy, to lobby for their continued support. Both can benefit from knowledge exchange.

Following opening remarks from Suzy Goodsir and Dr Richard Dixon, the workshop moved into two group work exercises:

One group identified the key issues for communities/NGOs wanting to take action on climate change.



One group considered the example of Greener Kirkcaldy, which was initially established through the Friends of the Earth Fife local group and now operates completely independently of FoES.

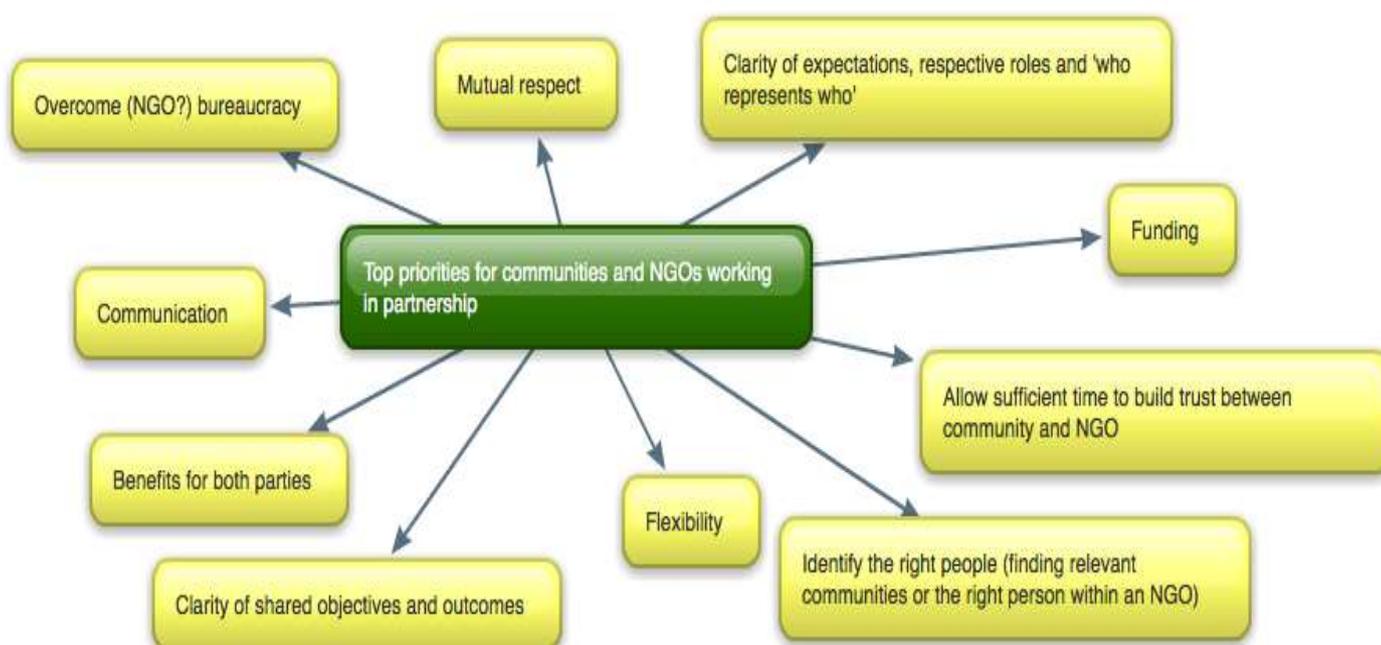
Another group considered the example of Friends of the Earth Scotland and Concerned Communities of Falkirk's work on fracking in Airth.

Questions:

Why did/didn't the partnership work well?

What could have been done differently/better?

What are the top 3 priorities to consider when working in partnership? Summarised below.



Protected Areas Leaders Simon Jones, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Andrew Binnie, Community of Arran Seabed Trust, Facilitator Nick Underdown, LINK

eNGOS have campaigned for laws, nationally and internationally to protect and restore environmental assets of national or international importance. Local communities have to live with regulations stemming from these designations.

Overview:

Examples of good working relationships/partnerships were offered and briefly discussed by members before a more general overview of issues, followed by potential areas for improvement. This was couched within the context of a more wide-ranging discussion about whether 'protected areas' are always the right/most effective management and regulatory tool for achieving 'outcomes' (eg of tackling biodiversity loss).

Participants shared examples of both good and more challenging working relationships between LINK members and more 'community-level' organisations.

1. Community of Seabed Trust + Marine Conservation Society
2. Community near St Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve + Marine Conservation Society
3. Beaulieu-Denny power line campaign drew together communities of interest, including John Muir Trust
4. Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust + Scottish Wildlife Trust

Observations/comments

- Protected area bureaucracy is often complex, and therefore barrier to local engagement
- If national-level NGOs present themselves as knowledge-givers, it will mean they can "talk too much" and alienate community enthusiasm/views
- Local communities are vital to the management of assets
- Engagement/relationship can build complementary capacity for all parties
- Early engagement is vital
- Listening is vital
- There is a disconnect between national policy-driven communications and community-specific sensitivities. Growing awareness of community views has major implications for communications policy
- Recognition that outcome is more important than the designation
- Clarity of communication between parties is essential to manage expectations
- Discussions around 'protected areas' and relationship with community can be markedly different if any party is a landowner.
- Underlying cultural perceptions experience of different designations by local/community interests are important to understand
- Timing is crucial: various interests may be at different stages of engagement with the designation process, recognition of this is important.
- Depending on what organisation/group(s)/people 'push' for or initiate the designation will often impact on success of that designation.
- The party which initiates offer of support can alter the dynamics – ie the offer might not necessarily be welcome
- 'Ask the fundamental questions first!' *before* specifics
- Does it matter if NGO employee is 'locally resident'? Relationships on the ground vs outsider having freedom to "say it as it is" (and therefore potentially more objective).

Potential actions/considerations for LINK members:

- Engage with "non-eNGO NGOs"
- Explore/share good practice, eg internal guides for NGO staff (examples include: Participatory Appraisal System/ Use the Community Voice/Sharing Good Practice)
- Build community checks into communications policy, eg speak to communities/local branch before drafting/finalising PR
- Push discussion of protected areas as a tool for tackling biodiversity loss

Understanding Land Reform Leaders Ian Cooke, Development Trusts Association Scotland, Mike Daniels, John Muir Trust, facilitator Andy Myles, LINK.

Development Trust Approach: Understanding each other's agendas. Development Trust is an unhelpful term – more an approach to community-led regeneration – failure of more mainstream attempts.

Principles:

1. A. independent and community-led. Bottom-up sense of what needs to happen.
B. Working to clear community plan or strategy
2. Commitment to take a holistic approach. Thinking across social, economic, environmental and cultural issues.
3. Commitment to partnership working – avoid limited talking shops. Specific partnerships for specific purposes – redefining partnerships.
4. Commitment to enterprise – how can they generate their own income and be independent. About profit but more important is what you do with the profits.

Communities seek to own land to create more control over their futures. For many, assets – land or material – communities see themselves as the natural stewards of those assets. Question of how to balance needs of local communities and stake of NGOs – develop partnership, but where there are conflict of agendas.

ENGo issues: Wild land in Scottish context – people living and using it (recreational). There are successes – Cole and Nevis partnership. Local communities – jobs and houses is the main characteristic of the concerns but as NGOs we don't really provide this – tensions can occur because of this. Challenges:

1. Local controversy – deer, crofting, land management etc. Good question – what is a local community? A few people? The majority? Community of place or interest? National interest needs to be considered too.
2. NGOs – urban outsiders, maybe because of history. Fair challenge to be called 'conservationist imperialists'. Need to be careful of this. We represent national interest not just local interest.

Ownership: n 2.6% - NGOs, about 1 % - Community, 10% - SNH, etc. All pretty small scale – much is still left in private ownership use.

Participants considered the four questions:

1. What are issues for local communities?
2. What are issues for NGOs?
3. Can we improve mutual interest?
4. Examples of working together – good/bad examples.

BEFS: Experience in urban historical buildings. Some relationships failed due to personalities.

CNPA: Challenge of communities is taking control of assets and setting up trusts – after initial phase tends to run out of steam. Needs more partnership with NGO and government for support of community enthusiasm. True partnership is what we want to achieve from this land irrespective of who owns it. Market failure – income from exploitative activities sometimes worse than the original proposal. Remember the bigger picture.

SCRA: eg of a one small group wanting to take more ownership but hostility from others meant project fizzled out. NIMBY principle.

WTS has 80 sites in Scotland, needs to engage with community groups as not enough staff to do the work, and community groups are there on the ground. Capacity within communities an issue – older generations worry who will replace them and continue to nurture. Need to be reasons for people to talk to each other.

Transfer programs – encourage local communities to take management or leases and purchase local woodlands. WTS being landowner and community using it. At best ambivalent attitude to NGO as landowners. Great resistance to change –disappointing but is the reality.

BBCT: Eg of a dysfunctional communities with shared interest, firefighting political sensitivities and overcome by disparate personalities. Other examples of harmonious personalities.

WTS: WWT: Caerlaverock – harmonious relationship with local communities, it is a tourist attraction bringing revenue to the area. Severn Barrage – won on technical front – next time we argue the case will involve the local community.

RSPB: EU LIFE project in Uists– EU protected status and in unfavourable condition due to management. Site has unique species and good example of high nature value farming but crofters changing practice with geese grazing and harvesting earlier. Government is obliged by EU to protect the site and RSPB presented itself as cheapest option. RSPB took over the goose scheme which has worked well. The only stumbling block is the sporting rights. North Uist is privately owned, South Uist is community owned. If we don't create it vacuum will be filled by someone who isn't sensitive to local needs. When you do support local communities a longer term approach is more sustained.

Archaeology Scotland: does not own land, has an Adopt a Monument scheme where we ask local communities to manage a local site. Also work with Vibrant Rural Communities in liaison with Scottish Government and James Hutton Institute. Research being funded but not feeding into the wider communities therefore communities are not pulling together.

APRS: experience of division between incomers and local people. Incomers were a generation that had previously moved to Dingwall – they were perceived as not having a right to say. Common denominator – council put tip in flagstone quarry – the two groups were able to move forward with that.

BCT: No assets. Tend to work more with communities of interest. Have worked with communities of place for awareness raising and asking local communities to adopt 1km sections in town but interest has dwindled and schemes in Perth and Dundee discontinued.

Ramblers: Access issues, works well if local group needs help in amplifying their campaign. When they can't stick up for themselves or there is conflict within the community we can step in as can step aside the local issues – make sure to resolve but not flare.

Trends / Themes?

- Personalities (good/bad) and harmonious relationships
- Challenge of sustainability, capacity and limits of volunteer action.
- Pushing decision-making down – democratic accountability
- Taking community with you during challenges
- Don't take on 'wrong' assets which could then turn into a liability – 'last chance saloon' – how does ownership help them to achieve their goals.
- Uists – still young and huge complex undertaking.

How can NGO, who have their own agendas (answer to boards and members) really be a continuing friend for local communities?

Why are there so many NGOs? All pretty similar anyway that we have to engage with – local communities may ask.

Multiplicity of NGOs – surprise from local communities and perception that NGOs are powerful. Our power is in our ideas.

Quality of partnership – imbalance of scale – identify common interests.

State ownership? Aspirations? More efficient and effective way of doing it? National Parks another example?

Scandinavia– no great NGO ownership. Much more power on municipal level – this makes Scotland different to the rest of Europe – we have a socio-economic problem that we don't talk about.

If NGOs own it what would we do differently to private owners? Not sure in terms of homes and eco-tourism.

What is a sustainable land use? Think there is a rational way to manage each acre of land but there isn't – personal choices. Conservation of biodiversity is the real test over time.

Any country that has a more draconian system of private/hereditary ownership – more forced to community ownership (Swiss example). Cap on private ownership (Denmark example). Legally phase out?

Urban areas – don't work in the same way as there is always more focus on rural areas. Historic regeneration of Scotland. Physical regeneration and wider regeneration initiatives. How to put communities properly in touch with planners?

Global number of members of NGOs living in communities – use that membership in community context to the best advantage? Extent to which they are mobilized?

Can you only be a member of one community at a time? Dozens of communities of interests – move on in Scottish politics and discourse.

Understanding of communities being rich and diverse across Scotland.

Plenary

After brief reports back from the 4 workshops discussion included:

Integration: *Most people do not fragment the issues in terms of economic, social, environmental. Is there scope to work with social NGOs to join up better?* Food is an interesting topic where the issues come together, eg Fife Diet, Sustain Edinburgh. Energy and Poverty groups is another example. NGO sector could be smarter with linking up. Greener Kirkcaldy worked closely with social organisations. It tends to be fuel poverty that motivates people rather than climate change issues.

Community Councils: *Would it help if they were given budgets for local environmental improvements?* It could, but should be community led. Community council coverage is patchy. Needs to be backed up with resources and not increase disparity of wealth between communities.

What could be improved in terms of local government reform? Much talk in government circles about the Nordic system. Interesting level of rhetoric versus action on local community empowerment. The efficient and elegant solution is to devolve power to the appropriate local level. By seizing the moment to bring action and power to local grassroots we will be bringing work on ourselves, it could be our downfall if we claim for ourselves the ability to represent. In the current debate we need to be mindful of scale, and be very honest. Fife council is putting more decision making on committees, as part of a decentralising process. NGOs could engage with them and make sure the needs of local people are represented. It is very difficult to engage people, and a big step forward if those here today could engage.

Concluding remarks – Deborah Long

What: We are in the market for change and for providing leadership for change. Pauline set out our different strengths and resources. The ideal would be for both sectors to work together, using the political space created by communities of interest with the behaviour changes generated by communities of place.

How: (from Anne) Presenting a common front, mutual support, matching form and function -what are we trying to achieve and do we have what the right mechanisms in place? Using the media and other publicity means, sharing.

Recommendations: - sharing expertise and resources and sharing those with local planners. Coordination of products and resources may be one way (for fighting blights) - recommendations to come from the study Elizabeth Leighton is carrying out for LINK. LINK bodies are pressing for change to the system and making the procedures better so that the environment counts.

NGOs are not in the business of doing government's work for it.

The Ideas Bank through the Climate Challenge Fund is an opportunity (re climate change action) Support requests from communities of place. Communications are vital to management of assets (protected areas). Challenge especially in non-designated areas. NGOs should share guidance on engagement protocols and communications policies.

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Delegate list and contact information:

Aedán Smith	Head of Planning and Development	RSPB	aedan.smith@rspb.org.uk
Alan McCombes	Communications Editor	John Muir Trust	alan.mccombes@jmt.org
Alex Kinninmonth	Policy Officer, Living Seas	Scottish Wildlife Trust	akinninmonth@swt.org.uk
Alice Walsh	Development Officer	SE LINK	alice@scotlink.org
Allan Whyte	Marine Policy Officer	RSPB	allan.whyte@rspb.org.uk
Andrew Binnie	Manager	Community of Arran Seabed Trust	andrew@arrancoast.com
Andy Myles	Parliamentary Officer	SE LINK	andy@scotlink.org
Anne McCall	Speaker	RSPB Scotland	anne.mccall@rspb.org.uk
Anne Youngman	Scottish Officer	Bat Conservation Trust	ayoungman@bats.org.uk
Beryl Leatherland	LINK Trustee	Scottish Wild Land Group	beryl@chway.plus.com
Calum Duncan	Scotland Programme Manager	Marine Conservation Society	calum.duncan@mcsuk.org
Carol Barbone	Stakeholder & Compliance Lead	CNR International	Carol.Barbone@cnrinternational.com
Carol Evans	Director	Woodland Trust Scotland	carolevans@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Carrie Hume	Head of Conservation Policy	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	carrie.hume@wwt.org.uk
Charles Dundas	Public Affairs Manager	Woodland Trust Scotland	charlesdundas@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Charles Strang	Convenor	Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	charlesstrang@mac.com
Clare Symonds	Chair	Planning Democracy	claresymonds@yahoo.com
Clive Mitchell	Strategic Direction Manager	Scottish Natural Heritage	clive.mitchell@snh.gov.uk ; sophie.castle@snh.org.uk
Cllr John Wincott	workshop leader		jwincott2@virginmedia.com
Colleen McCulloch	Agricultural Development Manager	Soil Association	CMcCulloch@soilassociation.org
Craig MacAdam		Buglife	craig.macadam@buglife.org.uk
Dave Morris	Director	Ramblers Scotland	DaveM@ramblers.org.uk
Deborah Long	Programme Manager	Plantlife	deborah.long@plantlife.org.uk
Derek	Chief Executive	Keep Scotland	derek.robertson@ksbscotland.org.uk

Robertson		Beautiful	k
Duncan Bryden	Convenor	Cairngorm National Park Authority	c/o margaretsmith@cairngorms.co.uk
Eddie Palmer	Chair	Scottish Badgers	eddiepalmer@classmail.co.uk
Eleanor Mackintosh	Convenor of Planning	Cairngorm National Park Authority	c/o margaretsmith@cairngorms.co.uk
Elizabeth Leighton	Consultant	Leighton Consulting	Elizabeth@leightonconsulting.co.uk
Euan Leitch		Built Environment Forum Scotland	euan.leitch@befs.org
Gail Wilson	Coordinator	Stop Climate Chaos Scotland	gail@stopclimatechaosscotland.org
Guy Harewood	Biodiversity & Ranger Coordinator	Scottish Countryside Rangers Association	harewoodg@stirling.gov.uk
Helen McDade	Head of Policy	John Muir Trust	helen.mcdade@jmt.org
Helen Todd	Campaigns & Policy Manager	Ramblers Scotland	helen.todd@ramblers.org.uk
Helen Zealley	Hon Fellow	SE LINK	andrewzealley@hotmail.com
Hugh Green	Finance & IT officer	SE LINK	hugh@scotlink.org
Ian Cooke	Director	Development Trusts Association Scotland	ian@dtascot.org.uk
Ian McCall	Senior Development Officer	Paths for All	ian.mccall@pathsforall.org.uk
Jen Anderson	Chief Officer	SE LINK	Jen@scotlink.org
Jess Pepper			jesspepper@gmail.com
Jill Williams	Member & Volunteer Support Officer	Plantlife Scotland	jill.williams@plantlife.org.uk
John Finney	Trustee	John Muir Trust	john.finney@ucl.ac.uk
John Low	Policy Officer	John Muir Trust	john.low@jmt.org
Jonathan Wordsworth	Rural Land Use Advisor	Archaeology Scotland	j.wordsworth@archaeologyscotland.org.uk
Karol Swanson		Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	ks.qferry@talktalk.net
Katy Malone	Conservation Officer (Scotland)	Bumblebee Conservation Trust	katy.malone@bumblebeeconservation.org
Liz Auty	Biodiversity officer	John Muir Trust	liz.auty@jmt.org
Liza Cole	Property Manager/Senior Ranger St Abbs Head	National Trust for Scotland	lcole@nts.org.uk
Lloyd Austin	Head of Conservation Policy	RSPB	lloyd.austin@rspb.org.uk
Mike Daniels	Head of Land & Science	John Muir Trust	mike.daniels@jmt.org
Nick Underdown	Marine officer	Scottish Environment LINK	nick@scotlink.org
Pamela McLean	Managing Director	The Surefoot Effect	pam@surefoot-effect.com

Paul Walton	Head of Habitats & Species	RSPB	paul.walton@rspb.org.uk
Paula Charleson	Head of Environmental Strategy	SEPA	Paula.Charleson@sepa.org.uk
Pauline Gallacher	Projects Coordinator	Neilston Development Trust	pauline.gallacher@neilstontrust.co.uk
Pete Minting	Scotland Officer	Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC)	pete.minting@arc-trust.org
Philip Gordon	Estate Manager	Woodland Trust Scotland	philipgordon@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Rea Cris	Parliamentary Office Administrator	SE LINK	rea@scotlink.org
Richard Dixon	Director	Friends of the Earth Scotland	rdixon@foe-scotland.org.uk
Rob Briers	Programme Leader: BSc Environmental Routes	British Ecological Society/Edinburgh Napier University	r.briers@napier.ac.uk
Roger Powell	Chairman	Scottish Countryside Rangers Association	rpowell@eastlothian.gov.uk
Rory Syme	Communications Officer	Woodland Trust Scotland	rorysyme@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Ross Anderson	Committee member	Scottish Campaign for National Parks	admin@eastlochhead.co.uk
Sam Gardner		WWF Scotland	SJGardner@wwfscotland.org.uk
Sam Tedcastle	Stakeholder Engagement Officer Scotland Celtic Seas	WWF Scotland	stedcastle@wwfscotland.org.uk
Simon Jones	Major Projects Manager	Scottish Wildlife Trust	sjones@swt.org.uk
Simon Pepper	Honorary Fellow	Scottish Environment LINK	srpepper@tiscali.co.uk
Sitar Ramsay	Community Engagement Officer	Changeworks	Sramsay@changeworks.org.uk
Sue Hamilton		Planning Democracy	mrs.sue@btinternet.com
Susan Tierney	Development officer	Scottish Badgers	developmentofficer@scottishbadgers.org.uk
Susan Wright	Head of Communications	John Muir Trust	susan.wright@jmt.org
Suzy Goodsir	Project Manager	Greener Kirkcaldy	suzy@greenerkirkcaldy.org.uk
Thomas Quinn	Campaigns Team	RSPB	thomas.quinn@rspb.org.uk
Vicky Cairns		National Trust for Scotland	vcairns@nts.org.uk
Willie McKenna	Board Member	Cairngorm National Park Authority	c/o margaretsmith@cairngorms.co.uk