

Scottish Environment Week 2015 Report

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2015 marked the ten year anniversary of Scottish Environment Week. The theme was Sharing Scotland, highlighting all the resident and visiting species with which we share our environment and the human duty to share the space fairly and responsibly. Sarah Boyack MSP was, once again, our overall sponsor. The Week consisted of the Evening Reception, the Pub Quiz, four seminars and a new event, a four day Drop-in Session.

Drop-in Sessions

The Drop-in Session were conceived as a way for all LINK members to be able to participate in SEW without needing to fit into set parameters fit by seminar topics. The Drop-in Session was to get members speaking directly to MSPs on topics or issues directly relating to their organization without the time constraints that a networking event such as the Evening Reception offers. The Drop-in Session was held in Parliament, in a meeting room both accessible to MSPs and the public. It ran from Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm. The Drop-in Session was well attended by members with 18 members taking part, including Marine Conservation Society bringing in a live touch tank and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland having their double decker education bus, Wild About Scotland, parked outside Parliament.



1 Wild About Scotland bus



The Drop-in Session attracted a total of 20 MSPs over the four days (this is not including the MSPs who visit the Wild About Scotland bus). This is not to mention the researchers, SPICe staff and members of the public who also attended.

Overall those who participated in the Drop-in Session found value in it, both for talking to MSPs directly but also other LINK members doing similar work since the Drop-in days were 'themed' to have similar organizations together.

"The drop-in session was very useful for us, due to the opportunity to meet and talk with MSPs, which enabled us to gain a better understanding of their priorities, how they work, and how we can focus some of our work to be of most use to them."

"The drop in sessions were excellent. It would be very good to have the opportunity to do those again."

"We really enjoyed and benefited from the opportunity to be part of it."

Lunch Time Seminars

Despite feedback from members last year to change the format, members approached us wanting to host four separate lunch time events.

Whales and Dolphins Around Scotland – Monday 16th February 2015 organised by Whale and Dolphin Conservation. Sponsored by David Stewart MSP

Historic Environment – Tuesday 17th February 2015 organised by SCAPE Trust and Archeology Scotland, featuring presentations from SCAPE Trust, Archaeology Scotland and RSPB Scotland. Sponsored by Liam McArthur MSP

Urban Environment – Wednesday 18th February 2015 organised by RSPB Scotland and featuring presentations from RSPB Scotland, Buglife and Froglife as well as poster presentations from Scottish Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust and Ramblers. Sponsored by Drew Smith MSP

Argoecology – Thursday 19th February 2015 organised by Nourish Scotland and featuring a presentation (via Skype) from France by Samuel Féret, co-ordinator of [ARC2020](#). Sponsored by Alison Johnstone MSP.

We had a total of 10 MSPs attending the seminars as well as SPICe staff and numerous researchers. The Urban Seminar had a useful and productive outcome where LINK members were asked by Sarah Boyack MSP to produce some guidelines they could circulate to MSPs on how better to green our urban environments and make them safer havens for biodiversity. This led to a meeting directly after the seminar, where it was proposed that a new LINK taskforce could be set up about the Urban Environment.

"I particular enjoyed seeing /hearing the short talks in the lunch time seminar. These provided a great way of seeing what other organisations are doing / triggering ideas for linking up projects."



2 Whale and Dolphin Around Scotland Seminar



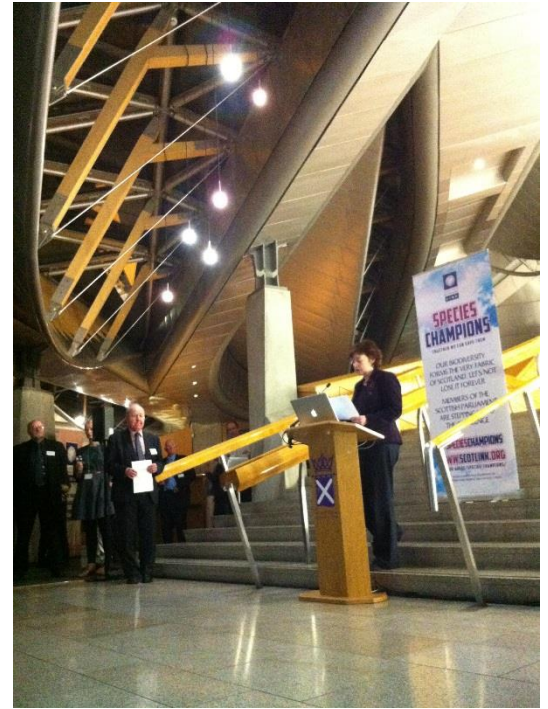
3 Urban Seminar meet to write guidance

Evening Reception

The Evening Reception, without a doubt continues to be the main event of Scottish Environment Week and this year was no exception with over a hundred guests attending. The Reception was again sponsored by the two National Parks who brought beer and whiskey samples to delight the guests. The new Minister for the Environment, Aileen McLeod MSP also attended and spoke at the event.

The new changes we made were inviting a 'star speaker' in the form of landscape photographer Colin Prior to give his views of what makes Scotland such an amazing environment to live and work in and give an impassioned presentation, which was very well received and may have done much to draw the high calibre of guest this year. The Evening Reception was very well attended by MSPs, with well over 20 staying or dropping into the Reception throughout the evening.

The other new element was a 'networking game' based on the Species Champion initiative which invited guests to find their species partners and pitch an action to sponsoring MSP Sarah Boyack. The game was well received and the winners were Sandeels.



Pub Quiz

2015 Pub Quiz had much vigor and healthy competition with many researcher attending, across political parties as well as two MSP attendance of Roderick Campbell MSP and Marco Biagio MSP. There was a good vibe in the air and it was a great and joyous way to end an overall successful week. It was once again sponsored by Calor Gas and sponsored by Rob Gibson MSP.

MSP Engagement

Overall SEW 2015 achieve a good result of MSP engagement, especially in reaching out to 'not the usual suspects'. We had many MSPs attend our events who are usually not associated with the green portfolio and showing much interest and knowledge, such as Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP. LINK members were happy with this new engagement, with MSPs expressing interest in becoming Species Champions and Nourish Scotland are planning on approaching Christian Allard MSP (who came to the Drop-in Session and the Argoecology seminar) with views of holding another event inviting members of the French Government.



Northern Irish Environment Committee Attendance

This year saw the attendance of our LINK Northern Irish counter parts attending SEW along with members of the Northern Irish Environment Committee, including the Convener and the clerk. Northern Irish Environment LINK wish to mimic our Scottish Environment Week at Stormont and therefore the purpose of the visit was to come see it in action as well as meet members of the Scottish Parliament RACCE Committee to discuss their relationship between Parliament and the NGOs, comparisons between the policy areas covered by RACCE and the NIA Environment Committee and developments in land reform and land use. Andy who was their chaperon and present at the meeting said it went very well with MSPs having a chance to 'show-off' at how engaged they were with NGOs and the MLAs being incredibly impressed by what we had achieved.



4 Anna Lo speaks to Aileen McLeod

Social Media Engagement

This year SEW was online and tweeting away! Thanks to the twitter feed and quirky photos, LINK incurred 45 new followers to the LINK Twitter account. To promote SEW throughout the year, the webpage is more engaging with presentations from seminar open to the public as well as a [light-hearted round-up video](#) of the week available to few and get a flavor of how it went.

Conclusions

Scottish Environment Week 2015 was an overall success, but there is always room for improvement and needs to think ahead to next year. 10 years is a nice way to reflect and make some changes and the political climate would also suggest them same; 2016 will see the Holyrood elections therefore saying farewell to well-known MSPs and welcoming and engaging news ones the year after. Sarah Boyack MSP has also made it clear that 10 years is a good place to stop in terms of her overall sponsorship and therefore the flame must be passed onto someone new. Therefore it seems appropriate for a refresh and revival and feedback was sent to LINK members after SEW and will considered during the Steering Group for SEW 2016.

"Good all round - well done!"

"I feel it is for us [LINK members] to take the opportunities it offers."

"Consider just running bi-annually if parliament will only allow access in alternate years. I think SEW has become a little formulaic."

"We appreciated what was put on."

"Getting to talk to people that you wouldn't usually talk to! Whether that be people from other organisations or people who work within the Scottish Parliament."

"It really helps benefit small charities like ours."



Rea Cris February 2015