



LINK

Scottish Environment LINK

Operating Principles & Task Force Guidance

Interim update at December 2006

pending fully revised version in 2007

As adopted by Members at AGM on 27 May 2003 in line with LINK's transfer to a company limited by guarantee and as subsequently revised by the Board in January 2004. And in line with changes to the constitution approved by Members at EGM on 24 November 2006.

References in these Operating Principles to "LINK" means the Scottish charitable guarantee company known as Scottish Environment LINK and to any "Article" means reference to the Article of that number in LINK's Memorandum and Articles of Association adopted in May 2003.

These Operating have been promulgated in terms of Article 50 and are reviewed from time to time by LINK's Board of Trustees. Though always subordinate to LINK's Memorandum and Articles of Association, they are intended to provide additional explanation of some constitutional points as well as guidance to members and potential members on what LINK can and cannot provide, what this 'collective' requires of its individual members to be effective, and definition of its 'modus operandi'. In case of doubt, interpretation and development of these Operating Principles is a matter for decision by the Board of Trustees, in the interests of LINK as a whole.

1. ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF LINK

LINK was set up to ensure that collective work amongst NGOs achieved something additional to the individual efforts of member bodies. LINK's first decade demonstrated the advantages of a collective approach, not replacing individual action or challenging members' sovereignty, but adding value to members' work and to the environmental objectives in common. It remains the case that LINK works best where there is recognition that the value of consensus on the common ground outweighs the importance of differences between members (the extent of common ground - even on what might appear contentious issues internally - is often considerable enough to merit advocacy work with decision-makers).

LINK is most usefully seen as 'enabling' - a vehicle through which the environment movement in Scotland can share ideas, skills and information, develop common approaches and take collective action where this offers benefits not apparent through other avenues. For those not involved directly in the environment movement (in Scotland and further afield) LINK offers a way in to the movement (a network of contacts and information).

LINK is a vehicle for its membership to network, share skills, establish and participate in joint task forces, projects and liaison - to pursue issues and employ tactics which, as collective initiatives, promise to achieve more for the environment movement than individual action. LINK responds to the movement's needs : it should not be seen as an organisation with a life

over and above these or with an additional voice. However the value to members of a LINK role in flagging up the movement's concerns, developing consensual positions ahead of the game, and in representing these in dialogue with other players, is increasingly evident, post devolution. The operational role which LINK staff play in this ever dynamic context can be key; their experience and overview of the 'LINK good' should be respected and utilised.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF LINK

2.1 Guidance on Criteria to be applied

Article 4 outlines the main qualifying criteria for Membership of LINK, namely:

"Full Membership shall be open to any voluntary organisations (as defined in the version operable from time to time of the Operating Principles), whether corporate or unincorporated, who shall apply for Full Membership in writing to the Secretary and can confirm when so doing that they meet the following criteria (which the existing Full Members shall determine whether they do so meet), namely that:

- (a) they are voluntary non-profit-distributing organisations; and
- (b) they are either Scottish organisations, or have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity; and
- (c) their main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with Clause 3(b) of the Memorandum (see below); and
- (d) they can demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland.

By 'voluntary organisations' LINK includes the following criteria, most of which any applicant organisation will be required to meet:

- which are voluntary, non-profit-distributing organisations
- which are either Scottish organisations, or which have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity;
- whose main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with LINK's Charitable Purpose "*to advance the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability*";
- which demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland
- which are autonomous and independent of government or its agencies, and of primarily commercial interests
- which have been established by an initiative of citizens or other voluntary organisations
- which demonstrate clear citizen-driven ethos
- where deployment of the resources of the organisation is overseen by a committee of citizens (trustees, council, management committee etc) working for the organisation's objects
- whose objectives are guided or approved by their wider memberships at least annually

The Objects of LINK are specified in Clause 3 of the Memorandum of Association, namely:

- "(a) to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of voluntary organisations involved with the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage;

- (b) to advance the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability; and
- (c) to advance the education, understanding and responsible awareness of the natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability."

2.2 Process for Application

Bodies interested in becoming Members (as opposed to Subscribers or Supporters - see 3 below) are asked to complete LINK's membership application form and to submit this, along with relevant background material on their organisation, to the LINK office.

The period between submission and decision on an application could be 6 months. LINK's Board of Trustees will consider applications, conducting any background enquiries, and then make a recommendation to the Members. The application and recommendation subsequently go to Members and in some cases a representative from the applicant body may be invited to attend a Members' meeting to speak about the organisation. It is important that existing Members consider the details of applicant bodies and the recommendation of the Board of Trustees in casting their vote. Membership applications are determined by the existing Full Members: approval by a two-thirds majority of all existing Full Members is required to admit new Full Members (Article 5).

Whilst the Articles of Association do not require it, membership of bodies newly admitted as Full Members will be reviewed after the first year as a matter of principle. During the first year the joining organisation will have the opportunity to participate in and familiarise itself with LINK and with the terms of the 'contract' between member bodies and LINK (details at 5 below). The review, for which the Board of Trustees will be responsible, may highlight the need for clearer guidance, changes in representation, and so forth.

3. SUBSCRIBERS & SUPPORTERS (full details on the LINK website)

Articles 17 provides the criteria for and benefits to Subscribers and Supporters, namely:

- "14. Organisations which are not eligible, or do not wish to apply, for Full Membership, but wish to be kept informed of the activities of LINK, may, on payment of an appropriate subscription, become Subscribers of LINK (e.g. local authorities, universities, companies, local environment groups).
- 17. Private individuals who wish to support LINK may, on payment of an appropriate subscription, become Supporters of LINK."

Some bodies considering membership of LINK may find that becoming a Subscriber fulfils their needs. Subscribers and Supporters are important in spreading LINK's message and in identifying potential allies for aspects of the movement's work. LINK will encourage others interested in LINK's work, but not eligible for Full Membership, to enquire about becoming a Supporter or Subscriber.

Subscribers and Supporters may not engage in LINK task forces.

4. INDUCTION

Induction is important for new representatives of existing Full Members as well as for representatives of new Full Members. The outgoing representative should normally carry this out, with support or participation from a member of LINK staff or Board of Trustees. LINK staff will provide a list of the main points to be covered. This will take place as soon as possible after an organisation has been admitted as a member of LINK, and within four months at most. In addition, a presentation by LINK to the board/council/staff of the new organisation is advised.

As LINK grows, it is increasingly clear that there is a need to induct/brief new representatives. This is primarily a member body role and one in which the outgoing representative is asked to fulfil and where a member of LINK staff/Board of Trustees will happily support or participate.

Task Force Convenors will also receive induction from a member of LINK Staff or a LINK Trustee as and when they take up their convenorship, either in a meeting or by advice given by phone or e-mail.

5. THE CONTRACT BETWEEN FULL MEMBERS AND LINK

It is crucial to see the relationship between Full Members and LINK as an informal contract, with serious commitments on both sides. The key principles of this relationship are set out here for the benefit of Full Members, Board of Trustees and staff.

Amongst the benefits to Full Members are:

- skills benefits, added credibility, long-term investment
- strengthened roles of smaller groups (from information, update, contact with others working on same issues, opportunities to raise concerns and seek broader support)
- avoiding overlap and duplication
- getting on the movement's agenda an issue which your organisation cannot take forward on its own
- developing a more informed approach for individual NGOs
- broadening each other's agendas
- variety of approaches to issues
- contact with government, agencies, and others
- spawning of effective campaigning bodies (e.g. LINK Quarry Group, Cairngorms Campaign)
- recognition from outside (as demonstrated by invitations to be represented on various forums and other bodies)
- personal development of individuals involved in LINK
- development of trust within the movement
- bridge to other sectors
- work opportunities

What does the contract require of LINK (staff, officers, Board of Trustees)?

- respect the time commitments of its members
- help its members understand each other more
- help its members understand LINK (and current guidance)
- enable members to set new agendas
- avoid representing the membership where this is inappropriate
- understand that not all members can take a view on all issues

What does the contract require of Full Members and their representatives?

- familiarise themselves (new staff and representatives especially) with LINK, its background and *modus operandi*;
- be clear about what LINK can and cannot do; for example, LINK cannot take on an issue where the expertise and willingness of the membership to engage is not evident (though where the will does exist, we can move mountains!); it is largely the responsibility of the member bodies to ensure that LINK delivers;
- think LINK, e.g.:
 - in relation to any opportunities that arise for new initiatives (e.g. joint projects, where members contribute funds and time, and the overall co-ordination is given to LINK) or for new representation of the movement;
 - in relation to briefing own staff/colleagues/contacts on LINK's *modus operandi*, progress with its work programme, current opportunities to use LINK as a tool in their work;
- prepare for, attend and pro-actively input at general meetings of LINK, its task forces (see Section 19 below) and other working groupings to which the member organisation has signed up;
- help to determine and review the LINK work programme, and try to establish a dynamic between that programme and the work plans of their own organisations;
- bring to LINK positions on which they can confidently engage in developing consensus within the movement; contribute to the running of LINK (e.g. fielding appropriate personnel to Board of Trustees, offices of Chair, Vice-Chair, and ~~convener~~ **Convenors** of sub groups or task forces);
- take responsibility as appropriate for representing LINK (e.g. at events, in briefings to parliamentary committees, on forums where the movement has a place) and ensuring the necessary input/feedback with the membership;
- respond promptly and clearly to internal LINK consultations and requests for information so that staff know whether to continue including them in the initiative.
- recognise the value of 'signing up' to policy statements to ensure widest consensus, where this does not conflict with the member body's own objectives, even though the policy area may not be specifically relevant to their remit. LINK member bodies must however always ensure that in doing so they work within their constitutions.

Members and others participating in LINK work will be expected to observe these principles where relevant.

6. REPRESENTATION ON LINK

6.1 Role of Representative

The 'named representative' referred to in Article 6 is the main contact person fielded by the member body to carry out its representation on LINK and to fulfil the contract with LINK. This person will be listed on the LINK contacts list on the LINK members' website so it is important that members keep LINK informed when this representation changes. Ideally, the representative will attend General Meetings, act as first point of contact for circulation of material (such as memos, e-mails, newsletter) to others in their organisation, and respond appropriately to requests for participation in various initiatives. It is important that these representatives are in a position to help to develop LINK policy, by representing the views/stances of their organisations on a wide range of issues. The more informed the representatives, the more informed the debate. Given the growing rate of political change, the movement needs to be ready to respond quickly to an external agenda, and this requires a fair degree of autonomy on the part of the named representative, therefore it is important that s/he is of a fairly senior level. The importance of swift response is also true in the case of LINK's task forces and work programme steering groups.

6.2 Deputies

The named representative can appoint a deputy to attend a meeting that s/he cannot attend. Any such deputy should be properly briefed by the named representative and should be able to present the views of his/her organisation on matters likely to arise in discussion. Members can also arrange to have all information relevant to that meeting e-mailed to the deputy. In general, experience underlines the strong importance of developing relationships with representatives and of continuity of representation by members in LINK.

6.3 Representatives to Sub Groups

Full Members can appoint other representatives to contribute to the work of task forces and other sub groups, but should recognise the desirability of consistent representation in any area of LINK's work. It is essential that members' representatives on various groups/subgroups/task forces of LINK should keep themselves adequately informed of all areas of their organisation's engagement.

The same applies to those Associate Members involved between 2006 and 2008 and to others participating in a LINK work area/Task Force.

7. ACTING AS A DELEGATE FOR THE MOVEMENT

7.1 Should LINK be represented?

Whilst it is not possible to 'represent' a network, there is an expectation that LINK will field at least a delegate to events, new forums, working groups (set up by government, industry, other NGOs). It is increasingly clear that LINK cannot afford to miss an opportunity to put forward the environmental perspective of policy debate, formally and informally. This requires flexibility for staff and other representatives of the movement. However, all need to be clear about the difference - sometimes a fine line - between instances where it's important to field a delegate, and others where this isn't necessary (e.g. there are plenty of environment NGOs already involved to carry the messages) or where the presence of a LINK delegate implies a common LINK position where there is none (in which case the function is to listen and report back). This needs ongoing review. There is also a resource implication - for members and LINK - in attending meetings and the associated 'dialogue' with LINK members; it needs to be monitored from this point of view also.

7.2 Representation through the Officers, Task Force Convenors and Staff

The President carries out a considerable amount of 'representational' work in his/her role as ambassador. The Chair also is heavily involved in heading up the strategy of LINK, in dealing with day-to-day issues and in chairing all Members' Meetings and all meetings of the Board of Trustees. However, LINK needs to set its own agenda for this work, and, given time constraints on President and Chair, there are gaps to plug. To some extent this can be done by the Vice-Chair, Task Force Convenors or appointed spokespeople from relevant task forces, and in some cases by staff.

7.3 Election of Delegates

LINK has agreed some criteria for selection of delegates:

- that delegates to new forums, or replacement delegates to forums on which LINK already has a place, should be elected by ballot
- where the subject/focus of the forum is specific (e.g. agriculture), and an obviously relevant LINK grouping exists, this group should be the focus of the ballot

- where the subject/focus of the forum is broader, or generic, and where an obviously relevant LINK grouping does not/no longer exist(s), the ballot should encompass all Full Members.
- ballots should be carried out by e-mail, giving members 14 days to respond, on the understanding that no response would be taken as abstention
- all such ballots should include information about (a) the forum in question, (b) about the 'candidates' for the LINK place(s), (c) LINK agreed guidance to delegates (Operating Principles, section 7)
- all such places should be subject to annual re-election at the AGM to ensure delegates are encouraged to fulfil the terms of the guidance and that the range of roles is shared amongst interested Full Members, except where it is clear from the outset that the grouping or forum's task is time-limited for completion of a specified task.

7.4 Responsibilities of LINK representatives on external forums, bodies or at external events

Individuals acting as a delegate for LINK are required to:

- attend whenever possible or find an appropriate deputy through LINK in plenty of time
- be proactive in expressing the range of, as opposed to their own body's, concerns; or, if acting in a dual capacity, indicate clearly to the meeting/forum when they are speaking on behalf of their own body and when on behalf of LINK
- regularly canvass for input from other LINK members via the appropriate TF Convenor or e-mail group on the issues under discussion
- ensure feedback to LINK staff and members after each meeting by e-mail, flagging up urgent matters that may have arisen and may need immediate attention of members or Board of Trustees (including lack of feedback from members)
- provide a report on and evaluation of LINK's role in that Forum, for the LINK annual report.

LINK staff will:

- provide these delegates with this guidance in writing at the start of their tenure
- keep them informed of any key LINK concerns prior meetings
- keep them in touch with LINK activities through the Newsletter and other mailings

8. PUTTING TOGETHER A LINK DELEGATION

8.1 LINK needs a means of quickly and relatively easily identifying the 'right' line-up from within the movement for external meetings. Meeting opportunities often stem from the initiative of member bodies working together (e.g. in task forces) though some arise unsolicited. Opportunities include meetings with Ministers, senior civil servants or Agency staff, politicians, and senior figures from other sectors. For consistency, the rationale is to relate opportunities to the relevant LINK work area or task force, and for LINK members to trust colleagues to select fairly, represent the 'complete brief', and make a good case.

8.2 Where a TF is selecting the delegation

- The TF convenor should discuss intentions v.v. delegations with TF/group colleagues, coming to agreement about these internally. The TF/group should agree the purpose and objective of the meeting before determining the delegation. Members and groups/TFs would acknowledge this as part of the convenor's overall remit at time of selection. Delegations should be drawn from the pool of members regularly participating on the obvious LINK TF (or TFs, other steering groups - there may be a case to include a rep/ reps of other TFs in the delegation).

- In this way, selection of delegations will normally be led by a TF convenor who should consider with other convenors and/or LINK staff the need to integrate relevant points from other LINK work areas.
- LINK should match the seniority proffered by the external party, from within the relevant technical LINK forum, where the common ground and detailed case are well rehearsed. In LINK terms therefore, a TF convenor will quite often be more relevant than the member body CEO/Officer¹.
- As the meeting is for LINK purposes, it should not be confused as an opportunity for individual organisations to promote their own views or for TF/group members' organizational colleagues to be involved (unless there is an over-riding case for substitution).
- Where a TF believes higher-level representation is crucial, the TF convenor should discuss this with LINK Staff. Inclusion of the LINK President or Chair in some delegations may be important, for example, and Staff can arrange this. There will be occasions when it is important to include another LINK figure not involved in that TF (but whose organisation is) for specific expertise which s/he can provide
- Delegations should be appropriately sized to ensure effectiveness and to match the line-up offered. It is not normally effective or professional to field a large delegation for strategic discussion with 2 senior officials for time-limited discussions of key points²
- In any delegation, the maximum number of people which any one organisation can reasonably field is one person.
- Where it proves impossible for the TF/group convenor to reach a satisfactory conclusion, the responsibility for helping to resolve things reasonably swiftly will be that of the Chair or other nominated Trustee.

8.3 In preparing for the meeting

- TF convenors are responsible for ensuring that the LINK case is prepared, for keeping TF colleagues informed as this develops, and for integrating with other TFs over this in advance of the meeting.
- TF/Group convenors should ensure that relevant LINK Staff are informed of the opportunity and the developing delegation so that they can advise about other people/convenors who should be invited to input.

8.4 In presenting the case

- All delegations are required to represent LINK, and the agreed LINK case, at such meetings. TF convenors are asked to ensure fair and unbiased representation of the LINK brief³ at the meeting, whatever the particular expertise of the delegation.
- Delegates should seek adequate briefing on the case which they will represent (especially where this does not directly correspond to their professional expertise/interest) and also on the background to, and objectives of, the meeting.
- Each delegation should ensure prompt and accurate feedback to the wider LINK constituency, if appropriate, via LINK Staff.

9. CONSENSUS

¹ LINK provides a number of opportunities for CEOs/Officers of member bodies to meet senior figures from other organisations where their presence as ambassadors for LINK is actively sought, including Christmas Reception, Congress, parliamentary receptions, party conferences, own conferences.

² There are exceptions - e.g. liaison meetings with agencies where a primary aim is to offer several smaller bodies the chance to meet agency staff whom they cannot easily meet as single operators.

³ Including key points from other LINK TFs in the spirit of integration.

LINK operates on the basis of consensus - 'signing' up to the area of common ground. An acknowledged function of LINK is developing consensus amongst members and with others. Consensus is invaluable as a lobbying tool. Like any coalition, LINK also relies, for public credibility, on an attitude of mutual respect and trust amongst its member bodies. Whilst members may not necessarily support the belief or approach of all other members on given issues, the cohesion of LINK is acknowledged by dealing with these differences, if necessary, in private, within the LINK forum, and by avoiding conspicuous public disagreements on key issues, as far as possible.

10. STATEMENTS

10.1 Why make joint statements?

The power of the collective voice, as a significant output of joint work, was part of the original appeal of networking. The potential for the movement under LINK auspices to make a strong case to government, industry, and the public, has become a more obvious role and remains important. Having argued the case (1990s) for a right to be heard, there is a consistent demand on LINK from parliamentarians, government agencies and others for views and/or involvement of the movement on a wide range of issues. This is unlikely to diminish and requires a mature style of working by LINK (where it decides to respond/act) by which members can quickly agree consensus as far as possible and submit this as verbal or written briefing within a deadline that is set by the pace of legislation passing through the Scottish Executive or for LINK spokespeople (President, Chair, TF Convenors, staff to advocate the movement's general position or concerns).

10.2 What form do statements take?

Statements may sometimes be verbal (e.g. President, Chair, Vice-Chair, TF Convenors, staff, to media on behalf of the movement), or expressed through press releases, reports, briefing papers, letters. These may be sent to their targets by post, faxed, or e-mailed. Members preparing these should guard against implying unanimity (unless this clearly exists and can be demonstrated by the authors) and should present or report the consensus in such a way that this can be well defended by the movement. The guidance below is designed to safeguard these two objects, and in cases of doubt over the guidance, members should consult the Chair, Chief Officer or Board of Trustees for advice.

10.3 Guidance on issuing statements

- (a) Statements issued on behalf of LINK should be approved and signed off by the Chair (Chair where the Chair is unavailable) where s/he is satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the membership.
- (b) Statements issued on behalf of a group of LINK's Members should be approved and signed off by the Convenor of that group (or deputy appointed by the group) only if satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the relevant member bodies. Such statements should generally list the bodies involved in the group/work/task force to which the statement relates.
- (c) In some cases it may be appropriate for statements to carry a positively worded disclaimer, such as:

This statement represents the general consensus amongst LINK member bodies, but should not necessarily be taken to represent the detailed policy position of every one of those member bodies

Statements could also include the following

In case of doubt regarding individual bodies' views they should be contacted direct.

- (d) Statements should talk about LINK member bodies rather than LINK *e.g. LINK member bodies believe, LINK members' views are, etc.* Members are also reminded to use the short form LINK in speaking/writing about the Association, and to use LINK letterhead for statements issued on behalf of groups of members (and not the letterhead of a member body).

10.4 Individual responsibility

Staff, officers, members, Convenors, co-opted members of task forces, and other spokespeople have a clear responsibility for:

- (a) working within the spirit of LINK's constitution and operating principles;
- (b) following the guidance given above;
- (c) ensuring that any statements they make on behalf of LINK member bodies, or relating to joint work under LINK auspices, are accurate and appropriately researched (in terms of information given) and give a reliable reflection of the nature, strength and breadth of view on the issue(s) within the network, and ;
- (d) not purporting to act as a delegate for LINK unless they have a clear mandate from LINK to do so.

This is vital in protecting LINK's credibility for members in the future, and ensuring there are no legal grounds for claims against LINK and/or its membership. Where there is any doubt, or even just a lack of clarity about what is best, key players should request guidance or a meeting with staff or Board of Trustees.

11. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees comprises the Chair, the Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and up to 6 other Trustees drawn from the Full Members of LINK, who are actively involved in activities of LINK and are familiar with its *modus operandi* and objectives. The Board of Trustees is elected annually at the AGM and nominations for membership are invited in advance. Full Members are positively encouraged to be proactive and to take a part in the Board of Trustees.

The Board will work in close co-ordination with the President, who is selected as an individual and is able to act as a representative of LINK. The President, whilst not a Trustee, would be invited to attend all meetings of the Board, will be encouraged to attend especially in respect of developmental issues, (however without having any vote at Board meetings s/he attends) and will be issued with sets of all Board papers.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for keeping an overview of the business management, and strategic direction as agreed and taken forward by the member bodies, and for other responsibilities remitted by the membership of LINK (e.g. employment review). The Chief Officer and other Staff participate in meetings/discussions of the Board of Trustees, contributing to these, progressing action points and keeping a record of decisions. The Board of Trustees meets on average 5 times per year and more regularly if required. The Board of Trustees will report annually on its work to the membership at the AGM. Member bodies and Task Force Convenors are encouraged to be freely in touch with Trustees.

12. LINK OFFICERS

12.1 President

The President has an ambassadorial role, helping to identify and pursue important openings for LINK, attending certain functions where it is important that LINK is represented generically, and helping to develop external perceptions of LINK and the contribution it can make. However s/he has an important role internally in helping to build relationships at

senior levels, to ensure that LINK reaches decisions through consensus and, generally, to develop its forward thinking.

The President does not need to be, nor would usually be, a Trustee, nor involved in the day-to-day running of LINK, or a named representative of a Full Member. The President will attend some meetings of LINK and of the Board, particularly where these relate to developmental issues, although s/he will not have a vote thereat. The President will receive all Board papers. The President's workload is limited to between 15 and 20 days per year, on a mixture of external engagements and delegations, hosting public events as well as internal meetings and taking part in key LINK events.

The President has a duty to work closely and in co-operation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, in ensuring a co-ordinated approach internally and externally in respect of LINK's affairs and business.

12.2 Chair

The main role of the Chair is internal management, including chairing the Board, line management of the Chief Officer, and close involvement in organisational development. The Chair will normally chair all General Meetings and the Annual General Meeting of LINK, although s/he may share this role with the Vice-Chair. There is an expectation that the Chair will be drawn from the pool of representatives regularly involved in LINK who have very good, up-to-date, hands-on knowledge of the organisation. As a representative on LINK of a member body, the Chair would have the normal right to vote at General Meetings (or through postal/e-mail ballots) on behalf of her/his organisation.

The Chair will liaise closely with both the President and the Vice-Chair at all times, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach internally and externally in respect of LINK's affairs and business. The Chair may be expected on occasion to carry out representational work where the Chair's input is pertinent.

12.3 Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair will complement the role of the Chair in terms of representational work where President and TF Convenors are not appropriate or not available. The Vice Chair may substitute for the Chair at Board meetings, General Meetings and other plenary meetings. As a representative on LINK of a Full Member, the Vice-Chair has the normal right to vote at General Meetings (or through postal/e-mail ballots) on behalf of his/her organisation.

12.4 Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer (elected by the members annually at an AGM) is to advise the Board of Trustees and LINK on financial issues. All day-to-day book-keeping and management of monies is the responsibility of administrative staff and Chief Officer in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, which reviews LINK's financial situation in detail each quarter.

12.5 Secretary/ Company Secretary

The Chief Officer will continue to act as the Secretary to LINK.

13. THE SEEKING OF VIEWS (OTHER THAN BALLOTS)

As a network whose representatives are dispersed across Scotland, 'canvassing' (by post, phone, fax and e-mail) for the views and suggestions of members is normal practice. LINK relies on this to progress and respond to issues. Timescales for response are dictated normally by deadlines set to LINK (e.g.. through external consultation, through LINK task force

deadlines for achieving tasks). There are occasions where the pace needs to be fast : over a decade's experience indicates that this is worth it for those who want active engagement be in on the action. The LINK process relies on prompt responses.

14. LINK WORK PROGRAMME, TASK FORCES AND SUB-GROUPS

The annual Forward Planning Meeting (involving President, representatives from the Board of Trustees, TF Convenors, Staff and Members) proposes the LINK work programme annually, including which TFs should operate under the LINK banner, level of integration and support required. This determines key areas for collective work. Participation of members at senior level is important to ensure integration with members' own plans and best focus for the movement. The Guidance for the operation of Task Forces, adopted in 2003, (see below) should be adhered to by all TF Members and Convenors.

15. PROJECTS

Projects are a further way in which LINK has successfully worked over the years. Some have involved the employment of staff (e.g. fish farming, parliamentary, LEARN); others have focused on the commissioning of reports (e.g. on local government reform, aggregates supply and demand), where the LINK role is more one of co-ordination between members. As with TFs, proposals for projects must indicate the brief, the timescale for completion, and financial implications, and be approved by members. Many projects arise anyway from TF work.

Project proposals should arrive with LINK in time for distribution for consideration at the Annual Forward Planning Meeting. Members have the right to and are encouraged to participate in LINK projects. Project management guidance applies to the funding and management of projects by the originators of the project.

16. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

LINK will seek to use the most efficient and effective methods of communicating with member bodies, recognising the need often for swift responses. All staff, Trustees and members use e-mail for much of their communication, and the network and others rely increasingly on this. Member bodies are therefore expected to be able to receive e-mail. Only where absolutely necessary will hard copy continue to be used.

LINK has a website with links to the websites of members (where these exist); members setting up websites, or changing their website names, should keep LINK informed. The LINK website will continue to be developed as the main repository for information, diary dates, and progress reports for LINK members, and as an obvious source of information about LINK work and contacts for LINK member bodies, for other audiences.

LINK will consider with members ways in which IT can support their work further (e.g.. use of standing conferences). Where there are technological problems, LINK staff will make every effort to find solutions with those members concerned if they are informed of where and how members are having difficulties.

17. LINK POLICIES

In relation to LINK staff and office(s), LINK has developed policies on equal opportunities, health and safety, green office, environmental matters and travel. Again in relation to its own staff, LINK has developed an employment policy, a performance management system and a staff handbook. These may be of interest to members. Please ask if you want further information.

18. SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members each pay an annual subscription to LINK. Subscriptions are tiered according to member bodies' income: the main criterion is the proportion of total income relevant to Scotland.

New organisations joining LINK (which have not been full members within the previous 10 years) are eligible for Introductory Membership at two-thirds of the relevant (banded) subscription rate for the first year. During this period these organisations are encouraged to engage as much as possible in LINK. As the first year draws to a close, they should decide whether they wish to remain members, paying full subscriptions from the second year, or withdrawing from LINK if that is their preference.

Subscription rates are kept under review by the Board, with a three-year schedule available to members for their own planning purposes. The network's current agreed strategy is for membership subscriptions to meet at least 50% of essential costs for the network by 2011 and it is important to other funders that members demonstrate this level of commitment to LINK.

Annual subscription schedules are circulated to members early in the calendar year and signed off finally at the AGM. All members are invoiced soon after this each year. Where subscriptions are not paid within 3 months of the invoice date (or by 31 January in cases where a member has arranged with the Board to 'stage' its payments), voting rights at LINK meetings (including task force meetings) will be deemed to have lapsed, although the defaulting member may continue to receive LINK information beyond this point.

Members who wish to explore subscription issues should contact the Board of Trustees.

19. GUIDANCE ON LINK TASK FORCES

Task Forces (TFs) are a key means for member bodies (MBs) to work together on specific topics of mutual interest, sharing information, expertise and provide a common approach to advocating environmental sustainability around each TF work area, via written outputs, delegations to external forums, briefings and events for decision-makers and stakeholders, the giving of evidence to Parliament, and so on. As at March 2004, 15 TFs were in operation. To a large extent, LINK TFs must operate without staff support given the range of TFs and the limited staff resource. This Guidance provides a framework for MBs to work together on numerous topics within the tradition of mutual trust, desire for consensus and furtherance of LINK strategic objectives, which have been the hallmark of successful LINK TFs to date.

19.1 Basic requirements for a LINK TF:

1. TFs should work within the spirit of LINK's Memorandum and Articles and this Operating Guidance, accepting full responsibility for the TF's work, its outcomes and for keeping the wider LINK audience fully informed.

2. Proposals for a new TF and/or new time-limited plans from an existing TF should be endorsed by the wider membership at an open meeting or by other agreed means.
3. A TF must involve a minimum of 3 active full MBs. The convenor and vice-convenor of a TF and all its delegates to external forums must be representatives of full MBs. Any full MB may participate in any LINK TF actively, or be included in the e-group for information. TFs may also involve those Associate Members involved between 2006 and 2008 and Co-optees (see Section 20 below).
4. TFs must keep LINK informed of progress, plans, etc, by communicating as necessary with Staff, Board, and with other TFs, and by participating in LINK's six-monthly planning and coordination meetings (October and March) which necessitate forward planning of objectives, rationale, targets, timescales, and fundraising.
5. Fundraising for TF activities is generally the responsibility of the TF.
6. TFs will be approved annually by members at the AGM (May).
7. TFs should ideally be time-limited, with plans which are focussed, relevant, time-limited and state the intended resource commitment of participating TF members and LINK Staff.

19.2 Leadership of a TF

Good leadership is vital for the TF's success. TFs working on long-term tasks should plan succession of convenorship, nominate deputies and ensure smooth transitions. New Conveners should arrange an early induction meeting with LINK Staff.

The Convenor's role is to:

1. chair and lead the TF, ensure it achieves its objectives, keeps to its aims and adheres to its timetable;
2. ensure that TF members (including those Associate Members involved between 2006 and 2008 and Co-optees) are inducted;
3. liaise with TF members to ensure action points are progressed and that all views are taken into account appropriately;
4. submit TF plans, progress reports and delegates' reports in time for LINK cycle of meetings and reporting;
5. actively liaise throughout the year with other TFs and LINK Staff to ensure co-ordination with other LINK areas at an early stage and that planned outputs/meetings/statements are consistent with, and complement, other TF outputs;
6. ensure outputs are consistent with LINK protocols regarding branding, sign-up and Parliamentary procedures; and
7. keep up-to-date email and telephone lists of all TF participants, share updates with LINK Staff and ensure all TF members are circulated with relevant information in good time.

19.3 TF members (and Co-optees).

Any Full MB can sign up to one or more TFs either 'actively' or 'for information only'. Active participation signifies a resource commitment by the MB in terms of developing consensus from a sound knowledge of their organisation's viewpoint, sharing of the TF's workload (including actioning points, administration and convening) and responding promptly and clearly to deadlines.

The Associate MBs involved at 2006 (to 2008) are required to identify the single TF of their choice to LINK though this decision can be reviewed at any time. No new Associate members will join LINK after 1 December 2006.

Each TF may seek the involvement of organisations which are not LINK members (Co-optees, see separate guidance at section 20 below) for the duration of a particular task.

TFs operate on the assumption of trust between members in fulfilling the TF's aims and objectives, in sharing information and agreeing tactics. TF members should have full confidence in each other as individuals representing their organisations, and sometimes representing a rounded LINK perspective when acting as a delegate for the TF. Any difficulties experienced by members with any of these aspects should be discussed at an early stage with the Convenor, Staff or Board. TF activities are subject to LINK's Memorandum and Articles, Operating Principles, Policy on existing Associate Members (from 2006 to 2008) and Co-optees and LINK's Corporate Strategy. In this context Convenors and Members are expected to be familiar with and abide by/apply these.

Any MB (both Full Members and those Associate Members engaged between 2006 and 2008) may sign up to a TF output where the TF wishes to widen the scope of signatories beyond TF members.

19.4 LINK Staff responsibilities:

1. Keep up-to-date lists of current TF Convenors and deputies and update these on the website.
2. Provide a 6-weekly bulletin (to TF Convenors, Board, Staff and Mb main reps on key activities of active TFs to aid co-ordination between TFs and with the broader LINK operations.
3. Organise and prepare for 6-monthly meetings for TFs, MBs, Board and Staff to plan work programme, maintain integration and monitor progress against LINK's objectives.
4. Assist TF liaison where outputs cross several TF interest areas, as resources permit.
5. Report on TF activities for newsletter, funding reports, bulletin, annual report, website and meetings.
6. Liaise regularly with Convenors regarding TF members' contact details and review participation of MBs in all work areas annually.
7. Advise Convenors on relevant LINK protocols.
8. Provide support to certain TFs and/or certain elements of TF work as determined at the 6-monthly planning meetings.

20. MEMBER & CO-OPTEE INVOLVEMENT ON TASK FORCES

20.1 Those Associate Members involved between 2006 and 2008

Although no further organisations will be admitted to this category after 1 December 2006, those Associate Members involved in LINK at 2006 (see organisations listed on LINK website) have until 1 June 2008 to determine whether they wish to remain involved in the network as Full Members. The Associate Members involved at 2006-2008 want only limited engagement

in LINK operations and in recognition of this, pay the associate membership rates determined by the Board in 2004/05.

Until 1 June 2008 existing Associate Members whose subscriptions are up-to-date can:

- participate fully in one LINK TF and receive all related information including LINK bulletin
- participate in LINK's every**one** campaigns
- receive the quarterly newsletter, and parliamentary monitoring relevant to the TF of their choice
- attend the AGM (in a non-voting capacity) and associated site visits
- participate in the annual Congress
- attend wider LINK seminars, conferences and other meetings, on invitation; and
- stand for election as LINK delegate on an external forum relating to the TF in which they are involved

Representatives of Associate Members may not stand for election as a TF Convenor/Depute. Associate members should not be corresponding members of other TFs except insofar as is necessary for TF integration.

TF responsibilities in relation to Associate Members - TF Convenors are asked to help LINK implement the policy for Associate Members engaged between 2006 and 2008, involving these organisations in the TF of their choice, campaigns and Scottish Environment Week but avoiding offering opportunities only intended for 'Full' Members.

20.2 Co-optees

Co-optees are bodies which are not eligible for membership of LINK and are organisations whose participation LINK TFs and campaign groups proactively seek for a specific purpose, or which approach LINK with an interest in participating in a TF or campaign or other project.

If such organisations are eligible for membership they are encouraged to join LINK to pursue engagement, taking advantage of the Introductory Membership (one year) at two-thirds of the subscription rate.

If the organization is not eligible, the LINK group will decide whether its involvement is actively desired and likely to add value. Co-opted organisations should not be involved in more than one LINK work area at a time and their engagement will tend to be time-limited – for the duration of the particular piece of work in which they wished to, or were invited to, engage.

Entitlements for co-optees are that they can:

- participate fully in the relevant TF (and not more than one TF concurrently);
- receive as a member of that TF all related information from LINK staff (including bulletin, relevant parliamentary monitoring, newsletter, etc);
- contribute to and support that TF's position statements, submissions and other outputs; and
- take part in that TF's initiated liaison meetings and events.

Co-optees may not take part in other LINK TFs or initiatives, or stand for election as TF Convenor/Depute or in represent LINK in other ways, as they are likely to be less aware of the wider operations, interests and ethos of LINK at any one time and, in addition, may not necessarily belong to the voluntary sector.

The policy relies on TF Convenors to differentiate between organisations which the TF approaches and those which approach the TF, and to inform potential Co-optees of the policy. The policy also relies on TF Convenors to keep staff informed of all Co-optees so that they can (a) maintain up-to-date e-lists for information purposes and (b) ensure appropriate charging.