



The voice of Scotland's environment community

Annual Report Summary April 2016 to March 2017

Full Annual Report and Accounts [here](#)

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations representing a range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

Member organisations 2016-17

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust	Scottish Campaign for National Parks
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	Marine Conservation Society	Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association
Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group	National Trust for Scotland	Scottish Farming and Wildlife Advisers' Group
Bat Conservation Trust	North East Mountain Trust	Scottish Geodiversity Forum
British Ecological Society – Scottish Policy Group	Nourish Scotland	Scottish Raptor Study Group
Buglife	Planning Democracy	Scottish Wild Land Group
Bumblebee Conservation Trust	Plantlife Scotland	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Butterfly Conservation Scotland	Ramblers Scotland	Soil Association Scotland
Cairngorms Campaign	RSPB Scotland	Trees for Life
Friends of the Earth Scotland	Royal Zoological Society of Scotland	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Froglife Trust (Scotland)	SCAPE Trust	Woodland Trust Scotland
	Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
	Scottish Badgers	WWF Scotland

Strategic Theme 1 - A Sustainable Scotland

As a priority, LINK members sought to **mitigate the risks emanating from the outcome of the EU referendum**. We sought and received **commitments from Scottish Government that Scotland's environmental protections will not be weakened due to Brexit**. With financial support from Government and its agencies we took forward plans to bring the European Environmental Bureau's [conference](#) to Edinburgh in November 2017 - helping Scotland to celebrate its environmental progress and underlining intentions to aim for the highest standards.

We raised concerns and potential solutions on all the legal issues around environmental protection, including ways of holding governments to account; LINK has renewed interest on environmental courts as one way to addressing the Brexit environmental governance gap. We contributed to the Scottish Human Rights Consortium [Rights at Risk](#) report, published in March 2017.

We worked to ensure that strong management measures are agreed for inshore **Marine Protected Areas** that will help to bring about healthy marine ecosystems for the benefit of nature and communities. We celebrated good progress for the marine environment with designation of a Special Area of Conservation to protect **harbour porpoises** – a first for the UK and the largest such area in Europe.



We relaunched our **Species Champions** initiative and **recruited over 90 MSPs** by the end of March. **Species Champion** MSPs embrace their chosen species - from plants and insects to eagles and whales - as valued parts of their constituencies, and want them to flourish. Our challenge to Species Champion MSPs is to work for their species but also deliver better policies for Scotland's biodiversity as a whole.



Strategic Theme 2 - A Strong Voice for Scotland's Environment



LINK PRESIDENT JOYCE McMILLAN (4TH LEFT) CHAIRED THE ENVIRONMENTAL HUSTINGS, APRIL 2016

We published our **manifesto** for Scotland's May 2016 elections and held a national environmental hustings. We were pleased to have some take up of our ideas by the political parties.

The **State of Nature Scotland** report showed very worrying declines across many species and habitats. LINK has helped develop the concept of a **National Ecological Network** for Scotland, a tried and tested way to factor in environmental development alongside social and economic development.

We were part of the successful to keep the **Birds and Habitats Directives intact**, working with others through the Environment Links UK, and pan-European networks. As the UK leaves the EU, the international standards these Directives represent provide the key baseline for future UK and Scottish ambitions.

Our **Flourishing Scotland** project was completed in Spring 2017. This 3-year programme has been hugely influential by bringing together many different interests calling for a more **environmentally sustainable, socially just, low carbon economy**. We produced joint briefings on the National Performance Framework, gave evidence to Parliament's scrutiny of the budget and held a major conference, with support from RSA Scotland and the David Hume Institute, on what needs to change for Scotland to become a low carbon economy.



SEA SCOTLAND DELEGATES 2016

The inaugural **Sea Scotland conference** was held in Dundee coordinated by LINK's Save Scottish Seas project. It brought many sectors together, helping to keep up momentum for Scotland's new system of Marine Planning to deliver ecosystem recovery alongside economic and social development. The report **Living with the Seas** which outlines a vision for marine planning to take a lead role in environmental recovery was published.

Across all of our work we promoted the multiple benefits of applying **sustainable development principles** to developing agendas on land reform, forestry, marine and land use planning. We promoted a culture of public goods for public funding, setting out our vision for a healthy and populated rural environment post CAP.

The **Members' Congress** in November focussed on the implications of Brexit for the environment, alongside progressive discussions with other sectors on participative democracy, health, and decent living.

A seminar for members and practitioners reviewed **access to justice** and the need for an environmental law centre for Scotland.



CLAUDIA BALDACCHINO

Our **10th Scottish Environment Week** was themed around **Environmental Futures**. We joined forces with some of Scotland's artists and poets, harnessing their passion for the arts to highlight environmental concerns in new ways. We invited visual art students to design posters about issues that mattered to them. The shortlist of eighteen were exhibited at the SEW midweek reception in the Parliament's Garden Lobby. Graeme Dey, ECCLR Convenor, and Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham were still picking their favourites during their speeches. These posters were the joint winners. You can see the shortlisted entries [here](#).



ANGEL NERVIDA



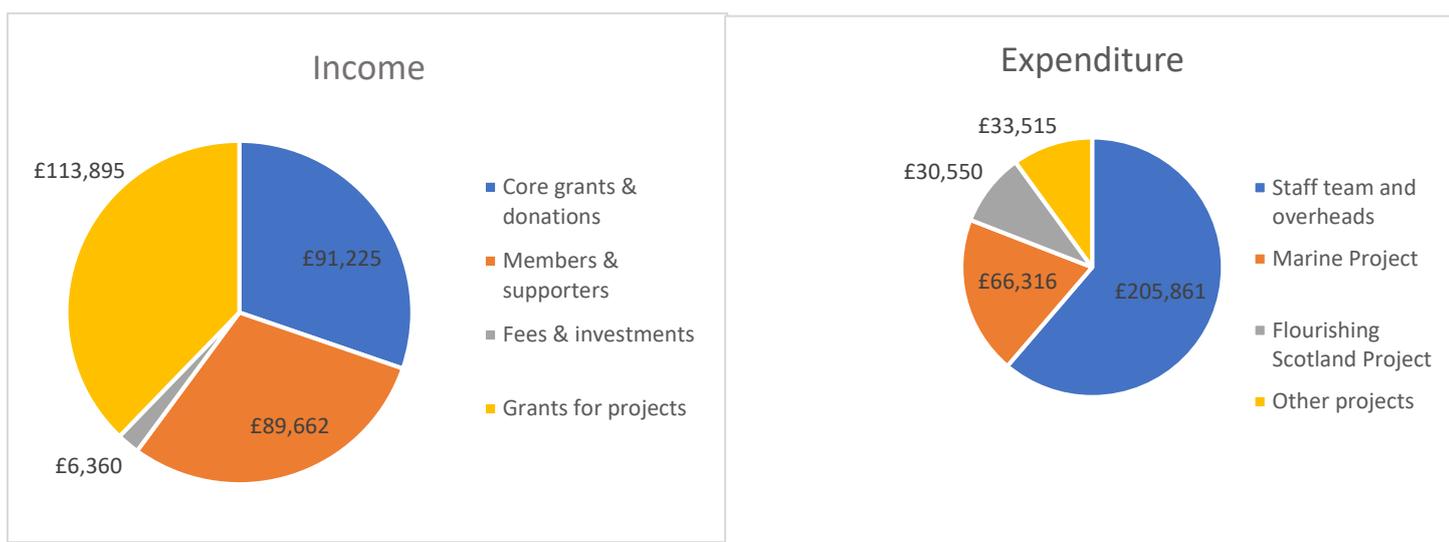
Members at the SEW reception in March 2017. Host Graeme Dey is with Joyce McMillan in the foreground.

Strategic Theme 3 - An Effective, Efficient & Accountable Network

37 member bodies took part in **5 Strategic Groups**, **10 Subgroups** and Forums, meeting quarterly. **95% of members** were actively engaged in at least one **work area**. The work programme was supported by **3.9** Full-time equivalent core staff, **2.6** FTE project Officers, and **1** part-time paid Intern, with support from our **Honorary President** and network of **Honorary Fellows**. **Voluntary engagement** within the network equalled **1,382** days' work - **£391,375** in financial terms. LINK was engaged across **44** external stakeholder forums, produced **52** consultation responses, briefings, reports, position papers, and media releases, as well as oral evidence to Parliamentary Committees. Oversight was provided by **10 Trustees**. **6 Organisational Supporters** received the highly-regarded Advocacy Monitoring weekly updates and attended events. **2** general meetings and **2** topic seminars were held for discussion and integration of effort across all work areas. **2** one-day **conferences** were held. Staff and members took part in the **Environment Links UK** gathering in Cardiff.

Groups and Subgroups plans, reports and evaluations informed the network on progress on our strategic objectives. The AGM in November agreed subscription rates and elected honorary officers. Regular liaison meetings were held with Ministers, politicians of all parties, and with colleagues in the statutory agencies and civil society organisations. LINK's Training day, Members' Congress, Scottish Environment Week events and Festive Reception were popular and useful. Investment in fundraising delivered significant new funding for the years ahead. LINK published its eighth Carbon Accounts. Organisational policies and the staff handbook were updated.

Financial Summary



LINK's work is underpinned by the subscription income and voluntary time from **member organisations**, which together account for 68% of all contributions.

Thanks to LINK's key core funders - **Scottish Natural Heritage** and **Scottish Government** and project funders **WWF UK**, **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation** and **Friends Provident Foundation**.



You will find the full Annual Report and Accounts on [our website](#)