

Scottish Environment LINK¹

Annual Report

June 1998 - May 1999

& Summary of Accounts

1 April 1998 – 31 March 1999

¹ Formerly Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link

Scottish Environment LINK – Voluntary organisations working together to care for and improve Scotland's heritage for people and nature.

LINK is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity. Its Scottish Charity Number is SCN 000296.

LINK's core work is supported by grants from WWF Scotland, the Scottish Office (Rural Strategic Support Fund), Scottish Natural Heritage and the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, as well as subscriptions from Member Bodies, Supporters and Subscribers. Donations from other sources such as charitable trusts, local authorities and private organisations are sought for project work.

Honorary Officers and Staff during 1998-99 were:

President	Professor Seaton Baxter
Chair	Michael M Scott
Vice Chair	Vacant
Treasurer	Walter Simpson
Manager	Jen Anderson
Administration & Policy Support	Alice Walsh
Administration & Policy Support	Nancy Nairn / Melanie Nicoll
Administrative Support	Rosalind Pearson
Parliamentary Officer	Elsbeth Alexandra
LEARN Officer	Ruth Anderson

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Chair's Foreword

"The Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March 1707, is hereby reconvened."

With those historic words, uttered by Winnie Ewing in the temporary Parliament building on the Mound in Edinburgh on May 12th 1999, the nature of Scotland underwent a profound and fundamental change. So – only marginally less significantly – did the nature of Scottish LINK. We now have a vital new opportunity to ensure that the environment is placed right at the heart of the governance (and hopefully the government) of Scotland.

It will not be easy. All the member bodies within LINK will need to learn to work in new ways, to forge new partnerships, to cast off old presumptions, and to perfect new arguments to ensure that our messages about sustainability, biodiversity and environmental stewardship are understood and appreciated by a group of MSPs who are primarily motivated by the desire to bring social and economic change to Scotland. We have an important challenge in convincing them that the environment must be an equally sturdy fixture in this "three-legged stool" of development.

Recognising the challenges and opportunities that the new Parliament would bring, LINK's efforts over the last year have been largely concentrated on reviewing our structure and repositioning our policies to ensure that we are best positioned for the tasks ahead. I want to pay full tribute to the advice and guidance of the LINK Scottish Parliamentary Group (SPG) and of our enthusiastic Parliamentary Officer, Elspeth Alexandra, in taking this forward. They identified the need for a short, snappy briefing of the environmental aspirations LINK members have for the Parliament, which was published as *The Scottish Parliament and a Sustainable Scotland*. They also saw the need for an informative overview of the environment movement in Scotland, and it was a great pleasure to attend the breakfast launch of this invaluable document, called *A Vital*

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Link, just before the last-ever meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee in March. It was immensely encouraging to welcome to the launch, amongst other aspiring MSPs, the future Transport and Environment Minister in the Scottish Executive, Sarah Boyack, and the future Finance Minister, Jack McConnell. I hope their participation in the launch presages good working relationships with these and other ministers in the future.

One other recommendation of the SPG led to great deal of soul-searching amongst our members. To emphasise the relevance of LINK's work to the agenda of the Parliament, they suggested that we should change our name to Scottish Environment Link. There was some concern about this proposal, not least because the term 'environment' has been hijacked in recent years to take on a much more limited definition relating to human health and well-being. Perhaps, however, that makes it even more important for us to reclaim the term 'environment' as our territory, in its true, holistic definition. Certainly, the membership agreed to the change of name at a Special General Meeting in April.

I am sure that, as Scottish Environment LINK, we are in a much stronger position when it comes to dealing with politicians and other interest groups, but I want to emphasise that it does not represent any repositioning of LINK's activities. Rather, it reflects the broadening of interests of our membership that has already happened, not least as new members have joined. We are already about much more than "just" wildlife and countryside, although these will remain absolutely at the core of our work.

As always, this annual report shows that a huge amount of other activity has gone on this year, none of which would have been possible without our dedicated and hardworking staff under the wise leadership of Jen Anderson. However, as this is my final Annual Report as Chair, I want to end with a personal reflection. In the 10 years that I have been part of LINK, it has always been a pleasure to come together with representatives of such a diverse range of