

The LINK Newsletter

Scottish Environment LINK update
Summer 2014



LINK's Referendum Challenge debate

Representatives from the Yes Scotland and Better Together campaigns joined a capacity crowd of LINK members and guests for a debate about how the constitutional arrangements each support could improve Scotland's environmental sustainability. LINK's *Referendum Challenge* to the campaigns back in 2012 sought to keep a focus on the crucial environmental issues facing Scotland, which need, as always, political will and cross-sectoral engagement to move Scotland onto a better track. The debate was very civilised with well-considered discussion mainly about the environmental, rather than constitutional issues.

LINK is grateful to Edinburgh University for providing the venue and to those who submitted their questions in advance and from the floor. Rob Edwards ably chaired the discussion. Our thanks go to Clare Baker (Lab) MSP and Tavish Scott (Lib Dem) MSP who spoke for Better Together and to Councillor Maggie Chapman (Greens) and Richard Lochhead (SNP) MSP who spoke for Yes Scotland.

LINK is pleased to have contributed on issues of substance about the kind of Scotland we want. Whatever the outcome in September, LINK will continue to make the case for a sustainable Scotland.

Species Champions

Half of Scotland's MSPs have become a Species Champion and this LINK Wildlife Forum initiative is now just over one year old. We are delighted it reached the shortlist of 5 'Cracking Campaigns' put to public vote for the SCVO Charity Awards.

MSPs with an environmental brief have commented on increased interest in their species by their fellow MSPs across all political parties, demonstrated by a

rise in related Parliamentary Questions and the Members Debate about the Freshwater Pearl Mussel organised by Mary Scanlon MSP. The Forum is currently fundraising for additional LINK capacity to develop the initiative.

Hill Tracks Campaign

Since publication of [Track Changes](#) in November 2013 the LINK campaign group has responded to feedback and kept abreast of political developments. Members have met and corresponded with MSPs, have liaised with officials, and answered the detailed criticism of the LINK report from Scottish Land and Estates in its own report [The Way Ahead for Constructed Private Tracks](#). LINK's main conclusion from reading SLE's document is that the introduction of planning control over track construction will prove readily acceptable to all those landowners who are sensitive to landscape and other environmental considerations, will not unduly burden planning authorities, and will be welcomed by the majority of public opinion. The alternative is endless controversy with those landowners who disregard public opinion and damage the reputation of the landowning and land managing community as a whole. This has been the situation over the last 50 years and it is time it was brought to an end, if Scotland is to live up to the democratic standards that we aspire to in the 21st century. LINK now awaits the Minister's decision and will be keeping up the pressure in the meantime.

Calum Brown (SWLG) author of the LINK report sets the issue in the wider context for LINK's [Friends of the Scotsman](#) slot on 4 June.

Scotland's Adaptation Programme

The first [Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme](#) was published on 29 May, setting out the policies and proposals Government believes are

needed to help Scotland adapt to huge changes in our climate. LINK's Climate Adaptation Taskforce (TF) has contributed strongly to the development of the Scottish Adaptation Programme (SAP) with the aim of enabling Scotland's biodiversity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This workstream has complemented the wider Stop Climate Chaos Coalition's work on mitigation targets. LINK welcomed the SAP as a springboard to greater action on making Scotland more resilient to climate impacts. It contains many actions to improve the environment and help wildlife. However it must kick start a much greater profile for climate adaptation and urgent action to respond to the impacts of climate change within Government and across wider society.

Scotland's climate is predicted to change, with drier summers, wetter winters, more intense storms, flooding and unseasonal weather affecting our way of life, our economy and our environment. Wildlife is already feeling the impacts. Seabirds are struggling as oceans warm and the foodchain is affected. The low-lying, flower-rich, coastal machair of the Western Isles is under threat from sea-level rise.

To reduce these impacts Scotland has targets to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases set out in the 2009 Climate Change (Scotland) Act. Alongside adaptation, Scotland must do more to reduce emissions and meet its mitigation targets, thereby reducing climate impacts.

The actions outlined in the SAP aim to increase resilience to the inevitable impacts of climate change. It covers the next 5 years and responds to risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2012. Working with the natural environment requires a vision over decades rather than a few years so we need to invest for the long-term in nature and our green assets with plans that respond to the needs at hand and to new research as it arises. The Programme must be much more than a fixed set of measures which tweak existing Government policies. Rather, it must be just one part of Government's proactive approach on climate impacts.

Nature is not able to respond to the rapid speed of change so Scotland must do all it can to protect our environment and create habitats for nature. Working with nature can provide positive solutions to

problems we face. Restoration of habitats such as river floodplains, coastal saltmarsh and peatlands in the hills can help prevent homes and businesses being flooded. Trees and attractive greenspaces can keep towns and cities cool and give us a feeling of wellbeing.

The Climate Adaptation TF will shortly pass the baton to other TFs to monitor progress and contribute where opportunities arise. We are very grateful to Jim Densham (RSPB) for his committed leadership of the TF over the last 3 years.

Marine

As many as 33 new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are due for designation at the end of July. The sites would form part of Scotland's emerging MPA network – designed to tackle the sad decline of biodiversity at sea. However, the Marine TF has concerns that Scotland's network may fall into the same trap as many MPA initiatives in other jurisdictions: the spectre of 'paper parks.' Specifically, the management measures for the network as currently proposed may fall well short of the duties for ecosystem recovery laid down in the Marine (Scotland) Act.

SNH/JNCC advice in 2012 stated that all but a couple of the MPAs would require management just to achieve an objective of 'conserve'. However, draft management measures outlined in February for 9 of the sites, as part of a Government study on fisheries displacement, propose few new restrictions on mobile fishing activity and seem to indicate a lack of ambition for 'feature' recovery. The TF hopes this does not reflect the standard on which the statutory management measures for the MPAs will be based and is currently advocating to avoid this potential pitfall in the way MPAs are implemented. This remains a critical time for marine conservation in Scotland.

RSPB Scotland has also initiated a [campaign](#) for "7 Protected Areas for Seabirds at Sea" – urging the Scottish Government to complement its current nature conservation plans with a full network of designated sites for seabirds at sea.

You can follow [@SaveScotsSeas](#) to get involved with the next stage of the campaign.

News and Views from Members

The next five pages contain articles from LINK member bodies and guest contributors

PAW Partner of the Year Award for Ian Hutchison, Scottish Badgers

Eddie Palmer, Scottish Badgers



Ian Hutchison

Each year the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) seeks nominations from across the UK for the person who has made an outstanding contribution to supporting the work of the statutory enforcement agencies in preventing and prosecuting wildlife crime. Scottish Badgers is delighted to

announce that the winner for 2013 is Ian Hutchison, the Species Protection Officer. Ian has provided leadership and tireless dedication to fighting badger crime over many years and this recognition is well-deserved.

The judges particularly recognised Ian's work over and above what is expected of him in his paid time of just 8 hours a week for Scottish Badgers and the same for the Badger Trust for England and Wales.

Of the many initiatives and contributions which were cited, the judges particularly noted Ian Hutchison's contribution to the following:

- *Operation Meles*, an intelligence led operation targeting badger persecution as part of the UK Wildlife Crime Priorities, for which he is crime prevention lead. He is pioneering information-gathering techniques and maintaining the UK Badger Persecution Data set
- Working closely with many other partner organisations in tackling the ever present threat to badger from criminal activity
- Serving as an expert witness in enforcement, a key and skilled role which is time consuming and often hazardous

- Carrying out training of expert volunteers who are an essential component of NGOs
- Contributing copy to newsletters and bulletins, and engaging with the media, a particularly awkward role during this period
- Attending meetings throughout the UK promoting the work and role of PAW.

The collective dedication of Scottish Badgers was also noted, and SB is proud to support Ian and proud of his excellent reputation. Scottish Badgers receives no government funding and relies totally on donations and grants, so we are constantly striving to secure more funding to support and extend Ian's worthy work protecting Scotland's badgers from criminal activities.

Ian will be presented with the award at the conference of the UK Environmental Law Association in Edinburgh on the afternoon of Saturday 21st June 2014 by the sponsors, Browne Jacobson solicitors.

Ian is a retired police officer who worked for 33 years as a Military Policeman and subsequently as a constable with Tayside Police in Scotland during which he worked part time as a wildlife liaison officer covering the glens of Angus on Operation Easter. On retiring he took to badger work, and for over 10 years he has represented Scottish Badgers as their Species Protection Officer. He has carried out work for the Badger Trust for the past 3 years which has meant travelling throughout the UK promoting awareness of badger crime.

Froglife's Scottish Dragon Finder

Vicky Ogilvy, Froglife



Froglife has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to run Scottish Dragon Finder over the next 4.5 years. This reptile and amphibian

conservation project will reach out to audiences all across Scotland, from the urban jungles of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the wilderness of Orkney and the Highlands. Through the project we will get more people involved in conservation, raise awareness and educate people, create habitats and build up species records for Scotland. Our wide range of activities will allow us to reach out to audiences from all walks of life, whatever their level of experience or current interest in conservation.



Young Dragon Finders © Froglife

Dragons in your Garden workshops are designed to show people how to garden in a wildlife-friendly way, and we have teamed up with Trellis Scotland to run workshops within therapeutic gardens. Through our Dragon Tails activities we'll be working with schools and youth groups, teaching children about reptiles and amphibians, and showing them what they can do for wildlife. We're running drama workshops with youth groups and coordinating a script writing competition, which will enable us to engage with young people in an alternative and memorable way. Dragons on the Hills training courses are aimed specifically at outdoor enthusiasts, showing them how to identify and record reptiles and amphibians whilst they're out and about, thus building up species records in rural parts of Scotland. Dragons on the Move is our travelling roadshow of events delivered across the whole country, which will raise awareness of conservation issues and give people the opportunity to learn more about reptiles and amphibians. Habitat creation and restoration is a major part of this project, and we're working at 25 locations all over Scotland. These projects will include training for local communities in species identification and surveying, as well as long-term habitat management. Finally, we will be offering two paid 18-

month traineeships to give people a chance to pursue a career in conservation. We'll be encouraging all of the groups that we work with to use Froglife's free Dragon Finder app (for iPhone and Android) to identify and record species, again helping us to build up species data.

For more information about the project, please take a look at the Scotland pages on the Dragon Finder website: www.froglife.org/dragonfinder or contact Dr Vicky Ogilvy victoria.ogilvy@froglife.org

Scotland's Online Environment Gateway

Eleanor MacLeod, SEWeb



What is Scotland's Environment Website?

Scotland's Environment Website is the gateway to everything you want to know about our environment. On the site you can get interactive with data tools, search areas of interest with map tools and search youth competition entries in our brand new 'Get involved' section. You are invited to visit the site at www.environment.scotland.gov.uk, like us on facebook, follow us on twitter and get engaged with Scotland's environment.

What are the highlights from Scotland's Environment Web this year?

The Project Finder is a key highlight of our work to date. This new online 'matchmaking' service for organisations running projects and for prospective volunteers will be launched towards the middle of June. Organisations will be able to create a profile on the system, giving information on who they are and what they do. Potential volunteers can then browse the list of registered projects and filter according to certain criteria. The organisation will then get in touch to discuss the project in more detail and make arrangements for them to take part. This tool will be useful to volunteers and organisations now and in the future.

Other useful tools include the improved Map View, the Land Information Search map tool, a list of recommended environmental Mobile Apps and useful Resources, and 'Discover Data' tools for Scottish

Climate Projections, Household Waste and Water Quality.

What's in this for me?

There is something for everyone with Scotland's Environment Web! Visit the website on a regular basis to find out more and be inspired to get involved with your environment. In June you will be able to access a new and improved site and [Contact Us](#) to give your feedback.



Citizen scientists © TCV

BES Scottish Policy Group

The What and the Why...

Rob Brooker, BES SPG



British Ecological Society

The British Ecological Society (BES) Scottish Policy Group (SPG) has recently joined LINK, and we're very pleased to take this opportunity to let you know a bit more about us.

The BES was established in 1913. It is the UK's learned society for ecologists, but with a very strong international membership and outlook. The BES' many activities include the publication of a range of scientific literature, organisation and sponsorship of meetings, education work, and the funding of grant schemes. Here, however, we're focussing in particular on the Society's policy work. The BES Policy Team works with its Public and Policy Committee and Press Officer to communicate ecological science to policy makers and the public. As an independent learned society - and a leading voice for ecologists in the UK - the BES and its members can play a significant role in

informing sound decision-making by engaging in the policy making process.

However, with the devolution of some key areas of legislation (for example biodiversity legislation) this task has become a little trickier. Good as they are the BES policy team are only human, and keeping track of policy developments in relevant areas across the UK is now a very big task. To stay up to speed and to fully represent the 500 BES members in Scotland, the BES Public and Policy Committee decided in 2011 to establish the Scottish Policy Group.

The SPG is run entirely by volunteer BES members, but with support from the BES Policy Team (in particular Cheryl Pilbeam and Ceri Margerison at BES HQ). Our aims are to help BES members in Scotland understand the Scottish policy-making process and context, to help Scottish policy-makers understand the range of ecological research being carried out in Scotland, develop strong links between scientists and policy-makers across Scotland, and to try to make the best ecological science available to policy decision making in Scotland. Being part of a learned society, we're very much focussed on promoting the scientific evidence base in decision making. We differ a bit from other SE LINK members as we are not an environmental campaigning organisation, although it is probably fair to say that the BES' membership is strongly conservation minded.

The SPG is experimental and evolving – we're still finding our feet and continuously trying to adapt and work out how to operate to deliver the best for the BES and its membership in Scotland. We're running a range of activities over the coming year, including co-sponsoring the SBS Science and Technical Group biodiversity science conference (2-3 October, Edinburgh), and a policy training day immediately beforehand (2nd October, also in Edinburgh).

We're also working hard to engage more with LINK. So if you see us at one of this year's LINK events, do please come and say hello. And if you'd like to know more about the SPG please contact Rob Brooker (rob.brooker@hutton.ac.uk) or Cheryl Pilbeam (cheryl@britishecologicalsociety.org).

SCAPE Trust joins LINK

Joanna Hambly, SCAPE Trust



The SCAPE Trust is a registered charity which advocates better understanding and stewardship of Scotland's coastal cultural heritage. Established in 2001, SCAPE is managed by a distinguished board of directors who include specialists in environmental history, coastal geomorphology, natural heritage, climate change and archaeology (terrestrial and maritime).

SCAPE works nationally with communities and organisations to initiate, develop and carry out projects that research, rescue and interpret the cultural heritage of Scotland's coast. The outcome of this work builds capacity for local stewardship, brings in new resources, informs policy, and ultimately improves the knowledge base and management of coastal heritage in Scotland.



Community survey of Iron Age houses on a North Uist beach

SCAPE's activities are focused in three main areas:

Citizen science archaeology, implemented through our Scotland's Coastal Heritage at Risk Project, where volunteers are trained to carry out condition surveys and update our national database of coastal heritage sites;

Community research, rescue and interpretation projects at significant sites threatened with loss or damage as a result of coastal erosion;

Advocacy, through presentations, publications, networking and partnerships, and by undertaking research and analytical work.

You can find out more about SCAPE and our activities at www.ssharp.co.uk and www.scapetrust.org

NTS Climate Challenge

Action Plan

Anna Scott, National Trust for Scotland



The National Trust for Scotland

So we've written our Climate Change Action Plan for the next 4 years and set targets to reduce carbon emissions, surely that's enough to make sure we are well on our way to a cleaner, greener organisation?



The NTS LED lightbulb, developed specifically for the Trust to meet our conservation requirements and save energy

Well, despite already having Senior Management, staff and volunteer commitment, as you've probably guessed, it was never going to be as easy as that.

The biggest challenge so far has been finding an effective

way to measure our emissions and associated costs by calculating our carbon footprint. With nearly 400 electricity and gas meters and an expenses system that doesn't record sufficient information to monitor heating fuels, this has been an extremely time-consuming task. We've had to trawl through meter readings, old invoices and our finance records and that's just energy - travel, waste, water and even carbon stored in our peatland have also been added to our footprint and at times we wondered if it was really worth it. However, with the help of a wonderful volunteer and smart meters being installed, we now have some systems in place to speed up the process and are convinced that monitoring and measuring our emissions is worthwhile. Analysing the data has already highlighted some quick win cost savings through incorrect readings and possible water leaks. By ranking meter consumption per property, we even discovered that a bothy was using almost as much electricity as the Castle on the same estate, purely because the heaters were left on. The carbon footprint information will also be invaluable in driving change and motivating staff as we report on our progress towards meeting reduction targets.

We're one year into our action plan now and eagerly awaiting the carbon footprint results to see if we are

on target. The first year focussed primarily on gathering monitoring data, establishing a baseline regarding our current environmental impact and looking at environmental improvement opportunities for our visitor Properties. As we move into year 2, the focus is on implementing improvement measures at Properties, staff awareness and training and business travel. Resources and funding remain an issue (particularly as despite being a charity, we are not an SME and hence miss out on a lot of key funding support). Everyone remains committed to making improvements though and that has to put us in a strong position.

If you would like more information about our Climate Change Action Plan please contact Anna Scott, Environment Adviser (amscott@nts.org.uk). More information on our Action Plan can also be found at www.nts.org.uk/Downloads/policy/ntsclimatechange.pdf

Turning the tide on litter

Calum Duncan, Marine Conservation Society



Recent Marine Conservation Society (MCS) litter surveys at Cramond, Blackness and Queensferry in April revealed a high tideline of wipes and sanitary products tangled in seaweed on these otherwise beautiful beaches. In fact, our MCS Beachwatch Big Weekend Report for September 2013 revealed that of the 1.9 pieces of rubbish recorded per metre of 45 surveyed Scottish beaches, over 7% were items we put down the loo but shouldn't (cotton bud sticks, sanitary towels, wipes, nappies and the like), higher than the UK average 4.3%. Whilst Scotland fared a bit better overall, the UK averaged 2.3 items/m, just under two items of rubbish for every metre of surveyed beach is every bit as disappointing as just over two!

How to turn this revolting tide of rubbish? Funding awareness campaigns to 'think before you flush' and pushing for appropriate materials and labelling of sanitary products are just two of many suggested actions we would like to see in the impending Marine Litter Strategy. Committed to by the Scottish Government in December 2009, we have welcomed involvement in scoping work but urgently need to see

the strategy and action flowing from it. Other major sources of litter that need concerted action to address include the public (snack and carrier bags, cans, bottle tops) at 33.8%, fishing activity (such as nets and fish boxes) 8.8% and shipping (barrels, drums and wooden pallets) 7%.

Innovative and easy-to-implement measures include reverse-vending of drink cans and bottles that has seen such dramatic reductions on beaches in Germany and South Australia and establishing 'No-special-fee' reception facilities and compulsory discharging of waste in port for all vessels, including fishing boats which currently have to pay.

We were therefore also pleased to see a charge on single-use carrier bags will be introduced across Scotland from 20th October. In the Scottish Parliament in May, MSPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of going ahead with a 5p charge on single use carrier bags of any material, not just plastic, provided by retailers to shoppers. The net proceeds will be expected to be given to good causes, according to the Scottish Government.



Beach clean at Cramond © Calum Duncan

Though these developments are welcome, much work needs to be done to turn the tide, protect sealife from plastic debris and deliver the zero waste Scotland we all aspire to. Until then, why not help gather further evidence for change by volunteering for the MCS Beachwatch Big Weekend from 19-22 September 2014. We are aiming to make it our biggest ever across Britain and Northern Ireland with 10,000 participants. Register at a beach near you here: www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch/.

More Network News

Agriculture: LINK's response to the [SRDP 2014-20 Stage 2: Final Proposals](#) was supported by 12 member bodies within the Agriculture and Woodlands Taskforces (TF). The response recognises the efforts made to improve upon the current scheme and welcomes efforts to develop targeting of the Agri-Environment-Climate (AEC) scheme and the Forestry Grants Scheme to support species and habitats. Deep concerns remain about the overall budget and its capacity to meet all the intended national objectives and obligations. Transferral of just 9.5% rather than the possible 15% permitted under CAP rules means the SRDP budget is c.£220m lower than it could have been. Safeguard of Heritage appears to be left out, as are proposals to enhance public access to agricultural land. LINK is critical of the largest share of the SRDP budget being allocated to the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme which delivers significantly less public benefit. LINK questions the adequacy of monitoring arrangements to ensure that the proposed measures are working and will raise this with the Minister.

The TF has also pressed for public subsidy to be better targeted towards public benefits in its response to the consultation on [Future CAP Direct Payments in Scotland from 2015](#).

Economics As the Roundtable reviewing Scotland's National Performance Framework continues discussions, LINK, with a broad range of civic society partners including SCVO and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, has collaborated on a [briefing](#) as a contribution to the review. There is a very clear consensus across civil society that if Scotland is to flourish, a far greater emphasis must be given to sustainability, defined within the internationally recognised terms of the original Brundtland Report. Deborah Long represents LINK on the Roundtable. Her recent [article](#) for LINK's Friends of the Scotsman slot explored the issues and opportunities.

Phoebe Cochrane, Sustainable Economics policy officer, has been preparing materials for LINK

members to use in their work and to inform the future direction of the Flourishing Scotland project.

Planning LINK's Planning TF awaits, with some expectation, the publication of the Scottish Planning Policy and the National Planning Framework 3 on 23 June. LINK recognises that the production of these two policy documents represents one of the most significant opportunities for Scottish Ministers to set out their vision for the sort of place they want Scotland to become.

The TF input to the SPP and NPF3 advocates for sustainable development principles to be at the heart of our planning system. Scotland could be an international exemplar in planning for sustainable development, using the planning and other regulatory systems to ensure not only that the right development happens in the right place but that damaging development is also quickly stopped or discouraged from being proposed in the first place.

Welcome to LINK's newest Organisational Supporter [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#), and to LINK's first Business Supporter [Scottish Power](#). We look forward to their participation at the Members Congress on 27 November and other network events. The SCAPE Trust (see page 6) has also joined LINK from April.

Meetings ahead include the regular liaison meeting with the Environment Minister on 10 June where Marine, Biodiversity and SRDP will be discussed. Meetings with the new SNH Chair, and with SEPA Chair and senior staff are scheduled for July.

Farewell to Lisa Webb who has left RSPB. Lisa convened LINK's Freshwater TF for several years with skilful dedication. Thanks also to Paul Ritchie, LINK Treasurer, stepping down after 4 years at the financial helm and a warm welcome to Tim Ambrose, who has volunteered his services, succeeding Paul.

For Further Information *about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit www.scotlink.org. Task Force outputs are listed under 'Work Areas'. Contact: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road Perth PH2 8BD. Tel: 01738 630804 Email: information@scotlink.org*