

The LINK Newsletter



Scottish Environment LINK update Autumn 2014

LINK Members' Congress

Environmental Development: Integrating, Mainstreaming, Raising the Game is the title of the 2014 Annual Congress, to be held once again in Birnam, Perthshire. Professor Aubrey Manning, our keynote speaker, will set Scotland's environment in the global context, followed by LINK speakers introducing the key issues for Scotland's Uplands, Lowlands, Seas and Urban areas. Landscape-scale conservation, ecological restoration, re-wilding, green infrastructure, living cities, ecosystem health - environmentalists have, for a long time understood that the delivery of environmental 'goods' requires work at large spatial scales. They have made the case for, and put their backs into, ambitious schemes that extend well beyond protected sites and reserves.

This work can take decades to bear fruit. It needs deep, cross-sectoral integration, inter-generational commitment and popular support. There are some wonderful initiatives happening in Scotland, and there is explicit national ambition and vision for improving our environment expressed, for example, in Scotland's Marine Act and its Biodiversity Strategy. Yet there remains neither the necessary funding support in public subsidy mechanisms, nor the sustained political will, to challenge 'business as usual' development, which is so often incompatible with these visionary aims.

The aim of this event is to bring together new thinking and innovative ideas to help bring about better integration of LINK partners' environmental vision with wider society. As well as member bodies, we warmly welcome people outside our network with a similar interest in improving long term sustainability of Scotland's environment. The programme and booking form are on the [website](#), or contact alice@scotlink.org for details.

Thanks to the Crown Estate for sponsorship, which helps to keep costs for delegates at last year's rates.

Joint Links Conference

Scotland is hosting the biennial conference of the UK Link organisations on 22/23 October in Glasgow, with over 50 delegates attending from member bodies, the four Link secretariats and Links' Chairs. This conference will explore ways in which members can effectively work on issues affecting all four countries in an increasingly devolved UK, a changing European context and continuing economic pressures. Delegates will also share information about environmental issues and concerns, different approaches and ways in which we can encourage environmental care across the four countries. We are grateful to WWF UK for generously supporting the event and Links liaison generally.

Changes at the top



Dave Morris's retirement is a significant moment for LINK as well as for Ramblers Scotland. Ramblers, with Dave leading, was one of the 14 founder members in the 1980s, where

organisations covering widely different environmental agendas recognised the common overarching interest and founded LINK as their forum for information exchange, discussion and value-added action. Aside from his leadership during the run-up to and passage of Scotland's Access legislation, Dave was at the core of the [LINK Quarry Group's](#) efforts against plans for a superquarry on Harris; was a key player in the fight to stop the Cairngorm Mountain Railway on nature conservation and landscape grounds; and for many

years was LINK's representative on the IUCN UK's steering group. Lang may his lum reek.

Deborah Long, LINK's Chair for the last four years, and vice-chair for another four before that, will stand down as a trustee at the AGM in November. Deborah is now away in Nepal for several months on a sabbatical, so she chaired her final board and network meetings in August. She was thanked for the tremendous job she has done for LINK and presented with several maps of Nepal and vouchers for outdoor equipment, for which she thanked the many colleagues who contributed. Deborah has enjoyed her time chairing the 'herd of cats' that is LINK, and we look forward to her return at the year end to continue in her other LINK role co-convening the Wildlife Forum and contributing to other LINK task forces.

Helen Todd has stepped up to the Chair since Deborah's departure in September. Previously Vice-Chair, she has been a trustee for four years, although she has been involved in the network in various capacities for over a decade. Helen also convenes LINK's Land Group, and co-convenes the Hill Tracks Campaign. Simon Jones, who joined the Board two years ago, has taken on the role of Vice-Chair.



Deborah on her way – pic from her [Nepal blog](#)

Hill Tracks Campaign

Following the Government's announcement in August on the introduction of a prior notification and approval process for hill track construction for agriculture and forestry purposes, Helen Todd, co-convenor of LINK's Hill Track campaign, commented in a press release that LINK and its members will continue to monitor the construction of hill tracks across the Scottish landscape, and to campaign for these tracks to be brought fully into the planning system.

While falling short of what LINK has campaigned for, the group is pleased that the Minister has listened to NGO concerns and recognises that this new process is a step in the right direction. However LINK does foresee serious problems in implementing this complex set of arrangements and in enforcing any conditions set by planning authorities. LINK has [written](#) to the Minister outlining some concerns and making positive suggestions, and has requested three seats on the Advisory Group drawing up the guidance to accompany this change to the General Permitted Development Order.

In the meantime, information gathering will continue and photographs can be submitted to the campaign via the LINK [website](#).

Flourishing Scotland Project

Phoebe Cochrane, LINK's Sustainable Economics Policy Officer, is working with the Economics task force (TF) preparing a workshop for all members next February on the Ecosystem Services Framework and Natural Capital Accounting. The TF has also been exploring ideas on the Circular Economy in which the Scottish Government has shown significant recent interest. Results from the Government's Programme of Evidence Gathering and Engagement in relation is due to report in December. The National Performance Framework (NPF) Roundtable, on which LINK is represented, is expected to reconvene and will report in due course. In the meantime the TF continues discussions about how the framework is used as a tool for scrutiny, and how it could be improved, and is preparing for fringe events at the Green and SNP party conferences, focussing on Beyond GDP and reform of the NPF.

News and Views from Members

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

Inspiration from Appalachia
Linda Dunion, Fred Edwards Trust



Ninian Stuart & Pam McMichael at Falkland Estate, photo Linda Dunion

August saw the latest stage in the development of the Fred Edwards Trust, with a visit to Scotland by two guests from the internationally acclaimed Highlander Center in Appalachia, Tennessee. At the forefront of popular education and citizen organising for over 80 years, Highlander has been a source of inspiration and support for activists involved in civil rights, anti-poverty, economic literacy and environmental justice, both in the US and across the globe. By bringing the Center's Executive Director, Pam McMichael and Education Programme head, Elandria Williams to

Scotland, the Trust's aim was to turn the spotlight on the tools, techniques and approaches that Highlander uses to good effect with citizen groups in the Southern States and beyond.

After a short programme of visits and events, which saw Pam travel around highland Perthshire and Fife, and Elandria spend time in East Ayrshire, the two guests joined the four short-listed Fred Edwards Trust Fellowship candidates in Perth. At a round table meeting, hosted by SNH, that brought together a range of organisations around the theme of 'People, Spaces and Places', Pam and Elandria described their involvement with communities working on economic and environmental justice in Tennessee.

Round table participants heard how popular education is being used to build skills and solidarity within some of the poorest communities in the US. Communities that are struggling to survive the economic impact of the decline in coal-mining and campaigning to combat the removal of entire mountain tops to reach seams of coal.

When Pam described mountain top removal to a meeting of community council representatives from across Perthshire earlier in her visit, a collective shiver ran round the room at the unthinkable prospect of such a practice taking place in Scotland. In Tennessee, mountain top removal is legal and hard to block so Highlander has helped educate activists to train their fire on the illegal environmental impacts of the practice in order to try to prevent more mountain tops being blasted.

The visit to Scotland ended with a skills-sharing conference in Perth. The need to ensure that citizens across Scotland have the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate effectively in the decisions that affect them individually and within their communities, has never been greater.

The conference saw around 80 participants come together to consider how the Highlander approach could enable them to work together more effectively

in their different roles, as public sector professionals, third sector staff, as community representatives and as individual citizens, on improving the shape, quality and delivery of public services. Half of those present came along as individual citizens or from community groups, helping ensure that table discussions remained rooted in the reality of people's everyday lives.

The Fred Edwards Trust is currently in discussion with a range of partners as to how best to build on the interest and enthusiasm generated by Pam and Elandria's visit, particularly in advance of the visit to Highlander by the first two FET Fellows in May 2015.

See frededwardstrust@gmail.com for more information.

Building Partnerships for Sustainable Development
Alan Laidlaw, The Crown Estate



Environmentalists have long recognised the need to take a sustainable approach to development, yet it has taken longer for businesses to recognise that sustainability goes beyond reducing environmental impact or corporate social responsibility.

At The Crown Estate, we take the view that genuine sustainability in the commercial world starts from the premise that success is inextricably linked to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the places and communities with which a business works.

Key to this approach is building strong partnerships and knowledge sharing as long-term commercial success should be under-pinned by collaboration to benefit all. We work with government, NGOs and the third sector more broadly, as well as a wide range of other stakeholders to ensure that our assets are managed effectively on a regional basis.

The Crown Estate is a diverse portfolio and an interesting one, be it the coastal areas that we manage, the seabed, urban retail property or rural estates, our values - Commercialism, Integrity and Stewardship, really reflect what we do.

Building upon these core values, we first began to incorporate sustainability into our Annual Report in 2002, and we continue to facilitate the development


of a robust and methodical approach to reporting on our 'Total Contribution' and demonstrating the true value that we deliver to the UK.

With offshore renewables, we took a conscious decision some years ago to focus on strategic work that addresses sector-wide problems or barriers. In offshore wind alone we have committed £100 million across the UK to help de-risk investment, promote knowledge transfer and stimulate the supply chain. And in marine leisure, we collaborate with coastal communities to help them and us develop facilities and manage assets for long-term success. That includes providing early certainty on leases for the foreshore or seabed through our Local Management Agreements, which can help them raise funds and build buy-in for projects.

Integration and land management go hand in hand, so we take a long-term approach when it comes to the strategic development of rural land, working closely with tenants when they seek to expand or develop their business. By taking a flexible approach and investing our own capital or expertise where required, we can form new agreements that benefit all parties – encouraging innovation, diversity and opportunities for growth. We also invest in stewardship, bio-diversity and educational activities to help maintain value and build strong links with local communities.

Time and time again we find that our relationships, be it at grassroots or Government level, make for a more resilient and sustainable business – and in that vein we and other businesses should ensure we recognise the work of Scotland's voluntary environment organisations that provide a forum for co-operation, challenge 'business as usual' and enable us all to look beyond just financial return.

Pollution hits pearl mussels in the Spey
Gus Jones, Convenor, Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group



In 2013 a debate on an endangered species was brought by Highland MSP Mary Scanlon, champion for the freshwater pearl mussel (FPM). Her motion (S4M-06401 on the importance of the FPM) acknowledged "that the River Spey has one of the most significant

populations of freshwater pearl mussels in the world” but this remarkable indicator of water quality in rivers, is critically endangered.

In the debate Minister Paul Wheelhouse referred to there being few viable populations of these long-lived filter feeders in Europe outwith Scotland, and the “vital role” pearl mussels play in our rivers. He emphasised that it is “incumbent on us all” to ensure these mussels are protected. There was heartening cross party support for conservation including combating pollution threats in rivers with pearl mussels.



River Spey near Grantown-on-Spey, downstream from a sewage outflow, photo Gus Jones.

Recently an important independent report to the Cairngorms National Park Authority by the James Hutton Institute has become public (see: www.robedwards.com/2014/09/millions-of-pearl-mussels-wiped-out-by-sewage-pollution-say-scientists.html). Identifying an urgent need for pollution standards to be tightened, the report emphasises the significance of pollution from sewage outlets, and reveals that safe limits for pearl mussels are being exceeded. Critical spikes in pollution levels can be devastating for FPM and are particularly likely when the river is low. With climate change and water abstraction, such extreme conditions could be increasingly frequent.

Coinciding with a period when Badenoch & Strathspey has controversially had the highest rate of housing growth of any rural district in Scotland, there has been a loss of millions of mussels. The unprecedented housing boom is now implicated in a decline in water quality of the Spey and the FPM crash.

BSCG hopes the drop on the Spey from some 10 to 5 million FPM since 1989 will strengthen calls for a less damaging scale of urban development.

Nourish Scotland

*Pete Ritchie, Director,
Nourish*



Nourish Scotland has just joined LINK. We set up a few years ago to bring together some of the different elements of food policy in Scotland and to build a coalition for a people-friendly, planet-friendly food system.

Despite food being so central in our personal lives and having such a major impact on climate change, the environment, animal welfare, health, jobs, social justice and community cohesion it was strangely quiet as an area of public policy from around 1947 to 2008.

Since then, the spike in food prices and the standstill on wages and benefits has led to a 26% increase in the relative cost of food – pushing hundreds of thousands of Scots into food insecurity and driving the growth of foodbanks as well as a 25% reduction in fruit and vegetable consumption for people on the lowest incomes.

The ubiquity of cheap calories in turn contributes to diet-related ill-health, with Scotland now the most overweight country in Europe and 5% of the population with Type 2 diabetes.

At the same time, work by Tara Garnett, WWF and others highlighted the massive (25-30%) contribution of food to UK greenhouse gas emissions, while conservation organisations started to name food production as the primary driver of soil degradation, marine and terrestrial pollution, habitat loss, and extinction of species at an unprecedented rate.

Scottish Government to their credit have sought to develop a cross-cutting food policy, but Nourish would argue that the policy needs to be bolder and more far-reaching.

The core of our work is building a coalition for transformative change in our food system and to that end we engage our 1800 subscribers; submit policy

responses; write think pieces; run events; train new farmers; support work to make Glasgow and Edinburgh sustainable food cities and generally advocate for a more sustainable and fair food system in many different policy arenas.

We're delighted to join LINK and to contribute to the conversation about how to farm in nature, not outside of it; and how to connect our concern for the environment with our everyday decisions about the food we eat.

There is an Alternative

Matthew Crighton, Friends of the Earth Scotland



The conference **Reinventing Our Economy for People and the Planet** (11 September) heard numerous suggestions which can enable us to build a socially just and environmentally sustainable economy.

Explaining the purpose of the event, Matthew Crighton of Friends of the Earth Scotland pointed to the banking crisis, poverty and inequality and above all the need to stop greenhouse gas emissions and avoid further breaching of environmental limits.

A number of the speakers were associated with proposals for a Green New Deal and Green Quantitative Easing and it's hoped that these will receive greater impetus in Scotland from the event.

Tim Jenkins from the New Economic Foundation set out what's wrong with current macro-economic thinking. Power was outsourced from the state to the big corporations by privatisation. So we need to reframe the debate by creating a new narrative that tackles finance, inequality and the environment, and then take back control.

Ann Pettifor pointed to the correlation of money, consumption and emissions and then talked about how we can use the monetary system to achieve society's goals. We'll need a lot of money to transform our economy, so we need to understand the monetary architecture of our economy.

Molly Scott-Cato said we should use the crisis to shift the way people think about the economy, which cannot keep growing within physical limits of the planet and anyway hasn't made us any happier. Just

outsourcing our manufacturing carbon emissions to China won't hack it.

The argument about 'no growth' was examined –that we should invest in jobs not carbon or speculation. Others argued that this is a difficult political sell, so we should be careful about getting hung up on growth. It is critical to focus on ownership and tax system, including land and use of pension funds.

Malcolm Sawyer focused on financialisation of the economy. A feature of this is deregulation and privatisation - a consequence of which is financial crisis. Equally important is how financialisation has contributed to rising inequality, continuing investment in fossil fuels and slower growth.

Richard Murphy talked about the need to control the economy and that needs a new approach to tax. There is a need to reorganise our economy, redistribute, re-price upwards bad things like carbon and re-price downwards good things. This means we need to collect more of £100bn tax dodged each year.

Andy Cumbers spoke about reclaiming public ownership. Privatisation led to concentration of ownership, mainly among foreign investors. The result is an energy sector that has failed on price, energy security and decarbonisation. Across Europe and the world there is a move to the remunicipalisation of utilities. Germany now has 44 new local energy companies. Danish wind power revolution is another example with hybrid models of ownership.

The final session looked at what needs to change and how we might do it. This was led by a panel of speakers from the partners who organised the conference. Fundamental is the role of finance, pensions and taxation in the economy. Tackling inequality as a moral and economic necessity, together with higher wages and incomes, including stronger collective bargaining mechanisms. The role of government and economic development needs to be rediscovered, including new forms of public ownership. All this economic development has to be sustainable because the planet's resources are finite.

The speeches will soon be available on the website reinventoureconomy.uk

More Network News

Marine On 24 July the Scottish Government made a landmark decision which will affect the future, long-term health of our seas: the designation of 30 [new conservation Marine Protected Areas](#) (ncMPAs). These are now legally in force and are a major boost to the emerging network, which – if properly managed – will help to kickstart the recovery for which LINK members have campaigned for decades. Alongside these MPAs, 14 new draft Special Protection Areas for seabirds and a further 4 proposals for ncMPAs to protect a shelf bank habitats and mobile species such as minke whales, sandeels and basking sharks were announced.

This has been a great example of science in action. With every passing day Scotland's marine science community is building a more detailed picture of the struggling health of our marine environment that will help inform regulation and planning for its recovery – these MPAs are part of that planning. It was a popular decision that reflects a growing consensus of support. Over 14,000 people supported the MPAs via public consultation and the measures are acknowledged as necessary by [environment and fishing groups](#) alike.

The next step to is how they are managed. Currently there are no statutory measures in place for fishing activity for the new inshore and offshore MPAs and patch-management is a real risk that could lead to paper parks and mean a lot of wasted effort. Parliament's RACCE Committee took evidence during August, to which the Marine TF [contributed](#) via written and oral [evidence](#).

In short, this round of MPAs is a great start, but several key species are unprotected, and more species and habitats need to be allowed to recover and thrive. We cannot assume that existing activity within these MPAs is not negatively affecting ecosystem health, so business as usual cannot be a given. For an overview of why recovery is so badly needed, see TF Convenor Calum Duncan's [article](#) for the Scotsman. There is still plenty of work ahead for the TF. You can follow developments as they happen on the www.savescottishseas.org blog.

LINK Meetings: Following discussion at a Network meeting earlier in the year in relation to case work

LINK trustee Beryl Leatherland organised a members' meeting on 4 August to share experience of how effectively the EU Birds and Habitats Directives are being implemented in Scotland to protect nature. Richard Evans (RSPB) gave an excellent presentation for non-experts about how they work in practice, followed by discussion. A key area of concern is the relatively poor implementation of Natura Directives in the marine environment compared to generally robust implementation on land, and further pressure afoot within the EU to reduce 'red tape' for developers.

The Network meeting on 21 August was very well attended by members and task force representatives with useful discussions about plans ahead, integration needs, and evaluation of previous effort. Barbara Stulz of Nourish Scotland attended as an observer, pending approval of Nourish's application for membership (see page 5), now completed. A workshop on use and management of land including coastal and seabed was proposed and a discussion on scope for future collaboration on freshwater issues within LINK.

LINK's annual advocacy training day was held on 25 July, with practitioners within the network sharing their skills and experience. LINK's Advocacy Team is looking ahead to next year in terms of members' developing needs.

Two meetings are planned in October and January for discussions of the post Referendum constitutional issues as they relate to members' interests. In the shorter term LINK is consulting with all members on key issues to submit, via SCVO, to Lord Smith's Commission on further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament and Government before the end of October.

Following up the ambition in LINK's corporate strategy to offer one-to-one meetings between a trustee and member bodies over the period of the strategy, to discuss their experience and aspirations for the network, invitations were circulated in April. Most of the meetings requested have been held, with much positive feedback on services and engagement opportunities. Some common threads are also emerging for strengthening the environment voice and making the most of opportunities for collaboration.

Planning: The task force's engagement over two years with consultations on the National Planning Framework 3 and the revision of Planning Policy are now completed, with much there to welcome. Members have turned attention to justice issues, specifically to an equal right of appeal for communities. Clare Symonds' (Planning Democracy) [article](#) for LINK's Friends of the Scotsman slot explains some of the deficiencies of the status quo, and the reasons for lodging a [petition](#) with the Parliament. For updates and how to help, please see Planning Democracy's [website](#).

Fundraisers' Forum: Following close engagement within Government's proactive and comprehensive stakeholder process looking at the options for the devolved Landfill Tax, LINK formally submitted [views](#) to the consultation on the draft Subordinate Legislation on 1 August. Our thanks to Gregg Wilkie (RSPB) for representing Forum views throughout.

Peatlands Following the joint LINK / IUCN Peatland Programme seminar in February, LINK submitted a [response](#), supported by 11 member bodies, to SNH's consultation on Scotland's National Peatland Plan. LINK welcomes the vision within the document, especially the long-term view, and would like to see a considerable level of commitment and action so that the 2030 deadline for seeing "peatlands in a healthy state and widely regarded as resilient" can be brought forward. More specifically, LINK wants to see peat use phased out by public bodies and commercial peat extraction rights annulled by 2020.

Liaison meetings: The June meeting with the Environment Minister was cut short due to Parliamentary business, so items were followed up by [letter](#). The next regular liaison meeting is planned for 4 November.

LINK's annual liaison meeting with SEPA Chair and senior staff at the end of July focussed on SEPA's intentions with regard to enforcement, and discussion of environmental courts and tribunals. There was useful catch up about Scotland's climate change targets, reactions to NPF 3 and Scottish Planning

Policy, and potential for further liaison around LINK's Flourishing Scotland project.

LINK's Chair and trustees had an introductory meeting with Ian Ross, SNH Chair, in July, where it was agreed to put such meetings on a six monthly basis.

Publications ahead Work continued over the summer on two LINK reports, to be published before the year end. One is on Wildlife Crime Enforcement in Scotland and the other on issues around the 'carbon bubble' for Scotland.

Scottish Environment Week 2015 A new steering group met early in September to plan the programme for February and has agreed on the overarching theme of **Sharing Scotland**. Dates are still to be confirmed with the Parliament and the final programme will be on the website before the Christmas recess.

Awayday: LINK staff, trustees and several task force convenors enjoyed a fine day out exploring The Great Trossachs Forest on 10 August. Thanks to Nick Underdown for organising it and to Sue Morris, project manager, for showing us around.



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*