

The LINK Newsletter

Scottish Environment LINK update
Summer 2015



Wildlife Crime

LINK published two reports on Wildlife Crime on 20 February. The first, [Natural Injustice Paper 1: A Review of the enforcement of wildlife protection legislation in Scotland](#) was commissioned by the Wildlife Crime taskforce from consultant Ruth Tingay. The purpose was to evaluate claims from frontline eNGOs that enforcement measures remain inconsistent and weak following the improvements some expected after Scottish Government's own report, *Natural Justice* (2008) which made recommendations on preventing, investigating and prosecuting wildlife crime.

LINK's report focuses on four specific areas of crime: those relating to the persecution of badgers, bats, freshwater pearl mussels and raptors. It presents an estimation of the extent of these wildlife crimes, provides an overview of the current enforcement framework, tracks the progress of 148 wildlife crimes reported to the police between 2008-2013 including the process of initial follow-up investigation, prosecution, conviction and sentencing, and presents the ongoing concerns of LINK members directly involved with the wildlife crime enforcement process.

Overall, but with a few noticeable exceptions, there is amongst those LINK members working on the frontline, an overwhelming lack of confidence in the ability of the statutory agencies to adequately investigate wildlife crime and in the willingness of the judiciary to impose meaningful deterrent sentences.

LINK concurrently published [Natural Injustice Paper 2: Eliminating Wildlife Crime in Scotland](#) with supporting member bodies' 20 recommendations for future action by the relevant authorities, based on the findings of the first report.

Taken together these reports are an indictment of Scotland's failure to diminish or eliminate wildlife crime. Some parts of the statutory authorities have been on the defensive and concerned more with specifics than the thrust of the reports. The taskforce is following up with correspondence and offers to meet, seeking constructive dialogue with all parties, including Scottish Ministers, to get better outcomes all round. As Eddie Palmer, (Scottish Badgers and Convener of the taskforce) commented in the press release: "Wildlife crime arises from modern versions of old and outdated practices. Practices that were once acceptable are now considered cruel and criminal. This is especially so where the practices are obviously linked with economic interests. Behaviour in certain minority groups has lagged well behind these changes in our attitudes. It is time to change that behaviour and stamp out these crimes."

Nature Alert

The four UK sister Links are working together on the European Commission's "Fitness Check" of the Birds and Habitats Directives. Paul Walton (RSPB), LINK trustee and Wildlife Forum member, is contributing the Scotland's perspective to the steering group, coordinated by Wildlife & Countryside Link.

There is deep concern across the UK (and EU) eNGOs about the Commission's decision to include the Natura Directives as part of its REFIT programme, for reasons outlined in the succinct [position statement](#) supported by 100 organisations across the UK networks. In summary the uncertainty caused is bad for nature, bad for people and bad for business. In May the Joint Links submitted the sector's response to the first phase of the Fitness Check consultation, including over 500 separate pieces

of evidence that demonstrate the effectiveness of the Directives in protecting nature, providing huge benefits for people and providing a stable framework for responsible businesses. The key points are summarised within the statement.

Paul Walton took part in a meeting at Defra on 1 June where representatives from the Commission and the consultants carrying out the review interviewed representatives of the organisations who contributed to the Joint Links evidence response.

Member bodies are encouraging their supporters to respond to the public consultation which runs until 24 July. The online tool [naturealert](#) was developed by a coalition of Friends of the Earth Europe, Birdlife International, the European Environment Bureau and WWF for citizens across the EU to respond.

LINK's Manifesto

LINK prepared a short [manifesto for the General Election](#) to inform all the political parties of the key issues for our network. The 7 points reflect the breadth of interests within the membership and directed the parties towards member organisations with further expertise on the headings, which are:

1. Measuring the success of our society intelligently;
2. Tackling climate change successfully, and using a precautionary approach to all development;
3. Benefitting people's health through the natural and built environment;
4. Integrating, and making sustainable, the uses we make of our land, sea and air;
5. Protecting and enhancing our ecosystems and all the species in them;
6. Taking decisions as close to people as possible, with openness and public participation central features of our governance;
7. Learning from, and playing our part in, the rest of the world.

A similar approach is being taken to LINK's manifesto for the 2016 Holyrood elections, which

members are being consulted on, and which will be communicated to all the parties over the summer.

Hill Tracks

LINK was engaged with the development of Government's guidance for prior notification and approval requirements in relation to agricultural and forestry private ways and buildings and subsequently [responded](#) to the consultation. Members hope this will result in improvements to what is recognised as 'compelling evidence' of the damage caused by unregulated tracks, brought to general attention in LINK's [Track Changes](#) report in 2013. The Government will review whether these new arrangements are working well in December. Meantime LINK bodies are asking hillwalkers and supporters to assist with gathering information on new tracks being constructed, and for volunteers to act as trackers, monitoring local authority weekly planning lists for notifications. Please see the [website](#) for more details or contact hilltracks@scotlink.org

Marine

The LINK seminar in February **How can marine spatial planning lead to a thriving natural environment for Scotland** brought together 60 experts, from planners to lawyers, industry to academia, to look at how marine planning can be used to provide benefits to the marine environment and ensure the sustainable development of Scotland's sea area. The [report](#) is on the website. The taskforce is taking forward some of the ideas discussed collaboratively with external institutions looking ahead to the progression and implementation of regional marine planning.

The consultation analysis and finalisation of the first round of fisheries management proposals for inshore Marine Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. is expected soon with more overlapping public consultations coming up over the summer and autumn. LINK plans more public awareness raising planned on the benefits that well-managed MPAs can bring to Scotland. Please keep an eye on the [website](#) for updates.

News and Views from Members

The following pages contain articles from LINK member bodies and guest contributors

New Director for Ramblers Scotland

Jess Dolan, Director RS



Shortly after starting as the new Director for Ramblers Scotland, I was told that one of my first public appearances would be delivering

the after dinner speech at Scottish Council - the annual formal meeting of Ramblers Scotland group members. Tough gig I thought. There's little to rattle an incoming director like having to deliver a talk to the most committed and knowledgeable section of your supporter base. So I decided that honesty was the best policy. "A fair few people have told me that I must be mad to take this job. But I think I'm coming in to one of the best jobs in Scotland. At Ramblers we are lucky enough to be able to play a role in such a breadth of policy - from land reform to mental health. And we are lucky enough to be able to see some of the best countryside in the UK while we do it - through walking in Scotland."

And I stand by those words. Ramblers Scotland has a long and proud history and has been a hugely influential campaign force - the Land Reform Act 2003 wouldn't be what it is without the stalwart campaigning of the then-Director Dave Morris and the team. But we are also an organisation that needs to take stock of itself and its position in the third sector. In order to make the best decisions to support, and hopefully grow, our membership and to effectively influence policy we need to reach out to work with others and to forge inspirational and creative partnerships. We need to be able to be advocates for everyone who enjoys walking - and even more so for those that don't yet think to go for a walk. We need to comfortably straddle the recreation, active travel, health and land use sectors. But perhaps most crucially, we need to

show that we are a positive organisation - and one that is all about supporting people to get outdoors and to have fun. Over December and January this year, we ran an online survey asking people what Ramblers Scotland should look like in 10 years' time. Nearly 800 people responded, with common themes of "more inclusive", "more diverse", "more welcoming" and "working effectively with others" emerging.

Recently Ramblers Scotland has been making efforts to change and adapt. In April we welcomed our 56th group into the organisation - Tayside Young Walkers. Our young walker groups are amongst our busiest and most thriving. Last year we created a short video to promote them - and to help change the perception of Ramblers Scotland - why not [take a look](#)? The Ramblers might surprise you.

Dave Morris: 25 years with the Ramblers' Association – a well-earned retirement

David Grosz, Vice President Ramblers' Scotland, and former Chairperson.

Twenty-five years ago Dave was tied to a desk in Peterborough, with a label round his neck reading 'NCC' [Nature Conservancy Council]. But fearing that the break-up of the NCC would leave him stranded south of the border where he had made a name for himself, Dave applied for the post of Scottish Officer in the Ramblers' Association and I am proud to have been leader of the team that interviewed him and agreed to offer him the job in 1989. A very few years later, a very young Calum Morris told his teacher that his Dad's job was to save the world - NOT QUITE! No, that was not in Dave's job description! But one thing that was – a rather daunting challenge to improve and enshrine in statute responsible public access to Scotland's countryside as a RIGHT, not simply a concession with no guarantee from year to year.

Responsible Access? To all land and later to water? Dave was the first to see the need to look at the occupier's or the landowner's position at

the same time, to ensure a responsible and fair right to roam and a balance of respect. He also brought on board representatives of a number of other appropriate outdoor activities. Together we could achieve more. There are also many former sceptics and bandwagon jumpers. He was preceded by a number of access wise heads for over a century, with little inroad made even in just the cause of access to open country, despite gallant efforts. As the end of the millennium approached we were given the usual rabbit out of a hat – a new law which would in effect give the landowners more powers of exclusion than they already had. Time was short, but 3,000 members of the Ramblers’, aware through Dave’s prompting of this new betrayal, wrote to express their dissatisfaction. The result was Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; a vast improvement. Almost all our points were met and we now have in Scotland possibly the best and most liberal national access regime in the world and we should be proud of the achievements of the Ramblers under Dave’s spectacular leadership, with special gratitude to Dave himself.

The seeds of an interest in pursuing a similar access right in England have been sown, I hear – it will be much more difficult, but I am glad they accept Dave was right. But are the general public: walkers, cyclists, horse riders, canoeists, anglers all who use Scotland’s land, water and the air above, for exercise, or education, or science, or appreciation of beauty, or space to think, as a right, and with a new confidence? Are they aware of Dave and the Ramblers? How can we make sure that Dave and his work are brought to mind by all lovers of the countryside forever? Tell us your views: what would be appropriate? *Ideas welcome via LINK, contact details on back page*

It's time for Scotland to break the links with fossil fuels and divest

Ric Lander, Finance Campaigner, FoES. 

Most fossil fuels must stay in the ground to avoid climate catastrophe. Yet according to data from NUS, Scottish universities invest £21 million in

fossil fuels. Scottish local government pensions invested a staggering £1.11bn in fossil fuels. In fact, pretty much all Scottish funds, from church bank accounts to civil service pensions are tied up in oil, gas and coal, lending these damaging industries cash but, more crucially, credibility.

Friends of the Earth Scotland is campaigning to break these links, as part of a wholesale shift towards investment in energy sources that can create a just future.

Divestment puts pressure on companies like BHP Billiton, one of the world's largest coal miners, who are currently open cast mining in the centre of the precious Borneo rainforest. One local government fund, the Lothian Pension Fund, invests £9.8 million in BHP.

Divestment can also pave the way for reinvestment in community-based solutions to climate change, like the [Edinburgh Solar Cooperative](#), launched last week. They are offering shares to the public, and need just over £2 million to get off the ground.

The path is being laid.



Colombian activists Rogelio Ustate and Francisco Tovar joined FoE Scotland to protest BHP Billiton and the devastating impacts of their mining activities worldwide.

In October an extraordinary student campaign secured a pledge from the University of Glasgow to sell its shares in fossil fuel companies. Edinburgh People & Planet has now heaved their university in the same direction, and more quietly in April, the United Reform Church in Scotland pledged to divest.

FoES Campaigner Gill Davies says “It's easy for us to feel that the financial world is out of our control but these are our pensions, our bank accounts, our money: we have the opportunity to

take control. Divestment shows us that we have more power collectively than we often think.”

Across Scotland local government pensions hold billions of pounds on behalf of hundreds of thousands of council workers. We want to see pensions become accountable to their members, and we want our leaders to show leadership: given our “world leading climate targets” is it not reasonable that the Scottish Parliament pension scheme should be a leading low-carbon investor, instead of undermining government efforts?

After their campaign victory Sophie Baumert from Glasgow University Climate Action said “now is the time to start investing in a safe and liveable future.” Let's get on with the job.

If you're interested in joining our call for fossil-free pensions you can sign our petition and [find out more](#) on the website.

The Touchstone – Ecosystem services, better knowledge and asking the right question.

Jim Densham, Senior Land Use Officer RSPB Scotland



The Touchstone is a pretty remarkable object. You hold it in your hand, ask a question and it gives you the answer. You just have to be a bit careful what you ask...

This is the blurb from a children’s book [The Touchstone](#) by Andrew Norris. My family and I listened to the audiobook last year. It is the story of how one of the most valuable objects in the galaxy falls into the hands of a schoolboy called Douglas Paterson. The Touchstone gives Douglas access to all the knowledge in the universe through a cosmic librarian called Gedrus. He can ask any question and get the answer. He can even get advice from Gedrus on how to do things, like his homework or getting his parents back together. Douglas thinks that the Touchstone and Gedrus will make life easier, but he soon finds out that acting on the advice brings unintended consequences and makes everything very difficult!

Imagine you had access to all the information in the world on the benefits and impacts of land

management. OK, it’s not the sexiest area in which to be the font of all knowledge but go with me on this. It would be fantastic because you would know all the environmental impacts of farming or forestry activities, or building a new housing estate. You could look ahead and see if flooding a field on a nature reserve would provide good habitat to attract geese without unintended consequences like soil erosion. If we understood all the health, social and environmental benefits provided by land managed for nature it might convince our politicians to invest in more nature reserves and the wider countryside.

In policy circles we call these benefits Ecosystem Services. These are things that nature (or managed ecosystems) provide and which society benefits from, eg food, clean water, pollination, carbon storage in soils, even inspiration and happiness. This is a controversial area because quantifying these Ecosystem Services allows economists to put a financial value on them and the possibility of estimating the total worth of an ecosystem. Conservationists rightly point out that Society can’t just put a price tag on nature and say that one habitat is more valuable than another. You can’t put a value on a lapwing or a pipistrelle bat – they are priceless, like the crown jewels.

Academics increasingly use the idea of Ecosystem Services as a way of bringing together our knowledge of the countryside and for understanding how the supply of these services may change if we adapt land management policies or practices. Like Douglas and his Touchstone, the knowledge gained from valuing ecosystem services can bring unintended consequences – so we need to learn to ask the right question. Eg, If we ask *how can I make as much money as possible from my land* the wildlife or the soil quality may well suffer as food production increases. That is what has happened with farmland since the mid 20th century as technology improved and policies incentivised food production.

Douglas learns that asking Gedrus questions in a different way always provides better results and cuts out the unintended consequences or lessens

the negatives, eg. *what is the best way to...* or *what will provide the best result for the most people*. And with all the information in the universe at his fingertips Gedrus can assess all options and arrive at the best solution.

In the past those who manage the land and Governments have always made decisions based on what they know and on real or perceived values. Improving actual data and predictions can help to provide more information to decision makers but it doesn't necessarily lead to better decisions. It all depends what question you ask. Eg, with more information the answer to *How can I make the most money from my land* might be to build houses rather than grow barley. However, we will get a more useful answer if we carefully ask, *What is the best way to manage my farm to remain profitable in the long term but also to provide a greater range of ecosystem services* or *How can I manage this nature reserve so that it is great for wildlife but is better at storing carbon and providing clean water*. Policy makers might ask *How can we best help farmers to adapt the use of their floodplain fields to temporarily store flood water* or *How can we best adapt how we use land in Aberdeenshire so that it provides food but optimises the provision of other services to society, and more people benefit overall*.

Ecosystem services, as a concept, continues to be debated. It can be a useful tool in decision making but the threat is if we unwisely use this knowledge to answer the wrong questions or see maximising the supply or financial value of Ecosystem Services as an end in itself. Ecosystem Services is a way of describing and better understanding the huge amount of benefits that habitats provide and that we all need. We should seek to use our knowledge of Ecosystem Services as a tool to help us make better decisions.

At the end of the story, Douglas uses his Touchstone to bring peace to the universe. I don't have quite such high hopes from better knowledge of Ecosystem Services, but better decision-making in how we use our countryside could reduce many conflicts. To do this we must learn to ask the right question. *Adapted from [ESCOM blog](#)*

Fife Pilgrim Way - Community Consultation

Nick Cooke, Secretary Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum

The Fife Pilgrim Way (FPW) is a community focused project that seeks to engage local people and visitors in celebrating the pilgrimage heritage of Fife through a new 109km long distance walking route. Led by Fife Coast and Countryside Trust in partnership with Fife Council, the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum and the Fife Tourism Partnership, our aim is to link the holy places and settlements of historic significance once used by pilgrims travelling to the great mediaeval shrine in St Andrews.

Traversing the interior of Fife, the route starts at Culross Abbey and the quay at North Queensferry to merge outside Dunfermline Abbey before heading east through Markinch via the Waterless Way to Ceres and the grand ruins of St Andrews Cathedral. The FPW will mostly utilise existing core paths to offer varied opportunities for long distance off-road walking linked to local circular routes.

Much of Fife's pilgrimage heritage is hidden and fragmented, making it hard to identify or appreciate its former significance. A strongly branded, way-marked and interpreted FPW route will connect this story at a wide variety of locations that include former chapels and other associated sacred buildings.

We have recently held 12 successful drop-in consultation events along the planned FPW route. These have involved local people, heritage groups, community councils, businesses and landowners in identifying how they can help make the Pilgrim Way a sustainable public resource bringing significant economic, social and environmental benefits to central Fife. Partly funded by Action of Churches Together in Scotland and Historic Scotland, these events have also highlighted the role of local churches in offering a spiritual context for today's pilgrim walker linked to this wider community engagement process.

Nearly 600 people have attended these events or completed our survey, providing vital evidence of public support for a project that still requires external funding to convert the FPW route from a line on a map into a physical reality on the ground. Please share your own thoughts via the [online survey](#) or to learn more about SPRF's work see the [website](#).

SAM is changing to SAHF in 2015

Lesley McEwan, SAHF Festival Coordinator



As part of Archaeology Scotland's contribution to Dig It! 2015, year of archaeology, we are re-shaping Scottish Archaeology Month into the Scottish Archaeology & Heritage Festival. In 2014, over 530 events took place in every local authority in Scotland with an estimated 30,000 people participating as a visitor or volunteer. The new festival has been broadened to have an even wider appeal and, as in previous years, the festival alongside Doors Open Days forms Scotland's contribution to European Heritage Days which sees events take place across 49 European countries.

In addition to traditional walks, talks, digs, tours and exhibitions, we are including intangible aspects of heritage such as drama, storytelling, local traditions and family history research. From 5 - 22 September, the festival will welcome everyone from the general public to local history groups, clan societies, walkers, ramblers and visitors to Scotland's 'Year of Food and Drink' events. We hope that SAHF will have a broad target audience including holiday-makers, amateur archaeologists and those attending the 2015 European Archaeological Association conference in Glasgow.



A launch is planned (subject to final approval from East Renfrewshire Council) at Rouken Glen Country Park on 5 September under the theme 'A

Grand Day Out' where Archaeology Scotland and East Renfrewshire Council will give 20 people the opportunity to take part in the excavation of Thornliebank House which was a tearoom at one time in its past history. The public will be invited to bring along objects and memorabilia which hold memories or links with the park and Glasgow life and experts from Bonham's will be on hand to give valuations. Visitors will be able to share their social history through recording memories, photographs and recipes on a Memories Board; have a look at some finds from the digs, view the digital exhibition of old photographs and kids can take part in the work of an archaeologist. There will be a variety of family-focused activities including trails, games and aerial kite photography on the day that will add to the Festival feel and possibly the chance to see some geophysics in action!

A taster events guide will be distributed across Scotland during July and you can follow @SAHFest on Twitter or visit www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk to add and find events.

Have You Got The Bottle?

John Mayhew, APRS Director



Litter spoiling our countryside and beaches concerns many APRS members. So we welcome the work the Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) have done to examine the feasibility of introducing a deposit return system (DRS) for drinks bottles and cans. In such a system, a small deposit is paid to retailers when you buy drinks cans and bottles and fully refunded by retailers when you return the container, in order to increase recycling rates and reduce litter.

A report for ZWS shows there are no major legal or technical barriers to introducing a DRS in Scotland, and that there would be positive economic benefits for job creation, for recycling businesses, for the circular economy, and in cost savings for local authorities. Also, improving our international reputation by tackling litter can only benefit our largest industry, tourism.

We know from elsewhere that deposit return systems reduce litter, boost recycling rates and reduce wastage of valuable resources. For example in New York State drinks container litter reduced by 70% after a deposit return system was introduced. And in 2012, in New South Wales, which didn't have a DRS at the time, drinks containers made up 1 in every 3 items of litter, whereas in South Australia, which did have a DRS, the figure was only 1 in 12.

We know the Scottish public supports the introduction of a DRS. A recent poll, conducted for APRS by Survation, indicates that 79% of the Scottish public support this approach while just 8.5% oppose it. The Marine Conservation Society and Surfers Against Sewage agree, as a deposit return system would reduce plastic litter in our seas and on our beaches. Friends of the Earth Scotland agree, as a deposit return system would increase recycling rates and reduce waste of valuable materials.



Litter on the foreshore, photo Calum Duncan

Last year, after lengthy debate Scotland introduced the carrier bag charge which has proved a great success; most people simply adjusted to taking reusable bags to the shops – as they always used to do. A DRS is the obvious next step in encouraging more sustainable behaviour, the sort of thing to which we should aspire in a modern, progressive Scotland. Six months after its introduction we'll be reading reports about what a success it has been. So our challenge to the Scottish Government is: Have You Got The Bottle to do the right thing for Scotland?

More LINK News

It has been a very busy time for the **Freshwater taskforce** responding to Scottish Government consultations on the [Water Scarcity Plan for Scotland](#); [Draft Second Cycle River Basin Management Plan](#); and [Improvement of the Physical Condition of Scotland's Water Environment](#). LINK urges greater ambition for ecological restoration, particularly of protected areas, and better integration with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

LINK staff There have been big changes to the staff team with departures of Hugh Green and Rea Cris. Hugh retired in April after 10 years with LINK and Rea moved in May to a post with RSPB. We are very pleased Rea stays within the network. Karen Patterson started as Finance and Office Manager in March, working 28 hours per week (an increase of 4) and Lisa Webb joined Andy Myles in the Advocacy Office for 3 days per week from May.

LINK Funding We are very grateful that our core grants from Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Government for 2015-16 were awarded at the same level as last year. These grants help support LINK to act as an intermediary body that co-ordinates, supports and strengthens the voice of the citizen-led environment NGO sector.

Flourishing Scotland Engagement with the National Performance Framework Roundtable has continued. LINK has contributed ideas on structure and indicators for the revised NPF, with sustainable development as the guiding principle, published as a [briefing](#) in June.

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'.

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