

The LINK Newsletter



Scottish Environment LINK update Winter 2013/2014

Scottish Environment Festival

This year the focus for LINK's annual celebration explored Scotland's contribution to the world with three seminars, a reception in the Parliament and a quiz, between 30 January and 6 February. *Our Worldwide Environmental Connections Today*, on 30 January heard from Jonny Hughes (SWT), Silviu Petrovan (Froglife) and Rory Syme (WTS), who celebrated the European and International networks that LINK members are actively involved in, and how Scotland's ideas and concerns are truly global. Thanks to Mike MacKenzie MSP for hosting this event.



Scottish Environment Festival reception photo Nick Underdown

The evening reception on 4 February held in the Parliament's Garden Lobby for LINK members and guests celebrated the international reputation of Scotland's natural heritage and its contribution to our economy. We are grateful to Scotland's National Parks for funding the reception, to Clare Baker MSP for sponsoring, and to Environment Minister Paul Wheelhouse MSP, for addressing the gathering.

The Scottish Contribution to Environmental Science, held on the evening of 5 February, celebrated the contributions of Scots over the centuries to the development of the environmental sciences. The contributions of Patrick Geddes, Alexander Wilson

and John Murray were explained by Aubrey Manning, Paul Walton (RSPB) and Denis Mollison (HWDT) respectively, who placed the work of these three individuals in a modern context. Thanks to Claudia Beamish MSP for sponsoring and to Historic Scotland for financial support.

The World Watches Scottish Nature, on 6 February celebrated the hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the world that come, each year, to visit Scotland's wonderful landscapes and wildlife. Liam McArthur MSP joined RSPB reserve staff and wildlife tourism operator, 'Ecoventures' to champion the numerous benefits of a healthy wildlife tourism sector. The Festival ends with a Quiz held in the Members' Restaurant. Thanks to Sarah Boyack MSP for sponsoring and to Calor Scotland for support.

Track Changes

LINK's hill tracks campaign group launched [Track Changes](#) on 28 November. In this report LINK calls on the Scottish Government to bring an end to the current unregulated system for vehicular track construction which allows landowners to build tracks without any public oversight, and instead to bring their construction into the planning system.

Successive governments have acknowledged and yet failed to act on this issue. Following a consultation on a review of the General Permitted Development Order in 2011 and a subsequent consultation which focussed on removing Permitted Development Rights from hill tracks in 2012, the Scottish Government announced in December 2012 that it had determined not to remove these rights but to keep any decision under review. The Minister challenged LINK members to produce evidence to demonstrate to him the need for legislative change.

Track Changes is LINK's response to that challenge. It gives photographic evidence of the damage caused to landscapes, wildlife and habitats across Scotland by some of these tracks, and aims to persuade Government to remove PDRs from such tracks and enable proper public scrutiny of any future plans. The LINK campaign group involves 9 member bodies from LINK's Planning and Landscape taskforces, convened by Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland) and Beryl Leatherland (Scottish Wild Land Group). The report and further information about the campaign are on www.scotlink.org/workareas/hill-tracks/

Marine

The Marine taskforce is delighted to receive a further three years funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, allowing employment of two four-day week project officers to support taskforce efforts to ensure effective implementation of Scotland's Marine Act and the secondary regulations that come from it. Esther Brooker joined LINK from mid-January as Marine Policy Officer, working alongside Nick Underdown.

Approximately 10,000 responses to Scottish Government's consultations on the National Marine Plan and the proposed Marine Protected Area network were facilitated by the taskforce as part of environmental campaigns to both support the concept of MPAs and challenge the Scottish Government to plug some major gaps in the proposed network. The plans do not yet provide adequate protection for all of Scotland's important species with several currently excluded from the proposed MPA network notably important sites for seabirds, whales, dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks, as well as other fragile seabed features. As the first major step in fulfilling the duties of the Marine Act to recover the health of Scotland's seas, the plans must be sufficiently ambitious in scope, for a functioning healthy ecosystem and to sustain people's livelihoods into the future.

Flourishing Scotland

LINK was awarded a grant from the Friends Provident Foundation to employ a three-day week Flourishing Scotland Policy Advocacy Officer working to its

Economics taskforce, for three years. Phoebe Cochrane began work in January, hosted by Friends of the Earth Scotland. In essence the project aims to take forward the recommendations of LINK's 2012 report, [*Environment and the Economy: helping Scotland to Flourish*](#). The initial focus is on advocacy around success measures beyond GDP in relation to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, which a roundtable convened by the Cabinet Secretary John Swinney has been reviewing from early 2013. LINK was invited to this roundtable, along with Oxfam, Carnegie UK, the STUC among others and is encouraged by the extent of common ground in the discussions.

Members' Congress

LINK Members' Congress on 28 and 29 November on the theme *Building Better Bridges between local communities and LINK organisations* explored some of the strengths of each sector and how we can work better together in pursuit of a more sustainable Scotland. Setting the context Pauline Gallacher of Neilston Development Trust gave a considered 'worms eye view' from her perspective as an activist with a particular holistic and strategic approach to place-making, working with one local community for 10 years. Anne McCall (RSPB) drew on extensive experience of working in partnerships between environment NGOs and local communities – from Hunterston to Lingerabay – teasing out the issues from the NGO perspective.

Smaller groups then discussed four topics: Climate Change Action, Fighting Blights, Understanding Land Reform and Protected Areas; each led by knowledgeable NGO and community representative. Thanks to Suzy Goodsir (Greener Kirkaldy), John Wincott (Fife Councillor), Ian Cooke (Development Trusts Association Scotland) and Andrew Binnie (Community of Arran Seabed Trust) for taking part and to LINK members Richard Dixon (FoES), Clare Symonds (Planning Democracy), Mike Daniels (JMT) and Simon Jones (SWT) for scoping the NGO perspectives. The ideas generated, together with research commissioned into communication needs between local environmental groups, national and intermediary organisations will be discussed by the Board in April to see how LINK can help.

News and Views from Members

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

Space for Cetaceans?

Sarah Dolman, Whale & Dolphin Conservation



In WDC's new report, [*Making Space for porpoises, dolphins and whales in UK seas: Harbour Porpoise Special Areas of Conservation, as part of a coherent network of marine protected areas for cetaceans*](#), we provide scientific and legal advice whilst highlighting key evidence to encourage the UK government to designate a network of harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) as required under the EU Habitats and Species Directive.

Part 1 is specific to the current failings of the UK government to designate harbour porpoise SACs to date. A case study is provided to demonstrate the differences in approach taken between other European States in implementation of the Habitats Directive in harbour porpoise SAC designation on the Dogger Bank.

Part 2 broadens our focus to the wider marine protected area network. This section puts porpoise SACs within the framework of marine protected areas (MPAs) and wider marine protection that is a requirement for all whales, dolphins and porpoises. We demonstrate that harbour porpoise SACs, along with bottlenose dolphin SACs, are a necessary component of a wider marine protected areas network.

A third case study uses a theoretical planning model, the Hebrides Marine, as an example of how a combination of site protection mechanisms (UK, European and global) can ensure effective protection of harbour porpoise, other cetaceans and a wide diversity of marine species. The Hebrides Marine is a large multi-use zoned area that encompasses various forms of marine protected areas, including existing and new SACs and Scottish nature conservation MPAs for minke whales, Risso's dolphins, and white-beaked dolphins, as a focus for more detailed and varying

(including temporal) management measures, as well as wider marine spatial planning to undertake appropriate management of activities.

Even those species that are not considered appropriate for MPA protection, such as the wide ranging but very small and vulnerable west coast killer whale population, may benefit from management measures introduced for SAC and MPA cetacean species.

Combining MPA and wider planning measures are also beneficial for humans. This two-pronged approach to conservation, including both MPAs and wider measures, is required under the key European Directives to ensure favourable conservation status of harbour porpoise and other cetacean species.



Risso's Dolphin, © WDC Nicola Hodgins

WDC has submitted its report, along with an accompanying legal analysis conducted by ClientEarth, to Defra and Marine Scotland and we are in discussions with the European Commission. We remain optimistic that harbour porpoise SACs will be designated in the next couple of years. We continue to make a strong case for the designation of national MPAs and MCZs and we hope that, most immediately, whales and dolphins will be included in the Scottish MPA network in 2014.

Brownfield Biodiversity

Craig Macadam, Buglife Scotland



Brownfields are any sites that have been altered by human activity and are currently not fully in use. They tend to be concentrated in urban and former industrial landscapes but also include old railway lines and bings. In Scotland, our rich industrial heritage has resulted in over 10,000 hectares of land being listed as vacant or derelict.



Fallin Bing ©Suzanne Bairner

With the loss of natural habitats in the wider countryside through agricultural intensification and development, wild areas within the urban environment have become crucial to the survival of many threatened species in the UK. Between 12-15% of nationally rare and scarce insects have been recorded from brownfields. Lack of management and low nutrients in the soil often creates an open mosaic of habitats such as species rich grassland, bare ground and early successional habitats which allow a wide range of species to complete their life cycles within the same site. In addition, brownfield sites provide links or 'stepping stones' between more natural areas of habitat and facilitate the movement of species through a less favourable urban setting.

Buglife is working hard to address the problems confronting brownfield biodiversity, through developing brownfield habitat management advice and a strategy for the conservation of our most important brownfields.

We hope to change public opinion on the value of the sites and encourage a 'biodiversity first' approach to planning, where sites of low value for wildlife, whether brownfield or greenfield, are prioritised for development. We also want to see developments that do go ahead on brownfield sites incorporating areas of brownfield habitat and wildlife-friendly designs such as green roofs and green walls.

Our new 'Brownfield Hub' is intended to help anyone from ecologists, planners and developers to wildlife lovers, to understand the value of brownfields for our rare invertebrates and how to protect them. The hub includes a series of downloadable PDFs which highlight the importance of brownfields for rare wildlife, how to identify 'Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land', and how to manage them for key invertebrate groups, alongside useful case studies of our work. Further information will be added to make this a 'one stop shop' for advice and information on brownfields.

For more information please contact Craig Macadam craig.macadam@buglife.org.uk.

www.buglife.org.uk/brownfield-hub

Big 5 Wildlife App

David Rodger, Scottish Natural Heritage



Scottish Natural Heritage released a new version of Big 5 wildlife app. Scotland's Big 5 app for iPhone is a pocket guide to five of the nation's most iconic animals – the golden eagle, red squirrel, harbour seal, otter and red deer. The first version was released by Scottish Natural Heritage in Spring 2013 to celebrate the Year of Natural Scotland. It has won many plaudits for its visually engaging design and content and recently picked up a commendation in the Education and Training category at The Herald Digital Business Awards.

A new iOS7 version is now available for free download at <http://www.appstore.com/scotlandsbig5>. The iOS7

version features wonderful images, video and audio of the Big 5, and a whole stack of key facts that take users on a journey through the often dramatic, always surprising, lives of these animals. The app also features more than 90 special places across Scotland, from the Shetland Islands to the Solway Coast, where one or more of the Big 5 can be seen, with expert tips on how best to spot these elusive animals.

For more details about the Scotland's Big 5 app, please contact David Rodger, Scottish Natural Heritage, email: david.rodger@snh.gov.uk Tel: 01738 458534. #scotlandbig5app

ARC joins Environment LINK

Pete Minting, Scottish Project Officer



Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) has joined Scottish Environment LINK. ARC's LINK representative is Scottish Project Officer Pete Minting, based in Hamilton. ARC recently secured three years of funding from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) for its Scottish Project.



Scottish great crested newt tadpole ©Pete Minting

The main focus of ARC's Scottish Project is getting more people involved in amphibian and reptile conservation. Since it began in June 2013, ARC has been involving volunteers in habitat work across Scotland. Although the Project has a strong practical emphasis, ARC is keeping a close eye on changes to environmental policies and legislation in Scotland.

ARC's Great Crested Newt Conservation Officer Dorothy Driver developed guidance for land managers

during the last phase of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Uptake of land management options (LMOs) under the last SRDP for rare species such as great crested newts and natterjack toads was disappointing. ARC has provided input to the latest SRDP consultation and hopes the suggestions made will result in better promotion and targeting of this scheme.

MSP Joan McAlpine, Species Champion for the adder, has offered to help launch ARC's Scottish Snake Search event this spring. MSP Elaine Murray, Species Champion for the natterjack toad, has also expressed an interest in supporting ARC's work.

Joining LINK has already proven very useful, with regard to meeting members with similar interests and discussing key issues. If anyone has any queries with regard to amphibians and reptiles, please get in touch and we will do our best to help.

ARC works closely with volunteers from Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (ARG UK) on a number of projects, including the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS) and Record Pool. If you have recently seen an amphibian or reptile in Scotland, please enter your sighting at www.recordpool.org.uk See www.arc-trust.org for more detailed information on the UK's native amphibians and reptiles, including free publications on habitat management. Tel: 07747 270581: pete.minting@arc-trust.org



Pete Minting and Fife ARG at a Scottish natterjack site © Iain Lewis, Fife ARG

Natural Capital

Mike Elm, Scottish Forum on Natural Capital



On 21 and 22 November 2013 the Scottish Wildlife Trust organised the inaugural World Forum on Natural Capital. The event saw 500 delegates from 35 countries - business leaders, environmental experts, NGOs, academics and government representatives - come together to help turn the debate on how we value our natural capital into action. On the first day the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital was launched with the support of the First Minister, Alex Salmond. This is a ground-breaking new initiative bringing together public, private and voluntary sector organisations to protect and rebuild Scotland's natural capital. The Scottish Forum includes five founding partners: SWT, Scotland's 2020 Climate Group, the University of Edinburgh, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland, and the Institute of Directors, Scotland. The vision of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital is:

- A Scotland in which all parts of society, including companies, NGOs, the Government, public bodies and communities, recognise our reliance on natural capital and the impact we have on it.
- A Scotland with an understanding of our relationship with natural capital that leads to action to protect and rebuild it.
- A Scotland that is exercising leadership to galvanise action both here and beyond Scotland's borders.

To deliver on its goals, the Scottish Forum will:

1. Calculate the monetary value of Scotland's natural capital and the cost of depleting it by coordinating experts such as accountants, people from business, academics and policymakers.
2. Communicate to a broad range of businesses and other stakeholders the risk of depleting Scotland's natural capital and the huge economic value from protecting and enhancing it.
3. Set up collaborative projects to deliver tangible action to protect and enhance Scotland's natural capital.

Membership of the Scottish Forum (free) is open to organisations that wish to contribute to achieving the

Scottish Forum's vision. The next World Forum will be held in Edinburgh on 26 & 27 November 2015. Further information: melm@naturalcapitalforum.com.

"What's Up" – Monitoring Change in Scotland's Uplands

Lorna Oldershaw, Upland Outreach, BTO



More than half of Scotland is upland. Climatic changes and changes in land use mean Scotland's uplands could be facing an uncertain future. Currently we do not have enough evidence to know what effect these and other changes are having on upland wildlife. We urgently need to improve monitoring of upland wildlife in order to assess the impact of these changes and plan conservation action accordingly.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), along with several partners, is running a project called "What's Up?". The project aims to encourage people who routinely work or 'play' in upland habitats, as well as people with an interest in birds, to submit their sightings of upland birds and wildlife. There are a number of ways for people to get involved in the project. These include submitting casual sightings of upland birds either via email or through BirdTrack (website or mobile app), carrying out a mountain transect survey, which involves recording all the birds seen above 750m during a day in the hills or alternatively, for those who are experienced bird watchers, taking on a Breeding Bird Survey square.

By working together with those who spend their time in Scotland's uplands, we hope to be able to collect data that will provide a better understanding and appreciation of Scotland's uplands. The data will also help decision makers to ensure these fragile habitats deliver benefits for people and wildlife for generations to come. Anyone that takes part in the project will be making a valued contribution to the conservation of Scotland's uplands, as well as potentially seeing some of Scotland's most iconic upland birds such as Ptarmigan and Snow Bunting.

For more information and to register interest please visit the BTO website <http://www.bto.org/whats-up>, or contact: lorna.oldershaw@bto.org

More Network News

Agriculture Diarmid Hearn (NTS) has taken over as convenor of this taskforce (TF) from Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland). We are very grateful to Jonathan for his considerable dedication to the TF over many years.

LINK put the case for setting Scottish agriculture on a more sustainable and progressive path in a [briefing](#) for October's CAP debate in Parliament, and has corresponded with and met the Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead, urging him to transfer 15% from Pillar 1 to Pillar 11 to give adequate provision for environmental measures. His proposal to transfer just 9.5% is extremely disappointing and frustrating.

The TF is preparing its submission to the latest consultation on the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

Climate Adaptation The TF [responded](#) to the consultation on the Scottish Adaptation Programme in September, provided evidence and briefings to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee and has contributed to development of more detailed guidance during December. For RACCE's debate on 14 January, LINK's key points of concern were that Scotland needs to plan now for the consequences and impacts of our changing climate, which are already happening. Scotland must reduce GHG emissions but also adapt how we run our economy, our society and how we look after our environment. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way. Despite the publication of the draft SAP, we are concerned that adaptation still remains a low priority within Government - building the resilience of Scotland's environment to climate change should be a priority at a time when our natural resource base needs to be valued as an important asset.

Deer The TF gave [evidence](#) to the RACCE Committee's inquiry into Deer and Natural Heritage Impacts in October, hoping that substantive recommendations for improvements to current deer management systems can be made in the lead up to the expected review of Scotland's Wild Deer Strategy in 2014, as it is plain that the current system of voluntary deer

management structures in place in Scotland is not fit for purpose

Freshwater: The TF [responded](#) to a consultation under the Water Environment and Water Services Act revising Environmental Standards for the Water Environment. LINK supports a revision of standards on the basis of sound scientific evidence, though has concern that the revision will distort overall trends of ecological status and mask whether a change in water body classification is due to underlying ecology or to reclassification according to revised standards. LINK asks for clarity and transparency about how baselines have shifted so there is a representative picture of water body health over time. The TF plans to meet the officials to get a better understanding of why particular standards were selected.

Governance LINK's Governance Group organised a debate with the Constitutional Campaigns on our *Referendum Challenge* issues, for the evening of 26 February in Edinburgh, chaired by Rob Edwards. A limited number of [tickets](#) are still available.

LINK [corresponded](#) with the Environment Minister supporting the manifesto commitment to appropriate structures to protect our environment and enable the best decision-making impacting on it. LINK has urged him to consider establishing an Expert Working Group to look into options for an environmental court or tribunal for Scotland, as a means of ensuring that Scotland is fully compliant with the access to justice provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

LINK supported the efforts of a wide coalition of organisations opposing the Westminster Lobbying Bill.

Planning The taskforce [responded](#) to a consultation on the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Sustainability and Planning, welcoming inclusion of a clear and internationally recognised definition of sustainable development, though concerns remain about the apparent weight of economic above environmental and social interests. The TF recently [contributed](#) to Parliamentary scrutiny of the draft National Planning Framework. In summary views are:

- Both the NPF and SPP must have a clear aim to deliver sustainable development
- The NPF and SPP should provide a clear steer for onshore wind development by

incorporating SNH's strategic locational guidance in full, not just in relation to Wild Land

- The NPF and SPP should make clear the precautionary principle will be applied to unconventional gas extraction, leaving reserves in the ground until climate and other environmental and health concerns are fully addressed
- There must be greater clarity around the NPF consultation process, particularly relating to the inclusion of national developments and any significant changes to text between the Main Issues Report and proposed plan stage.
- Parliament should consider a general review of the NPF process, SPP and the planning system to ensure it remains fit for purpose
- The NPF contains some commendable aspirations, however, the document needs to be clearer on action to deliver climate change obligations
- The NPF appears to pick up arbitrary targets for expansion of the aquaculture industry – this must be justified.

Wildlife Forum Members are delighted with the interest and support of MSPs in Species Champions, which encourages all MSPs to adopt a species under threat in their constituency. LINK organised a celebratory event for participants in the Parliament on 31 October. A short [video](#) explains the concept and what it means to some of the 63 MSPs supporting it. Thanks to Nick Underdown for producing this in his spare time! The TF is fully engaged with the Biodiversity Strategy process, with representation on the new delivery groups. A position paper [The Future of Scotland's Biodiversity](#) from a joint seminar held with the Royal Society of Edinburgh outlines what needs to be done.

Wildlife Crime: LINK's recently formed TF convened by Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers) with depute Ian Thomson (RSPB), commissioned a report on wildlife crime and its enforcement. The report, from consultant Ruth Tingay, will be released in the Spring and the TF is pleased with the interest shown so far in terms of data submitted.

LINK AGM Members thanked Lloyd Austin for his long

and excellent service on the board, and also Angus Yarwood who stood down this year. Craig Macadam, Paul Walton and Charles Dundas were elected as new trustees, and Mike Robinson and Mandy Orr co-opted for a further year. Dan Barlow was made a LINK Honorary Fellow. Members agreed to increase their subscription rate by 5% to underpin essential services.

LINK was delighted to hear from SNH before Christmas that its grant will continue at the same level in 2014-15. LINK has also been granted £5,000 from the Craignish Trust for a further 3 years for core activities, and £5,000 from Historic Scotland for Scottish Environment Week to 2017. A grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for core activities (EFF also funds LINK's Marine project) will end in December 2014; and fundraising efforts to new trusts continue.

The challenges for the year ahead were explored by members at LINK's Strategic Planning meeting in November and further discussed at January's Board and Network meetings in terms of priorities and capacity within the taskforces, membership and staff to achieve collective ambitions: broadly to continue to build common cause with other sectors and promote a shared understanding of sustainable development.

Liaison LINK President Ross Finnie led meetings with business interests including the Weir Group and the Federation of Small Business, to explore the common agenda on economics and the environment.

Regular meetings with the Environment Minister have continued with November's meeting covering Climate Adaptation, Wildlife Crime, Opencast Coal, Native Woodland Survey, Hilltracks and Lobbying legislation. The next meeting will cover Agriculture, Fisheries, the National Performance Framework review, the National Planning Framework, Biodiversity Targets, and Environmental Tribunals.

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*