

# The LINK Newsletter

Scottish Environment LINK update  
Winter 2014-15



## Save Scottish Seas

It has been a very busy few months for the Marine Taskforce (MTF). The crucial detail of fisheries management in Scotland's inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is now in development. Marine Scotland brought together stakeholders from the fishing industry, coastal communities, science-based conservation organisations, universities and local authorities to discuss MPA management in regional forums across Scotland, after which options were put out for consultation. LINK's MTF has significant concerns about the management measures and argue that a zonal and restricted approach to management within the MPAs could mean business as usual rather than taking more ambitious steps to kickstart ecological recovery; the key benefit of enacting the legislation. Proposals that could allow scallop dredging and bottom trawling to continue to damage protected seabed habitats and other marine species within MPAs were the subject of campaign led by members. **Don't take the P out of MPAs** ran through the consultation period (to 2 February) with a [video](#) and online action explaining the long term benefits of adequate protection and enabling thousands of people to support the coalition's call to manage MPAs for recovery, avoiding more bureaucracy without benefits.

The consultation has closed, but the campaign is far from over. Public support will be vital for effective management of MPAs and LINK members will be working hard over the coming months to ensure that this growing voice in



support of progressive management is heard for the benefit of coastal communities that depend on healthy seas in the longer term.

**National marine planning** LINK's engagement with the National Marine Plan process continues in parallel. With this Plan we have a golden opportunity to create an effective, integrated planning system to monitor and plan for the combined impacts of all human activity on Scotland's marine environment – and to deliver the statutory duty to “protect and, where appropriate, enhance” it. As Calum Duncan (MCS, and MTF Convenor) put it in a LINK [article](#) for the Friends of the Scotsman; “we can have a plan that continues to pretend that the seas have room for unlimited growth, or we can have one that seeks to repair their health and restore their potential. It is not clear, currently, in what direction we are headed. A quick look at the evidence suggests serious confusion.”

The Plan was laid before Parliament at the end of 2014 and has gained political and media attention in recent weeks, in large part due to the thorough scrutiny of the Rural Affairs Climate Change & Environment Committee. Issuing a press statement describing the Plan as 'not fit for purpose', MSPs have written to the Cabinet Secretary with a report full of recommendations and issues for resolution.

LINK's members are taking a constructive role in the development of marine spatial planning by coordinating a workshop on 12th February: [How can marine spatial planning lead to a thriving natural environment for Scotland.](#) This event will facilitate timely thinking on how planning can, and must, deliver sustainable development and ecosystem enhancement for Scotland's seas. LINK has invited a wide range of contributors from those with an interest in landscapes, terrestrial planning, ecological restoration, environmental law, participative democracy and related areas. Contact Esther Brooker [esther@scotlink.org](mailto:esther@scotlink.org) if you would like to know more.

LINK was very pleased to get additional funding for the Marine project from the John Ellerman Foundation, complementing support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for a further two years.

You can keep up to date with developments on the Save Scottish Seas [website](#) and social media channels and help to spread the word by viewing and sharing the campaign video.

## **LINK Congress and AGM**

Eighty members and guests gathered in Perth on 27 November to hear presentations and discuss issues on the theme of *Environmental Development: Integrating, Mainstreaming, Raising the Game*. Professor Aubrey Manning appraised the impact of environmental NGOs

against the scale of action required across society. On the plus side, as the political mainstream flounders with attempts to get the growth agenda back on track, there are opportunities for LINK and others to push open the cracks. He encouraged more explicit use of the hard evidence for the natural world's beneficial impact on human health to make a more persuasive case with unengaged decision makers, and cited Planning Democracy's Equal Rights of Appeal campaign as a way to engage the wider public, as vast inequalities can galvanise people.

Mike Daniels (JMT), John Thomson (SCNP), Paul Walton (RSPB) and Calum Duncan (MCS) provided overviews of the Scottish Uplands, Lowlands, Urban and Marine environments, each with substantial needs and opportunities for environmental recovery, explored further in the group discussions which followed. A coordinated approach and integration of effort continue to be the perceived mainstay for getting progress, and there was considerable optimism that today's increased citizen engagement is an opportunity to build wider support for an environmentally sustainable future. Our thanks to the Crown Estate for sponsorship and to all who came and contributed.

At the AGM the following day, Helen Todd was elected Chair, and Sam Gardner to the Board. Other Honorary posts were confirmed: Tim Ambrose is Treasurer, Simon Jones is Vice-Chair, and Elizabeth Leighton and Dave Morris are new Honorary Fellows. Members were very pleased that Ross Finnie has agreed to stay on a fourth year as President while a successor is recruited over the course of this year. A 3% rise in membership subscriptions was agreed to help underpin core services, a solid indication of members' belief in the value of collective endeavours.

# News and Views from Members

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

## Dragons on the Hills

*Ruth Carruthers, Scottish Dragon Finders Project Manager*



Froglife's Scottish Dragon Finder project is now in full swing, starting year 2 of the project in January 2015. This 4.5 year project, part funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, is an amphibian and reptile conservation project engaging with people across Scotland through a range of events.

One of the many activities Froglife runs in Scotland is our Dragons on the Hills training workshops for outdoor enthusiasts. Amphibians and reptiles are highly under-recorded in the hills and wild areas of Scotland despite the fact that walking is the most popular Scottish outdoor pursuit and with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code allowing responsible land access across much of the country.

Our workshops aim to encourage the recording of sightings whilst in the remote areas of our country and in turn learn more about the distribution of reptiles and amphibians. Through recording sightings, people accessing the Scottish outdoors can help halt the decline of our amazing

species. In year 1 we completed two workshops, one of the Isle of Arran and one in Aberfoyle. Attendees learned how to identify different reptiles and amphibians and where best to spot them in the wild – this included an indoor presentation and finished with a walk to see some local wildlife!

Hill-walkers, climbers and the general public alike can submit their sightings through Froglife's free Dragon Finder smartphone app or online. Our app includes a key to identify native and non-native reptiles and amphibians and allows users to submit records using the GPS function of their phone for accurate locations. As users submit and identify records in the field, the chance of mis-identifying an animal is greatly decreased. All data is shared with local record centres and will be used to create a map of the records the project has received year by year.

To find out more about Dragons on the Hills workshops please visit [www.froglife.org/dragonfinder/scotland/dragons-hills](http://www.froglife.org/dragonfinder/scotland/dragons-hills) and to download the Dragon Finder app search for 'Dragon Finder' in your app store.

## For the Love Of....

*Gail Wilson, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Coordinator*



For the love of country walks and Scotland's beautiful seasons. For the love of the food on our plates. For the love of the Arctic and the Great Barrier Reef. For the love of all the things we care about, we're taking climate change seriously. And we're not alone.

Across the UK, organisations, businesses, members of the public and some famous faces are coming together to highlight the things they

care about that are, or will be, affected by rising global temperatures.

Many LINK members are involved, asking their supporters to take action on climate change, in the name of the things they love about the natural world. There will be a particular focus on how spring, and all of the wonderful nature that comes to life at that time of year, will be affected by climate change.

All of this is important because 2015 is set to be a huge year for the global climate movement. In Paris, in December 2015, global leaders are expected to conclude negotiations for a new global deal to tackle climate change and address its impacts.

As a country that has already committed to take ambitious action on climate change, Scotland has a key role to play in that movement. To make sure political leaders know there is strong public support for ambitious and binding commitments in Paris, we will show there is a large and diverse range of people who are concerned about this issue. We will help people connect climate change with the things that matter to them, and offer them opportunities to be part of the solution to this, the 'defining issue of our time'.

People across Scotland are already telling us about things they care about that are affected by climate change. In February, we'll be turning Valentine's Day green. There will be local events across Scotland and lots of activity on social media. You could use For The Love Of... on the 14/15<sup>th</sup> weekend to get people talking about what your organisation loves about Scotland's natural environment and how it is and will be affected by climate change. For more information on how your organisation can get involved email [info@stopclimatechaosscotland.org](mailto:info@stopclimatechaosscotland.org) or call 0131 243 2707.

What do you love? Share your ideas at [www.fortheloveof.org.uk](http://www.fortheloveof.org.uk) For the Love of... is a campaign by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. LINK members support the campaign and in particular LINK Wildlife Forum is actively engaging in it through Species Champion initiative and MSPs will be making Valentine messages for their species as part of it.

## **Raising Spirits: Allotments, Well-being and Community**

*Book Review by Alistair MacKinnon, member of Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society*

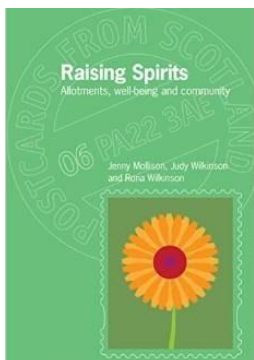
If you are at all interested in growing your own food, you'll know that at this time of year the seed catalogues have been out and the ground plans are being laid for the spring. Books are being referenced and innovative tips are sought. A good book to read at this point would be *'Raising Spirits: Allotments, Well-Being and Community'* by Jenny Mollison and Judy and Rona Wilkinson.

*Raising Spirits* is not just another allotment 'how to' guide. It explores the health, well-being, social, political and design aspects of Allotments without being preachy, with more than the occasional allotment gem of practicality, such as: Just what is the best use of 'household liquid activator'?

Ever since the inception of allotments over 123 years ago, there has always been the underlying thread of social justice on land provision for food; helping ensure that sites have survived for so long. While there have been different influences on the use of allotments at various times: the war and environmental concerns for example, the book brings all the various elements up to date, but doesn't forget why allotments were created. If you have more than a passing interest in the Community Empowerment Bill, the book gives the reader foundational information on allotments, a major section within the Bill.

According to the commissioning editor, the books in this series are meant to be quick, but knowledgeable reads, based on experience. *Raising Spirits* is just that: 80+ years of allotment wisdom in Scotland, from the 3 authors, condensed into a neat hand sized volume.

This wee book now sits alongside *Organic Gardening* by LD Hills and Holmgren's *Permaculture Principles and Pathways*. Very useful for when the nights are long and I need some inspiration on the 'why' of an allotment.



*Raising Spirits: Allotments, well-being and community.* Mollison J, Wilkinson J, and Wilkinson R. Postcards from Scotland Series. Argyll Publishing. [www.postcardsfromscotland.co.uk](http://www.postcardsfromscotland.co.uk)

### Looking for Support – thoughts after the 2014 LINK Congress

*Alastair Lavery, LINK Honorary Fellow*

In 2011 I was scanning the results of some SNH research into the outdoor activities of young people in Scotland. One table reported on participation in a range of activities in the last 12 months. For example, 53% had been cycling or mountain biking, 20% skiing or snowboarding. I was startled by an 8% bird or wildlife watching – much higher for young people (or any age group) than I would have expected. The researchers scarcely noticed the figure, dismissing this surprising number in a “below 10%” list in the discussion. Interpreting public opinion surveys needs care and an awareness of the context of the question. The researchers were not involved enough with wildlife to know that the participation they had found was greater than those working in the field would have expected. This wasn't a low participation to be dismissed, it was an unexpected platform to build on.

I was struck by a pessimism at this year's LINK Congress in Perth – there were many references in talks and in general conversations on the need to build more public support, to get the public on side, to get the voting public to give a higher

weighting to the environment in the political decisions they take. There is a link with public opinion polling. We have years of opinion polling on the environment at local, Scottish, UK and European level. These all show three constants; concern about the environment is high, that it has risen historically and is now at or near its highest.

One example, the Eurobarometer. It's up-to-date and it's easily available online. This survey uses standard questions across all the countries of the EU. The current format was used in 2011 and 2014. Unfortunately Scotland doesn't get a separate entry, but other research hasn't shown differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

A couple of headline numbers from 2014. Asked how important the environment is to them, 95% across the EU say it is important, 94% in the UK. The EU figure is up slightly from 2011, the UK percentage constant. 5% in the UK say that the environment is not important to them. Asked if they can play a role in protecting the environment, the EU figure for “agree” is 85%, the UK 87% and the UK “disagrees” 10%. Tellingly, EU and UK agreement on this action-based question are down slightly; more hopelessness?

It is always possible and usually easy to find reasons for dismissing polls. The 2014 referendum provides endless examples of polls dismissed because of error, bias, momentum, poor questions and more. But so many polls on environmental attitudes build a similar picture. The conclusion must be that the UK and Scottish public are concerned about the environment, putting it in the same league as the economy, defence and health. It may not be top of the league but it's there. The Eurobarometer has questions on the relative importance of environmental, economic and social issues. But that will have to be homework.

Why is this important to us? If we assume that the public don't care then it will affect how we frame our argument. We will be in danger for going back to basics in every argument, and boring people. We will be in danger of sounding superior – we know how important all this is but you have missed the point. We will not base our arguments on the direct issue we are campaigning on but dissipate it in some general awareness raising.

Why do we get into this negative frame of mind? I think two factors are important. The environment matters less to many than it does to us, and this can look as though they are not aware, or don't care, at all. And most importantly, our work brings us disproportionately into contact with the minority to whom the environment isn't important – the 5% in the 2014 Eurobarometer. We shouldn't allow ourselves to be over-influenced by a minority.

**Sources:** European Commission (2014). *Special Eurobarometer 416. Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment*. Online: at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_416\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_416_en.pdf)

Scottish Natural Heritage (2011). *Enjoying the outdoors – attitudes and behaviour of young people in Scotland*. Commissioned Report 470. Online at [http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/470.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/470.pdf)

**Planning : The People's Perspective – conference 25 April 10-4.30 Glasgow**  
*Sue Hamilton, Planning Democracy*



Have you been, or might you be about to be, affected by planning decisions? Do you have concerns about the way the Scottish planning system works? Are you a professional interested

in seeing an alternative viewpoint to that normally presented at planning conferences?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then you will be interested in this conference.

At the conference you will

- hear how well the planning system works - or doesn't work - for communities that are faced with major development on their doorstep
- meet other people and exchange experiences of planning – through participation in 'community speed dating'!
- join forces with others to create a louder voice for communities in planning
- work with Planning Democracy to campaign for a fairer planning system, including an Equal Right of Appeal
- have conversations with sympathetic professionals
- attend workshops with experts on a variety of planning topics.

Planning Democracy believes that there is a relative absence of the public voice in fora where planning is debated and discussed. This conference aims, in particular, to involve individuals and communities in that debate. We welcome everyone, including professionals and decision-makers, to join us in the less-heard side of the planning story.

The conference will cost £10 for individuals and community group members and £20 for planners and professionals. To register your interest, email [info@planningdemocracy.org.uk](mailto:info@planningdemocracy.org.uk) with your name, address, phone number and organisation (if applicable). We will reply with more details and payment options – you can pay by cheque, debit/credit card, bank transfer or paypal.

For information about Planning Democracy go to <http://www.planningdemocracy.org.uk> Further questions? Ring 0781 387 4805.

## Scottish Environment Week

*Sharing Scotland* is the theme of Scottish Environment Week from 16-19 February in the Scottish Parliament. The [programme of events](#) highlights all the resident and visiting species we share our environment with and the human duty to share the space fairly and responsibly. It is 10 years since LINK began this initiative to bring the valuable work that members and partners routinely do throughout the year closer to decision makers. Highlights include the popular and increasingly competitive pub quiz, a marine touch tank with the chance to get up close and personal with all manner of things underwater, Edinburgh's Zoo's *Wild About Scotland* bus, as well as our star speaker, landscape photographer Colin Prior, at the main evening reception.

There will be seminars on Whales & Dolphins around Scotland, the Historic Environment, the Urban Environment, and Food, at lunchtimes from Monday to Thursday, as well as more informal drop-in sessions. We are very grateful to our MSP sponsors for hosting the various events over the Week: Sarah Boyack, David Stewart, Liam McArthur, Alison Johnstone and Rob Gibson; and to Historic Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority, and Calor Scotland, for their support.

**Agriculture** Members of the task force (TF) met in November to discuss forward strategy after their close and often frustrating engagement with CAP related processes, with few environmental gains resulting from that effort. They plan to work on a wider food agenda for greater influence on the next round of CAP.

**Land Reform and Land Use** Members met in December to learn about Government's plans for Land Reform legislation and its second Land Use Strategy to be laid before Parliament in 2016. In LINK's view these two processes should be more closely related. Member bodies' interest in Land

Reform is primarily in the sustainability of how the land is used, and legislation will be an opportunity to take forward the ambition of the first Land Use Strategy. Its change-driving potential is reduced by sitting alongside, rather than influencing, other sectoral strategies and the CAP itself. LINK has submitted a comprehensive response to the consultation on Land Reform, supported by 9 member bodies. LINK will be closely engaging with the development of the second LUS, ably led by Vicki Swales (RSPB).

**Scotland and the Carbon Bubble** This LINK [report](#) was published on 17 December. The Economics TF commissioned research from consultant Jess Pepper as part of its work in coming to a greater understanding of the economic drivers of our society and their impact on the environment. The report investigates the dangers of the 'carbon bubble' - the systematic over-valuation of fossil-fuel reserves in the face of climate risk, and how this might affect Scotland. There has been good media coverage of the report in relation to the slump in oil prices, disinvestment in fossil fuels on ethical grounds and exploitation of new sources of fossil fuels. Following Government's announcement on 28 January of a moratorium on fracking and a public consultation on unconventional oil and gas, LINK plans to respond.

Phoebe Cochrane, LINK's Sustainable Economics Officer, has been busy organising a seminar for members for 18 February, *Economic Policy and the Environment: Opportunities for LINK*. The aim is to increase understanding about how economic policies affect the environment and ways in which ENGOs can engage in economic debates in their own work. The workshop presentations will include real case studies to demonstrate examples of practice and there will be lots of time for discussion.

Phoebe has been working on a paper for LINK to take to the National Performance Framework (NPF) Roundtable when it reconvenes, which

builds on the joint [briefing](#) by LINK and partners submitted to the Roundtable in 2014. It suggests that sustainable development principles should guide the structure of the NPF as a whole, and makes specific suggestions about how indicators can be derived from that, concentrating on indicators for 'environmental limits', 'wellbeing' and 'economic activity'.

**Wildlife Crime** LINK's report on wildlife crime enforcement in Scotland, *Natural Injustice, papers 1 and 2*, will be published very shortly. Please keep an eye on the website, or get in touch if you want to be kept informed.

**Freshwater** With enthusiastic support of TF members, Tom Leatherland (SWLG) has stepped up to the plate to reconvene the Freshwater TF. Its focus is responding to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of [River Basin Management Plans](#) with its 4 concurrent and linked consultations, closing on 9 April.

**Species champions** This LINK initiative, asking MSPs to lend their political support to an iconic or endangered Scottish species, has grown steadily, with 74 MSPs signed up as champions. Members of the Wildlife Forum, which oversees the campaign, were delighted to gain a Highly Recommended award for Species Champions at the Nature of Scotland awards in November. Rea Cris, LINK's Advocacy Officer, assists the Forum as time allows. Given the opportunities for developing it further, the Forum is actively fundraising for more dedicated support. For the moment, the focus continues to be on building the support base of MSPs and carrying that support through to the post 2016 Parliament.

**Environmental Governance** The Governance Group organised a seminar (30 October) reviewing the wider political situation and opportunities for environmental benefit following

the Referendum. Discussions informed LINK's [submission](#) to the Smith Commission, and agreed procedures for contributing views to the political parties ahead of the 2015 election, based on LINK's [Referendum Challenge](#) and [Governance Matters](#) reports.

**Scottish Environmental Fundraisers Forum** December's meeting was hosted by Froglife. Discussions covered SRDP funding, the plastic bag tax, member updates, and a presentation on SSE's Regional Funds.

**Liaison meetings** Trustees and staff met SNH on 26 January, for updates and discussion of goals. SNH's Protected Areas Review was mentioned as one area for future focussed discussion. Chair and trustees met CNPA in January to discuss plans and contexts. A meeting with Scottish Government discussed the mechanics of liaison between Ministers and members, with LINK asking for more informal opportunities and better access to the Cabinet Secretary for appropriate issues. LINK members will meet Aileen McLeod, the new Minister, on 16 February to introduce the breadth of environmental interest and expertise within the network, supported by half a million people.

**Membership** The John Muir Trust has decided to withdraw from LINK from the end of March. JMT has made a great contribution to LINK's work over many years. We are grateful for that and anticipate, given the broad range of issues in common, that there will be continued joint work by ENGOS and JMT in future.

**For Further Information** about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit [www.scotlink.org](http://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](mailto:information@scotlink.org)

*Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is funded by subscriptions from its member bodies and Supporters, and is sponsored by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government, grants from charitable trusts including the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Friends Provident Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation, The Gannochy Trust and the Craignish Trust. LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company No. SC 250899. LINK is a Scottish Charity SCN 000296. Printed on Image recycled paper.*