

'Greener Scotland' Executive Debate 13 June 2007

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 36 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. We welcome this debate on 'a greener Scotland'. Managing our environment well is integral to successful governance, as a rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage is the cornerstone of a high quality sustainable economy. If done properly, looking after our environment and preserving our natural resources can enhance economic activity. For example, maintaining healthy seas ensures a sustainable fishing industry and enhances wildlife tourism. On land, the Scottish countryside is a major attraction for tourists and brings in £3.6 billion in revenue annually. In some cases, such as tackling climate change, investment is essential and can kick start new industries – such as the renewable energy industry.

Climate change is the biggest challenge we face. In Scotland, it will mean more unpredictable weather, more storms and rising seas, leading to floods, drought, failed harvests, the spread of disease and whole species being wiped out. We have only a small window of opportunity in which to act to prevent the worst consequences of climate change. The Scottish Parliament must act consensually to ensure Scotland leads the world in tackling climate change in a sustainable manner. LINK would like to see:

Climate Change Bill with mandatory carbon reduction targets of at least 3% per annum and also a long-term target to cut emissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050.

- Legislation must be the cornerstone on which a realistic strategy to tackle climate change in Scotland can be based.
- Annual targets are essential to guarantee steady, year-on-year cuts in carbon emissions, and to ensure that ambitious long-term targets can be achieved.
- A climate change strategy must take a sustainable approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation that conserves and enhances the environment.

Targets for energy saving in buildings and energy efficiency targets for new build

- Cutting our energy use through energy conservation and energy efficiency is essential if we are to tackle climate change with the minimum environmental and social impact.
- Home efficiency and energy saving in buildings is one area in which energy conservation can make a big difference. Evidence suggests that the economic potential exists to reduce domestic energy use by 37%, and emissions by 41% - which can only benefit the consumer as well as the environment.
- LINK's election campaign called for 40,000 new homes to be built or renovated every year using super insulation so that they have little or no heating bills and can meet part of their own energy needs using green technologies by 2010.

An energy efficiency strategy for Scotland

- An energy efficiency strategy was promised in the last parliament. We trust that following the recent consultation, a strategy will be forthcoming in the near future.

The public sector leading the way in best practice Government – with the opportunity of making a big green impact

LINK welcomes recognition in all party manifestos that the public sector has an important role to play in developing sustainable practices.

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- LINK calls for the Soil Association's 'Food for Life' initiative, which has been piloted successfully in East Ayrshire, to be rolled out in schools and hospitals across Scotland. All 'Food for Life' schools must provide food that is 30% organic, 50% locally produced and 75% unprocessed.

Achieving a zero waste Scotland

Materials and waste make up 38% of our global footprint. Whilst household waste recycling is at last increasing, a lack of progress in actually reducing the amount of waste we produce risks undermining efforts to improve Scotland's record on waste. Similarly greater attention needs to be directed towards tackling business and industry waste. Such efforts would cut pollution, save money and create business opportunities.

LINK would like to see:

- Progress towards a zero waste Scotland, with higher municipal recycling rates of at least 70% by 2020 and stronger commitments to making less rubbish in the first place
- Avoidance of new large scale incinerator or 'energy from waste' facilities as these risk stimulating waste generation and undermining efforts to increase recycling.

Renewed commitment to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

Biodiversity is the earth's life support system – we need it so that our environment can adapt to new conditions. However, it is in global decline because of human activity that has taken the planet to the edge of a massive wave of species extinctions, with huge potential consequences for our own and the planet's well-being. We need to stop the loss of biodiversity in order to help our environment adapt to its greatest challenge – climate change.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 provided a sound legislative basis for protecting and enhancing Scotland's biodiversity through the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. But implementation has been slow, and with fewer than 1000 days to meet the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss, species and habitats continue to decline. LINK calls for:

- Renewed efforts to protect Scotland's biodiversity during the next round of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Plans for 2008 – 2010.
- Measures to ensure that the laudable biodiversity duty of the Nature Conservation Act is understood and acted upon by all public bodies.

A marine bill for Scotland

Scotland's seas and marine biodiversity benefit both tourism and the coastal communities who make their living from the sea. An example of biodiversity decline, marine ecosystems are struggling, with 16 out of 21 Scottish fish stocks beyond sustainable limits.

Scotland's seas are currently managed using a confusing array of marine legislation with no overall forward plan and no lead body to implement plans and deal with enforcement.

- LINK calls for a marine bill for Scotland to complement the expected UK marine legislation; this must include a marine spatial planning system and must establish nationally important marine sites in Scottish waters to protect marine species and habitats of national importance, as agreed through the recent Advisory Group on Marine and Coastal Strategy process.

For further information on the work of Scottish Environment LINK please contact:

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