

Scottish Environment Week 2008



EVALUATION REPORT 2008

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1. Introduction

Scottish Environment Week 2008 on the theme *A Climate for Change; enabling sustainable livelihoods* marked the fourth year that the Week has run in the Scottish Parliament, and demonstrated the high importance that is now attached to the Week, by parliamentarians, environmental NGOs and other sectors.

While the Week has grown both in popularity and recognition, it has also developed over the years with events branching out beyond Holyrood and reaching new audiences; demonstrated this year in the second Public Event at the Botanic Gardens and in the partnership with National Grid in organising a Business Breakfast Seminar.

2. Programme for the Week

Thursday 31st January

Public Event

The week began with a lively public event kindly hosted by RBGE at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. A wide-ranging audience of 70 people braved the terrible weather to join a panel-led discussion on the theme; learning for our future: sustainable development and education.

The meeting, organised by LINK in partnership with the Sustainable Development Education Network, was chaired by Simon Pepper OBE. Alastair Lavery, Head of Education at RSPB, set out what the situation is today - Scotland has responded well to meet the call to action by the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable



Ann Finlayson, Education Commissioner with the UK Sustainable Development Commission

Development (2004-2014), we have a curriculum with the capacity to deliver sustainable development education in schools and it is very encouraging that over 95% of Scotland's schools are involved in the Eco-Schools programme, and that some of our universities are among the greenest in the UK.

Ann Finlayson, Education Commissioner with the UK Sustainable Development Commission, set out some challenges for Scotland based on developments in the rest of the UK and internationally.

Gerard Hastings, Director of the Institute of Social Marketing at Stirling University, gave an insight into the role that social marketing might play in incorporating sustainable development education principles more fully across society. Lively discussions followed involving the considerable expertise within the audience which continued beyond the scheduled finish time. The event was also useful for informal networking and there were displays from LINK and SEW sponsors.

Tuesday 5th February

Landscape Seminar

LINK's Landscape Task Force held a competition for MSPs in autumn 2007 to raise awareness of issues relating to landscape. The results of the Living Landscapes competition were unveiled at the seminar in Holyrood on 5 February. Willie Coffey MSP was the winner with his evocative description of Loudoun Valley, Ayrshire. Twenty-nine MSPs entered the competition with a photo of their best loved Scottish landscape and a brief description of what made it so special to them. Runners up were Ted Brocklebank MSP with the Cuillin, and Mike Pringle MSP for the view of Edinburgh from the Royal Observatory. The competition aimed to raise awareness of the importance of Scotland's urban and rural landscapes to people and of the need to ensure they are adequately protected. All the entries were on display during the Week and are now available from the LINK website (www.scotlink.org).



Willie Coffey MSP who won with a description of the Loudoun Valley

A DVD presentation, commissioned by LINK's Landscape Task Force, highlighting the values of Scotland's landscapes was shown at the prize-giving, and there was the opportunity to discuss the issues informally. The competition was an innovative and popular way of drawing a diverse selection of MSPs' attention to the issues.

Six MSPs and three researchers attended the event which included an appearance by the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment. The competition generated excellent media coverage, airing issues on which LINK and other members of the Scottish Landscape Forum agree: that the European Landscape Convention needs to be translated into government policy, and that landscape is a fundamental concern for people. The DVD was circulated widely to MSPs and other interests.

Marine Seminar

Peter Peacock MSP hosted an evening seminar involving sixty stakeholders including MSPs and researchers, industry and other delegates, looking ahead to marine legislation and exploring the measures needed to safeguard marine life, resources and our coastal communities for the future. Mr Peacock outlined the process the legislation is expected to take, and introduced the premier of *Save our Seas*, a short film illustrating the issues, now available from the campaign website (www.savescottishseas.org).



Peter Peacock MSP addresses the Marine Seminar

Calum Duncan, Marine Conservation Society, and convenor of LINK's Marine Task Force, welcomed the DVD as a suitable celebration of our seas and set out LINK's vision of what a Scottish marine bill must deliver. Mr Duncan emphasised that Scotland is starting from a position where these resources are already much diminished and the importance of 'getting it right', including restoration and enhancement, for the long-term future.

Bill McDermott, a shellfish farmer from Adnamurchan, spoke passionately about the links between damage to the marine environment and the future of the coastal communities which depend on the sea, advocating particularly the potential role of 'no take' zones; future generations, he pointed out, depend on our getting this legislation right.

Wednesday 6th February

Business Breakfast

Planning for Sustainable Livelihoods was the theme of Wednesday's Business Breakfast held in partnership with National Grid and chaired by Patrick Harvie MSP. John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, indicated at the start that he would be leaving before breakfast owing to the first SNP Budget being presented to government later that day. Even so, a good debate ensued with the group of business representatives, exploring issues of climate change, energy generation and agriculture. So engaging was the debate that Mr Swinney set aside his pressing schedule, staying well into the breakfast. The event was a successful means of attracting an influential business audience, and the Cabinet Secretary, for discussion of issues relating to environmental sustainability.

Sustainable Travel Seminar

Nanette Milne MSP sponsored an event on active travel run by the Ramblers Association and Sustrans. *Get Active, Keep Active* showed how solid, ongoing investment in planning and designing for active travel, such as creating comprehensive path networks in, around and between communities can help bring about substantial changes in the way we travel. Parliamentarians (including five MSPs) and invited guests from the health, sustainable travel and environment sectors heard about innovative promotion campaigns which are delivering positive changes in attitudes.

Thursday 7th February

Rural Development Funding Seminar

Making the best use of Rural Development Funding, hosted by Jim Hume MSP was fairly buzzing with MSPs from all parties, researchers, Scottish Government, and agriculture stakeholders. The sixty-five guests enjoyed lunch and the colourful posters on display from nine organisations including NFUS, FWAG, the Crofters Foundation, the Scottish Rural Property Business Association and LINK members, illustrating a range of environmental, social and economic benefits achievable through well-targeted funding. The event was organised by LINK's Agriculture Task Force. The posters are available on the LINK website.

Scottish Environment Week Reception

Thursday evening's reception was a lively gathering of 150 members and guests. Environment Minister Michael Russell deputised for Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead. He spoke of rising awareness of environmental issues across the Parliament, driven largely by the climate change challenge, and commended the role of the Week in raising awareness among MSPs outwith the 'usual suspects'. He affirmed that the Week is an expected fixture in the Parliamentary calendar.

Sarah Boyack MSP who has sponsored the Week since 2004 endorsed this view, observed that environmental advocacy needs to be maintained and extended to all parliamentary committees and encouraged LINK members to continue to hold all the political parties in Scotland to account.

John Mayhew, LINK Chair, thanked the Parliament for its continued support for Environment Week and indicated LINK's intention to work positively with government to influence public behaviour in the context of climate change while continuing to challenge government to provide the framework.

Excellent 'get together' on Thursday. What a tribute to LINK's work over the years - I was amazed at the number of people who came and the variety of interests they must have represented.

Jenny Mollison, SAGS

3. Press Coverage

Scottish Environment Week achieved some significant press coverage, with a feature in Holyrood magazine focused on marine issues and promoting the marine seminar, and the landscape competition achieving both a double-page feature in the Scotsman and a ten-minute feature on BBC Radio Scotland.

Sarah Boyack MSP, the Week's parliamentary sponsor, wrote a piece for the Edinburgh University student paper describing the history and importance of the Week to parliamentarians. In addition, the Week's events were listed in Holyrood magazine, The List, The Skinny, Third Force News and Edinburgh Evening News.

The LINK stand, with information about the work of all of the sponsors, was manned throughout the Week by LINK members and staff. About half of all MSPs and their staff visited the LINK Information Desk in the Upper Garden Lobby during the week. LINK publications, DVD and leaflets were available and a photo exhibition off the Garden Lobby illustrated biodiversity issues; this will be 'on tour' to organisations able to display the pictures throughout the coming year.

LINK's parliamentary office dealt with several requests from MSPs for constituency visits to environmental projects. LINK member organisations and partners were encouraged to contact MSPs directly to organise these visits, so it is not possible to report on the full extent of these activities.

4. Evaluation

A thorough evaluation has followed, examining the Week's success over a number of different areas and taking on board comments from sponsors as well as LINK Members and Board, events organisers and speakers. Feedback is on the whole very positive and a number of useful suggestions for future years were flagged up: in particular, that rather than a specific theme each year, the Week's theme should simply be 'celebrating Scotland's environment'.

Events organisers were generally pleased by the response to invitations and considered that this year's approach of more informal networking, and less formal speeches, worked well for everyone. The value of a wide range of organisations working together to celebrate the environment, away from the detailed policy discussion forums where stakeholders more usually meet, was noted by guests at the agriculture and marine events.

The level of engagement you were able to achieve with MSPs is extraordinary, and the scale of what was offered in the week is remarkable.

Michael Scott OBE

5. Acknowledgements

Scottish Environment LINK appreciates the support from the funding partners and contributors given below.

Sponsors:

Historic Scotland
Keep Scotland Beautiful
National Grid (supporting the Business Breakfast).
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Natural Heritage

Event Hosts:

Sarah Boyack MSP (Week), Rob Gibson MSP (Landscape), Patrick Harvie MSP (Business Breakfast), Jim Hume MSP (Rural Development Funding), Nanette Milne MSP (Active Travel), Peter Peacock MSP (Marine).

Event Organisers:

LINK Agriculture Taskforce, Biodiversity Taskforce, Landscape Taskforce, Planning Taskforce, Ramblers Association and Sustrans and LINK member organizations.

Public Event:

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for hosting, and speakers: Simon Pepper, Ann Finlayson, Gerard Hastings, Alastair Lavery.