

News Release

Embargoed until: 00.01am on Wednesday, 27th June, 2012

Environment community issues Referendum Challenge

NOW IS THE TIME FOR SUBSTANCE

Scottish Environment LINK today issued a major policy challenge to the constitutional campaigns – tell us why YOUR option for change best meets OUR aspirations? In a leaflet, LINK has published its 10 point vision of a sustainable Scotland – including sustainable development to improve people’s lives, fighting climate change and protecting and enhancing our natural heritage. The alliance of 34 environmental and heritage organisations wants the constitutional campaigns to respond by explaining the substantive impact of their proposals for constitutional change.

Launching Referendum Challenge, Deborah Long, LINK Chair, said: **“We challenge the campaigns for each of the constitutional options to tell us how and why their preferred option will best meet each of the 10 aspirations that make up the type of Scotland we want to see in future. We will publish the replies we receive on our website so that our members and other interested citizens can read them before they make their decision on Referendum Day.”**

The Chair went on: “We don’t know exactly when this day will be, nor the options on offer, who will be able to vote, or who will be the ‘referee’ for the referendum – but we ask that these technical issues be settled in the near future so that the debate can be concentrated on the serious, substantive issues outlined here.”

The leaflet was launched at Duddingston Loch nature reserve – in the centre of the capital but on the other side of Arthur’s Seat from the Holyrood Parliament. Lloyd Austin, LINK Board Member, said: **“We have heard, from all sides at Holyrood, how their favoured constitutional options will improve Scotland. Now we want the lofty words spelt out in detail for the whole country. We all want to see a flourishing Scotland – for people and for the environment. However, we want to examine the details of the various schemes, and to assess the consequences of all the constitutional options for these outcomes. ”**

One of the 10 aspirations in LINK’s manifesto is genuinely participative democracy. In pursuit of this LINK also launched today **“Governance Matters – Join the Debate”**. This short paper sets out the conclusions reached in a review of the methods and processes used across government in Scotland since 1999. It suggests that major failures in public participation and scrutiny of government require urgent attention.

LINK intends to organise a major conference in Autumn 2012 to open up discussion of improving our governance arrangements to the whole of the wider Scottish policy community. Eila Macqueen, Vice-Chair, said of the paper and the conference: **“Regardless of the outcome of the referendum, governance matters, now and in**

future. We want to discuss ways of improving Parliament’s scrutiny of the executive branch. We need to look at improving the ways the Scottish Government consults people and communities of place and interest. We need to keep our eyes on what is happening in the Courts - and it’s time to examine the ways civic discussion and debate in our country is organised.”

Ends

Contact details

For more information please contact Andy Myles on 0131 225 4345 or on 07834 485 760 or at andy@scotlink.org

Editors’ Notes

(1) The Referendum Challenge leaflet is available on line at:

<http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/other/LINKReferendumChallenge2012.pdf>

(2) Governance Matters – Join the Debate is available online at:

<http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/other/LINKGovernMattersSum2012.pdf>

(3) Scottish Environment LINK is the network for Scotland’s voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has over 30 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage and supported by around 500,000 people. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

(4) The formal launch of the documents will be held on Wednesday, 27th June, 2012 at 10.00am at Duddingston Loch nature reserve, Edinburgh (please phone for map).