

The LINK Newsletter

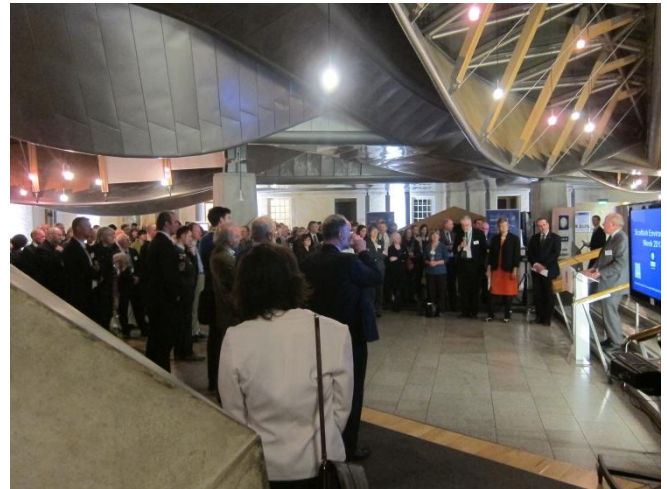


Scottish Environment LINK update Spring 2013

Scotland's Environment Revealed

Scottish Environment Week was celebrated in February with two seminars in Parliament, a reception in the Garden Lobby, a pub quiz and a menu of constituency visits across Scotland hosted by member bodies for MSPs, researchers and families. Those attending the seminars, *The Land Revealed* (sponsor Rob Gibson MSP) and *The Sea Revealed* (sponsor Liam McArthur MSP), heard short [presentations](#) on recent research. *The Land Revealed* covered scenarios for Scotland's landscapes looking 50 years ahead (National Trust for Scotland) to assembling a comprehensive record of what we know of Scotland's past (Scottish Archaeological Research Framework), and explored the prospects for one species - the chequered skipper butterfly (Butterfly Conservation).

The Sea Revealed (picture below) featured monitoring and recording of life below the waves through Seasearch (Marine Conservation Society), seabird tracking studies (the Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment RSPB and partners) and archaeological sites threatened by coastal erosion (Archaeology Scotland and the SCAPE Trust). Thanks to Historic Scotland for supporting both these seminars and to FAME for support of *The Sea Revealed*.



Wednesday's reception (pictured), supported by Scotland's National Parks and sponsored by Claudia Beamish MSP, was the network's biggest annual gathering of members and guests with MSPs and researchers. Speeches from Claudia Beamish MSP, Minister Paul Wheelhouse MSP, and LINK President Ross Finnie underlined the role of Scotland's biodiversity for our well-being and economic health. The pub-quiz, sponsored by Jamie McGrigor MSP, was held on Thursday evening with the cultural heritage team "We know where the bodies are" declared the winners. Thanks to Calor Scotland for support and to Scottish Natural Heritage for support of the week overall.

Members' Annual Congress

Congress on 22 November was an opportunity for the environmental NGOs and representatives of the business sector to explore how we can work better together for Scotland's environment. One issue that quickly emerged was the lack of a civic space for such discussions, and the hope expressed that this event was the beginning of a process to encourage both sectors to take forward some of the good ideas being discussed. The workshops: on Food and drink, Transport, Energy, and 'Drivers for change' were



lively, each jointly led by LINK and business sector facilitators. They identified areas where clarification of the environmental needs and resources available would be valuable; where joint advocacy might be effective, with recognition that there are issues that continue to cause conflict between the sectors though which should not otherwise impede progressive collaboration. By the close there was a strong feeling that there is more of a common agenda than was at first anticipated, and that with goodwill and some refocusing from both sectors we can make real progress. LINK aims to facilitate some follow-up meetings to keep this ball rolling.



We are grateful to all who took part, particularly to those from the 2020 group and LINK who took a lead role; Ian Marchant, Helen Todd, Gordon McGregor, John Mayhew, Deborah Long, Simon Pepper, Sarah Longair, Andrew Millson, Vicki Swales, James Withers and Ian Findlay. A [report](#) is available on the website.

25th Annual General Meeting

There was an excellent turnout for LINK's AGM and strategic planning meeting on 23 November at the Birnam Institute, with many participants enlivened by the ceilidh dancing to celebrate our 25th anniversary the previous evening. We were very pleased to welcome Mandy Orr as a new trustee. She is a professional fundraiser and is helping us to strategically sharpen our approach. Beryl Leatherland was elected to the Board. With long experience of engagement in LINK's taskforces and in the governance of several NGOs, she has landscape and recreation, planning and fundraising experience.

Simon Jones was also elected. His experience is primarily in reserve and species management across the UK for over 20 years, and he has led the Scottish Beaver Trial since 2008. Members thanked outgoing Vice-Chair Eila Macqueen both for her recent term as VC, and her previous service on the funding sub-group. Members also thanked Jonny Hughes, outgoing trustee, and the network will continue to draw on his expertise in international policy issues, IUCN in particular. Members reflected on the year's successes, lessons and challenges ahead, strongly endorsing the overarching work on [economics](#) and [governance](#).

Wildlife Forum - species champions

Building on the *Inspire Environment* event and *Wildlife Proclamation* covered in the [previous newsletter](#) the Wildlife Forum have been encouraging MSPs to become champions of Scotland's species, some iconic like the wildcat or golden eagle, and some that are less celebrated, though vital for healthy ecosystems. Kudos to those MSPs championing the pond mud snail, the narrow-headed ant, and rusty bog-moss, as well as the bottle nosed dolphin, wildcat, and house sparrow. The full list of species awaiting their champions are on the [website](#), also a list of MSPs who are recruited. Members are delighted that MSPs are keen to take part (32 champions enlisted at 6 March) as it is generating a lot of media interest and so raising the profile of many less well-known species and the threats they face. Thanks to David Stewart MSP (pictured centre, with LINK members) who in January hosted a meeting in the Parliament for the Wildlife Forum members and MSPs signed up to the Wildlife Proclamation. You can keep up with progress on the website and contact an MSP to alert them to suitable species for their constituency.



News and Views from Members

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

Ashes to Ashes – Chalara ash dieback

Andrew Fairbairn

Policy & Communications Manager

Woodland Trust Scotland



Chalara ash dieback is a serious disease which has the potential to cause the loss of up to 90% of our ash trees. The impact could be disastrous for the landscape and the environment in terms of the high ecological value of ash. Dieback is caused by a fungus, *Chalara fraxinea*. It causes leaf loss and crown die back and usually leads to the death of infected trees (symptom guide at www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara). According to government figures, there are 5,000 hectares of pure ashwood in Scotland but it is a significant component of other mixed broadleaved woods (62,000 hectares) and common in parks and gardens.

The disease is thought to have originated in the far east with the first European record noted in Poland in 1992. By November 2010 it had been recorded in 22 countries across Europe and was first found in the UK in early 2012. How and when it reached our shores is up for debate. It is known that infected ash trees have been imported from Holland and planted here but there is a strong possibility it also reached the UK by natural means. Chalara fraxinea has spread across Europe at a rate of 20-30km per year, by fungal spores carried in the wind, mist and rain. The map <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara#Distribution> of known infections in the UK shows clusters of infected sites found in the wider environment along the east coast of the country. It would be rational to surmise from this that these east coast clusters have arrived here naturally and quite possibly have been in existence for some time without being detected.

The UK Government brought forward a plant health order banning imports and movement of ash trees on 29th October 2012 in an attempt to stem the flow of

infected trees coming into Britain. Subsequently, the Scottish Government has agreed an interim control plan for the next few months, before the infectious stage of the disease becomes active.

As this article is written there are 26 confirmed and many potential cases of ash dieback in Scotland, but is this the only tree related pest or disease we should be concerned about? The answer to that is a resounding NO. The Forestry Commission's list of 'top' pest and disease threats already in Britain is a long one. Not all of these are present in Scotland, however, of the 15 listed some are familiar, for example, Dothistroma needle blight and Pine tree lappet moth affect pine trees including Scots pine and Phytophthora ramorum is increasingly affecting larch.

Observed climatic trends show a change towards warmer and wetter weather that is quite possibly enabling new pests and diseases to thrive in the UK where previously the conditions may not have been suitable. Adapting to future climatic change will mean adapting to the existence of tree related diseases. In addition, it is hard to ignore the risks involved in indulging in the global trade of horticultural plants, trees and timber products. The UK is unsurprisingly among Europe's largest importers of timber products, with 85% of domestic demand coming from overseas. So the risk of new pests and diseases arriving on our doorstep remains high.

So what can be done? The first thing to do is to try and limit the impact of those that are already here. The Woodland Trust is working closely with the Forestry Commission and many other stakeholders to use research and experience from around the globe to minimise the effect. The Trust will organise an international conference in 2013 to agree an action plan on the way forward. We plan to work with tree nurseries to ensure that all of our planting stock is grown in non-affected areas within the UK. And we aim to involve the public, specialists and scientists in a

monitoring project to ensure that the extent of the disease is known and acted upon.

Alongside this, some form of international regulation on the movement of disease free plants, trees and timber products will be required if the risk of introducing new pests and diseases is to be reduced.

How can *you* help? It is known from mainland Europe that the ash trees with most resistance to Chalara ash dieback are the old growth trees. The ancient and veteran ash appear to be less affected. There is some hope that seed from resistant trees will enable ash to remain a part of our landscape. So we need to know where such trees are. The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt has 300 old and gnarled ash trees already recorded but there must be many more out there. To make a record - a grid reference, girth at 1.5m and a photograph are required, so if you know of any old ash trees I would really like to hear about them!

For more information: www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk
andrewfairbairn@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Explore ... Scotland's Protected Places

Stewart Pritchard
Scottish Natural Heritage



Scotland's Protected Places is a new website www.scotlandspreservedplaces.gov.uk to encourage the people of Scotland and our visitors to get out and explore the best of our natural and cultural heritage, much of which is found in Scotland's protected places.

This is a joint contribution by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland, in the Year of Natural Scotland, to raising awareness of our protected places for nature and history and supporting socio-economic development based on sustainable use of these special places.

The website provides a map-based directory to over 500 places to visit and a brief overview of Scotland's heritage. For those looking for more details of designations there are links to the SNH and HS websites.

We are looking to increase the number of sites included and if you have a property you would like to feature on the website, please contact me. To be listed, your property must be a protected place (that is have some recognised designation), there must be some provision for visitors, from something as simple as a car park and footpath, and a web address for prospective visitors to find out what there is to see and what facilities to expect.

(Already listed are scheduled ancient monuments and Historic Scotland's properties listed on Historic Scotland's website; national and regional parks and many country parks, national nature reserves and many local nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest and Natura sites which are managed by SWT, NTS, RSPB, JMT, COAST, Plantlife & WTS.)

Contact: stewart.pritchard@snh.gov.uk 01738 458649

Cairngorms Appeal taken to the Inner House

Gus Jones, Convenor, Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group

The Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group, the Cairngorms Campaign and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks have joined again to appeal an important point of law in the September 21st 2012 Opinion of Lord Glennie. This opinion related to a wide ranging legal challenge to the Cairngorms National Park 2010 Local Plan heard in January 2012.

We and our QC respectfully believe that Lord Glennie misinterpreted the terms of the European Habitats Directive relating to the appropriate assessments of Natura 2000 sites.

If we win this appeal that is being heard on 12 March it will be a significant judgement which should force the Cairngorms National Park Authority to revise its whole approach to safeguarding European sites. More widely it should help to ensure a stronger application of the Habitats Directive that would be more in line with a precautionary approach to planning development.



An Camas Mor site proposed for 1500 houses, photo BSCG

This challenge comes in the year of ‘Natural Scotland’. It also comes soon after the National Geographic magazine declared the Cairngorms, the only British entry, to be in the Top 50 of the World’s Last great places, along with such locations as Madagascar and the Gobi desert. Before the judgement from the inner house the CNPA will have in post a new Chief Executive, Grant Moir.

For further information see the website www.safeguardthecairngorms.org.uk. Safeguard the Cairngorms campaign has been established by four LINK members, BSCG, CC, SCNP and Buglife.

Nature of Scotland Awards

Sarah Conway, Events Volunteer
RSPB Scotland



Have you placed your nomination yet?

The **Nature of Scotland Awards** are open for entries and we have received some exciting nominations so far! An RSPB Scotland scheme, these awards celebrate excellence and recognise success in the conservation of Scotland’s beautiful landscapes and unique wildlife. There are 8 categories, and it is **free** to enter. Don’t miss your chance to nominate a colleague, friend, organisation, group or outstanding individual who is involved in protecting Scotland’s precious natural heritage. We look forward to receiving your entries and do remember that you can nominate your own organisation

Deadline for submission is 15 March. For more information, and how to enter, please visit www.rspb.org.uk/natureofscotland

Turning point for Wild Land Campaign?

Mel Nicoll, Campaigns
Coordinator, John Muir Trust



The John Muir Trust’s Wild Land Campaign reached a significant point in mid-February when the Scottish Parliament’s Public Petitions Committee discussed the Trust’s Petition for a new designation to protect Scotland’s best wild land.

Our petition, first lodged in January 2011, had stalled pending the release of the final phase of mapping work being undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). We wrote to the Petitions Committee at the end of January, urging the Committee to explore with both the Scottish Government and SNH, as a matter of urgency, the mapping and other aspects relevant to the petition.

The Trust stressed that it had been accepted by the Scottish Government some two years previously that our petition had been timely and there was evidence of increasing impacts visually on wild land areas. Since then, we argued, compelling new evidence had emerged of strong public support for action to protect Scotland’s wild land, as evidenced by the July 2012 “[Public Perception Survey of Wildness in Scotland](#)”, carried out by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority/Cairngorms National Park Authority/SNH. According to that survey, 86% of the public believe further action is needed to preserve wild land in Scotland. Of those who believe that further action is needed, the most widely supported measure was the introduction of a specific Wild Land designation.

The pressures on Scotland’s wild land have continued to grow in the time since our petition was submitted – for example, there has been much coverage in the past year of the SNH Natural Heritage Indicator “visual influence of built development and land use change” whose statistics show that, in 2002, 41% of Scotland was unaffected visually by built development. By 2009, this had reduced to 28%. In the absence of specific information on wild land, this Indicator is a reasonable proxy. With no updated figure available we are unsure just how much more of our wild land has disappeared in the interim. However, there is no doubt that the pressures on wild land are significant

and that there is an urgent need for an updated policy position from the Scottish Government and SNH to assist with planning decisions, particularly around the contentious, rapid spread of industrial-scale wind developments.

We were therefore pleased that our petition was discussed at the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee on 19 February. Better still, on the day itself, there was cross party support for the petition to be continued and the Committee agreed to invite the Chief Executive and Chair of SNH to appear before the Committee to report on progress with the wild land mapping, and for the Environment Minister to be invited to appear subsequently. Members of the Committee also expressed disappointment at what they perceived to be an inadequate response from the Minister, who had said in response to the Trust's January letter, that he was "not persuaded by the case for designation."

We are encouraged that the Committee is now pressing for action and also by the very recent news that wild land will feature in a debate at the Scottish Parliament on 6 March. The debate follows a Motion *S4M-05602 "Endangered Species and Wild Land Conservation"* submitted by Murdo Fraser MSP. This achieved cross party support and acknowledges calls for "a concerted effort in 2013 to deliver a step change in conserving wild land and endangered species."

All this reinforces our hope that, in the Year of Natural Scotland, the Scottish Government could make a powerful statement for wild land and all the many benefits it brings, by protecting our best wild land. That truly would be a legacy of which John Muir would be proud, and would be given an added resonance as 2013 marks the 175th anniversary of the birth of the man whose vision helped achieve legal protection for large tracts of American wilderness.

To add your support for a new designation to protect Scotland's wild land please visit our website for a template letter you can send to your MSPs. Please also sign up to receive the Trust's e-newsletter so we can keep you in touch with latest news and actions from the Campaign. www.jmt.org email: campaigns@jmt.org

Beacons: stories of our not so distant future

Gail Wilson, Coordinator, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland



Throughout history, writers have been spokespeople for social change, and with global warming a real and insistent threat to our planet, now is no different.

With specially commissioned short stories, many of the UK's foremost writers address our most pertinent problem in this new book: *Beacons: stories of our not so distant future*. Authors who have contributed a short story to the collection include Alasdair Gray, A.L. Kennedy and Janice Galloway.

This is a stunning collection of writing that will shock, amaze and entertain in equal measure. From Joanne Harris' techno-dystopia, where parks and bees are no more, to the soldiers paroling the ravaged Welsh landscapes of Jem Poster's 'Visitation', we're shown our world, altered. Toby Litt uses the analogy of a knickerbocker glory to explain what we're all about, and Nick Haye's beautifully illustrated tale of the bond between man and nature.



Beacons: stories of our not so distant future is published on 7 March.

All royalties go to the charity Stop Climate Chaos.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is the largest coalition ever formed in the country,

representing faith groups, international development and environment organisations, community groups and trade and student unions. You can find out more about the book, and order your copy, at: www.tinyurl.com/scc-beacons

More Network News

Agriculture and Land Use On 13 March Members of the European Parliament vote on the rules for how agriculture funding (CAP) from the EU Budget will be spent until 2020. The document as it stands raises serious concerns, containing proposals for a policy that continues to subsidise harmful farming practices that pollute, while wildlife continues to decline and wildlife-friendly farmers struggle to remain viable. The March vote has the power to change that. LINK's Agriculture taskforce (TF) and its members, coordinating with colleagues across the UK and the EU, have been setting out the case for a system that encourages farming practices which respect nature and will produce food sustainably. An e-action targeting MEPs is now underway. This is calling for greening of the CAP, so that all farmers and land managers undertake basic measures to protect and restore the environment, including compliance with relevant EU environmental and animal welfare regulations and basic standards of good farming practice. MEPs are also being asked to reject proposals that waste money by paying twice for undertaking the same environmental measures and to support dedicated funding for nature friendly farming systems. There is a link to the [e-action](#) on the home page of the LINK website and members are encouraged to use it to send a message to MEPs now.

In Scotland, the [LINK TF](#) continues to input to Scottish Government stakeholder groups on CAP and the Scottish Rural Development Programme, and to a group reviewing regulation in agriculture.

A number of LINK members also took part in Scottish Government's event on the Land Use Strategy in January where it was announced that 2 regional land use frameworks would be piloted. LINK welcomed this, having called on the Scottish Government to encourage a more planned approach to rural land use, as the basis for decision-making and resource allocation that reflects the public interest. Members look forward to getting involved in the Scottish Borders and Aberdeenshire to make these pilots a success.

LINK has set up a short term group, convened by Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland) to contribute network views to the Land Reform Review. LINK's

contribution will focus on outcomes in terms of land management to meet sustainable development goals.

Scottish Environmental Fundraisers' Forum SEFF [responded to the consultation](#) on the future of the Landfill Tax supporting continued use of funding from an environmentally damaging activity for projects that benefit Scotland's environment. SEFF and the Scottish Landfill Community Fund Forum organised an event at the Parliament on 15 January which showcased some examples of the benefits and breadth of this funding for biodiversity and communities across Scotland.

LINK organised a well-attended workshop for members on energy issues in November to discuss issues around the Landscape TF's draft energy position statement, which the TF is taking forward.

LINK Marine project – heads are turning offshore

2013 is a very big year for Scotland's marine environment. Now eight members strong* LINK's marine TF is gearing up for a critical chapter in Scottish marine policy.

Most immediately, the adequacy of proposals for a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is in the balance. Concern grows that some MPA sites will fall out of the process before the consultation this summer. The eight members of the TF are agreed that the forthcoming public consultation must include all 33 MPA proposals as detailed in the Government's scientific advice package - and we will appeal to the wider LINK network to help make sure this happens.

This summer, three major public consultations will have far-reaching and long-lasting implications for Scotland's seas; the Scottish public will see long-awaited proposals for a National Marine Plan, Marine Protected Areas and Sectoral Plans for offshore wind and wave and tidal energy industries.

The TF is all-too aware of the pressing ecological context. Our seas are not in good shape; the Scottish Government's own Marine Atlas has documented that almost all broad-scale habitats are a matter of concern, and there are worrying declines in seabird, common seal, shark and ray populations. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 was conceived to put this right, to

kickstart the ecological recovery of Scotland's all-too-often neglected marine environment.

A National Marine Plan and a network of Marine Protected Areas can underpin this sea-change and provide the intelligent environmental safeguards and a strategy for truly sustainable development. Many on-going concerns remain, but we are confident that Government can seize a fundamental opportunity to put ecology at the heart of marine planning for the first time in Scotland's legislative history.

As Scotland's economy begins to float on the rising tide of developments offshore, the Scottish Government is duty-bound to put in place the 'sustainability architecture' for these marine industries.



MTF posters highlight the economic as well as the environmental benefits of MPAs.

The TF is engaging with these three post-legislative processes to support the robust implementation of the Marine (Scotland) Act and working to raise wider

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awareness about MPAs and the importance of progressive marine policy. This is not straightforward work. Recent outputs have included the publication of a peer-reviewed valuation of a Scottish network of MPAs (November), contributions to drafting the Scottish Government's management handbook for Marine Protected Areas (January) and the development of a joint campaigns website (on-going).

Looking ahead to the next few months, the TF will push for better coverage for whales, dolphins and seabirds (currently poorly-represented in the new MPA proposals) and strong site measures that effectively manage potentially damaging human activities. We are also coordinating work with our sister Links in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on the all-important ecological coherence of MPAs. By addressing still-unresolved questions about the scale, connectivity and scope of this emerging MPA network, this collaboration will seek to make sure Scotland meets obligations under OSPAR agreements and European law. Other scheduled work includes intensive engagement with the Sustainability Appraisal processes for MPAs and Wind, Wave and Tidal energy sectoral plans. But most important will be the three consultations this Summer – by mid-July, we will need wide involvement in the process to help collectively secure the ambitious measures needed to reverse the decline of our seas. See www.savescottishseas.org for details and updates.

In addition to Nick Underdown, the TF benefits from the skills and experience of Phil Rhodri Taylor who moved from Birdlife International to provide maternity cover for Sarah Archer in the Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer role.

*The Scottish Ornithologists' Club joined the TF in August 2012, bringing valuable knowledge and a wide network of members.

For Further Information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter see [Scottish Environment LINK](#). Task Force outputs are listed under 'Our Work'. Contact: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road Perth PH2 8BD. 01738 630804. enquiries@scotlink.org