

The LINK Newsletter

The quarterly update from Scottish Environment LINK
Autumn 2007



LINK

Twenty years of LINKing

It should not have escaped your attention that LINK is now 20 years old, and that a number of celebratory events and landmark initiatives have taken place during 2007. These include a history of LINK commissioned from Michael Scott which reflects on two decades of experience and draws lessons from this for the decades ahead.

Michael's lively report *A Strong Coherent Voice* was available on 6 November for the 200 members and guests gathered at the Great Hall in Edinburgh Castle to celebrate the 20th anniversary in splendid style. It was hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Richard

Lochhead MSP. The minister welcomed the gathering and noted the valuable role played by LINK over the years. Honorary Fellow Fred Edwards responded for LINK, commenting that LINK would continue to act in the role of 'critical friend' to government, and that we will "act on our conviction that the environment is not negotiable." He promised that we would be "pressing in particular on areas such as real sustainability, biodiversity, marine issues, (and) that overarching issue of sustainability failure namely climate change and areas where environmental and economic interests clash."

On the wider issue of influencing behaviour with regard to climate change, which is being considered collectively by LINK member

LINK members at Edinburgh Castle, 6 November 2007



bodies with regard to their individual members, Fred continued:

“We will be supporting government along with other organizations and institutions in society to secure the massive attitudinal change that is needed to make it politically feasible to seriously address the way we treat our planet. To the credit of your government and to the credit of those who have gone before you, significant changes have begun to occur. But these changes are nothing like on the scale required to enable you to politically carry the massive social and economic alterations that living within our natural means are going to require in the course of this century. The environmental sector which is economically, politically, and scientifically literate has enormous sympathy with the scale of that political problem. We do not underestimate your difficulties in addressing a matter which for future generations is incomparably more important than terrorism. We will assist you with that required massive shift in public attitude, and we shall engage with other organizations and institutions in also securing their assistance.”

Engaging with the urgent task of positively influencing individual behaviour in relation to climate change emerged as a challenge from the process of researching *A Strong Coherent Voice*. The steering group of LINK Trustees and Honorary Fellows overseeing the anniversary-related events and initiatives commissioned Simon Pepper to investigate the degree of concern and enthusiasm for a joint and structured approach, with a range of LINK member organisations, other networks, and government representatives.

The keen response to Simon’s enquiries from member bodies led on to a well-attended LINK meeting on 20 September where 23 member bodies agreed, in principle, to a programme of actions ranging from provision of network guidance to consistency of communications with their individual members on climate change issues. Momentum was carried forward to the LINK Members’ Congress on 23 and 24 November, where the roles of LINK, member bodies,

and that of Stop Climate Chaos were explored in more depth. Recent research into what motivates individuals to change their behaviour provided a useful basis for members to discuss how they might individually and collectively apply the lessons of social marketing and advertising to best effect.

On behalf of LINK and government, Simon Pepper, with LINK secretariat assistance, is organising a workshop with networks from civil society and business to examine the potential for better collaboration between all sectors for positively influencing behaviour relating to climate change, for 5 December.

Scottish Environment Week 2008

Scottish Environment Week 4 to 11 February is themed *A Climate for change: enabling sustainable livelihoods*. Funding partners are Keep Scotland Beautiful, Historic Scotland, SEPA and SNH, with National Grid sponsoring an additional breakfast business seminar. The theme explores how government, business and the public can inspire others and facilitate change towards sustainable development, low impact lifestyles and a carbon neutral society.

Seminars during the week will consider:

- examples of best practice and new initiatives on the ground
- legislative initiatives from across the world
- how we put legislation into practise effectively
- movements for environmental change that have inspired the wider public

Diary alert: A public forum on *Sustainable Development Education; success in Scotland* is planned in association with the Sustainable Development Education Network for the evening of 31 January at the Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. Confirmed speakers are Anne Finlayson, Education Commissioner for the Sustainable Development Commission and Professor Gerard Hastings, Director of the Institute of Social Marketing at the University of Stirling.

News and Views from Members

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

Scottish Real World Learning Partnership

Dr Joyce Gilbert, Education Policy Officer, RSPB Scotland

Over the past twenty years opportunities for young people to learn outdoors have diminished despite the fact that research has shown that learning about the natural and cultural heritage through first hand experience is one of the most effective forms of education. It broadens children's outlook, improves personal and interpersonal skills and creates a sense of place that can foster understanding of biodiversity, sustainability and citizenship. Outdoor learning also increases levels of physical activity and can therefore play an important role in improving public health and wellbeing by combating the likelihood of future generations of Scots becoming inactive and obese adults.

In recent months several organisations in Scotland have come together to establish a 'Real World Learning' (RWL) Partnership to address this decline in outdoor learning. The partnership's statement of purpose is:-

“to ensure that every child in Scotland, regardless of their socio-economic background, should have regular access to inspirational and challenging outdoor learning, where they can enjoy first hand experience of their cultural and natural heritage, as part of a full and complete childhood.”

The first meeting took place in July 2007. Partners represented included RSPB, Woodland Trust, John Muir Trust, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Grounds for Learning, Field Studies Council, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Association for Science Education. Apologies were received from Scottish Advisory Panel on Outdoor Education, EcoSchools Scotland and the University of Edinburgh Outdoor Education Dept. SNH attended as observers.

Recent research has shown that many barriers have to be addressed to help teachers take their pupils outdoors. At this first meeting it was agreed that the aims of the partnership would be to raise the profile of the many benefits of outdoor learning and to secure a commitment from the Scottish government and other key decision makers for a remedial course of action to address these barriers.

A formal launch event is planned in the New Year. In the meantime current partners are very keen to invite other organisations (big and small!) to join the partnership. There are many levels of involvement ranging from regular, active involvement to simply endorsing the campaign. RSPB Scotland has employed an Education Policy Officer who will be working on behalf of the partnership two days a week and will take on the role of coordinating the campaign. If you would like to know more please contact Joyce Gilbert at RSPB (joyce.gilbert@rspb.org.uk).

Beauldy-Denny PLI update

Helen McDade, John Muir Trust

The Beauldy Denny Inquiry continues its marathon run from February to December 2007, moving through four towns from Inverness to Stirling. I think LINK members will be particularly interested in the following aspects, as there are issues which are relevant to many areas of our work.

Media coverage has suggested that the length and cost of this Inquiry is down to the objectors' involvement. In fact, most of the time has been taken up by the electricity companies' witnesses, led by their legal team. This seems to be aimed at "talking out" the time available for subsequent witnesses, from the objectors. It also makes it almost impossible to predict which day a particular witness will be heard – more difficult for individuals who have to get time off work, 3

etc, and there is pressure on witnesses at the end of the day to be brief as everyone wants to go home. The setting is hugely intimidating for individuals to participate – with three Inquiry Reporters and a raft of lawyers. Extreme formality, as if it is a court, is the order of the day. No wonder so few of the individual objectors have chosen to enter the lions’ den. However, the local action groups and community councils along the line have done very well to put professional cases together – often at extreme personal cost in time, money and health.

Members of the Beaully Denny Landscape Group (APRS, JMT, MCofS, NTS, RAS, SWLG) have continued to inform politicians and media about the economic and environmental case against the line and the John Muir Trust has taken part in three of the local sessions, discussing the wild land issues there. Other groups are trying to get concerns about health issues discussed at the Inquiry but recent government committee reports on electro-magnetic fields and health have not been accepted for discussion. This is concerning when there are recommendations within those reports about minimum distance of transmission lines from habitation. The line will pass within less than 100 metres of some houses. The pylons themselves can be up to 65 metres high. How planning and environmental justice are delivered are just two of the major issues being put in the spotlight.

Housing threat to CNP

Gus Jones, Convenor, Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group

The first Local Plan produced by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is an important publication for a world famous nominally ‘Protected Area’. This DLP (Deposit Local Plan) is heading for adoption in 2009. BSCG recognizes it poses an unprecedented threat to community and conservation interests in Badenoch and Strathspey and demonstrates a delivery deficit for policy on halting biodiversity loss,

safeguarding native woodland, climate change and treating local communities and European priority habitats with respect.

In the current DLP an agenda of “housing, housing, housing” is presented as sustainable development with serious disregard for sensitive natural heritage interests. The annual rate of house building envisaged, 157 per year for the next ten years, is a 60% increase on the average for the last 30 years.

According to Highland Council figures the population of Badenoch and Strathspey increased by 6.9% in the decade 1991-2001, nearly three times faster than the rate for Highland Region as a whole, and the fastest population growth of any rural district in Scotland.

On top of this in the DLP the CNPA sought responses to an entire new town of at least 1,500 houses. Yet no environmental assessments have apparently been made public, or in some cases even undertaken, including those for the necessary infrastructure which is likely to impact on a European Site.

The DLP states: “It is expected that demand for second homes in the national park will remain higher than historical rates, so a 50 per cent additional allowance will be made to the household prediction.” This allowance for second homes in the Park comes to 475 houses.

In contrast the CNPA Draft Local Plan, published in 2005, suggested that access to new build houses should be restricted. This would have reduced unsustainable growth while addressing provision of affordable local housing. It appears that the Park Authority has capitulated to the demands of landowners and developers, such as Reidhaven Estate, which, in its response to the Draft Local Plan, berated the CNPA for being “unduly restrictive” towards development.

For further information on some of these housing issues, please see www.bscg.org.uk.

Blueprint for Water Campaign

Jodie Bettis, Wildlife & Countryside Link

Earlier this year Wildlife and Countryside Link took on the secretariat for the Blueprint for Water campaign as part of the work of the wider Water Working Group (WWG). Launched in November 2006, the Blueprint for Water document brought together a unique coalition of conservation, water efficiency, and fishing & angling organisations to promote their collective vision to secure water supplies, enhance biodiversity, maximise social and economic benefit, and improve resilience to climate change. The Blueprint's 10 steps to sustainable water by 2015 are summarised as follows;

- Waste less water
- Keep our rivers flowing and wetlands wet
- Price water fairly
- Make polluters pay
- Stop pollutants contaminating our water
- Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches
- Support water-friendly farming
- Clean up drainage from roads and buildings
- Restore rivers from source to sea
- Retain water on floodplains and wetlands

Throughout this year representatives have been busy meeting decision makers and deliverers, such as OFWAT, the Environment Agency, Ministers and Parliamentarians, to promote the key asks contained in the Blueprint. A review of progress during the first year of this two-year campaign will take place this November and will be marked by the launch of a report and a parliamentary event. For more information on the work of the WWG see www.wcl.org or www.blueprintforwater.org. For a copy of the original Blueprint or the one year review report, please contact Jodie at WCL on jodie@wcl.org.uk.

Wales Environment Link Report

Sue Evans, WEL Director

In July, Labour and Plaid Cymru formed a coalition government, and Ministerial portfolios were divided up between the parties.

WEL met the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson, Labour) and discussed issues including the proposed refresh of Wales' Sustainable Development Action Plan, climate change commitments, and the implications of the UK Planning White Paper for Wales.

WEL will meet the Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru) shortly to discuss the Rural Development Plan. A meeting is planned with the Countryside Council for Wales, so that WEL can input into the development of their corporate plan.

With the introduction of the Government of Wales Act, Ministers and Assembly Members have been busy proposing new areas of competence and primary legislation. Consequently, WEL was invited to give evidence to the Committee scrutinising the proposed Legislative Competence Order on Environmental Protection and Waste. The new Act has also led to the creation of Scrutiny Committees which undertake topic-specific inquiries, and WEL has been invited to give evidence to the Sustainability Committee on their inquiry into the reduction of carbon emissions in Wales.

WEL has also been compiling suggestions for the review of the Environment Strategy for Wales Action Plan, which the Government is currently preparing.

WEL welcomed three new marine officers in August; Annie Smith, Marine Policy Officer (Nature Conservation and Marine Protected Areas) for RSPB Cymru; Lyndsey Dodds, Marine Policy Officer (Marine Spatial Planning and Licensing) for WWF Cymru; and Tim Hall, Marine Campaign and Advocacy Officer for Wildlife Trusts Wales.

Train or plane?

*Julie Stoneman, Campaigns Officer
WWF Scotland*

A few months ago I was lucky enough to go on a training course near Vienna and, according to our WWF travel policy, I was encouraged to take the train rather than fly.

I have to admit that I worried about going by train - could I justify the extra time compared to a flight? What if I didn't make a connection and got stuck somewhere where I couldn't speak the language? Would I be safe? On the other hand I spend a lot of my time encouraging people to take the more sustainable choice, so decided to go by train – both to cut my carbon but also to see what it would be like.

It's perhaps not for everyone, but personally, next time I wouldn't hesitate to take the train. The trip to London was on time. From there I sped to Paris on the Eurostar in under 2½ hours arriving well in time for my sleeper. I slept like a baby travelling on the smooth European rails (quite different to the British sleeper), arriving for breakfast in Munich before heading on to Vienna and then catching a local train to arrive at my hotel about 3pm – in time for a swim and sauna before other participants arrived. So although I invested an extra day I felt relaxed and ready for the course (having actually had the time to read the pre-course materials), and I'd met some interesting people along the way. On the way back a UK colleague joined me and after seeing a bit of Vienna, we headed to Munich for dinner, Paris for breakfast and I was back in Perth (having done almost a full day's work) for tea.

It seems odd to write about this experience for this newsletter as if taking the train is such an unusual thing to do – less than 20 years ago taking the bus or train would have been the first choice. I wonder which will be the first choice 20 years from now? No doubt for that to happen there will have to be a change in the price - I'm told that my carbon emissions were about a quarter compared to a flight but I know that it cost WWF about £250 more. Teleconference, anyone?

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Mike Robinson, Chair SCCS

Stop Climate Chaos is a UK based coalition of faith, humanitarian and environmental charities with 1.5 million supporters in Scotland, including many of the faith and church groups, unions, community councils, mental health bodies, environmental NGOs, humanitarian and aid agencies and others. It is currently helping establish a cross party group on climate change in the Scottish Parliament and will provide the secretariat. It runs training and presentations on climate change, has written and published many articles and a series of FAQs, runs a website and a separate volunteers website, has spoken at fringe events and party conferences, helped organise workshops and conferences with Edinburgh Council, ran a month long series of talks and works with a host of organisations. It continues to bring high profile and expert speakers to Scotland to encourage greater understanding of the issues.

SCCS is developing links between academics, NGOs and organisations involved in implementing solutions and ran the first network event for these groups during a climate weekend at the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens this November. Representatives have met politicians at all levels and continue to work through the policy and advisory group (chaired by Clifton Bain of RSPB) to lobby over both the UK and Scottish climate bills. A media and events group (chaired by Clare Shelley of Christian Aid) is also established to maximise coverage of the issue and help move the debate towards solutions.

In the new year we will be working with the collective galleries to encourage arts groups throughout Scotland to adopt the messages and help interpret climate change. Details will be available in early January. Please contact SCCS's one member of staff, Ruth Dawkins (based at the RSPB office in Edinburgh) on telephone 0131 311 6512 or email: ruth@stopclimatechaosscotland.org

LINK Task Force and other news

Agriculture Due to delays in the launch of the Scottish Rural Development Programme there are 1332 agri-environment and organic scheme agreements which will end in 2007. With no interim arrangements put in place to allow continued funding of these, the task force (TF) was involved in a period of intensive advocacy work including joint letters to the Cabinet Secretary and Minister with other rural stakeholders, briefing MSPs, successfully suggesting Parliamentary Questions and a Parliamentary Motion, with good media coverage. Advocacy has continued to the European Commission and MEPs.

A surprise decision to set a rate of 0% for set-aside across Europe from Autumn 07 was made in September. The TF was immediately concerned about the need to retain the environmental benefits of set-aside and corresponded with the Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead. This resulted in a meeting between LINK, SNH, NFUS and civil servants to discuss options; LINK's ideas were well received and will be followed up with a written proposal.

Carey Coombs, LINK's delegate to the climate change and agriculture sub-group of the Agriculture Strategy Implementation Group, presented LINK views to the group, and the TF is hopeful that these will be reflected in the report due in March 2008.

Biodiversity TF members are considering future engagement with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy process following the submission of the Scottish Biodiversity Committee's draft progress report to Ministers. In LINK's opinion, the draft report is not fit for purpose, presenting an overly optimistic view of progress achieved.

Climate LINK met civil servants in September for a useful discussion which highlighted the benefits of natural ecosystems in helping tackle climate change impacts such as flooding. LINK would like to see an adaptation strategy in the Climate bill.

LINK and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland met Climate Change Minister Stewart Stevenson MSP in October to discuss our key asks for the bill. Civil servants and LINK/SCCS will be working closely together on the bill, and LINK has been asked to engage with the Strategic Environment Assessment of the bill.

LINK TFs and members met in November to refresh LINK's climate and energy statements to ensure their continuing relevance to the developing climate change agenda.

On the UK Climate bill, LINK and SCCS will be contributing to the Legislative Consent Motion where Parliament looks at implications of the UK bill for Scotland. This will be another opportunity to flag up concern that the UK target needs to increase from 60% to 80% emissions reduction.

Marine LINK's has a dedicated website www.savescottishseas.org carrying news of the marine campaign, research and briefing materials and tools for activists, which was launched in October.

LINK attended the LibDem, Green and SNP autumn conferences, and organised a well-supported marine fringe meeting chaired by Richard Lochhead at the latter. Meetings have also taken place with civil servants and MSPs. The TF is concerned that there has been no commitment to a Scottish Marine bill in the next year, other than the commitment made in June to consult on Scottish legislation, which was welcomed. LINK is encouraging cross party support for a robust Marine bill for Scotland, stressing the importance of aligning it with the UK bill process, so that policy goals for all the UK's seas can be agreed. The TF supports, on conservation grounds, the Minister's proposals to the SNP Congress to extend responsibility for nature conservation from 12 to 200 nautical miles.

The Scotsman supported the effort to save our seas with its month-long campaign for a Scottish marine bill, adding a further 1000 people pledging support for a bill. Articles

dealt with species under threat, fishing, the effects of climate change on our seas, and more. The newspaper also covered a LINK report *Finding NIMAs* (Nationally Important Marine Areas), which will be available shortly from the website. A bulletin on NIMAs has been prepared for MSPs. Colourful calendars prepared with our sister Links 'Marine Acts Now!' were sent to all MSPs, select Scottish MPs, officials, stakeholders and members of LINK, and from sister Links to MPs and officials at Westminster.

Parliamentary LINK's parliamentary team has changed with the departure of Alex Hopkinson in August to pursue her studies and Jane Herbstritt's temporary maternity leave from November. Susan Guest was recruited as Parliamentary Administration Officer in August, having previously been administrator for the green group of MSPs in the Parliament.

Eilidh Macpherson joined as Parliamentary Officer in October, having gained her

Masters degree in Development Studies from LSE—she continues to serve on the board of People & Planet. Both Susan and Eilidh have quickly found their LNK feet ensuring a very smooth transition of the service for members.

Jane Herbstritt coordinated production of *Scotland 2011: Scottish Environment LINK's challenge to the new Scottish Government*, which updated material from LINK's earlier *Policy manifesto for Scotland's environment, people and economy: a charter for sustainable development*. Meetings were organised with the main political parties to discuss LINK's proposals, and the document provided the basis for discussions for a meeting of members with Environment Ministers held on 7 November.

Jane coordinated ideas from task forces and members to submit suggestions for future Inquiries to the Environment and Rural Affairs Committee. LINK has been well represented at the Autumn party conferences, by the parliamentary team, the marine campaign officer, and member bodies.

Connect2 - Vote for green travel

Sustrans needs your vote to win Lottery funding for the green transport project **Connect2** which will revitalise walking and cycling in 79 communities across the UK by creating new routes for the journeys we all make every day. Crossings and bridges will be created over busy roads, railway lines and rivers, linking into new networks of local paths to get you to where you want to go.

Scotland would benefit from 4 greener local travel initiative around Perth, Glasgow, Hamilton and Dumfries.

Voting closes at noon 10 December. You can vote online, by mobile or by landline. See www.thepeoples50million.org.uk or www.sustransconnect2.org.uk for details.

Further Information

For information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit www.scotlink.org Task Force outputs are listed under 'Work Areas' accessible from the home page.

HQ Address: 2 Grosvenor House,
Shore Road
Perth PH2 8BD

Phone: 01738 630804
Fax: 01738 643290
Email: enquiries@scotlink.org

Parliamentary Office 3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land
483 Lawnmarket
Edinburgh EH1 2NT
Email: parliamentary@scotlink.org
Phone: 0131 225 4345

For updates on the marine campaign see www.savescotlandsseas.org

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