

The LINK Newsletter

The quarterly update from Scottish Environment LINK
March 2009



Scottish Environment Week 2009

The fifth Scottish Environment Week (SEW) held in the Scottish Parliament has ended with a record number of Parliamentarians taking part in the seminars, visiting the exhibitions and networking with environmental organisations at the reception in the Garden Lobby.

Events kicked off with a seminar on Smart Metering hosted by Sarah Boyack MSP which explained how the technology can encourage energy efficiency and work with micro renewables. A Smart Metering exhibition stand in Parliament during the week was very popular with MSPs.



With the Marine Bill due to be introduced to Parliament shortly, a seminar *Healthy Seas: Priceless!* celebrating Scotland's seas and showing how healthy well-managed seas can meet social and economic aspirations for Scotland, was timely. Hosted by Maureen Watt MSP, now the Convenor of the Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, it was well-attended and mentioned by MSPs during the Marine debate held in the chamber the following day.



A seminar on *Climate Change and the Environment; back to nature* was organised by LINK's Climate task force (TF), hosted by Malcolm Chisolm MSP, which focussed on the impacts climate change is having on Scotland's wildlife and habitats, again a timely event as the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill progresses through Parliament. Patrick Harvie MSP, Convenor of the Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change looked at the displays and several LINK members were on hand to discuss key indicators of climate change in Scotland, the role of "carbon sinks" eg peatlands, and how we can tackle climate change while protecting and working with nature.



Delivering the Goods, a drop-in session on Thursday lunchtime, explored how the Scottish Rural Development Programme can help deliver environmental goods. A series of posters and brief presentations set out some of the opportunities. A LINK report also titled *Delivering the Goods*, commissioned by LINK's Biodiversity TF, showed what the environmental NGOs are already contributing to help meet the objectives of the Government's biodiversity action plan. This is available from the LINK website.



NHS Health Scotland teamed up with the Ramblers Association, Sustrans and the Mountaineering Council of

Scotland for the very popular event *Physical Activity for Life*. This illustrated how a pleasant, accessible outdoor environment encourages healthy activity. Pupils from Dunbar High School, where 200 pupils commute regularly by bike, and women from the South Lanarkshire Older Walkers group, and leaders from the Quickdraws climbing club were on hand to explain what helps motivate people to take up and continue with everyday healthy exercise.

Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham was days into her new post when she addressed the crowd at the SEW midweek reception.



She indicated her preference for action-orientated meetings and welcomed the prospect of robust dialogue with sectors including LINK. Responding to her lively presentation LINK President Helen Zealley looked forward to it too and asked Government to take due account of the thoughtful, rounded contributions from the network on matters affecting sustainability on many fronts.

LINK is grateful to SEW sponsors including SNH, NHS Health Scotland, SEPA and OnStream. Our thanks to Sarah Boyack MSP for hosting the Week, to the Presiding Officer for his support, to the MSPs who hosted the seminars and to all who manned the LINK stand and who organised and supported the events.

We are planning for SEW 2010 now so if you would like to feedback about your experience of the 2009 Week, Susan Guest email: susan@scotlink.org would love to hear from you.

Climate Change (Scotland) Bill

LINK's [climate TF](#) continues working closely with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) as the Climate Change Bill progresses through Holyrood. LINK submitted written evidence to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee in February, supporting the SCCS's ten key priorities. LINK also submitted [written evidence](#) to the Scottish Government consultation on the consenting process for thermal power stations, with particular reference to an

Emissions Performance Standard for new coal power.

In the [response on the Climate Change Bill](#) LINK calls for a sustainable approach to be included in the Bill to avoid environmental conflict when considering ways to reduce emissions or in adapting to climate change. The Ministerial Foreword to the consultation document recognised the need for sustainability to be at the heart of all policies, including climate change, but this is not

reflected in the legislative proposals.

On Adaptation, LINK wants the Bill to require the Scottish Government to produce its own climate change impact assessment, with support from the relevant advisory body, rather than rely entirely on a UK impacts report. LINK considers independent public scrutiny of progress in implementing adaptation policies and programmes important and recommends the Bill require the production of a

Scottish adaptation programme at least every three years.

Regarding the controversial proposal to lease 25% of the National Forest Estate LINK was concerned that the plans were not fully explained or costed, so represented a distraction from the important climate change priorities in the Bill; the benefits of carbon sequestration being small compared to mitigation from reductions in fossil fuel use. Additionally, the important role of the Estate in adaptation was not considered here. LINK wanted to see any specific powers legislated for after proper exploration and consultation. LINK welcomed measures for the Forestry Commission Scotland to enter into joint ventures which could include renewable energy

projects, as these proposals are specific and directly relevant to the Bill's aims. All land uses are important for climate change mitigation and adaptation; Scotland should have a sustainable land use strategy to deliver a holistic integrated approach to land use which addresses climate change and delivers multiple public benefits. Angus Yarwood (WTS), convener of LINK's Woodland TF presented oral evidence to the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee in February where these points were more fully explored. LINK was very pleased that Government has since dropped the leasing proposals and that a unanimous Parliamentary Motion passed on 19 March calls for good proactive measures for forestry and climate, and for introduction of

a comprehensive integrated land-use strategy.

LINK supported the Bill's enabling powers to vary muirburn times and considered that the energy efficiency sections should be strengthened, noting that an Energy Efficiency Action Plan was promised six years ago and that the Bill should not prevent its earliest possible publication.

Sam Gardner (WWFS) took over from Clifton Bain (RSPB) as convener of LINK's Climate TF with Corinne Evans (FoES) as depute. We are indebted to Clifton for his sterling work leading across new and often tricky terrain on the wide-ranging climate agenda since 2005.

LINK Marine Bill Campaign

The Scottish Marine Bill is expected to be introduced to the Parliament in April. Since December's update LINK's Marine TF, with the able assistance of Alan Wells (Marine Research Officer) and Ylva Haglund (Marine Campaign Officer) has been responding to more [consultations](#), providing [briefings](#) and evidence to Parliament, holding meetings with Scottish Government, SNH and Defra, and organising awareness-raising events.

In January the TF gave [evidence](#) to the Rural Affairs & Environment Committee on the Legislative Consent Motion - UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill. Some of the major concerns, such as differences in approach to marine planning and management in different UK

countries, planning of reserved matters in the Scottish inshore region and the lack of enforcement powers in the offshore zone were raised by LibDem and Labour MSPs. One result has been that the lack of enforcement powers for nature conservation in offshore areas was recognised immediately as an error and would be amended.

A [marine debate](#) was held in Parliament on 26 February, where the motion "that the Parliament notes the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver a Scottish Marine Bill to drive sustainable economic growth and improve the stewardship of the seas around Scotland..." was debated. MSPs from different parties raised a range of concerns, referring to

a [briefing](#) supplied by LINK, notably that marine ecosystem objectives must underpin planning, licensing and wider measures and not just marine conservation.



Fringe events were held at the Labour and Liberal Democrat

party conferences in March. An event is planned for the April SNP conference and a stand at May's Conservative conference.

The extent of LINK's marine work over the past two years

would not have been possible without the two project officers funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Trust, enhancing Marine TF members' commitment of resources. The grant ends in

June and the TF has been in discussions with the Trusts and others to find ways to keep this critical resource as the Bill enters Parliament.

LINK Task Forces

Agriculture The task force has taken an active part in the Scottish Rural Development Plan first stage review. LINK [wrote](#) to the Cabinet Secretary outlining views following announcement of the review. LINK convenors met Peter Cook, the external consultant carrying out the review to discuss these, and also submitted a [formal response](#). LINK is hopeful that the review could provide an opportunity to improve delivery of

environmental goods through the SRDP but it also presents risks, for example that funds could be diverted from the more targeted agri-environment scheme. The TF promoted LINK's views on SRDP funding through an event at Scottish Environment Week where the SRDP's importance for delivering benefits to biodiversity was emphasised.

The TF has engaged with the implementation of CAP Health

Check changes in Scotland, is represented on the Scottish Government's groups on Set-Aside and Good Agricultural and Environment Condition and hopes that these could provide some opportunity of improving environmental delivery through the first pillar of the CAP. LINK was represented on the LFASS-CAP stakeholder group where means to tackle the rapid loss of livestock from Scotland's hills were discussed.

Deer The task force focus is on liaison with the Deer Commission Scotland and SNH over their forthcoming merger, and in contributing views to proposals for new Deer Legislation in the proposed Natural Heritage Bill in 2010. LINK met civil servants in January and has produced a [briefing note](#). LINK supports reform of deer legislation, welcomes DCS's broad proposals for legislative change, though feels that these recommendations could be strengthened in several areas to achieve sustainable deer management including:

- The Deer Management Planning system is a key area for reform for the public as well as the private interest to be delivered effectively. Instead of a basis of voluntary management planning LINK proposes a more formal structure sitting alongside and integrated with other land use planning structures to reflect Government's wider aspiration of a single land use strategy for Scotland; joint agency working; and delivery of other public support for land management through Rural Development Contracts;
- For faster remedial action to resolve deer impacts on SSSIs/Natura 2000 sites, LINK proposes alignment of relevant parts of the legislation with those of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Water Environment Services Act 2003;
- LINK believes that training for deer managers should incorporate basic ecological training.

[Freshwater](#) The task force continued engagement with the Flooding Bill process, provided evidence and briefings to MSPs and worked closely with the Scottish Government. Stage 2

is now complete with Stage 3 expected in May.

Mike Donaghy (WWFS) who has shared convenorship of the TF with Andrea Jonstonova (RSPB)

is moving job shortly. We wish him well and are grateful for his enthusiastic commitment to the TF's work.

[Scottish Environment Fundraisers Forum](#)

A subgroup of SEFF organised a meeting in February looking solely at the Scotland Rural Development Programme and specifically at Rural Development Contracts- Rural Priorities. This was well-attended by members with support from SCVO and SNH. The agenda covered a summary of organisations' progress to date, a best practice example from the Butterfly Conservation Society, a training session from SCVO, and a workshop looking at members future needs, including messages for a meeting with Peter Cook (see under Agriculture TF). A further session is planned for June.

Interested members please contact [Pauline Jewett](#), or tel: 01330 830 211.

SEFF [responded](#) to the Big Lottery Fund Scotland consultation in February. LINK has concerns about the independence of the fund from Government, as the BLF is awaiting Scottish Government policy directions before setting its programmes. LINK noted that the previous programmes had been difficult for environmental organisations to access in Scotland whilst BLF England had supported the natural and built environment through a ring-fenced

programme. LINK proposed a move to integrate environment as a horizontal theme across all grants to help ensure the three pillars of sustainability are supported. Public bodies in Scotland now have a duty to conserve biodiversity so LINK would like to see the BLF embrace this in all its grant-giving. LINK also commented on the need for a leading funder such as BLF to consolidate and support ongoing good work as it is neither viable nor cost-effective for charities to be constantly required to innovate to gain funding.

Liaison meetings

The annual high level meeting with SNH was held in January. Discussion covered the proposed Natural Heritage Bill; the SRDP review; environment and health; and planning issues. Further liaison was agreed in these areas. SNH has invited LINK's views on its forward policy development programme and a meeting is scheduled for early April.

The quarterly meeting between LINK and the Environment Minister in February discussed natural heritage and the planning system. LINK believes Councils need access to expert

advice on natural heritage and environment matters especially with regard to the ecosystem approaches and landscape scale developments in the [National Planning Framework 2](#) and is concerned about environmental capacity. The initiative from the public health department *Good Places, Better Health: a new approach to environment and health in Scotland* was raised. The Minister urged LINK to play a full part in developments here, supporting LINK representation on the implementation group.

A meeting with members and staff from the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority in February discussed how the Authority can work better with members across the land use and biodiversity spectrum.

A joint workshop was organised with the Built Environment Forum Scotland to consider the National Parks Consultation, which informed members' responses.

LINK's quarterly networking meeting in January was well-attended and productive.

Staffing

Most members have now met LINK's Parliamentary Officer, Andy Myles, in post since December. Andy brings extensive knowledge and

understanding of Scotland's political systems, the environmental agenda and its connections to other mainstream priorities, and of media and communications. After eight years with RSPB Scotland, where he contributed

to LINK's parliamentary and campaigns work, he became adviser on environmental issues to the Deputy First Minister. He is pleased to be "recycled" back into the network.

News and Views from Members

The following are articles from LINK member bodies and guest contributors

[The Commonwealth Orchard – for a fruitful Scotland](#)

John Hancox, Director, Children's Orchard



Over the past five years we have been developing the Children's Orchard as a Scotland wide project, to support and enhance community and school orchards. Our proposal for the Commonwealth Orchard builds on this experience with plans to spend the next five years planting a Scotland-wide network of orchards and fruit trees in schools, parks, public buildings and sports facilities to be in place and bearing fruit by the time of the 2014 Games. This will act as a fruitful and healthy legacy for years

following the Games long after the athletes have gone home. The Commonwealth Orchard is a project of the award winning Children's Orchard, which has developed the idea, and launched it at the Holyrood Apple Day in October 2008, hosted by Robin Harper MSP. It is currently with the Scottish Government being considered for inclusion in the official legacy plan. But either way, official or unofficial, the project is going ahead, with the support of a wide range of organisations from eco-schools Scotland, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and many others.

Local communities, and especially children and families, are at the core of the proposal, but these truly are orchards or fruit trees for everyone's Common Wealth – meaning that everyone is enriched by their existence. Schools and

communities will be encouraged and supported to develop their orchards. In the process we want to encourage resilient and self sufficient communities better able to grow and use local food well. Health and well being and a strong sense of place is a key benefit of this.



We have found from experience that orchards can have an important role in community development. The concept of creating "edible place-making," is core to the concept. Community orchards should have a place in both urban and rural areas.

Apart from new planting, we have identified considerable work required to map and maintain existing orchards, and to make sure that existing trees and orchards are used and managed effectively. Fruit will be picked, eaten, juiced and used for cooking, for the benefit of local communities and schools, and turned into quality food. Currently much fruit that

does grow in gardens, old orchards and public spaces is not picked or used. As part of our Abundance project developed through the Children's Orchard we'll identify and pick fruit for community benefit which would otherwise be wasted. Schools and communities can be encouraged to create labelled Commonwealth juices and chutneys which will be presented to the athletes and delegations to the 2014 Games.

Our hope for the next five years is not just that we help plant new fruit trees, but also encourage a wider interest in home grown food. Our experience is that planting fruit

trees is a great introduction to food growing of all sorts.



There is plenty more information on the Commonwealth Orchard on the [website](#). If you or your group would like to help develop the Commonwealth Orchard please [contact me](#), tel: 0778 606 3918.



SEPA Research Strategy 2008-2012

Dave Gorman, Head of Environmental Strategy

SEPA has recently launched its Research Strategy for 2008-2012. It is essential that SEPA maintain a sound science and knowledge base in order to fulfil its remit as environment watchdog. Therefore the research and development work within SEPA is of vital importance as it enables the organisation to deliver best value practices and to inform the development of effective policies and the Scottish Government's goal of sustainable economic growth.

SEPA's Research Strategy 2008-2012 defines our aims, needs and interests in research and development. We define 'research' as the discovery of fundamental new knowledge

and understanding and 'development' as the process by which new knowledge and understanding is applied. This strategy provides an overview of the principles we will apply in fulfilling those aims, and focuses on the key themes and priorities that will influence our research activity over the next four years.

Although we fund research directly, this constitutes a relatively small programme of work. There is a wealth of common environmental interests across significant areas of the research agenda for the academic and public sector research community both within Scotland and across the rest of the UK and Europe.

We seek to gain added value to our work by collaborating and networking with these sectors to influence the public research agenda and exchange knowledge and outputs. This strategy serves as a tool to communicate SEPA's research and development focus and priorities for the next four years, and we hope that it will foster close collaboration and improved sharing of knowledge with interested parties.

As a way of nurturing this collaboration SEPA has created a Wiki for the Research Strategy, which will allow people to discuss and shape how SEPA will proceed with R&D in the future. Please follow [this link](#) to go to the wiki.



Promoting a Strategy for National Parks across Scotland - partnership project between SCNP and APRS

Robert Maund, Chairman, Scottish Council for National Parks

Compared with many other countries, including England and Wales, Scotland has failed to realise fully the potential of National Parks. In a country half the size of England and Wales combined, which contains many Areas of outstanding natural beauty and wildlife significance, only two Parks have so far been established and those only in the last five years or so. Progress to expand this National Park network has been slow due, in part, to lack of political will and low public awareness. Consequently, several important areas are under threat from a range of environmental pressures. In addition, the benefits to be gained from properly marketed tourism and other environmentally suitable business developments in these areas are not being realised fully.

The Scottish Council for National Parks (SCNP) has entered into a partnership with the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) which will, over the next 3 years, seek to break this log jam and actively

promote the development of a strategy for future national parks in Scotland. This project will involve:

- research into the national park experience in Scotland, the UK, Europe and further afield;

- campaigning and education among communities living in potential national park areas and more generally;

- lobbying of the Scottish Government, local authorities and environmental organisations to gain support for a national parks strategy;

- a high level conference at a central venue bringing together community, national and international experience. The aim of the conference will be to formalise a submission to the Scottish Government on a strategy for future national parks in Scotland.

The overall aim will be to secure community and Scottish Government support for a development strategy and a programme of implementation which could see up to three new national parks (including a first coastal and marine park) being designated by 2014. The

partnership is seeking to raise overall project costs of £170,000 and has so far raised £20,300 which illustrates the difficulties of fundraising for an idea as opposed to a physical project.

The complementary interests of SCNP and APRS are uniting to progress this aim of strengthening and expanding the National Park network in Scotland. The partnership has received letters of support from:

- Cairngorms Campaign
- Campaign for National Parks
- Camping and Caravanning Club
- Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs
- Marine Conservation Society
- John Muir Trust
- National Trust for Scotland
- Ramblers Scotland
- RSPB
- Scottish Mountaineering Trust
- Scottish Wildlife Trust

The need for such a project has been further emphasized by the weakness of the National Parks Strategic Review conducted by government which has got bogged down in administrative detail and not addressed any really strategic issues.



Cutting Carbon at the office

David Downie, WWF Scotland

When we refurbished the WWF Scotland office in Dunkeld, we wanted to make it as thermally efficient as possible. The first and easiest decision was to ensure that the loft area was

well insulated, avoiding the standard products (which tend to require large amounts of energy in the production process), opting instead for insulation from sheep's wool,

sourced from the north of England.

The existing windows were in good condition, but single glazed. Rather than dispose of

perfectly good windows, we decided to improve their performance by fitting draught-excluding brushes around all of the frames. Consideration was also given to the insulation of the walls, but ruled out on the basis of the return on the investment - mainly due to the existing stone structure

providing a reasonable level of insulation.

Most recently, we installed a wood-pellet boiler. Carbon-neutral, this replaces gas as the fuel for our heating and hot water, and even allowing for the emissions in the transportation of the pellets, this should save approximately

9.5 tonnes of carbon annually. Coupled with the fact that prior to the refurbishment the building had an electric heating system, and that the reduced supply now required comes from renewable sources, we feel that we have made a genuine difference to the carbon footprint of our office.



A new era for the Scottish Wild Land Group

Rob McMorran, SWLG Co-ordinator

The 2008 AGM of the Scottish Wild Land Group saw four of the long standing steering team members stand down, making way for a number of new recruits. Alistair Cant (Co-ordinator), John Digney (Wild Land News Editor), Fiona Anderson and Danny Rafferty all retired from the SWLG team following many years of dedicated service. Following much interest and many offers of support in the build up to the AGM, five new steering team members were appointed. Two existing committee members, David Jarman and Tim Ambrose, stayed on in their roles, providing a base of experience to compliment the fresh energy of the new members.

The new volunteers which were appointed to the SWLG steering group are: Rob McMorran (SWLG Co-ordinator), Grant Cornwallis (Membership Secretary and joint WLN

Editor), Jayne Glass (Website administrator and joint WLN Editor), Calum Brown and Graeme Cornwallis. The full biographies of this mixed bag of wild land devotees can be seen in the most recent edition of Wild Land News, available on the newly launched and revamped [website of the SWLG](#) - well worth a visit!

The AGM discussions confirmed that the group was in good financial health, as well as having an ongoing strong base of membership. Furthermore, the continuing importance of the role of the SWLG in modern-day Scotland was emphasized. The SWLG remains one of the few fully volunteer run NGOs in Scotland, in an arena dominated by large staffed organisations. Scotland's wilder landscapes and habitats remain under considerable threat from a variety of sources, including insensitively located large-scale

energy initiatives and excessively high deer densities. The benefits of these areas remain considerably under recognised and wild land remains a politically contentious issue, despite the massive importance of this resource from economic, environmental and social perspectives.

The threats facing wild areas grow ever more complex and it is the goal of the newly regenerated SWLG to tackle these complexities and ensure that wild land remains firmly on the political agenda. SWLG committee members, new and old, look forward to a future of active campaigning and increased networking with other organisations through Scottish Environment LINK, to raise the profile of Scotland's wild land and ensure the conservation and enhancement of this resource in the long term.

In Brief

[Friends of the Earth](#) has a new website urging people to do one thing differently this year to help the environment spreadthelove.org.uk

[Butterfly Conservation](#) needs volunteers for a new monitoring scheme to discover “where have all the butterflies gone”. If you can make two survey visits to an area near your home between May and August [contact](#) Katie Cruickshanks (tel 01929 406036).

[Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) is organising the annual National Spring Clean during April. To take part visit the [website](#) or call 01786 468243.

LINK Further Information

For information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit the [LINK home page](#) Task Force outputs are listed under ‘Work Areas’.

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

Phone: 01738 630804
Fax: 01738 643290
[Email:](mailto:enquiries@scotlink.org) enquiries@scotlink.org

Parliamentary 3rd Floor,
Gladstone’s Land
Office 483 Lawnmarket
Edinburgh EH1 2NT
[Email:](mailto:parliamentary@scotlink.org) parliamentary@scotlink.org
Phone: 0131 225 4345

Marine campaign [email](#), [website](#)

Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is sponsored by grants from SNH, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Scottish Government, and supported by subscriptions from its member bodies, supporters and subscribers, and charitable donations. LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company No. SC 250899. LINK is a Scottish Charity SCN 000296.