

# The LINK Newsletter

The quarterly update from Scottish Environment LINK  
May to July 2006



LINK

## Holyrood elections 2007

Preparations for LINK's **everyone** campaign for Holyrood 2007, to raise the profile of the environment further up the agenda of all the parties, have been underway for some time. The campaign 'asks' will be based on LINK's *Policy Manifesto for Scotland's Environment, People and Economy: A charter for sustainable development* (see LINK website) published early this year. A Campaign Delivery Team (CDT), involving parliamentary, policy and marketing expertise across the network, and headed by Julia Harrison of RSPB Scotland, was formed in the Spring. The CDT has worked with the marketing and communication agency Leithal Thinking, to develop its communication strategy. This process included a lively communication workshop led by Leithal Thinking, held alongside LINK's Annual General Meeting on 20 June. It involved a good cross section of staff from LINK organisations. Thanks to WWF Scotland for funding the costs of Leithal Thinking's contribution.

The workshop marked the departure of Susan Warren as part-time Campaigns Coordinator. Susan worked on the previous two **everyone** election campaigns and has helped prepare the ground for 2007. LINK is very grateful to her for her dedication and hard work over the last 3 years. Ylva Haglund, succeeding her as Coordinator, has a strong background in communications and campaigning.

The Campaign Delivery Team is preparing for a late 2006 launch, with a wide menu of means for supporting organisations to take part. Plans include a media training day for members on 11 September. Contact Ylva on [Ylva@scotlink.org](mailto:Ylva@scotlink.org) for details.

## LINK AGM News

Lloyd Austin stepped down as Chair of LINK at the AGM on 20 June, with praise ringing in his ears from all quarters for his mighty contribution to LINK over the past 6 years in a leadership capacity. He was elected to serve another year as a trustee on the Board. He was presented with a small gift, with the promise of more to come at the Members' Annual Congress on 24-25 November. John Mayhew, stepping into the role after a brief period as Vice-Chair, was pleased to take it with support from Deborah Long as Vice-Chair, and from Fred Edwards continuing as President. Eila McQueen and Francoise van Buuren were elected as new trustees. Lisa Schneidau and Bill Wright stepped down this year amidst thanks for their contributions. David Downie was elected for another year as Treasurer.

The increased commitment needed from LINK's office bearers, due in part to requirements of the new charity legislation but more to the breadth of LINK's work, makes it challenging to recruit volunteers with the time to put into running the organisation. To help ensure that no one is overloaded LINK has divided the responsibilities of the Board among trustees. LINK is grateful to all their employers for the commitment of staff time for these roles, and of course this applies equally to LINK's task forces, especially the Convenors. Other trustees re-elected were Ian McCall, Dan Barlow, Andrew Fairbairn and Ian Findlay.

Lloyd, in a brief parting speech, praised the tremendous contribution of Fred Edwards to LINK's work since his election as President two years ago; this was heartily endorsed by all members.

## **Scottish Rural Development Programme**

The Agriculture task force coordinated LINK's response to the Executive's consultation on the Scottish Rural Development Programme and accompanying Strategic Environment Assessment. LINK noted that the SRDP is the key vehicle to deliver the Executive's commitments on a raft of environmental requirements and objectives on biodiversity, forestry, water, landscape, organics, climate change, sustainable development, care of the historic environment, outdoor access and physical activity. LINK believes that measures that contribute to multiple objectives must be prioritised.

There is concern that the interpretation of sustainability outlined in the consultation document is weak, seeking only to 'avoid net damage' to the environment. It must be consistent with the Scottish Executive's objectives as set out in the Sustainable Development Strategy. The SRDP should present an integrated programme where measures benefit each of the three cross-cutting elements of sustainable development, and delivery must comply with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and further the conservation of biodiversity.

LINK is extremely concerned at the prospect of very limited funding for the SRDP, especially in the early years. Therefore the best possible use of available public funding must be achieved, and increased funding must be found if a shortfall in SRDP funding means environmental objectives cannot be fully met. To achieve best use of the available funding, early consideration must be given to the public goods and benefits delivered by Land Management Contracts and the Less Favoured Areas Scheme, the latter which is likely to take up much of the budget. Landscape, or catchment-scale and collaborative approaches should be encouraged, to help meet SEERAD's wide ranging objectives. The full response is available on the LINK website.

## **National Transport Strategy**

LINK has joined the many other organisations which have submitted comments on the draft National Transport Strategy. The Transport sub-group of LINK's Climate Change task force (TF) made its submission to the Strategy following a meeting between Clifton Bain (RSPB), Chair of the TF, and John Lauder (Sustrans) who chairs its Transport sub-group, with the Scottish Executive team writing the Strategy. A meeting is planned for the Autumn with Transport Minister, Tavish Scott and LINK.

The LINK response concludes that the Strategy will do little to halt the growth in road traffic and the damaging environmental impacts made by carbon emissions, increased road building and air travel. LINK calls on the Executive to produce a finished Strategy that is a far-sighted and inspiring programme of measures to tackle oil dependency, reduce road traffic, protect the environment and improve the health of the nation and, in so doing, position Scotland at the forefront of eco-friendly transport in Europe.

## **Landscape**

LINK gave evidence on 7 June to the Parliament's Communities Committee at Stage 2 of the Planning Bill, supporting the introduction of legislation on National Scenic Areas (NSA). The Landscape task force will continue to work to get adequate powers and funding for NSAs, to make it a useful and significant designation.

LINK welcomes the creation of the new Landscape Forum set up by Scottish Natural Heritage, with input from the Scottish Executive, as an indication that government is at last beginning to consider how best to protect one of Scotland's critical assets. Helen McDade (JMT), Convenor of the task force, and Bill Wright (APRS), represent LINK on the Forum, which is expected to complete its work by March 2007.

# News and Views from Members

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

## **Seasearch in Scotland: Sharing hidden gems**

*Calum Duncan, Scottish Officer, Seasearch Scotland Coordinator, Marine Conservation Society*

Despite 70% of all Scots living within 10km of the sea, what lies beneath the waves remains 'out of sight, out of mind' for most. Yet Scotland's territorial area, extending to 12 nautical miles, is 53% sea and, according to one respected study, there are 16,491km of Scottish coastline.

Lifting the briny blanket surrounding this byzantine coast reveals almost half of Scotland's biodiversity, an estimated 43,000 species, of which the more complex plants and animals number some 9,000. Here lies hidden an intriguing, colourful world of flameshells and lumpsuckers, phosphorescent sea-pens and soft corals, occupying a spectrum of habitats from the sheltered reefs and muddy-basins of our sea lochs, by way of biologically rich tidal rapids, to the wave-pounded sea stacks of the Western and Northern Isles and St Kilda.

To properly protect this wonderful marine life, biodiversity 'hotspots', rare species and habitats and also the unremarkable areas need to be identified, a huge and expensive task. Cue Seasearch, a volunteer seabed-surveying project for divers, started by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the then Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) in the mid 1980s. A National Seasearch Steering Group was then established in 1999, coordinating the statutory nature conservation bodies, conservation and education groups and diving organisations with an interest in developing the project. By 2000, MCS had appointed a full-time Scottish Officer, part SNH-funded with Seasearch co-ordination in the remit, and in 2003, the project re-launched with a two-tier training programme.

In 2005, capacity was increased by employing local coordinators in west and northeast

Scotland. Since 2000, 24 Seasearch Observation and Survey courses have been run from St Abbs to Shetland; 14 expeditions – as far flung as Isle of May, Loch Torridon, Cape Wrath, Isle of Rum and this year Sanda Island, Handa Island and South Uist; and 15 weekends, including St Abbs, Ailsa Craig, Loch Alsh, Portmahomack and Kilbrannan Sound, have been organised, resulting in almost 1,000 records.

Seasearch highlights have included: the shallowest ever sighting of the deepwater brittlestar *Asteronyx loveni*; new sites for pink sea fingers (*Alcyonium hibernicum*) and the rare burrowing sea anemone *Arachnanthus sarsi*; new records of the previously overlooked red blenny (*Parablennius ruber*); sightings of climate change indicator species such as red mullet, John Dory and Sunfish and the re-routing of a planned sewage pipe to protect fragile maerl beds off Arran.

All the information is entered into Marine Recorder and uploaded onto the National Biodiversity Network ([www.searchnbn.net](http://www.searchnbn.net)) where professionals can access it to inform their decisions. MCS hopes that the data will ultimately help inform potential locations for future Nationally Important Marine Sites, established under a Marine Act for Scotland that LINK has long been calling for.

Seasearch is also all about helping divers 'get their eye in' to what lives where and getting something out of every dive, no matter how modest. Following a trip to the Isle of May, one Seasearch diver summed the ethos up perfectly: "Its great to think you don't have to go very far or very deep to get fantastic dives...and record wonderful underwater life."

For more information contact Calum Duncan on 0131 226 6360, email [Scotland@mcsuk.org](mailto:Scotland@mcsuk.org) or visit [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org) or [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk).

## **Scottish Archaeology Month**

*Andrew Tibbs, Communications Officer, Council for Scottish Archaeology*

The Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA) is voluntary charitable organisation which works in Scotland to raise awareness of our archaeological heritage through promotion, lobbying, conservation and education. Our flagship public participation initiative is Scottish Archaeology Month which is a unique programme of events celebrating the nation's rich archaeological heritage.

Throughout September there are hundreds of events and activities taking place up and down the land, from re-enactors replaying the past to leisurely guided walks around ancient sites; viewing excavations to museum exhibitions. Visitors to Scottish Archaeology Month can experience crafts and stalls using forgotten technologies, or sit back and listen to the experts talk about the real work of archaeologists. From Shetland and Orkney to the Scottish Borders and from the Western Isles to the East Neuk of Fife, there are hundreds of things to see and do. There's something for everyone; individuals, groups, families, and even some events where you can take the dog!

Scottish Archaeology Month has proved to be a hugely successful event since its original inception ten years ago as part of the UK-wide National Archaeology Days. Since then, it has grown to a programme of almost 300 events, attracting 18,000 visitors in 2005, and it is expected to continue growing. With the CSA already working on the 2007 programme we hope to increase the number and range of events. We are also concerned with increasing visitor numbers and diversity beyond traditional heritage audiences by working with minority groups, and by promotion of Scottish Archaeology Month beyond Scotland.

For the latest details, or to request a national events guide, phone CSA on 0131 247 4119 or visit [www.scottisharchaeologymonth.com](http://www.scottisharchaeologymonth.com)

## **Food for Life**

*Carey Coombs, Policy Manager, Soil Association Scotland*

Making a sustainable food chain workable in Scotland is difficult because it is so complex. Sustainability in the food chain has to address farming methods and food distribution and access. All of these areas in the Scottish food system are fraught with issues of energy use, of environmental impact, and of ecological justice. To propose an accessible and positive means of dealing with these issues is a challenge.

The Soil Association *Food for Life* project has attempted to deal with these issues by focussing on procurement, and in particular procurement and delivery of school meals. We believe that public procurement by the Executive should set exemplary standards to demonstrate what is achievable and how it can be done.

*Food for Life* sets standards of 70% fresh and unprocessed, 50% local and 30% organic. By achieving these standards schools will avoid overprocessed 'junk' type foods for foods that retain their integrity and vitality. They will begin to deal with the 'food miles' issues and the associated environmental consequences, and they will support the viability of local organic farmers. This will also help to grow the understanding of the organic agri-ecological approach to farming and growing. There has been considerable interest and a number of local authority catering managers have taken up the challenge. The achievements of Robin Gourlay, the East Ayrshire catering manager at Hurlford are now well recognised. He has managed to deliver to the targets and is now rolling out the project in 11 schools.

Soil Association Scotland's challenge is to have these standards adopted across Scotland as a useful and achievable set of targets that can make a real and substantial impact on Scotland's children's health and understanding of the linkages between food, environment and health.

## **Built Environment Forum Scotland update**

*Jo Robertson, Forum Coordinator*

The BEF Historic Environment Review Taskforce (HERT) has been keeping a watching brief on the development of the Historic Environment Audit. In March the group hosted a workshop to gather ideas from stakeholders on possible questions that the Audit could provide answers to and also to identify possible data sources and relate these to questions. Participants endorsed the promotion of regular headline reporting of results; highlighted the strong role for Local Authority staff in the Audit process; noted that data accessibility will be variable and signposting of existing data will be necessary; and that the audience(s) for the Audit will need to be clearly defined. Participants were keen that a user group of stakeholders be established to feed views to the Stakeholder Advisory Group. A survey to assess data quality is currently being undertaken by Glasgow Caledonian University (Heritage Futures) – the results will be available in the autumn. Further information is on <http://www.heritagefutures.net/research/dataquality.html>

At a BEFS workshop on the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan, participants recognised housing as a major challenge for the park plan. Relationships between the park plan/local plan and design guidance need to be teased out, and the significance of the European Landscape Convention and emphasis on public participation were highlighted as key issues.

BEFS held a workshop on Scottish Historic Environment Policy 3: Gardens & Designed Landscapes: in response to this draft policy from Historic Scotland, the relevance of the European Landscape Convention was again highlighted. Participants were concerned by the narrow focus in the document on sites of national importance; calling for much wider recognition of the value of non-national sites and a more holistic approach to valuing

landscape in general. For information on BEFS, contact Jo on [jrobertson@bef.org.uk](mailto:jrobertson@bef.org.uk), or telephone 0131 556 5353.

## **BBC Breathing Places Campaign**

*David Jamieson, Director BTCV Scotland & International*

BBC Breathing Places will run from 2006 to 2008, aiming to mobilise 1 million people to create 50,000 nature-friendly green spaces across the UK. As well as promoting the campaign through a range of broadcast output, the BBC is co-ordinating a campaign database ([www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/getinvolved/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/getinvolved/)) which links people to their local Breathing Places. A Breathing Place could be anything from an established nature reserve to a small green space that is being cared for by a community group: a school that is transforming a space in its grounds, an allotment site or a playing field or golf course....

The legacy of the campaign is:

- A transformed landscape, sustained into the future
- Heightened awareness and understanding of nature for the participants
- Increased and widened participation in nature conservation, particularly from new enthusiasts

The BBC needs and welcomes the support and expertise of conservation organisations in order to ensure the success of the campaign. It has been talking to many partners as the project has developed and will continue to do so. BTCV is partnering The Wildlife Trusts in leading support for Communities, and the RSPB is leading support for School-based Breathing Places. Twelve regional delivery teams are being set up to co-ordinate the effective delivery of the campaign across the UK. Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Executive are leading the Scotland team.

The Big Lottery Fund is offering grants to communities and schools that need funds to develop an existing or new Breathing Place. 5

Grants of between £300-£10,000 are on offer. Application forms can be found at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk) The first £1 million is being offered to community groups who are already up and running. The deadline for applications is 26th July 2006. The next £4 million will be available from October 2006. This will support groups, including schools, which wish to create a new breathing place or improve an existing one.

If you know of a community or school that would like to improve its local Breathing Place then make them aware of the campaign, get their Breathing Place registered on the campaign database, and encourage them to apply for a grant to support their efforts. For further details on Breathing Places go to [www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces) BTCV Scotland can provide “hands-on” help with improving community and school Breathing Places. Contact [Scotland@btcv.org.uk](mailto:Scotland@btcv.org.uk)

**Sustainable Development Education:  
Are we finally getting somewhere?**

*Morag Watson, WWF Scotland & Chair of the SDE Network*

Since our last update on Sustainable Development Education (SDE) in October 2005 we are pleased to report that things have really started to move on the policy front.

The commitment in *Choosing our Future, Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy* to publish an Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was very welcome. Now the Action Plan has been finalised, the question is ‘are we finally getting somewhere?’

On the schools front the Action Plan is pretty strong with commitments to put SDE into the curriculum, continued support for the Eco School programme including additional resources to boost involvement by secondary schools, SDE to be incorporated into the schools inspection process, a renewed commitment to outdoor education and an acknowledgment that teacher training will have to change to take into account new

curricular priorities. Sadly these strong commitments in learning and teaching have not been matched in the area of school build. The Executive highlights its commitment to invest £2.3 billion in renewing the school estate, details the guidance it has published on sustainable school design but doesn't include any actions to ensure this guidance is taken on board—a huge missed opportunity and a disappointment to the SDE community.

On the further and higher education side the picture is almost the opposite of the schools' situation with estates management way ahead of curriculum changes. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has been given lot to do, with SD featuring prominently in its capital grants process. Its other action points are not quite as strong and when it comes to learning and teaching the SFC will be doing a lot of identifying, scoping, encouraging and considering of SDE. On a brighter note the SFC has been tasked with conducting its own business in a sustainable way and increasing its own staff's SD skills and knowledge. They will also be working with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to incorporate SDE into the curriculum design and review process.

This Action Plan, which runs to 2010-11, places less emphasis on informal learning but commits to focusing more on this in the second Action Plan covering the period 2010-14. As a first step they are planning a conference on ‘involving people in sustainable development’ early in 2007.

In the meantime the Scottish Executive will be introducing a new SD training programme for its own staff, holding an annual conference to share experience and celebrate success, creating a dedicated website for the UN Decade and reporting annually on the progress they are making.

On the whole this is a good start and provides a foundation to build on. We look forward to working with the Scottish Executive to turn these commitments into reality.

## LINK Task Force and other news

**Biodiversity** TF representatives took part in a meeting of the Scottish Biodiversity Committee (SBC), taking the opportunity to highlight the importance of UK-wide coordination and monitoring of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the need for new species on the list to have SMART actions. Additionally the TF has been working to support the UKBAP and progress the targets review. Scottish LINK is working closely with UK sister Links on biodiversity, attending recent Wildlife & Countryside Link's task force meetings. Discussion of biodiversity among other issues at the 4 Links secretariats meeting in May prompted organisation of a seminar to examine how devolution is working for the environmental NGOs throughout the UK, now planned for Cardiff in November.

Looking ahead, the TF proposes to carry out a small review of the recently published DEFRA costings report of the UKBAP and the Scottish data from the UKBAP reporting round, and will be preparing for the first meeting of the SBC sub-group on the next round of SBS implementation plans. The TF will prepare a response to the SNH Species Framework consultation.

**Deer** The TF responded positively and pro-actively to the Executive and inter-agency announcement in May on the forward work programme for a further 16 "priority sites" relating to deer damage to protected areas.

**FORGE** The fundraisers' group met on 31 May at the Scottish Seabird Centre to discuss recent developments in funding sources. Both Lillian Kelly (SSC), FORGE secretary, and Margaret Thorne (WTS), Convenor, moved on from their jobs in July; they are warmly thanked for years of good work. The next meeting is scheduled for 20 September.

**Freshwater** Andrea Johnstonova was invited to speak to Waterwatch Scotland about the importance of sustainability and

environmental improvements for Scottish Water customers. The TF prepared a briefing, *Living within Environmental Limits*, for a Sustainability Scotland conference in June. LINK has written to the Environment Minister to express concerns about sheep dips pollution in Scotland and calls to reverse the recent ban on cypermethrin based sheep dips. The TF also wrote to SEPA to express concerns over the exclusion of small water bodies, which are numerous in Scotland and important for biodiversity, from the characterisation process under the Water Framework Directive.

**Marine** The TF circulated a UK Marine Bill bulletin outlining LINK's position to a wide range of stakeholders, contributed to sister body Wildlife & Countryside Link's (WCL) response to the UK Marine Bill consultation, took part in stakeholder events in Scotland and London on the consultation, and submitted its own detailed response to Defra. A copy of the response was also sent to the Scottish Executive. The TF has received funding of £7,000 from charitable trusts via WCL, to help support campaign work for a Scottish Marine Bill over the next 6 months.

Following LINK input to the Advisory Group on the Marine and Coastal Strategy on the need to consider Marine Governance and Marine Nature Conservation as part of that process, it was agreed that the Marine Biodiversity Working Group take forward a Marine Nature Conservation workstream. A draft paper prepared by Dr Rebecca Boyd was discussed at a meeting in June, and will be developed further before a further meeting in August. The TF has commissioned a short paper giving a snapshot of some of the most significant marine species, habitats and landscapes of national importance to Scotland (nationally important marine features) not currently afforded adequate protection, using case studies.

**Planning** The Planning Bill began Stage 2 on 14 June, and the TF is looking ahead to September when the Communities Committee will likely be discussing third

party rights of appeal (TPRA). The everyone website has been updated and encourages people to contact MSPs on the issue.

LINK was very disappointed and disillusioned with the Committee's Stage 1 report, which concluded that the majority of the Committee did not see any reason for communities, local authorities or individuals to have the right to participate in a formal examination of the National Planning Framework. The majority also supported the Executive's decision not to introduce a limited TPRA, despite considerable public support for this. Amendments supported by LINK, the Association of Scottish Community Councils and the Royal Town Planning Institute that would make a public inquiry on the National Planning Framework statutory, were rejected. LINK had circulated a briefing on the types of development that could be covered to MSPs and media. The TF had met the Minister for Parliament, the Deputy Minister for Communities and all independent MSPs to discuss the democratic deficit that will result without real rights in planning.

**Sustainable Scotland** The TF met the Executive's Sustainable Development (SD) Team to discuss progress with developing the SD Strategy implementation plan and SD indicators. Both documents are now released and on the Scottish Executive's website. The Indicators did not include Footprint. Indicators of social justice, environmental equality and well being are being developed further at a UK level and may be introduced in Scotland later. The TF has much appreciated the open approach of Joanna Young, who has now moved on from heading the SD Team, and looks forward to meeting her successor in the Autumn.

The TF submitted a response to the Executive's consultation on waste prevention. Dan Barlow, TF Convenor

attended a meeting of the Executive's Waste Liaison Group. LINK is highly concerned at the next phase of the Strategic Waste Fund in which groups of local authorities are compiling 'Strategic Outline Cases' setting out proposals for waste infrastructure. Many of these contradict commitments made in the National Waste Plan, suggest lower recycling rates and are proposing the development of numerous 'energy from waste' facilities.

**Woodlands** The TF has submitted responses to consultations on the reviews of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme.

**In brief** LINK's application to the Executive Sustainable Action Fund was granted in full for core activities from April 2006 to March 2009. We are very pleased that SEERAD recognises and values the breadth of LINK's contribution to the sustainable development agenda through this funding.

Scottish Environment Week 2007 will run from 5 to 12 February. There will be more to report in the next newsletter.

### Further Information

For information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please contact LINK or visit our website [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org)

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For updates on the everyone campaigns see [www.everyonecan.org](http://www.everyonecan.org)