

The LINK Newsletter

Update from Scottish Environment LINK
Spring 2011



Adapting to a changing climate

By Jim Densham RSPB, Convenor of LINK's Climate Adaptation Taskforce

Scotland will have to adapt to a changing climate. This is inevitable. The questions remaining are; how quickly do we need to adapt, how much do we need to adapt, and what is the best and right way to adapt.

In 2010 Scottish Environment LINK established a [Climate Adaptation Taskforce](#) to take forward work on adaptation. It doesn't mean we have abandoned mitigation. Limiting further climate change is still of the greatest importance in Scotland and we continue to support efforts to achieve Scotland's ambitious targets. But the GHGs already in the system will mean that some climate changes are inevitable.

We know that wildlife and landscapes are already being affected by the impacts of climate change and many species cannot cope with the speed of change. Therefore, we believe that there is a need to act urgently and help the natural environment adapt by putting the right policies in place now. LINK's aim is to see that the natural environment is enabled to adapt to climate change in Scotland and that this is achieved both in areas designated for their

wildlife and landscape value, and also on land which has other primary uses. Our key sites for wildlife, for example, must be managed as well as possible to provide robust species populations which are resilient to change and can act as 'seed sources' for future species movement. The key with the majority of land uses, such as agricultural land, forestry or the built environment, is to ensure that adaptation policies (as well as mitigation policies) are sustainable, i.e. not harming the natural environment. Furthermore, if we conserve nature, ecosystems can provide services which will help society to adapt in the future.

In February LINK responded to the Scottish Government's *Adapting to the Changing Climate* consultation. In it Government asked for opinions on an assessment of the environmental impact of their adaptation policies within the draft Sector Action Plans. Thanks to the efforts of a wide range of LINK members we were able to submit a [detailed response](#) which can be found on LINK's website.

In our response we highlighted that:

- The Draft Action Plans were not

sufficiently strategic and too frequently the actions did not specifically target the challenges of climate change.

The 12 Action Plans themselves require further development as the actions within them are vague and did not provide sufficient detail to be able to confidently assess the full environmental impact. They also demonstrated a lack of urgency to the impacts of being experienced now, especially by the natural environment.

We understand that the Action Plans are in a process of development and will become part of the Government's statutory adaptation programme in 2013. We want to work with Government and other organisations to develop the Sector Action Plans and embed sustainable adaptation responses into existing policies. In reality, climate adaptation shouldn't be about developing a whole new set of policies. Some new policies will be necessary but rather it should be about 'future proofing' existing ones and embedding adaptation into policy development. Time to get the crystal balls out and thinking caps on.

Single Outcome Agreements— Audit and Conference



Delivering for the environment in our communities: *An audit of Single Outcome Agreements* was published in February. This audit, commissioned by LINK from CAG consultants, followed the February 2010 report [Working for Sustainable Development through Single Outcome Agreements](#) which set out preferred outcomes and indicators in ten key areas.

The audit found that although environmental issues feature in a number of SOAs they tend to cover quite narrow statutory necessities, such as waste and street cleanliness. By taking this approach, significant gaps remain in addressing national priorities such as climate change adaptation, landscape, the historic environment and the sustainable management of water resources. LINK argues that financial constraint means now more than ever, local authorities need to seek solutions which maximise the economic and social benefits of a healthy environment.

The audit identified several good practice examples where local authorities recognise the benefits of strong environmental policies in terms of adding value to health, jobs, and pride in the community.

Following circulation of this report and of the Sustainable Development Commission's 4th Assessment Report, LINK worked with SNH, SEPA, SSN, Scottish

Government and the Improvement Service, to coordinate a seminar, held at CoSLA, on 21 February. *Single Outcome Agreements and Action for People, Place and Community* aimed to explore how action on local priorities by local government and community planning partnerships (CPPs), through the outcomes based approach between central and local government, can maintain and enhance progress on sustainable development, tackling climate change, and the environment. It was targeted at those involved in the preparation or delivery of SOAs, to provide an opportunity for exchange between experienced practitioners. Acutely aware of tight budget constraints, it also set out to focus on upstream solutions - prevention rather than cure - and how to secure both multiple benefits (economic, social and environmental) and cost savings. Thirty-five organisations including 20 local authorities took part. An [independent report on proceedings](#) was prepared by Tim Birley Consultancy.



The event largely endorsed the findings of LINK's audit with the seminar report identifying what participants consider is needed, including:

- Leadership, both political and management. More courage is needed eg by aligning budgets, timetables and outcome delivery plans.

- There is a key role for Scottish

Government to give clear guidance and establish a more responsive mutual learning process to enable continuous improvement.

- The evidence base of the Area Profiles should inform priorities and outcomes, and could be a focus for community engagement. Informing the evidence base and monitoring progress against outcomes need the right data sets disaggregated to the right spatial level. Local priorities are often a better starting point for SOAs than a top-down process.
- SOAs need to be built around a small number of genuinely strategic local outcomes. It is easier to recognise the connections and interdependencies with a small number of outcomes, such as the importance of the quality of local environments in supporting local health and economy outcomes.
- Great care is needed that indicators and targets don't drive the process. It is outcomes that matter, and ways in which progress towards these can be understood and communicated.
- There is a need to improve accountability; effective audit; and holding to account, internally by CPPs, and externally by Scottish Government, the Improvement Service and Audit Scotland.

More Network News

Agriculture The taskforce (TF) [responded](#) comprehensively to the consultation *The Impact Assessment of the Commission Proposals "Common Agricultural Policy towards 2020."* LINK's vision for the CAP's future is that it should be focused on providing public goods with a strong legislative baseline requiring the polluter to pay for environmental damage, with tiered support allowing all farmers to deliver environmental benefits while rewarding those most who provide highest benefits.



LINK has produced and circulated three further filenotes, expanding on current CAP related issues. The latest are about [Food Security](#), [High Nature Value Farming and Crofting in Scotland](#), and [Public Goods in Agriculture in Scotland](#). All are on the LINK website.

Biodiversity In January members decided to stand down as an active TF though continuing as a Wildlife Forum to maintain the vital information and discussion aspects. The ten member bodies jointly ran a [campaign](#) inviting candidate MSPs to pledge to "endeavour to retain the colour, variety and vitality of Scotland by conserving wildlife and restoring habitats". Over 60 candidates signed, (not all were elected). Members will build on this base to increase awareness and enthusiasm among MSPs for action supporting wildlife.

LINK Biodiversity and [Deer](#) interests contributed throughout the stages of the Wildlife & Natural Environment bill, enacted on 7 April. Members were pleased with the excellent measures on invasive species, though remain sceptical that the new but still voluntary deer management measures will be fit for purpose. Members were heartened by strengthening of the

biodiversity duty by adding a three-yearly reporting requirement and by the introduction of the vicarious liability for estates involved in wildlife crime. As the bill progressed views coalesced on implementation of the ecological coherence provisions of the Habitats Directive, and though that failed to get into this bill, it was included in the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee legacy paper.

Freshwater The TF coordinated [LINK's response](#) to SEPA's consultation on *Better Environmental Regulation*. The feedback will be discussed at a meeting with SEPA and Scottish Government staff in May.

The TF's [response](#) to the consultation on the future of Scottish Water, *Building a Hydro Nation* set out concerns about the lack of reference to the environment and sustainability. Members hope to meet civil servants shortly to discuss how the water industry can be more sustainable.

Lisa Webb (RSPB), TF convenor, attended the first meeting of the National Flood Management Advisory Group in April. The TF's next meeting will discuss SEPA's consultation on National Flood Risk Assessment running from June to August.

Marine The TF has been busy with further responses to consultations including strong support for SNH's scientific case to designate East Mingulay as a Special Area of Conservation; productive meetings with Marine Scotland, SNH, ongoing involvement on stakeholder forums; and publication of a report commissioned from the Scottish Association of Marine Science. [Making the case for the sound management of Marine Protected Areas](#) (MPAs) contributes to the debate on how recovery of the marine environment can be delivered in practice. Making the

right management decisions now will allow MPAs to flourish, playing their part in delivering the shared vision of a healthy, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment. Scottish Government's publication (March 2011) [Scotland's Marine Atlas: Information for the National Marine Plan](#) - an assessment of the condition of Scotland's seas based on scientific evidence from data and analysis, supported by expert judgement - reveals the worrying extent of damage and threat to the marine habitat and many marine species.

During the election campaign candidate MSPs were encouraged to sign [LINK's Marine Declaration 2011](#) to show their commitment to delivering healthy, productive, biologically diverse seas around Scotland during the new Parliamentary session. The Declaration was well supported by political parties with Richard Lochhead (Scotsman 27 April) commenting - "The SNP Government piloted the Marine bill through the Scottish Parliament and we will keep our commitments to regenerating Scotland's seas. LINK's Marine Task Force are quite right to raise the issue and a re-elected SNP Government will work with all those involved in using and managing Scotland's seas to protect them for our future."

Membership LINK was sorry that the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland withdrew membership in recent months because of internal problems. Members are delighted to welcome [Froglife](#) as a member. Read about Froglife's work below.

[Paths for All](#) has signed up to be an Organisational Supporter joining Keep Scotland Beautiful in this new affiliation. If you are involved with an organisation with an environmental remit that is ineligible for membership, do check out the benefits of becoming an [Organisational Supporter](#). Details are on the website or get in touch.

Staffing After four years as Parliamentary Office Administrator Susan Guest left LINK in April. She was presented with vouchers for equipment she will need for a major cycling trip she is planning later this year. Recruitment for her replacement is underway.

Liaison meetings The last Ministerial liaison meeting before the election was held in February with Richard Lochhead, Roseanna Cunningham and Jonathan Pryce, new head of the Rural Affairs and Environment Directorate. The agenda covered the RAE portfolio budget, SRDP, CAP, and climate change.

There have been several liaison meetings with SNH senior staff and board members around priorities,

working relationships, opportunities and challenges ahead. LINK's June networking meeting will include a presentation on the revised SNH corporate structure.

Scottish Environment Week SEW 2011 featured another excellent mix of events in the Parliament on the theme of Active Citizenship. These showcased member bodies' and sponsors' initiatives, each demonstrating an aspect of Scottish people's passion for their environment. Read about SCRA's project below for a flavour.

Guests at the midweek reception (pic right) enjoyed excellent produce from our National Parks, courtesy of the National Park Authorities.



LINK is very grateful to all who contributed the MSPs who hosted each event, the organisers and presenters, and the Week's funding sponsors - SNH, Historic Scotland, SCVO, and Calor - and also for SEPA's involvement.

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'.

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News and Views from Members

The following are articles from LINK member bodies and guest contributors

Joining forces to cross the road

Helen Todd, Ramblers Scotland



If you have ever been stuck in a queue of traffic travelling at 40mph on the A9 trunk road, you may well sympathise with calls to fully dual this major route between Perth and Inverness. Politicians are always keen to support road upgrades, and so sections of this part of the A9 are being dualled in stages. Currently, works are ongoing at Crubenmore, south of Newtonmore, but somehow, in the midst of all the consultations for this multi-million pound project, Transport Scotland omitted to make satisfactory arrangements for walkers, cyclists and horseriders to cross the newly dualled road. This is unfortunate, given that a 300-year-old General Wade Military Road crosses the A9 at this point and is well-used by locals and long distance travellers.

The A9 can be a challenge to cross at present, but it will become even more difficult once the upgrade is completed, unless there is a bridge or underpass. Not only will four lanes of traffic be travelling at speeds of up to 70mph, but a permanent barrier will be placed down the centre of the road and in the verge. The Environmental Statement produced by Transport Scotland indicated that existing access for walkers, cyclists and horseriders will be unaffected by the new scheme - but it has now emerged that Transport Scotland suggest an eight-mile diversion to the next crossing point at Kingussie as the solution!.

A local campaign headed by a pony trekking centre started up once it became clear that the road engineers were going to ignore

non-motorised users and to try and stop them from crossing the road as they had done ever since the present A9 was constructed in the 1970s. However, the campaign really got into gear once they joined forces with Ramblers Scotland. The combination of key local campaigners plus the experience of national walking, cycling and horseriding organisations has led to a successful e-petition, pledges by politicians to build a bridge or underpass and red faces in Transport Scotland. It remains to be seen whether this issue will prove a turning point in the way transport engineers and planners accommodate non-motorised users in future road schemes.

Permitted Development Rights for Hill Tracks - Consultation

Hebe Carus, Mountaineering Council of Scotland



Hebe's (adult sized) bicycle on a track that did not require planning permission

Photo Hebe Carus

Prompted by the hill tracks campaign launched by the MCoS last year and debated in Parliament in June, the Scottish Government has launched a consultation on non-householder General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), specifically including hill tracks. This was supported by 2,600 signatories.

There are increasing numbers of tracks regularly appearing in the uplands. They degrade biodiversity, hydrology, soils, wildness and people's experience of the Scottish landscape. Almost never are tracks restored, even after they are no longer used. This is not sustainable. Most are built without

the knowledge of the planning authority and claimed as under the General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 (GPDO). When they are reported, no evidence of applicability is required. There is therefore no control over their proliferation.

The consultation could lead to changes to the statutory instrument that ensures hill tracks are brought under planning control. This is not to prevent legitimate land management, but to regulate these damaging scars on the landscape, which significantly impact upon the public services the land can offer. This would result in better outcome for people, ecology

and the landscape. It should be noted that tracks associated with renewable developments and telecom masts are controlled through non-GPDO mechanisms.

It is urgent that the Scottish Government takes seriously the impact of this uncontrolled development-creep and takes full cognisance of the recommendations of the 2006 Heriot Watt report referred to in the consultation. The closing date for responses is 1st July 2011-and the consultation can be accessed [here](#).

Go for it Girls

Roger Powell, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association



Countryside Rangers in Scotland work with a variety of Community and Educational Groups to encourage a positive engagement with the environment. The following project is one that was presented at the Scottish Parliament during Scottish Environment Week 2011

Go for it Girls was a project formed in 2009 in East Lothian. Girls in their first two years at High School who were deemed to be having difficulties at school were referred to the Integration Team by high schools and social work. These were children who are quiet and vulnerable and often overlooked. The girls attend on a voluntary basis and meet as a group every Friday, working with the Family Support Team.

The girls decided that they wished to pursue the John Muir Award (JMA), and as East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service (ELCRS) is a JMA provider a project was devised by ELCRS to work with the girls to achieve this aim. It turned out that the girls very rarely visited the countryside, thought that beaches were dirty places and only spent time in urban areas around their homes. This led to the theme for the project which was Exploring the East Lothian Coast. The aim was to use the environment to help the participant's personal development, while also working with the participants to connect to and improve that environment – very much a two way project.

Over six months, the girls explored eight places along the East Lothian coastline, supplemented by indoor sessions and a residential. Many different aspects of the coast were explored, using the Scottish

Outdoor Access Code and Leave No Trace principles at the core of the entire project.

Activities included:

- Searching for the inhabitants of the rockpools of Dunbar
- Hunting for fossils at Barns Ness
- Directly experiencing what it's like to live where the land meets the sea- putting on a wetsuit and clambering / wading / swimming around the rocks (coasteering) at JMCP
- Collecting shells and driftwood from the strandline at Gullane to make jewellery and decorate mirrors etc with
- Learning to travel on top of the water in an environment reclaimed from the sea – kayaking at Musselburgh Lagoons
- How to light, risk manage and dispose of a responsible campfire safely, both for them and the environment
- Looking at the issues surrounding dog fouling and irresponsible dog owners
- Horseriding along the sand at Seacliff
- Making exploding volcanos like the Bass Rock at Whitesands
- Clearing litter from Fishherrow beach in Musselburgh and writing / performing a song about the items they had collected and what John Muir would think of it all.

The project was very carefully designed to not only meet the four challenges of the John Muir Award, but to provide a variety of learning opportunities –including important progression of engagement, skill and challenge.

To bring everything together the girls hosted a final sharing celebration to which their families, teachers and partner staff were invited. They had made displays of

their adventures and performed their song before receiving their thoroughly well deserved John Muir Awards.

The project was then used to represent the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association at a session at the Scottish Parliament. After a short presentation, the girls informally shared their learning and experiences with MSP's and other interested people –clearly demonstrating the resounding success of the project.

It doesn't end there - The next chapter has already started. The girls are really keen to do more and want to aim for the next level of the John Muir Award. There is also a new intake of girls, tentatively interested about getting involved after hearing about all the different stories. The original girls will act as peer mentors for the new intake, using their experience to help support them and to achieve the Discovery level JMA - while the originals progress onto the Explorer level. They have already identified "Mammals and where they live" as their topic - with the Go For It Girls now really living up to their team name.

Quotes from the Integration team:

A fantastic example of team and multi agency working

I've seen everybody's confidence and self esteem quadruple. The feedback from the parents and school is the same – all said that their child has grown in confidence, they're more outgoing and able to manage social relationships better

There's only so much you can do in a groupwork session inside - you're quite limited - the

opportunities with the Ranger Service has broadened their horizons of what they're capable of.

For them to directly experience things - every school child should have that hands on experience with the Rangers - you can't underestimate the impact that can have.

I learnt a lot about the beaches I live close to. I don't quite see them in the same way now. I have a lot more knowledge and understanding that I pass onto other people too.

Quotes from the Go For It Girls:

I took my mum and dad to show them where I've been and what we've done - and I've told my mates

I didn't want to do the Coasteering - I was too frightened. But I did it - everyone made me feel safe

I learnt to push myself rather than just giving up

What training do you have to do to be a Ranger?

I helped other people and helped myself at the same time

I learnt how to do a fire properly - to look after the environment properly. We left no trace.

I've never done it before. I was scared a wee bit. I'm glad I did it though - I want to do it again

I was excited when we went rockpooling - finding all the different animals and finding out their names and that. Like the hermit crab. I thought it was just a shell. It was fun.

The environment is getting worse and we need to help to stop it getting even more worse.

The Nature of Scotland Awards

Sarah McDowell, RSPB Scotland



Nominations are now open for the first annual Nature of Scotland Awards. RSPB Scotland is delighted to be hosting these new awards, which will recognise the best of Scottish nature conservation.

Scotland's outstanding natural habitats and diverse wildlife face threats and challenges that we must work to overcome. So many individuals, businesses and the

public sector make a hugely valuable contribution to looking after our incredible natural heritage, and we feel the time is right to start celebrating such efforts.

There are six categories, all open for entries until 26 August 2011, recognising a different area or type of contribution to the protection of Scotland's natural heritage:

Marine Award
Sustainable Development Award
Politician of the Year Award

Innovation Award
Outstanding contribution to Nature Conservation Award
Species Champion Award

It is easy and free to enter. If you would like to make a nomination, please visit www.rspb.org.uk/natureofscotland where you can read more about the awards and download an entry form.

Froglife - an introduction to LINK's newest member

Sam Taylor, Froglife



Froglife is a national wildlife charity dedicated to the conservation of the UK's amphibians and reptiles and the habitats on which they depend. Formed in 1989, Froglife has initiated a number of national and regional projects, and championed their cause through a blend of practical conservation, community involvement, and education events.



In recent years, Froglife has hopped north of the border to help save the day for Scotland's amphibians and reptiles. Starting with the Glasgow Living Water

Project the team got straight to work with an ambitious pond creation programme across the city.

"The project has a strong emphasis on community involvement and we hope the new ponds will improve areas not just for wildlife but for local people as well. We've had such a great variety of people volunteer to help with our work; it really is refreshing to see communities come together for the good of wildlife" says Eilidh Spence, Living Water Project Officer.

Following the success in Glasgow, the Living Water Project recently expanded into North Lanarkshire. With even more ambitious pond creation plans, the project is considered another valuable piece of the jigsaw in the efforts to halt pond decline.

Froglife's future in Scotland is a bright one, with other counties

keen to further expand the Living Water Project and a number of potentially new and exciting projects waiting to start. Froglife looks sure to deliver its promise of conserving Scotland's amphibians and reptiles well in to the future.

With tasks ranging from amphibian surveys to pond digging, Froglife is urging people in Scotland to join in and get their hands dirty! The volunteer days are always good fun and a great reason to get outside and make a difference. Froglife also organise survey training courses and open events to really get people engaged with our amphibian and reptile friends.

All upcoming events in Scotland will be advertised on Froglife's website. Alternatively, if you want to find out a bit more you can email robert.williams@froglife.org or call the Froglife office on 01413390737.