

The LINK Newsletter

The quarterly update from Scottish Environment LINK
Summer 2010



Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment

LINK launched a visionary new report, [*Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment: effective planning for marine renewable energy in Scotland*](#), on 17 June. The report aims to contribute to the design and implementation of a regulatory framework which will secure both a thriving renewables industry and "a clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment, managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people" (Scottish Government's marine vision). The launch was attended by industry representatives and other stakeholders, including Bill Wilson MSP (SNP) (pictured below centre) who introduced the event and Sarah Dolman (Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society) and Duncan McLaren (Friends of the Earth Scotland) who spoke on behalf of LINK.



Nothing proposed in LINK's report should delay responsible development or hinder the potential of this industry to contribute to preventing climate change. Far from it. If these recommendations are taken forward, the industry would be on a more transparent and sustainable footing, better able to proceed without the setbacks of controversy

and failure which have blighted other growth sectors in the past.

The challenge of climate change, the abundance of marine renewable energy resources, and a combination of political and economic factors make a strong case for the urgent development of marine renewable energy in Scotland. There is an equally strong case for a precautionary approach due to the value of the marine environment, the unknown impacts of some of these technologies, the poverty of knowledge of marine ecosystems, the frailty of marine conservation measures, and our poor history of rapid development. As set out in the report LINK believes that Scotland can do better this time.

The report includes a call on decision makers and industry to work together to:

- establish realistic expectations of growth, allowing time for proper care to minimise impacts on the marine ecology;
- guarantee adequate resources to fund the necessary environmental research and monitoring, to match the pace of development;
- appoint a wholly independent committee to scrutinise scientific research and advice given to regulators;
- publish without delay zones of particular sensitivity where there should be a presumption against development;
- adopt an adaptive management and planning approach, to build early

findings into future plans and practices;

- improve arrangements for constructive stakeholder engagement.

The report is supported by 15 member bodies. It concludes that LINK bodies strongly support the responsible growth of the marine renewable energy industry. In its recommendations LINK proposes some restraint of the development drive, not to hinder it unduly, but to bring it into a sensible relationship with the principles of precaution, which should also receive more proportionate investment.

The 17 page report was prepared with assistance from Simon Pepper and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust, as part of the LINK Marine Project.



Lindsay Roberts (LINK) Calum Duncan (MCS), Rory Crawford (RSPB Scotland), Sarah Dolman (WDCS), and Alan Wells (LINK) at the launch

LINK AGM and Officer Bearers

At the AGM on 22 June members said goodbye to Ian McCall who stepped down as Chair and as a long-serving trustee, and to David Downie who has been Treasurer for the past nine years. David and Ian were presented with gift vouchers as a small token of appreciation for their years of service. Deborah Long was elected Chair (she was previously Vice-Chair) and Dan Barlow was elected Vice-Chair. Paul Ritchie, SWT's Director of Finance and Resources, was elected a trustee and Treasurer. Helen Todd

was elected to the Board. Remaining trustees, and Helen Zealley as President, were gladly reconfirmed by the membership for a further term. We are grateful to all for their commitment to the good governance of the network, which, in many cases, is additional to their involvement via the task forces. LINK's [annual report and accounts](#), and [carbon accounts for 2009-2010](#) are now on the website.



Deborah Long, new LINK Chair

The Environment and the Law



Lunchtime, Congress 2009

The Environment and the Law is the theme of LINK Members' Congress 2010, on 18 November at the Churches House in Dunblane. LINK, its member bodies and task forces have focussed much effort over the last decade to contributing to world leading environmental legislation in Scotland. The Congress steering group plans to gather views about how the environment has fared as a result

of some of these historic Acts, to see how aspirations at the time of drawing up the legislation are reflected by experience so far. The findings will be presented at the Congress. There will be a mix of presentations, small workshops, and debates, as well as the usual excellent networking and social aspects, so keep the date free.

LINK Organisational Supporters

The AGM agreed to trial a new category of affiliation to LINK for organisations with an interest in environmental issues which are not eligible for LINK membership. The affiliation is developed to offer

these organisations access to a comprehensive list of benefits and services for an annual cost of £1,000. Current Subscribers are being contacted individually to explain the transition as this status

will shortly cease. The category of Individual Supporter will remain. Full details about [Organisational Supporters](#) are on the website, with new enquiries welcome.

Wildlife & Natural Environment Bill

The LINK task force dealing with [our input to the W&NE Bill](#) will be providing written evidence to Stage 1 of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs & Environment Committee's consideration of the Bill before the deadline of 1 September, and

providing oral evidence on 15 September. Members' interests in this Bill mainly spans deer management, invasive species, wildlife crime, badgers and muirburn. Lloyd Austin (RSPB Scotland), who is leading LINK's

work on this Bill took part in a seminar organised by the School of Law at the University of Dundee where there was useful discussion about the Bill's provisions.

Fred Edwards Trust

LINK has helped to set up a charitable trust to commemorate Fred Edwards. Charitable status has recently been confirmed and the Trust will be formally launched on 25 October, where the first in an annual series of lectures will be given by Professor Aubrey Manning. The venue is the Playfair Library, Edinburgh. The Trust's first project is the creation of a programme of Action Learning Groups across Scotland. These volunteer facilitated groups will

support and encourage active citizenship, based on the four principles that Fred's own activism embraced – social justice, ecological integrity, economic literacy, and a global world view. The Trust aims to empower people to see the possibilities for real change in their lives and environment and to effectively create and lead that change. Please contact [Kate](#) at the Perth office to attend the launch.



Ross Finnie MSP and Fred Edwards at a LINK dinner to celebrate Fred becoming LINK President in 2002

More Network News

Agriculture Vicki Swales (RSPB) gave [evidence](#) for LINK, alongside representatives of NFUS and the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, to Parliament's Rural Affairs and Environment Committee short inquiry into the reduction of livestock on Scotland's hills on 12 May. There was general agreement that farm payments need to be better related to provision of public goods and services rather than compensating for agricultural disadvantage, and that the objectives of agricultural subsidies need to be clearly and coherently promoted within Scotland and the UK as EU CAP discussions continue, if Scotland is to get a share of the reduced budget that fairly reflects our contribution to a host of public goods.

The task force submitted a short joint [response](#) to the online CAP debate, and is contributing to the mid term evaluation of the Scottish Rural Development Programme. The task force has said farewell to Carey Coombs who has left RSPB to manage his organic farm full time. LINK is grateful for his excellent contribution over the years, latterly co-convening the task force with Katrina Marsden (RSPB), and before that representing the Soil Association Scotland.

Biodiversity The task force organised a joint seminar for the

NGOs and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Officers working in local authorities to identify how the sectors can work together to achieve species action at local level to meet national priorities; discuss how biodiversity delivery on the ground will be achieved in the future and to explore how NGOs can advise on national priorities and help deliver local actions. The event (picture below), held in Perth on 1 June, was well attended with over half the LBAP officers taking part and with good feedback and useful outputs from the day. LINK is grateful to Perth & Kinross Council for a grant to cover the costs of organising and hosting this seminar.



Climate The June network meeting agreed that as members can work through the [Stop Climate Chaos Scotland](#) coalition on implementation and mitigation LINK's effort should focus on adaptation. Jim Densham (RSPB) will convene this group which will complement members' work through SCCS.

Single Outcome Agreements

The task force has invited tenders for an audit of how issues representing sustainable development, and environment are being addressed by each Community Planning Partnership in the Single Outcome Agreements 2009-12, to determine emerging trends in the lead-up to the national and local elections in 2011 and 2012 and to influence the development of new or 'refreshed' Agreements. The task force had useful meetings with Scottish Government and SNH where the scope of LINK's audit was among issues discussed.

Sustainable Land Use The task force responded to the consultation on the [Land Use Strategy Strategic Environment Assessment Scoping Report](#), and is planning a one-day conference on 8 November, during the consultation period on the draft Sustainable Land Use Strategy. Please see the website nearer the time for information.

Marine LINK was delighted to have confirmation of funding until 2013 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Trust to continue dedicated marine project work through initial stages of implementation of the Marine Scotland Act. This funding enables continued employment of Alan Wells, Marine Research Officer since 2007, and allowed recruitment of Lindsay Roberts in

June. Both Alan and Lindsay share roles as Marine Policy and Advocacy Officers. Lindsay has a degree in Law and Politics, and is familiar with the Act from her previous post as Senior Researcher and Policy Officer for the Scottish Green Party while the Marine and Climate Bills were going through Parliament.

In addition to publication of *Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment* (see page 1), the task force has submitted views on the [draft guidance 'Marine Protected Areas in the seas around Scotland: guidelines on the selection of MPAs and the MPA network'](#), the draft [Marine Nature Conservation Strategy](#) and the draft list of Priority Marine Features. At Defra's invitation, and with other UK Links colleagues, the task force is working to prepare comments on the draft UK Marine Policy Statement. They are actively engaging with the Scottish Government as it prepares to publish its draft National Marine Plan. Further areas of work include the [Offshore Wind draft plan and SEA consultation](#).

CIVICUS Andy Myles, LINK Parliamentary Officer, will attend the CIVICUS World Assembly in Montreal from 18 to 25 August as a representative of SCVO's Policy

Committee on which he represents LINK views. The theme is *Acting Together for a Just World* with Economic Justice, Development Effectiveness, and Climate Justice the issues to be addressed at this Assembly. Andy's experience of where Scottish NGOs have taken part in pursuing and achieving world leading legislation in the area of climate change and other environmental concerns, his long-held interest in governance and development of civic societies here and abroad, won him a free place at the event. We look forward to his report back on new ideas and fresh thinking from all areas of the Assembly.

Joint Links The Link organisations in the UK are having their biannual meeting in Chester on 15-16 September. Members and staff from all the Link organisations attending will discuss changing political landscapes, ongoing effects of the recession and how the Links engage in European and international issues. It will be a great opportunity for sharing ideas and discussing areas for future joint working and information sharing.

Liaison Climate and sustainable land use, CAP reform and Marine were among issues discussed at the quarterly meeting with the

Environment Minister in June. LINK raised continuing concerns about provisions for deer management in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill which are to be voluntary despite the poor record of voluntary measures for managing deer to date. The Minister responded that Government had to balance a range of interests, and that budget cuts will impact resources available to underpin statutory management, though landowners are aware that Governments will step in if voluntary provisions are not working.

The next liaison meeting is scheduled for 14 September, where the Independent Budget Review, to which LINK submitted views, will be on the agenda in relation to longer term environment and sustainable development commitments.

A high-level meeting between LINK and SEPA on 4 May agreed the benefits of closer discussions on various topics including: climate change, land use, single outcome agreements, environmental reporting, sustainable development, freshwater and waste. These meetings are taking place over the summer and autumn.

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



Little Impact BIG Mover

Dianne Laing



The Alstor in action, photo James Hendrie

SNW Trading Ltd, Scottish Native Woods wholly owned trading subsidiary, has just taken delivery of an Alstor 8x8 mini-forwarder to be used for hire, training and our own work. Purchased with help from the Scottish Government Third Sector Fund the Alstor has eight wheel drive, is under 1.5 metres wide, and weighs less than 1.5 tonnes. It can work its way around trees on difficult terrain without damaging the site, and still be transported by a four wheel drive with trailer between sites. It can load and carry two tonnes of material at a time, giving it the capacity to move a serious amount in a working day, whether that is taking timber out of a wood, or

footpath and fencing materials across rough terrain.

Simon Lockwood, our Central Scotland Area Manager, researched various machines but it was a visit to see an Alstor in action that cemented the decision to buy. Its speed in the wood, the 60 tonnes of timber extracted in one day and the use of less than 3 gallons of fuel made Simon sum up it up as a machine that *“makes economic sense”*.

The Alstor has the potential to make a big difference to the economics and practicalities of small scale woodland operations in Scotland. The machine is already proving its worth in Mauldslie Wood SSSI, where we are helping South Lanarkshire Council to gradually restore a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site.

We have also used the machine to extract timber from a particularly difficult site in Angus where a tree surgeon had been hunting around for a suitable solution to the extraction problem when he saw the Alstor in action at one of our demonstration events. The

machine proved to be extremely agile and quick in the wood and Simon was pleased to report that **65 tonnes** of randomly stacked, non-standard length timber was moved to roadside in one day.

Hire the Alstor As well as using the machine to help with the management of our sites we will be hiring the machine out to suitably qualified and experienced managers and contractors. We will also be able to hire the machine with our own operator if required. Hire rates can either be calculated by time or size of job.

Shortage of trained contractors To encourage other contractors to consider using this type of low-impact machine we will also be arranging operator training. Training will be an adaptation of the Lantra Trailed Forwarder course and result in Forest Machine Operators Certificate. The course can also give credit for prior experience.

If you are interested either in hiring the machine or being trained please contact [SNW](#) or call 01887 820392.

Peat and Archaeology

Jonathan Wordsworth



The neolithic timber platform at Park of Gardens, Carse of Stirling under excavation in 1999. Dating to c4,000BC this is thought to have been occupied for a short period as a hunting platform before being sealed by later peat growth. © AOC Archaeology'

Much of the environmental debate on preserving our peat deposits has concentrated on its importance as a substrate for globally significant species and habitats and its value as a store for carbon at a time of increasing concern over rising CO₂ levels. Peat is crucially important for modeling future trends in both climate and sea level. For example, peat deposits now lying at a depth of 8.9 metres below the current mean sea level off Symbister Harbour, Unst have been used to date sea-level rise here since the peat started forming some 7,000 years ago. Peat, of course, is also important as an anaerobic, wet medium which preserves organic materials such as plant, insect and pollen remains that record past environmental history. Recent studies, for example at the NTS property of West Affric, show that Caledonian Pine stumps preserved in the peat and viewed as part of an iconic Caledonian Pine Forest are in fact untypical of the vegetation history

of this area. Detailed pollen analysis and multiple C₁₄ dates have shown that this pine dominant period lasted no more than 500 years and that a more varied deciduous and grassland cover has been typical of this area since peat first started forming here some 5,000 years ago.

For archaeologists, peat is valuable for preserving organic remains that do not normally survive under normal soil conditions where root and microbial activity normally cause these materials to degrade. The preservation of wooden artefacts whether of tools like the Rotten Bottom longbow (dating to just after 4,000 BC) or structural timbers like the Neolithic platform at Parks of Garden on Flanders Moss (dating to the same period) give much more detailed evidence on how people lived and managed their environment. Similar conditions previously applied to the preservation of crannógs in lowland bogs across central Scotland but these have been largely degraded and archaeologists now have to rely on lacustrine deposits such as those found in Loch Tay to find the evidence to re-create these impressive timber structures such as Oakbank Crannóg near Aberfeldy. Survival of bodies in peat, like Tollund Man in Denmark, or Lindow Man in England (also known as Pete Marsh!) have been rarely found in Scotland but those that have been discovered, such as the 17th century Gunnister Man found in 1951 in Shetland, have given significant new information. (In this case the nature of contemporary clothing for the

ordinary person in the 17th century. Normally it is only the clothes of the elite that have been preserved.)

The other area of archaeological interest in peat is in preserving prehistoric landscapes abandoned as blanket peat began to form. Extensive landscapes of prehistoric settlement are preserved under, for example, the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland making this one of the best surviving areas in Europe for understanding how people managed the land in past times. Elsewhere remains have been truncated or completely destroyed by later farming and forestry, but blanket peat can often seal complete and complex landscapes of human settlement in our uplands. This evidence of course does not survive everywhere and the peat itself makes it difficult to prospect for where these former settlements were located, but Archaeology Scotland and others concerned for protecting Scotland's historic environment are only too happy to support the IUCN Peatland Programme. Protecting these special habitats and conserving these areas as a CO₂ sink is also protecting significant parts of Scotland's historic heritage.

For those interested in learning more about Peatland Archaeology, please examine the [Scottish Palaeoenvironmental Database](#) and the [Scottish Wetland Archaeological Database](#).

Scottish Badgers join LINK

Steve Jackson



Limpy the badger, photo Tricia Alderson

Scottish Badgers is delighted to have recently become a member of Scottish Environment LINK. As an umbrella group for local badger groups, we are the only charity in Scotland dedicated to the protection of badgers.

Scottish Badgers really hit the headlines last year as, under the guidance of our National Survey Co-ordinator, Elaine Rainey, we published the results of the Scottish Badger Distribution

Survey, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The survey, which involved over 600 volunteers surveying over 900 one-kilometer squares, was one of the largest national surveys undertaken in Scotland for many years and has really given the conservation community a solid baseline from which to work in the future. You can find out more about the survey through our website, www.scottishbadgers.org.uk.

However, we're not intending to rest on our laurels for long. Scottish Badgers is at the forefront of fighting badger crime and our Species Protection Officer, Ian Hutchison, will be continuing to work determinedly with the Police and SSPCA to protect badgers from the cruelty of baiting through our

ongoing campaign, Operation Meles.

We also have a busy programme of events and campaigns running this year which will include Scottish Badgers Project Officers running a new youth project, taking a novel approach to tackling badger crime. In addition, we're continuing to develop our role in the planning process with selected Planning Authorities whilst also developing our CPD training courses and events for professional ecologists.

As a rapidly developing charity, Scottish Badgers is looking forward to an exciting future. We greatly look forward to lending our voice to that of Scottish Environment LINK members as we work together for a more sustainable Scotland.

Farming Butterflies

Tom Prescott & Paul Kirkland



Marsh Fritillaries, photo Paul Kirkland

This is the third year of Butterfly Conservation's partnership project with Scottish Natural Heritage

(SNH) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) to reverse the decline of four of Scotland's most threatened butterflies and moths. The species - Marsh and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Chequered Skipper and Slender Scotch Burnet - are highlighted in the SNH Species Action Framework and the Scottish Forestry Strategy, and are all UK Biodiversity Action Plan species.

In most situations in Scotland, the four species are all reliant upon light grazing, preferably by cattle, to maintain their habitats in a suitable condition. The project is restoring sympathetic management by helping landowners gain entry to the Rural Priorities scheme.

Marsh Fritillary The project's initial focus was the Marsh Fritillary

in Argyll. By teaming up with Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) and agricultural experts from the Agrimony consultancy, a complete conservation advice service has been provided to over 100 sites, with over 90% of the subsequent applications being accepted. Site-specific grazing plans were required for each application, and as a result, over 2000 hectares are now being managed specifically for Marsh Fritillary. Farmers can obtain funding for fencing and stock handling costs and scrub and bracken control, as well as annual payments dependent on the area entered.

Ten of the sites have been on SSSIs and include several of Scotland's most important colonies. Many farmers now regard the



presence of Marsh Fritillary on their land as an asset and there is a high demand for management advice.

Slender Scotch Burnet Just five owners control the fate of the entire UK population of Slender Scotch Burnet. The advice provided to these lucky owners has been enthusiastically received, and has resulted in habitat management work being undertaken at all sites; mainly scrub, bracken and cotoneaster removal but also fencing to allow grazing. In addition, Rural Priorities applications have been submitted for two adjacent areas of suitable but currently unoccupied habitat.

Chequered Skipper and Pearl-bordered Fritillary The focus of the project has now switched to the two woodland butterflies, Chequered Skipper and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. The timing is perfect as an exciting new development this year is the introduction of funding for woodland grazing for conservation, through 'Rural Priorities'. This measure is the culmination of several years of work by the West Highland Grazing Project, supported by FCS, SAC and Butterfly Conservation Scotland, amongst others. Four Pearl-bordered Fritillary and two Chequered Skipper sites have now

been entered into Rural Priorities. For more, see the [Butterfly Conservation website](#).



Pearl-bordered fritillary, photo Paul Kirkland

Planning to overlook Biodiversity?

Gus Jones, Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group

As well as being International Year of Biodiversity, 2010 has seen the launch of the International Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). On this the UN Under-Secretary has emphasised to governments that biodiversity ecosystem services "underpin all life – including economic life – on Earth."

In Scotland the Cairngorms are a prime area for biodiversity and landscape, with a wealth of semi-natural habitats, 25% of the UK's most threatened species and fine examples of European Priority Habitats.

Given this international significance, concerns about appropriate governance extend far. For example, in 2002, the UK was formally challenged by the European Commission over targeting new housing in important habitat for the endangered capercaillie, an iconic bird of Caledonian pinewoods.

Unfortunately, the National Park Authority (CNPA) continues to earn the area an unenviable reputation for environmental planning conflicts.

In 2009, the findings of a Scottish Government Reporters' Inquiry into the CNPA's controversial first Local Plan were deeply critical. Regrettably, as this took place under 'transitional arrangements' (that are now superceded) these findings are not binding on the CNPA, and have thus been significantly disregarded with grave implications for the future environment of the Park.

The Reporters stated that the CNPA "should fully ascertain whether there are protected species on a site and what the implications of that might be before deciding any planning application." Taking this recommendation seriously could make a fundamental difference.

But this has scarcely happened anywhere; not even at the so called 'world class' 1500 house new town of An Camas Mor, where outline permission has been granted regardless of the Reporters' concerns. On this outstanding site in a National Scenic Area, BSCG has already this summer, with remarkably little effort, found a number of UK Priority species not recorded by the developers nor the CNPA (eg *Magdalis duplicata*,

pictured, a rare weevil classified as a Notable A species © 2010 BSCG).



At two biodiversity hot spots (the Mossie at Grantown and Boat of Garten Wood) the CNPA have removed conservation-unfriendly housing allocations, but instead are inviting opportunistic applications on these very sites. At the Mossie this is killing at birth the community's aspirations for a Local Nature Reserve.

With the creation of the National Park, hopes were high that biodiversity would be afforded due weight and the outstanding environment of the Cairngorms would be in safe hands. Yet the history of poor planning decisions, the emerging CNPA Local Plan and the dismissal of much of the Reporters' Inquiry Report shows that in reality little has changed.



Events

13-16 September, **Eurosite Annual Conference**, Dunblane. Eurosite is a pan-European network to exchange, enhance and promote expertise in the management of sites for nature, throughout Europe. The focus of the conference is **The Challenge of Managing Sites in a Changing Environment**. Information is on the [Eurosite website](#) or from Marianne Sandison (SNH) tel: 0131 316 2672.

19 August, WWF Scotland [Festival of Politics](#) Event: **Zero-carbon Scotland of the Future** at the Scottish Parliament, 1:30-2:30pm. Scotland has some of the world's toughest climate targets. When we have reduced our carbon emissions to almost nothing, what will Scotland be like? Where will our energy come from? What will our homes be like? How will we get about? Chaired by environmental journalist Rob Edwards, a panel of

experts will paint a picture of life in a zero-carbon Scotland. Transport behaviour expert John Pinkard from Transform Scotland, low-carbon community practitioner Rachel Nunn from Going Carbon Neutral Stirling and energy expert Stuart Haszeldine from Edinburgh University. Tickets are free but must be [booked](#).