



The voice of Scotland's environment community

Annual Report Summary April 2018 to March 2019

Full Annual Report and Accounts [here](#)

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland’s voluntary environment organisations representing a range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable Scotland.

Member organisations 2018-19

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| Amphibian and Reptile Conservation | Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust | Scottish Campaign for National Parks |
| Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland | Marine Conservation Society | Scottish Countryside Rangers’ Association |
| Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group | National Trust for Scotland | Scottish Farming and Wildlife Advisers’ Group |
| Bat Conservation Trust | North East Mountain Trust | Scottish Geodiversity Forum |
| British Ecological Society – Scottish Policy Group | Nourish Scotland | Scottish Raptor Study Group |
| Buglife – the Invertebrate Conservation Trust | Planning Democracy | Scottish Wild Beaver Group |
| Bumblebee Conservation Trust | Plantlife Scotland | Scottish Wild Land Group |
| Butterfly Conservation Scotland | Ramblers Scotland | Scottish Wildlife Trust |
| Cairngorms Campaign | RSPB Scotland | Soil Association Scotland |
| Friends of the Earth Scotland | Royal Zoological Society of Scotland | Trees for Life |
| Froglife Trust (Scotland) | SCAPE Trust | Whale and Dolphin Conservation |
| | Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society | Woodland Trust Scotland |
| | Scottish Badgers | WWF Scotland |

Strategic Theme 1 - A Sustainable Scotland

Priorities this year were environmental governance; strategic coherence between environment and climate and resource use and management; implementing mechanisms to restore the health of Scotland’s seas; supporting more ecologically coherent land use; developments on environmental justice and human rights; increasing appreciation of the importance of landscape; modifying planning to support sustainable development; and preparing for legislation on the circular economy.



The potential to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies with **nature-based solutions** motivates supporters of [Fight for Scotland’s Nature](#), the campaign launched in November 2018. LINK developed this campaign to raise public awareness of the environmental risks of Brexit; the need for a robust legal framework to underpin Scotland’s environmental ambitions and to apply sufficient resources to restore and enhance Scotland’s ecosystems.



With 1 in 11 Scottish species at risk of extinction, the support of Species Champions – MSPs adopting a threatened or iconic Scottish species – is vital. Over half of the Champions took part in our 100 day challenge over summer 2018. MSPs have spoken up for their species in debates, have asked Parliamentary Questions, and supported their species locally. *Pictured: Finlay Carson MSP, Species Champion for the Leisler's bat, speaking on crimes against bat species at a Parliamentary evidence session on Wildlife Crime.*

At March 2019 the Scottish Government had made some important commitments towards environmental protections, indicating it would bring forward new legislation to ensure Scots law continues to align with EU law; it will strengthen environmental protection, including seeking opportunities to legislate; and it will look at how best to safeguard important EU human rights values.

Strategic Theme 2 - A Strong Voice for Scotland's Environment

LINK's **Fight for Scotland's Nature** campaign was developed to give a stronger and louder voice to the environment primarily, but not only, in the context of Brexit. We launched the campaign to excellent press and social media coverage, followed up with regular blogs and articles from members keeping up momentum. We ran an e-action coinciding with Scottish Government's consultation on **Environmental Principles and Governance** which encouraged over 22,000 individuals to respond, calling for a **Scottish Environment Act**. The campaign demonstrates the extent of public support for our fundamental right to a healthy environment. In parallel LINK continued its engagement with Scottish Government on Brexit related issues, including technical aspects of Statutory Instruments and Scottish Statutory Instruments; on the Environment Strategy and on environmental principles and governance; evidence to Parliamentary Inquiries on the Trade and Common Frameworks, and with UK colleagues on the UK Environment Bill.



LINK's evidence and briefings on Scotland's **Climate Bill** focused mainly on biodiversity aspects, complementing the work of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. LINK, with WWF Scotland, commissioned **Scotland's Nature on Red Alert** exploring climate change impacts on Scottish Biodiversity. The report was widely shared and very helpful in raising the issues with MSP's on the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform Committee and with Species Champions.

The premise that **public subsidies** should be for **public benefits**, including care of the environment, is now widely accepted. When realised it will help bring about transformational change. LINK commissioned a poll to find out what a representative sample of Scottish people thought future public subsidy for farmers should deliver. This found overwhelming support in favour of a subsidy system that delivers for the environment. The results were published in April 2018 and referenced by MSPs and the Agriculture Champions charged with developing a strategy for the sector. In January 2019 we were pleased by Parliament's commitment to set up a new group to inform the direction of agriculture policy, this time involving environmental interests.

LINK has been building common ground with a wide range of land management interests, discussing different needs and ways ahead. In September 2018 LINK organised a seminar on the **Land Use Strategy** involving officials and representatives of regional groups with high hopes that the Land Use Strategy and land reform agendas might together drive a future approach to land use policy based much more firmly on the principles of integrated, multi-benefit management and payment for the delivery of public goods identified through an inclusive, participative

process. Other significant Land Group contributions included engagement with the **Scotland's Forestry Strategy**, to which we responded with many positive suggestions; with SNH on **deer management**, and we await the recommendations of the Deer Working Group appointed by Scottish Government, expected by the end of 2019.

The Economics Group project, **A Circular Economy for a Fairer Footprint** (funded by the Friends Provident Foundation) brought many stakeholders together in December 2018 to explore what the forthcoming **Circular Economy Bill** for Scotland should cover. A wider alliance has since been formed pressing for consumption reduction targets to be included in the Bill.



The Marine Group's **Save Scottish Seas** project (funded by the John Ellerman Foundation) carried on with its work of ensuring that implementation of marine legislation brings about ecological recovery in Scottish waters. This included preparation for the long-delayed consultation on 4 new Marine Protected Areas for mobile species and associated public campaigning, and delivery of the annual **Sea Scotland** conference. This annual conference, overseen by a wider interest group, keeps up momentum on Marine Planning in Scotland **Sea, Soul and Society**, held over 2 days in June 2018 was on the theme of marine stewardship for community empowerment. It brought together marine planners, decision makers, scientists, community and industry representatives, environmental NGOs and members of the Scottish Youth Parliament to discuss the opportunities recent steps towards community empowerment present for society.



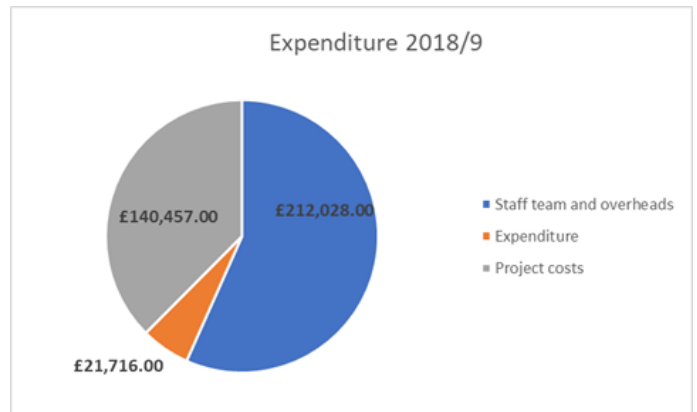
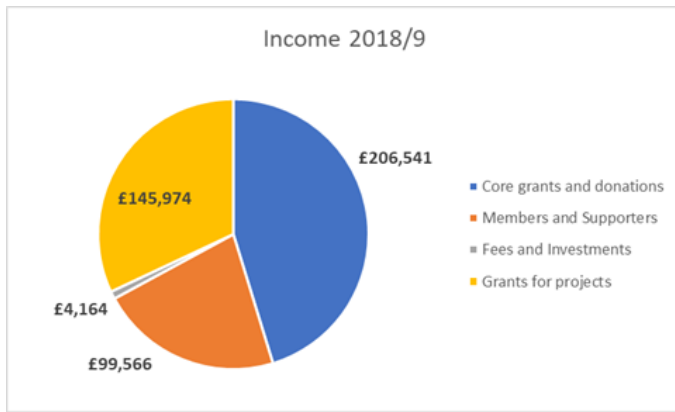
The **Planning Group** strongly engaged with the Planning Bill as it made its way through Parliament, striving to keep sustainable development principles at its core. We were disappointed by the limited success in this much amended Bill when completed in June 2019. Our concerns around fairness, including a **right of appeal for communities** and hilltracks were well-aired (*pic shows example of a problem track which needed no permission*). We published a further report, **Changing Tracks** in September 2018, yet more evidence of the need to bring all hilltracks into the planning system and are assured that this will be address in the coming Permitted Development Rights review in 2020.

Strategic Theme 3 - An Effective, Efficient & Accountable Network

LINK contributions to public policy development through consultation responses, evidence to Parliamentary Committees, briefings, reports and campaigns were well supported by members who consider it clearly adds value to work together. Our positions are appreciated by those developing public policy and new legislation, and in many cases, our suggestions are adopted. The difficulties are in translating good policies into practice, the continual gap between the rhetoric of intention and the reality of delivery on the ground. We have been steadily building support with other sectors across LINK's priority areas of Economics, Governance, Land, Marine and Planning, and are exploring further ways to build more cross sectoral support.

LINK's finances are relatively healthy for core and project work. Fundraising priorities were for a new Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland and for Marine capacity from 2020. We will be working to increase awareness among UK and Scottish funders of the opportunities and benefits of funding environmental work in Scotland, following the 2017 report *Where the Green Grants Went Scotland*.

Financial Summary



Facts and Figures

Work Programme supported by 10 staff members:

5.1 core staff* | 2.1 project staff*

*Full Time Equivalent
with support from our Honorary President and network of 27 Honorary Fellows

Oversight was provided by 9 Trustees

60% core costs supported in member fees, in kind support

160 regular meetings held with ministers, politicians of all parties, and colleagues in the statutory agencies and civil society organisations

75 consultation responses, briefings, reports, position papers and media releases

Sea Scotland 2018 conference attended by 91 individuals over 2 days

Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign supported by all 37 LINK members, 30 other organisations and over 22,000 individuals.

Species Champions 104 MSPs in the Scottish Parliament standing up for 110 species

6 Organisational Supporters received the highly-regarded Advocacy Monitoring and attended LINK events

Voluntary Engagement within the network equalled 1,360 days' work or £372,000, in financial terms

37 member bodies took some part in our: 5 Strategic Groups, 12 Subgroups and forums and 2 member meetings

LINK was engaged across 51 external stakeholder groups

Circular Economy 100% of members engaged in at least one work area for a Fairer Footprint seminar, held in the Scottish Parliament, attended by 37 participants

LINK's work is underpinned by the subscription income, additional financial contributions and voluntary time from member organisations and honorary officers, which together account for 60% of all contributions.

Our thanks to all of LINK's core and project funders over the period.

