



# **Scottish Environment LINK**

## **Scottish Charity Number SC000296**

### **Operating Principles**

Updated July 2025

References in these Operating Principles to "LINK" means the Scottish charitable guarantee company known as Scottish Environment LINK and to any "Article" means reference to the Article of that number in LINK's Articles of Association adopted in May 2017.

These Operating Principles are promulgated in terms of Article 54 and are reviewed from time to time by LINK's Board of Trustees. Though always subordinate to LINK's Articles of Association, they are intended to provide additional explanation of some constitutional points as well as guidance to members, potential members, office bearers, staff and sometime partners, on what LINK can and cannot provide, what this 'collective' requires of its members to be effective, and definition of its 'modus operandi'. In case of doubt, interpretation and development of these Operating Principles is a matter for decision by the Board of Trustees, in the interests of LINK as a whole.

# Table of contents

- 1. WHAT DOES LINK DO? ..... 4
- 2. WHO CAN JOIN LINK AS A MEMBER? ..... 4
  - 2.1 Guidance on Membership Criteria ..... 4
  - 2.2 Process for Application ..... 5
  - 2.3 Membership subscription in year of joining ..... 6
- 3. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTERS (including business supporters) ..... 6
- 4. INDUCTION ..... 6
- 5. THE CONTRACT BETWEEN MEMBERS AND LINK ..... 6
- 6. REPRESENTATION ON LINK ..... 8
  - 6.1 Role of Representative ..... 8
  - 6.2 Deputy Representatives ..... 9
  - 6.3 Representatives to Groups, and other forums ..... 9
- 7. ACTING AS A DELEGATE FOR THE NETWORK ..... 9
  - 7.1 Where should LINK be represented? ..... 9
  - 7.2 Accepting invitations or overtures to represent environmental views/the environment/the environmental sector/the ENGOs on stakeholder groups/forums/events ..... 9
  - 7.3 Accepting invitations to represent LINK/ environment/the environmental sector at parliamentary and other inquiries ..... 11
  - 7.4 Representation through the Office Bearers, Group Conveners, and Staff ..... 11
  - 7.5 Election of Delegates ..... 11
  - 7.6 Responsibilities of LINK delegates to external stakeholder forums, events ..... 11
- 8. PUTTING TOGETHER A LINK DELEGATION ..... 12
  - 8.1 Identifying the line-up ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - 8.2 Where a Group is selecting the delegation ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - 8.3 In preparing for the meeting ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - 8.4 In presenting the case ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - 8.5 Ministerial meetings - Guidance on LINK involvement ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- 9. CONSENSUS ..... 13
  - 9.1 Disputes between member bodies ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- 10. STATEMENTS ..... 15
  - 10.1 Why make joint statements? ..... 15
  - 10.2 What form do statements take? ..... 15
  - 10.3 Guidance on issuing statements ..... 15
  - 10.4 Individual responsibility ..... 16
- 11. PUBLICATIONS ..... 17
- 12. BOARD OF TRUSTEES ..... 18
  - 12.1 LINK Office Bearers ..... 19
- 13. THE SEEKING OF VIEWS (OTHER THAN BALLOTS) ..... 19
- 14. LINK WORK PROGRAMME ..... 20
- 15. PROJECTS ..... 20
  - 15.1 Project definition ..... 20
  - 15.2 Project initiation ..... 20
  - 15.3 Project execution ..... 21
  - 15.4 Project completion ..... 21
- 16. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ..... 22
- 17. LINK POLICIES ..... 22
- 18. COMPLYING WITH LOBBYING LEGISLATION ..... 23

19. SUBSCRIPTIONS..... 23

20. GUIDANCE ON LINK Groups ..... 23

    20.1 Leadership ..... 24

    20.2 Membership of Groups..... 25

    20.3 Co-optee involvement on Groups ..... 26

21. WORKING WITH PARTNERS ..... 27

22. ORGANISING EVENTS ..... 28

23. USEFUL LINKS ..... 28

## 1. WHAT DOES LINK DO?

LINK was founded to ensure that collective work amongst NGOs achieves something additional to the individual efforts of member bodies. LINK's record demonstrates the advantages of a collective approach, not replacing individual action or challenging members' sovereignty, but adding value to members' work and progressing the environmental objectives in common. LINK works best where members recognise that the value of consensus on the common ground amongst them outweighs the importance of differences between them; the extent of common ground - even on what may initially appear to be contentious issues, is often enough to merit advocacy work with decision-makers. For those new to LINK, Michael Scott's history of the first 20 years *A Strong Coherent Voice*, is a short, often entertaining account very much worth reading. See also our 10 minute [video](#) to celebrate 30 years of LINK.

LINK is most usefully seen as 'enabling' - a vehicle through which the member bodies can share ideas, skills and information, develop common approaches and take collective action where this offers benefits not apparent through other avenues. For those not involved directly in the environment network (in Scotland and further afield) LINK also offers a way in, a network of contacts and information.

The LINK 'vehicle' allows its membership to network, pursue issues and employ tactics which, as collective initiatives, can achieve more for the collective and for the environment than individual action alone. In determining its key priorities LINK reflects its members' collective concerns: it should not be seen as an organisation with a life over and above these. On the other hand, the value to members of a LINK voice, flagging up collective concerns, developing consensual positions ahead of the game, and representing these in dialogue with other players, is evident. The operational role which LINK staff play in this ever dynamic context can be key; their experience and overview of what works should be respected and exploited.

## 2. WHO CAN JOIN LINK AS A MEMBER?

### 2.1 Guidance on Membership Criteria

LINK's Articles of Association state that full membership "shall be open to any voluntary organisations (as defined in the version of the Operating Principles operable from time to time in terms of Article 54), whether corporate or unincorporated, which shall apply for full membership in writing to the Secretary and can confirm when so doing that they meet the following criteria (which the existing members shall determine whether they do so meet), namely that:

- (a) they are voluntary non-profit-distributing organisations; and
- (b) they are either Scottish organisations, or have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity; and
- (c) their main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with Clause 4(b) of the Articles of Association; and
- (d) they can demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland.

LINK's charitable purposes are specified in Clause 4 of its Articles of Association, namely:

- (a) to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of voluntary organisations involved with the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage;
- (b) to advance the conservation and improvement of Scotland's natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability; and
- (c) to advance the education, understanding and responsible awareness of the natural environment and associated cultural heritage as part of the pursuit of environmental sustainability;

Applicants must meet (b) above and may meet either or both of the other purposes.

By 'voluntary organisations' LINK includes the following:

- which are voluntary, non-profit-distributing organisations
- which are either Scottish organisations, or which have a significant separate or devolved Scottish identity;
- whose main aims, objectives and activities are and remain compatible with Clause 4(b) of the Articles;
- which demonstrate the ability to make a contribution to the work of LINK at a national level in Scotland
- which are autonomous and independent of government or its agencies, and of primarily commercial interests
- which have been established by an initiative of citizens or other voluntary organisations
- which demonstrate clear citizen-driven ethos
- where deployment of the resources of the organisation is overseen by a committee of citizens (trustees, council, management committee etc) working for the organisation's objects
- whose objectives are guided or approved by their wider memberships at least annually
- Applicants are required to meet sufficient of these criteria to demonstrate the voluntary way in which their organisation is managed and directed and a Scottish locus for determining policy in Scotland.

## **2.2 Process for Application**

Applicants for Membership (for applications as Organisational Supporter please see 3 below) should complete the membership application form on the website and submit this with relevant background material to the LINK office. Applications are considered first by LINK's Board of Trustees which conducts any background enquiries before making a recommendation to the existing members.

It is important that existing members consider the details about the applicant bodies and the recommendation of the Board, in casting their vote.

Membership applications are determined by the existing members: approval by a two-thirds majority of all existing members is required to admit new members (Article 11(c)).

In most cases the period between submission and decision is about three months. In some cases, the applicant organisation may be asked to attend a meeting involving LINK members to support its application. In these cases, the application process can take up to six months or even more.

## 2.3 Membership subscription in year of joining

New organisations joining part way through the LINK financial year will pay a pro-rata amount calculated to the start of the quarter in which they are admitted.

## 3. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTERS (including business supporters)

In accordance with Articles 17 to 19 of LINK's Articles of Association, organisations which are not eligible for membership but which desire to support LINK and receive certain benefits, including regular information updates and invitations to LINK events, may apply to become an Organisational Supporter of LINK. In applying for this affiliation, organisations must fulfil certain requirements and pay an annual subscription (see website for current details).

The Organisational Supporter affiliation may include businesses.

Decisions on the eligibility of Supporters, including businesses, are made at Board level in the interests of the network, on a case-by-case basis.

Network members should encourage bodies which they know to be interested in supporting LINK's work without being involved in it, and which are not eligible for membership to become Organisational Supporters.

Organisations which *are* eligible for membership *cannot* be affiliated in this way.

## 4. INDUCTION

Induction is a must for new representatives of existing members and incoming main representatives of new member bodies. Induction is advised within, at most, 2 months after an organisation has joined. In addition, a presentation by LINK to the new organisation can be arranged. New members are strongly encouraged to pursue these opportunities.

Outgoing representatives should normally induct their successor representatives to LINK, with support if they wish from a member of LINK staff or Board. LINK staff can provide a list of points to be covered at such inductions.

Group Conveners and Vice Conveners will be inducted by LINK Staff or a Trustee as they take up convenership. In person induction is recommended. The need for ongoing guidance and training for these leaders of LINK's collective policy work areas is kept under review. Group Conveners or their nominated representatives are expected to attend networking meetings.

## 5. THE CONTRACT BETWEEN MEMBERS AND LINK

It is crucial to see the relationship between members and LINK as an informal contract, with serious commitments on both sides. The key principles of this relationship are set out here for the benefit of members, Board and staff.

Amongst the benefits to members are:

- skills benefits, added credibility, long-term investment
- sharing intelligence and broadening each other's agendas
- strengthened roles of smaller groups (from information, update, contact with others working on same issues, opportunities to raise concerns and seek broader support)
- avoiding overlap and duplication
- getting on the network's agenda an issue which your organisation cannot take forward on its own
- developing a more informed approach for individual NGOs
- collectively moving environment up the political and social agenda
- collective benefit from variety of approaches and tactics applied in concert
- contact with government, agencies, and other parties
- spawning of effective campaigns (Save our Scottish Seas, Fight for Scotland's Nature)
- being part of a respected network, the value of whose contribution is recognised (as demonstrated by invitations to be represented on various forums and to give evidence to Parliament)
- personal development of individuals involved in LINK and increased contacts for all
- development of trust within the network
- bridge to other sectors
- work opportunities

What does the contract require of LINK Staff, Office Bearers, Trustees?

- ensure the forward plan of work is agreed through a process of prioritisation with members in which capacity to deliver is carefully appraised
  - respect time commitments of members as indicated in the Network's strategy and work programme
- help members understand each other and the added value which the network can provide to them
- help members understand LINK operations and current guidance
- enable members to set new agendas informed by all
- avoid representing the membership where this is inappropriate
- understand that not all members can take a view on all issues
- enable members to address challenges in good time

What does the contract require of members and their representatives to LINK and its Groups, campaigns and projects?

- familiarise themselves with LINK, its background and *modus operandi* and range of work
- be clear about what LINK can and cannot do; for example, LINK cannot take on an issue where the expertise and willingness of the membership to engage is not evident (though where the will does exist, we can move mountains!); it is largely the responsibility of the member bodies to ensure that LINK delivers;

- in relation to briefing own staff/colleagues/contacts on LINK's *modus operandi*, in relation to its own work programme and resources allocation, current opportunities to use LINK as a tool in their work; and ensuring that agreed LINK positions are observed within the signatory bodies

- prepare for, attend and use LINK network meetings, meetings of its Groups, campaigns and other forums
- help to determine and review the LINK work programme, and to ensure that it addresses key priorities within the available capacity of both the network and LINK's staffing and budget try to establish a dynamic between that programme and the work plans of their own organisations
- make explicit in its own forward plans the intended staff-time commitment to each LINK work area in which it is involved
- bring to LINK positions on which members can confidently engage in developing consensus within the network
- contribute to the running of LINK, fielding appropriate personnel for the Board, offices of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Conveners of Groups, and Steering Groups
- take responsibility for representing LINK at events, in briefings to parliamentary committees, on forums where the network has a place and ensure the necessary input/feedback with the membership
- respond promptly and clearly to internal LINK consultations and requests for information so that staff know whether to continue including them in these initiatives
- recognise the value of 'signing up' to policy statements to ensure widest consensus, where this does not conflict with the member body's own objectives and is not explicitly ruled out by its constitution, even if the policy area may not be specifically relevant to their remit
  - follow all relevant LINK policies when carrying out LINK work or representing LINK (listed on the members pages of the website.
  - where appropriate support LINK in fulfilling its statutory obligations (e.g., registering incidences of lobbying)

LINK offers a range of information services to its member bodies and organisational supporters, notably the weekly Advocacy Monitoring and monthly Bulletin. These are intended for those working or volunteering on behalf of the member body, and are not for onward distribution to individual members of organisations. If the information service helps these players to fulfil a *role* within the member body, they may be added to the distribution list. It is preferable if individuals have an organisational email address. Co-opted organisations (See section 20.3 below) which are participating in LINK work will be expected to observe these principles.

## 6. REPRESENTATION ON LINK

### 6.1 Role of Representative

The 'named representative' referred to in Article 12 in LINK's Articles of Association is the person appointed by the member body to represent it on LINK and help the member body engage appropriately. It is important to keep LINK informed when this representation changes.

The representative should attend networking meetings, act as first point of contact for circulation of material to others in their organisation and respond to various requests for participation or feedback. It is important that the representative is able to help develop LINK policy by representing their organisation's views across a wide range of issues. The more informed the representatives, the more informed the

debate. The network can need to respond fairly quickly to an external agenda, and this requires a degree of autonomy on the part of the named representative, therefore it is important that they are fairly senior.

## **6.2 Deputy Representatives**

A well-briefed deputy can attend in the main representative's place and should be able to present the views of their organisation on matters likely to arise in discussion. Please ask LINK staff to email relevant information if necessary. From experience, it is useful to have continuity of representation by members.

## **6.3 Representatives to Groups, and other forums**

Members can appoint the most appropriate person to contribute to the work of Groups and other Forums, recognising the desirability of consistent representation in any area of LINK's work. It is essential for integration that an organisation's representatives on various groupings keep themselves well-informed of all areas of their organisation's engagement.

The same applies to any Co-opted Organisations (See section 20.3 below) participating in a LINK work area.

# **7. ACTING AS A DELEGATE FOR THE NETWORK**

## **7.1 Where should LINK be represented?**

Whilst it is not possible to 'represent' a network, there is an expectation that LINK will field at least a delegate to relevant events, new forums, stakeholder groups (set up by government, industry, other NGOs).

LINK is also regularly invited to give evidence to parliamentary and other inquiries.

It is usually beneficial to put forward the environmental perspective of policy debate, formally and informally. This requires flexibility for staff and other representatives of the network. However, all need to be clear about the difference - sometimes a fine line - between instances where it's important to field a delegate, and others where this isn't necessary, e.g. where the presence of a LINK delegate would imply a common LINK position on the issue where there is none (in which case the it may be more appropriate to field such an invitation to members in LINK known to be active on the issue, or for the function of any LINK delegate to simply listen and report back) or where there are plenty of environmental NGOs already involved to carry the relevant messages and therefore no need for a LINK delegate per se.

There is a resource implication - for members and LINK - in attending meetings and the associated 'dialogue' with LINK members which requires monitoring.

## **7.2 Accepting invitations or overtures to represent environmental views/the environment/the environmental sector/the ENGOS on stakeholder groups/forums/events**

LINK explicitly seeks opportunity to provide broad environmental and sustainable development (SD) expertise to forums set up, often by Government, to address issues relating to the environment and SD. This is an important part of network advocacy strategy, and LINK aims to widen its representation beyond current 'boxes'.

The collective preference in LINK is to receive such invitations via LINK, and as LINK, and to choose delegates through existing protocols. We cannot assume our protocols are commonly known across the civil service and beyond; Scottish Government (SG), for example, seeks input to these groups in various ways, sometimes not directing invitations via LINK (staff or chair) although usually seeking broad environmental expertise of the kind developed through collective work within LINK.

Please therefore be aware that the sometimes *ad hoc* nature of SG's invitations can be challenging for the network and for invitees; that, ideally, any invitation to represent environment/SD, however it is extended, should be shared with the network, and a network decision made on best person for the job. If you accept an invitation to represent more than just your own personal, or organisational expertise, you may be breaking with LINK protocols.

LINK will best operate if, when –

- you are approached as an individual, to join a stakeholder group to bring the environment view point (as opposed to expertise on specifics for which your expertise is known and which LINK does not pursue, eg track maintenance, wading birds, sea mammals), or
- your organisation is asked to field someone to bring the environment viewpoint (rather than specific expertise such as the above examples for which your organisation may be known to be expert) –
- you please share the information a.s.a.p. with LINK senior staff (or Chair) so that the network can consider best possible representation for the role.

You may feel an invitation you've received is in fact more relevant to your or your organisation's expertise, than it would be to LINK; relevance of forums to LINK work should be clear from your knowledge of current LINK areas, as represented on LINK's website, LINK discussions in which you've been involved recently. You can easily check this with senior LINK staff and it's anyway useful for them to be aware of where member bodies/individuals are to be involved on forums so that other LINK members can be informed via the bulletin.

For the avoidance of doubt, LINK's representatives are *ONLY* appointed through LINK. If a person finds themselves in the position where they are appointed as an individual, or for their own organisation, and then seem to be being considered as a wider, LINK, representative by some sort of osmotic process, they should firmly correct external misapprehension and resolve the situation within LINK at the earliest stage possible.

People within the LINK network are asked to keep the relevant LINK Group informed of ANY relevant appointment they accept, in order that LINK can keep some sort of track on what is going on and not end up blind-sided.

### **7.3 Accepting invitations to represent LINK/ environment/the environmental sector at parliamentary and other inquiries**

Conveners of Groups clearly related to issues on which an invitation is received to give views or evidence on behalf of LINK, should determine whether it is appropriate to take up such opportunities. Where the issue at stake in the invitation is central to a Group's agenda, a delegate can be identified as at 7.4 below.

There are occasions, however, where the presence of a LINK delegate may imply a common LINK position on an issue where in fact there is no consensus. In such cases, the Convener implicated should consider the wisdom of accepting as LINK. In cases where Convener is doubtful about that, there may be a number of LINK members working on the issue and it may be more appropriate to field the invitation to them.

### **7.4 Representation through the Office Bearers, Group Conveners, and Staff**

Office bearers may carry out a considerable amount of 'representational' work in their role as ambassadors. The Chair is usually heavily involved in heading up strategy for LINK, liaising over issues that arise, chairing Members' meetings and meetings of the Board. The Chief Officer represents LINK in relation to its strategic objectives with key audiences including Government officials and other sectors. However, LINK needs to set its own agenda over a wide range of issues and there are gaps to plug. This can be done by the Vice-Chair, Group Conveners/vice-conveners or other appointed spokespeople from relevant groupings; and in some cases, staff or Fellows may take a representational role.

### **7.5 Election of Delegates**

LINK has agreed criteria for selection of delegates:

- that delegates to new forums, or replacement delegates to forums on which LINK already has a place, should be elected by ballot
- where the subject/focus of the forum is specific and a relevant LINK grouping exists that grouping should be the focus of the ballot
- where the focus of the forum is broader and where a relevant LINK grouping does not exist, the ballot should encompass all Members
- ballots are held by e-mail, giving members 14 days to respond; no response taken as an abstention
- all such ballots should include information about (a) the forum in question, (b) the 'candidates' for the LINK place(s), (c) LINK agreed guidance to delegates (section 7 of these Operating Principles)
- new delegates should receive an induction about LINK, especially if there is no relevant LINK Group.
- The opportunity to review LINK representation is available to the delegate or to the membership any time after the first year in order to ensure that delegates are fulfilling the terms of the guidance and that the range of roles is shared among interested members

### **7.6 Responsibilities of LINK delegates to external stakeholder forums, events**

Individuals acting as a delegate for LINK are required to:

- Be familiar with LINK operating guidance
- attend forum meetings or find an appropriate deputy within the network

- be proactive in expressing the range of, as opposed to their own body's, concerns; or, if acting in a dual capacity, indicate clearly to the meeting/forum when they are speaking on behalf of their own body and when on behalf of LINK
- regularly invite input from other LINK members via the appropriate Groups, and/or the general membership, on the issues under discussion. LINK's members Bulletin circulated at the beginning of each month is a useful mechanism for this.
- ensure feedback to members after each meeting (via Bulletin), flagging any urgent matters requiring their immediate attention or that of the LINK Board
- provide a report on and evaluation of LINK's role in that Forum as required
- Where it is felt that LINK involvement is not delivering for the environment the decision on action to be taken should be made in discussion with relevant colleagues (Group or relevant network experts)

LINK staff will:

- provide delegates with this guidance in writing at the start of their tenure
- keep them informed of any key LINK concerns prior to meetings
- keep them in touch with LINK activities through the Bulletin and other mailings
- coordinate LINK-wide ballots

## 8. PUTTING TOGETHER A LINK DELEGATION

LINK must be able to quickly and fairly identify the most appropriate participants for external meetings. These opportunities may arise from government or agency invitations or from LINK-led initiatives. External meetings can include engagement with Ministers, Cabinet Secretaries, civil servants, MSPs, and senior staff at agencies such as NatureScot, SEPA, or ESS.

Where appropriate, meetings should be linked to the relevant LINK group(s). Participants should be chosen based on topic relevance, knowledge of the LINK position, and ability to represent the collective view, not individual organisational priorities.

### 8.2 Coordination and Selection

Meetings with Ministers or agencies are usually coordinated by the Senior Advocacy Officer, Parliamentary Officer, or Director of Policy and Engagement. Once a meeting is arranged, LINK staff will contact Group Conveners and Vice-Conveners to:

- Invite agenda suggestions.
- Identify who can attend.
- Invite nominations from the group if the Convener/Vice-Convener is unavailable.

Agenda items will be selected based on relevance to the external stakeholder and time available.

Delegations should:

- Be drawn from active group participants.
- Include only one representative per member organisation, unless there is strong need otherwise.
- Be appropriately sized to maintain focus and professionalism.
- Include LINK senior staff or officers where strategic leadership or coordination is needed.

If a Group believes higher-level representation is needed, this should be discussed with LINK staff (e.g. inclusion of Chair or Chief Officer).

### **8.3 Preparing for the Meeting**

A pre-meeting will usually be organised by LINK staff to brief participants, allocate speaking roles, and align messaging. Group Conveners must keep colleagues informed and ensure coordination with other relevant LINK groups. LINK staff will prepare any required briefing papers with input from groups and key members. Actions from previous meetings will be reviewed and updated as needed.

### **8.4 Presenting the Case**

Delegates must represent the LINK position and not individual organisational view, other than where members agree this is appropriate. All participants should be well-briefed on LINK's agreed case and the objectives of the meeting. Participants should clearly state when they are speaking on behalf of LINK or their own organisation.

After the meeting, the staff lead or group delegate must report back to the relevant LINK Group(s) and/or via the LINK Bulletin.

### **8.5 Ministerial Meetings - LINK Protocols**

LINK has long-standing engagement with Scottish Government Ministers, often including quarterly meetings with relevant Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries. LINK staff coordinate dates and facilitate participation across the network.

Agendas are set based on:

- Group and member input.
- Current policy priorities.
- Timely strategic opportunities.

Representatives are introduced with their LINK Group identity and member body affiliation. Regular Ministerial meetings are normally attended by the Chief Officer, Director of Policy and Engagement, along with key LINK group representatives.

Active LINK Groups may also request ad hoc Ministerial or agency meetings beyond these regular touchpoints but should liaise with LINK staff to ensure coordination across the network.

## **9. CONSENSUS**

LINK operates based on consensus with 'signing up' to the area of common ground. An acknowledged and vital function of LINK is developing shared positions among members and presenting those collectively to decision-makers. The strength of LINK's advocacy lies in the unity and credibility of our collective voice. Like any coalition, we rely on mutual respect and trust among our member bodies. While members may not always agree with every belief or approach held by others, cohesion is maintained by managing those differences within LINK forums and avoiding public disputes on key shared issues where possible.

It is vital that members signed up to a LINK position accurately reflect the extent and limits of that consensus. No member should imply that consensus is broader than it is. Likewise, organisational positions must not contradict LINK positions that the organisation has voluntarily endorsed. Diverging in public from LINK-agreed outputs risks undermining both the collective and the network's credibility. Where consensus is not possible, respectful recognition of differing views is essential, and LINK has procedures in place to manage this constructively.

### **9.1 Managing Disagreement Within Groups**

LINK Groups operate on a principle of consensus building. The goal when producing outputs, such as consultation responses, briefings, or publications, is to reach a shared position across the participating member bodies.

- If there is minor disagreement or members prefer not to actively support a position, the standard LINK sign-up process applies: members can choose whether or not to be listed as signatories. The output may still proceed under the LINK banner, provided there is no formal objection.
- In some cases, if a member strongly believes that LINK should not adopt a position supported by other members and a consensus position cannot be reached, the Group Convener and relevant LINK staff will agree whether it is appropriate for LINK to proceed. LINK members are free to take alternative approaches such as producing a joint statement or publication without LINK branding, clearly marked as a collaborative output by the endorsing organisations only.
- Where there is disagreement between members, the LINK staff lead will work to ensure neutrality and to prevent any one member or representative from exerting disproportionate influence.

Conveners and Vice-Conveners have a key role in facilitating dialogue and encouraging consensus. However, they must not make unilateral decisions on behalf of the group in situations of disagreement. Where views are split, Conveners are expected to work with the staff lead and the group to find either consensus or agree to an alternative route.

This structured approach ensures that LINK outputs remain representative and trusted, while still allowing work to progress when full agreement is not achievable.

### **9.2 Disputes Between Member Bodies**

There may be rare occasions when fundamental differences arise between member bodies, including disagreements not directly linked to LINK outputs. In such cases, the LINK Board offers the following guidance and, if necessary, may act as an honest broker:

- Initiate early dialogue with the other party to seek resolution before the situation escalates.
- Notify the LINK Chair or Chief Officer early in the process with a brief outline of the concern.
- Avoid "green-on-green" criticism; frame differing views constructively and professionally.
- Identify an alternative contact within your organisation who can help manage the situation if needed.
- Consider the reputational impact of any public statement and offer advance notice of any planned media release to the other party.
- If discussions break down, seek LINK Board support on facilitation or process management.
- Maintain communication throughout, even during disagreement as trust and transparency are essential to the wider credibility and purpose of the network.

The LINK Board will keep track of serious disputes and work to safeguard the integrity and trust on which the LINK network is built.

## **10. STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN OUTPUTS**

### **10.1 Why make joint statements?**

The power of the collective voice is part of the original appeal of networking. The potential for the network, under LINK auspices, to make a strong case is important. Having argued for a right to be heard by decision-makers, we face consistent demand from parliamentarians, government, its agencies and other sectors for views and/or involvement on a wide range of issues. This requires a mature style of working by LINK (where it decides to respond/act) by which members can quickly agree consensus as far as possible and submit this as verbal or written briefing within a deadline that is set by the external context or for LINK spokespeople (Chair, Group Conveners, Fellows, staff) to advocate the network's general position or concerns.

### **10.2 What form do statements take?**

Statements may sometimes be verbal (e.g. by Office bearer or Staff to media on behalf of the network), or expressed through written outputs (press releases, reports, briefing papers, letters and submissions – see guidance below on publications). Members should guard against implying unanimity (unless this clearly exists and can be demonstrated) and should present or report the consensus so that it can be well defended by the network. The guidance below is designed to safeguard these two objects, and in cases of doubt, members should consult the Chair, Chief Officer or other senior staff members for advice.

### **10.3 Guidance on issuing written products**

- (a) Statements issued on behalf of LINK as a whole should be approved and signed off by the Chair (Vice-Chair, if the Chair is unavailable) or Chief Officer where they are satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the membership. Some of the opportunities for this will on occasion be identified by staff using their antennae, and notifying relevant Office Bearer(s), with recommendations for action, as LINK, within the context of the guidance in this section.
- (b) Statements issued on behalf of a grouping of LINK's Members should be approved and signed off by the Convener of that grouping (or Vice Convener) only if satisfied that the text can be broadly supported by the relevant member bodies. These statements should include a list of the bodies on whose behalf they are being made.
- (c) Reference to the estimated, collective membership of the network (ie, 500,000 people) can be made where a generic description of the network is being given as introduction or background. However, such reference should not be used in specific text about specific issues to imply a breadth of support for a view being presented by a subset of LINK's members involved in the Group issuing that text. The exception to this would be where all members have signed up to a case being presented through LINK in which situation the collective membership figure could be cited.
- (d) Statements should refer to 'LINK member bodies' rather than 'LINK' e.g. LINK member bodies believe, LINK members' views are, etc. Members are also reminded to use the short form LINK

(preferably not 'SEL') and to use LINK letterhead (and not those of a member body) for statements issued on behalf of groups of members.

Press releases should be signed off by the Chief Officer, Chair or Director of Policy and Engagement . When issuing press releases please copy these to relevant contacts in government agencies, departments, parliamentary contacts, as well as media. Where LINK is being supportive it is useful that they are aware of what we have tried to promote, even if it has got into the papers/media.

If releasing a report, the Members (or Group) responsible for the publication should give Scottish Government, NatureScot, or other target audience, appropriate<sup>1</sup> advance sight of it before the media cover it, particularly where the content is critical of progress or is likely to require their comment at time of release. It is the responsibility of the lead person issuing a LINK statement to ensure that LINK's pertinent grant conditions are met. Please contact LINK staff if in any doubt.

Quotes can be used from relevant LINK players if these are cleared by the organizers with the person/people to be quoted in good time.

For written 'products' use LINK's press release, briefing templates, letterhead and logo as appropriate, all available on the members' part of the website. When referring to LINK, use Scottish Environment LINK in full, with the abbreviation, LINK, afterwards. Other abbreviations should not be used. For verbal comment, be sure to explain which part of LINK you represent (eg. the XY Group). If representing LINK in total, introduce it, eg, the forum for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations, the voice of Scotland's environment community, or similar. LINK staff have access to all logos, colours, templates on Sharepoint in the Admin folder.

Signatures - normally the Group Convener. If the occasion requires the Chair or Chief Officer signature instead, please advise staff in good time to arrange for this.

## **10.4 Individual responsibility**

Staff, office bearers, members, conveners, co-opted members of Groups, and other spokespeople have a clear responsibility for:

- (a) working within the spirit of LINK's constitution and operating principles;
  - (b) following the guidance given above;
  - (c) ensuring that any statements they make or publish on behalf of LINK member bodies, or relating to joint work under LINK auspices, are accurate and appropriately researched (in terms of information given) and give a reliable reflection of the nature, strength and breadth of view on the issue(s) within the network, and;
- 

<sup>1</sup> In some cases, e.g. where documents are very technical, or very critical, the coordinating Group may wish to give their target audience(s) more than the minimum period of advance notice, as part of their advocacy strategy.

- (d) not purporting to act as a delegate for LINK unless they have a clear mandate from LINK to do so.

This is vital in protecting LINK's credibility for members in the future, and ensuring there are no legal grounds for claims against LINK and/or its membership. Where there is any doubt, or even just a lack of clarity about what is best, key players should request guidance or a meeting with staff or Board.

## 11. PUBLICATIONS

This guidance is for when LINK is publishing a document, paper, report, briefing or media release and covers the 7 steps from pre-publication through to final dissemination.

### Step 1 Pre-Publication

1. Ensure that there is a single person in charge of the final editing, authorisation and publication of the document – and that it is clear to all concerned who that person will be as well as which LINK body is commissioning and responsible for the document.
2. Ensure that the wider LINK network is made aware of the intention to publish on this issue – through LINK bulletin or direct communication with the network.
3. Make sure that procedures are in place for the document to receive proper authorisation from the commissioning group, staff team or Board (or sub-group), as a publication to be issued formally in LINK's name.
4. Offer adequate early warning of publication (one week minimum for position papers, 24 hours for media releases or briefings) to any of our strategic partners affected or mentioned (such as\* Scottish Government, NatureScot, SEPA or operating or funding partner organisations) in order to ensure that they are not taken by surprise.
5. Offer adequate early warning to staff who will be proof-reading, publishing and disseminating.
6. Make sure that any funding grant conditions (if applicable) relating to the project have been fulfilled.
7. Draw up a preliminary external distribution list for the document upon publication and seek input on this from the commissioning group.

### Step 2 Text Sign-Off

1. Ensure that all appropriate LINK members concerned have had adequate opportunity to amend, correct and comment on the document (ie, commissioning group and relevant other members or groups).
2. Ensure that no appropriate LINK member within this identified circle of interests objects to the substantive content of the final draft.

### Step 3 Required Technical Details

Ensure all publications, media releases, briefings follow LINK's [style guide](#) available on the members part of the website and carry:

- the LINK logo;
- reference to LINK websites and social media
- a short description of LINK (i.e. the forum, its sizeable membership, voice – as per website);
- detail on LINK's status (including: address and website, charity and company numbers);

- relevant information about our funding or specific funding of this work, and, where appropriate, funders' logos;
- copyright, if appropriate; for writing, quote and link to the original source.
- ISBN/internet publishing numbering, if appropriate; and
- credit for pictures and graphics: for pictures, graphics and video, only use those you have permission to use (through fair use, creative commons licensing, or explicit written permission from the owner). Credit design, if appropriate.
- Contact details

#### Step 4 Proof Reading

After adding the required technical details, ensure that the final draft (including covers, index, summary, introduction, and page-numbers) has been proof read – preferably by a member of staff - and that all errors, amendments are addressed in the final version.

#### Step 5 Internal Publication

Arrange for electronic copies to be sent to LINK office bearers, groups and members in the following categories, as appropriate.

- Board
- Group Conveners
- Member Organisations' main LINK Representatives
- Chair and Honorary Fellows
- Staff

#### Step 6 Web Publication

Ensure that the LINK staff have an electronic copy of the document and press release, together with brief covering text in order to publish the document in the appropriate part of the LINK website.

#### Step 7 General Publication & Dissemination

Circulate a link to the document on LINK's website to all parties on the target distribution list. Staff will disseminate widely via social media, to members via the monthly bulletin and to others via the monthly update to key contacts.

## 12. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board comprises Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and up to 6 other Trustees familiar with LINK's modus operandi. The Board can co-opt 2 further individuals during any one year. Trustees are elected at the AGM with nominations invited in advance. Members are positively encouraged to take a part in the Board.

The Board is responsible for an overview of management and strategic direction as agreed and taken forward by member bodies, working to the Strategic Operational Plan and the annual work plan; it also prioritises allocation of staff and other resources on an ongoing basis and is responsible for other areas remitted by the membership of LINK including legal matters and HR. The Chief Officer and other Staff participate in Board meetings, contributing to these, progressing action points and keeping a record of decisions, which are posted on the members' website. The Board meets at least quarterly and reports to members at the AGM. Member bodies, Group Conveners are encouraged to be freely in touch with

Trustees, and networking meetings involving Members, Trustees, Groups are held in May and later November.

## 12.1 LINK Office Bearers

**Chair** - the main role of the Chair is internal management, including chairing the Board and close involvement in organisational development. Either the Chair, or Vice-Chair or Treasurer line manages the Chief Officer. The Chair normally chairs Networking Meetings and AGM, though they may share this role with the Vice-Chair. There is an expectation that the Chair will be drawn from the pool of representatives regularly involved in LINK who have excellent, up-to-date, hands-on knowledge of the organisation. If they are a representative on LINK of a member body, the Chair has the normal right to vote on behalf of their organisation at Networking meetings. The Chair liaises closely Vice-Chair and senior staff to ensure a co-ordinated approach internally and externally and may be expected on occasion to carry out representational work. The Chair, along with Treasurer, Vice-Chair and one other Trustee, form the Board's Employment Sub Group responsible for advising the CO on staffing and HR issues.

**Vice-Chair** - the Vice-Chair complements and supports the role of the Chair in terms of representational work where Group Conveners are not appropriate or not available. The Vice-Chair may substitute for the Chair at Board meetings, Networking Meetings and other plenary meetings. If also a representative on LINK of a Member, the Vice-Chair has the normal right to vote on behalf of their organisation.

**Treasurer** - advises the Board and LINK on financial issues supporting relevant staff on financial aspects of LINK's operations. All day-to-day book-keeping and management of monies is the responsibility of the CO and the Director of Operations in conjunction with the Board, which reviews LINK's financial situation in detail each quarter. The Treasurer is part of the Board's Employment Sub Group responsible for advising the CO on staffing and HR issues, and of the Board's Funding Sub Group, which advises staff and Board on more detailed funding issues.

**Honorary Fellows** - As Honorary roles, there is no fixed term or limit. Honorary Fellows can be put forward by members, Board members and staff. Appointment is by majority vote at the Annual General Meeting. Nominations for Honorary Fellowships are invited to fill gaps in LINK's skills base and access to key sectors, building on the skills and reach analysis completed by the Board on a regular basis.

The Honorary Fellow role enables LINK to retain contact with exceptional leaders who have contributed to LINK's development in the past and are in a position to support LINK and to promote LINK's vision. They are asked to offer their expertise and input to LINK's work, to help develop the network's external relationships and facilitate LINK's wider connections across civic society and the policy arena.

**Company Secretary** - The Chief Officer acts as the Company Secretary to LINK.

## 13. THE SEEKING OF VIEWS (OTHER THAN BALLOTS)

As a network dispersed across Scotland, 'canvassing' (by phone, e-mail) for views and suggestions of members is normal practice. LINK relies on this to progress and respond to issues. Timescales for response are dictated normally by deadlines set to LINK e.g. through external consultation, through LINK group deadlines for achieving tasks. There are occasions where the pace needs to be fast: experience indicates

that this is worth it for those who want active engagement and to be in on the action. LINK's process and its effectiveness rely on prompt responses.

## 14. LINK WORK PROGRAMME

The annual Strategic Planning Meeting (involving office bearers, trustees, Group, Staff and Members, and open to Fellows) determines key priorities for collective work, the content of LINK's annual Workplan and the resource-ability of these across the network. Participation of members at senior level is important to ensure integration with members' own plans and best focus for the network. Experience clearly shows that LINK must prioritise strongly, as aspiration always outstrips capacity.

## 15. PROJECTS

Projects are another way in which LINK has successfully worked over the years. Some of these have involved employment of project staff, others commissioning of reports, or holding conferences.

### 15.1 Project definition

A project, in strict accounting terms, is any activity carried out by LINK Staff and / or Groups, which requires Restricted or Designated funding.

Restricted funds have external donor-imposed restrictions on where the money can be spent, whilst Designated funds are set aside from LINK's unrestricted funds by the Board for a specific purpose. In either case, the expenditure of these funds has to be accounted for separately from LINK core activities.

Depending on the size and complexity of an individual project, the project manager should adhere at an appropriate level of detail to the following project lifecycle template:

### 15.2 Project initiation

*a. Project proposal* should be drawn up, to include:

- i. Identification of project manager and project team
- ii. Statement of project objectives
- iii. Timetable / project plan
- iv. Project budget as per LINK template, including:
  1. Budgeted costs including requirement for any LINK staff time for support or financial administration
  2. Budgeted income stream to meet these costs, from:
    - a. members & sponsors (confirmed)
    - b. requested LINK funding (from Designated Project Fund)
  3. For projects extending beyond a single LINK Financial year, the budget must include a Whole Project Life summary, showing income and expenditure plans across the whole lifecycle of the project

b. Project approval

- i. If LINK funding from any available Discretionary Project Reserve is required, an application should be made to the LINK Board Funding Subgroup (a form is available on the LINK website)
- ii. Fully funded projects to be carried out using the LINK name need to be taken to LINK Board for final approval, whether or not LINK finances or staff resources are required

c. Contracts

- i. All LINK projects, outputs and events / activities that are delivered by external organisations must have a contract set up before any work commences.
- ii. LINK contracts must use the template, available from the Director of Operations, and must include:
  1. Full address and contact details of the consultant / organisations
  2. The lead contact in LINK
  3. Task description
  4. Audience
  5. Deliverables: list
  6. Signing off responsibility: LINK's CEO / Director of Policy and Engagement
  7. Timescale with specific dates
  8. Copyright and indemnity
  9. Payment and payment schedule
  10. Signature of LINK's CEO / Director of Operations
- iii. Contracts may only be issued by LINK's Senior Managers. Project sign off to trigger payment must also be approved by a Senior Manager before payment will be made.

### **15.3 Project execution**

a. Progress reporting

- i. Project manager to send Quarterly reports to Staff for various needs. The final report / output must be signed off by CEO or Director of Policy and Engagement.

b. Financial management

- i. LINK Director of Operations responsible for invoicing and banking of income, and payment of expenses, as approved by the Project manager
- ii. All invoices to be addressed to LINK office in Perth FAO Director of Operations
- iii. LINK staff to notify Director of Operations monthly about the number of days support given to the project, for allocation of internal salary and overhead costs
- iv. LINK Director of Operations to maintain the Actual financial status of the project and send updates to the Project manager as they happen
- v. Project manager to provide LINK Director of Operations with quarterly Forecast updates, including explanatory notes if necessary, in time for inclusion in the LINK Budget Out-turn for each LINK Board meeting
- vi. Projects which forecast a deficit during project execution must freeze and go back through a Stage 1 funding review with the LINK Board Funding Subgroup before continuing
- vii. Project Manager to ensure that all project costs can be met and, where a shortfall is forecast, that appropriate savings can be made on expenditure, or additional fundraising carried out by the project group.

### **15.4 Project completion**

a. Final reporting

- i. Project manager to send final project report to LINK Operations Director, and provide appropriate reports required by any project grant funding bodies
- b. Financial management
  - i. Project Manager to finalise the project accounts with LINK Director of Operations, including agreement on release or repayment of any remaining project funding surplus
  - ii. Project surpluses cannot be held past the end of the project life, or over a LINK financial year, without a definite and agreed expenditure plan
- c. Final review
  - i. Project Manager responsible for ensuring evaluation (along lines of After Action Reviews) by project steering group and communication of lessons learned to others in the network

## 16. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**16.1** The network relies on email for communications. Member bodies are therefore expected to be able to receive email.

**16.2** LINK's main website ([www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org)) carries links to members' websites; members changing website names, logos, etc, should keep LINK informed. The LINK website will continue to be developed as the main repository for information, diary dates, and progress reports for LINK members, and as an obvious source of information about LINK work and contacts for LINK member bodies, for other audiences.

### **16.3** Social Networking Protocol

For fuller information on the LINK social media policy see the full Guidance on the website [here](#) .

As a general rule all should be aware that comments are public, unless it is specified otherwise. New media might in future include equivalents of the LINK website's 'public' and 'members only' services, and appropriate controls should be in place to ensure that the distinction is made and the 'members only' services are kept within the designated privacy settings available.

LINK social media services must convey messages that are entirely consistent with LINK's organisational views, activities and events. LINK's senior management will be responsible for ensuring that this is the case.

LINK members, trustees, group conveners, and staff are fully entitled to broadcast in a personal capacity on social networking and new media sites. It is requested that when they are so broadcasting that attention is paid to ensure that no inference could be drawn that they are speaking on behalf of LINK – and, if necessary, that attention is drawn to LINK's own broadcasting. The guidance on Statements (section 10) applies.

## 17. LINK POLICIES

Separately from this Operating Guidance, LINK has developed policies on many aspects of collective working. Members, all office bearers, group leads, group members and staff are required to adhere to these in carrying out LINK work.

Policies include equal opportunities, health and safety, green office, travel, running events, working with partners, safeguarding, children, data protection, among other. They are published on the member pages of LINK's [website](#).

For its own staff, LINK has developed an employment policy, a performance management system and a staff handbook. These may be of interest to members. For more information contact the Director of Operations.

## 18. COMPLYING WITH LOBBYING LEGISLATION

From 12 March 2018, all regulated lobbying activity must be recorded on the [Lobbying Register](#). Regulated lobbying is communication which is: face-to-face or by video-conference; with an MSP, Minister, a Special Adviser or the Permanent Secretary; in relation to Government or Parliament functions. LINK intends to voluntarily submit details, insofar as is possible, of all instances of lobbying on behalf of LINK. Our advocacy work is undertaken across the LINK network by staff of member organisations, LINK Board members and those holding honorary positions. LINK aims to voluntarily register all instances of lobbying on behalf of LINK to ensure that we are open and transparent about our lobbying activities. If a convener, group member, LINK delegate, staff member undertakes 'regulated lobbying' **and advocates a LINK position** at any meeting or event, then they should record that activity on behalf of their own organisation (although not if the small organisation exemption applies). **In addition, they should please notify LINK of this instance of 'regulated lobbying', whether the small organisation exemption applies to them or not, as LINK intends to voluntarily register such instances. They should email [information@scotlink.org](mailto:information@scotlink.org) with the information – see [LINK's briefing](#) on the Lobbying Register in Scotland for further detail.**

## 19. SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members pay an annual subscription to LINK. Subscriptions are tiered according to member bodies' income: the main criterion is the proportion of total income relevant to Scotland. The model is kept under review by the Board which also recommends annual subscription levels. Subscriptions are set at the AGM and members are invoiced each summer. Where subscriptions are not paid within 3 months of the invoice date, voting rights will be deemed to have lapsed, although the defaulting member may continue to receive LINK information and other services until the financial year end. Members who wish to explore subscription issues should write to the Board.

## 20. GUIDANCE ON LINK Groups

The mechanism of Groups is a key way for members to work together to develop and promote common positions on areas of mutual interest. Since LINK's inception these have been a means of improving

understanding and developing collective views and promoting or advocating these as written submissions, evidence to parliamentary committees, briefings for decision-makers and stakeholders, publications, media work, and via delegates to external forums, seminars and conferences and campaigns.

Groups are largely self-supporting and self-regulating with collective responsibility for their own workplans within the LINK Work Programme and for keeping the wider LINK audience informed. Proposals for a new Group and further plans for existing groups must be endorsed by the wider membership at the annual Strategic Planning Meeting or by other agreed means. Groups will be allocated a staff liaison contact.

A group should involve a minimum of 3 member bodies. The convener, vice convener, and group delegates to external forums must be representatives of member bodies. Any member body may participate in any LINK Group, either actively, or be included in the e-group for information and should let the Convener know of their status. Groups may also involve Co-optees (see 20.3 below).

Groups must keep LINK informed of progress, plans, etc, by communicating as necessary with staff, Board, and with other groupings, and by participating in LINK's Strategic Planning and Network meetings (twice yearly) which require forward planning of objectives, rationale, targets, timescales, resourcing, advocacy strategy and evaluation of effort. Group plans should state the intended resource commitment of participating members and support needed from LINK Staff.

Fundraising for Group projects is usually the responsibility of the Group with guidance available from LINK staff and sufficient input to ensure against duplication or contradiction with LINK's wider funding strategy. The Board may have allocated available funding via a Discretionary Project Fund for which Groups may apply. On occasion, LINK staff support may be allocated to assist a Group in fundraising.

## **20.1 Leadership**

Good leadership of LINK Groups is vital to achieving strategic goals and sustaining effective collaboration. Groups working on long-term tasks should plan for leadership succession and nominate Vice-Conveners or deputies to support continuity. New Conveners and Vice-Conveners should arrange an early induction with LINK staff to ensure clarity around roles, expectations, and coordination.

### **Election of Conveners and Vice-Conveners**

Group members may volunteer for the roles of Convener and/or Vice-Convener. If more than one person volunteers for a role, an anonymous vote will be held. The LINK staff lead will facilitate the vote to ensure neutrality and transparency.

Conveners and Vice-Conveners are typically drawn from active, committed representatives of LINK member organisations.

### **Role of the Convener**

The Group Convener leads and coordinates the work of the Group. Key responsibilities include:

- Chairing and leading the group to achieve agreed objectives and stay on schedule.
- Ensuring induction of all new members, including Co-optees, into the group.
- Tracking and supporting progress on action points and ensuring all voices are considered.

- Submitting forward plans, advocacy strategies, and progress reports in line with LINK’s reporting cycle.
- Liaising with other groups and LINK staff to ensure consistency and coordination across LINK’s work areas.
- Representing the group at LINK’s twice-yearly networking meetings or arranging an alternative representative.
- Ensuring all outputs comply with LINK protocols on branding, sign-off, and publication.
- Keeping and sharing up-to-date participant lists and ensuring timely communication within the group.

### **Role of the Vice-Convener**

The Vice-Convener supports the Convener and LINK staff lead across core functions and may act as deputy when required. Key responsibilities include:

- Assisting with the drafting of meeting agendas.
- Reviewing and signing off publications (e.g. briefings, reports, consultation responses).
- Representing the group at external meetings (e.g. with Scottish Government officials or stakeholders).
- Helping with draft consultation or call-for-views responses.
- Giving evidence to parliamentary committees where appropriate.
- Reporting on group progress every six months.
- Attending LINK’s strategic planning events to support the annual review of the group’s work plan.

The LINK staff lead supports both roles by handling administrative tasks such as meeting arrangements, secretariat duties, and document management.

## **20.2 Membership of Groups**

Any member body can sign up to one or more Groups either ‘actively’ or ‘for information only’. Active participation signifies a resource commitment by the member in terms of developing consensus from a sound knowledge of their organisation’s viewpoint, sharing of the Group workload and responding promptly and clearly to deadlines. Groups should review members’ commitment annually when forming their work plans.

Groups operate on the assumption of trust between members in fulfilling their aims and objectives, in sharing information and agreeing tactics. Group members should have full confidence in each other as individuals representing their organisations, and where acting as a delegate for the Group representing a rounded LINK perspective. Any difficulties experienced by members with any of these aspects should be discussed at an early stage with the Convener, Staff or Board. Group activities are subject to LINK’s Articles of Association, Operating Principles, general Policies, Policy on registering lobbying activities, Policy on Co-optees and LINK’s Strategy. In this context Conveners and Members are expected to be familiar with and abide by/apply these protocols.

Any member body may sign up to a Group output where the Group wishes to widen the scope of signatories beyond its immediate members.

A member of LINK Staff will be allocated to each Group to:

1. Be included in all group circulations
2. Be the Go-to person for the group’s Convener

3. Advise on protocol etc as needed and help coordinate between Groups to help identify gaps and overlaps with rest of staff team. This could include helping to organise workshops, integration between groups, etc
4. Keep abreast of its minutes and plans so as to inform other staff, see crossover, and assist Group liaison where outputs cross several policy areas.
5. Save all group minutes, positions, communications to Sharepoint
6. Ensure relevant outputs go online (by passing to appropriate staff)
7. And in the case of Project led Groups: Providing the secretariat, minutes, meeting set up, progress reporting, funder reports (with Development Officer)

Staff will also

- Provide a regular update via the LINK bulletin on key activities of active Groups to help co-ordination between these groupings and with broader LINK operations
- Organise and prepare for the Strategic planning and networking meetings for Groups, member bodies, Board and Staff
- Assist Groups with their annual work plans
- Report on Group activities for Network and Board updates, funding reports, annual reports.
- Liaise regularly with Conveners regarding Group members' contact details and review participation of member bodies in all work areas annually
- Keep a listing of Group Conveners and Vice Conveners, on the members' website

### 20.3 Co-optee involvement on Groups

Co-optees are organisations whose participation a Group may wish for a specific purpose. Co-options should be agreed formally, in writing, between the Co-optee and the lead of the Group, with a member of LINK staff copied in, and should specify clearly the basis, period and scope of the engagement. Whether the approach is instigated by a non-member organisation interested in the Group, or by the Group reaching out to the non-member organisation:

- (a) Where the organisation **is eligible** for membership, the Group should insist upon membership from the outset. If the would-be co-optee decides not to join LINK, then the Convener should ensure that they are not included in the list of participants or in the work of the group. LINK's Board has agreed that in order to avoid operating a 'double standard', LINK must be clear and consistent about respective distinctions between members and co-optees, given the financial contributions required of members.
- (b) Where the organization **is not eligible** for membership of LINK, the Group should decide whether its involvement is likely to add value. If the Group has a strong case for wishing the organisation to take part, the request should be decided by the LINK Board. The duration and

scope of the co-optee's engagement will be specified in the initial exchange of communication. Co-optees should be required to pay an associational fee<sup>2</sup> from the outset.

Entitlements for Co-optees are that they can:

- participate in one relevant LINK Group, but in no more than one work area over that time;
- contribute to and support that Group's position statements, submissions and other outputs; and
- take part in that Group's liaison meetings and events.

Co-optees may not stand for election as Group Convener/Vice, or represent LINK in other ways, as they are likely to be less aware of the wider operations, interests and ethos of LINK and may not necessarily belong to the voluntary sector.

The policy relies on Group Conveners to differentiate between organisations which the Group approaches and those which approach the Group, and to inform such organisations of the policy. The policy also relies on Group leads to inform the Board of Co-optee requests and abide by its decision, and keep staff informed of Co-optees so that they can (a) maintain up-to-date lists for information purposes and (b) ensure appropriate charging.

## **21. WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

LINK, sometimes chooses to pursue work in partnership with non-network organisations or individuals beyond the network who have relevant expertise. Where this happens, the LINK 'lead' for the work area is required to ensure that the partner (organisational rep or individual) and LINK players are aware of and adhere to the principles set out below.

The LINK lead may be group conveners, other group appointees, members of staff, trustees or fellows. The principles should be referenced in an initial exchange of communications between the LINK lead and the partner about mutual expectations of the work.

If concern arises between LINK and the partner which cannot be satisfactorily resolved the LINK lead is required to raise this for resolution at LINK Board level.

Principles for working in partnership:

- LINK prides itself on network reputation for high quality, well-informed, evidence-based positions and for professional approaches to relationship building and advocacy with other stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> This will be no less than the fee charged for organisations in the lowest LINK subscription band.

- Where entering into a professional relationship with other organisations or individuals, LINK members expect the same conduct and behaviours of these players as are expected from LINK's members, staff, fellows, trustees and volunteers.
- LINK values the knowledge and experience which partners bring to projects and shares the benefits achieved by working in partnership.
- LINK reserves the right to terminate any relationship with a partner if the actions or conduct of that party may jeopardise the reputation of the network.

## 22. ORGANISING EVENTS

When organising events in LINK's name please observe LINK's environmental and travel policies, completing the Event Risk Assessment in advance. Full information can be found on our website [Planning a LINK event](#).

## 23. USEFUL LINKS

See the members part of the website [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org) for policies, templates, plans and contact details for LINK reps, trustees, groups, staff and delegates.