

PROJECT: Helping Scotland to Flourish Sustainably

ORGANISATION: Scottish Environment LINK

END OF YEAR REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: 1st January 2014 – 31st December 2014

During the first year of this project the main emphasis has been on engaging with LINK member organisations and building foundations for the project, though as this report indicates we are also engaging with allies and external audiences on certain aspects. In the second year, we will build on this – taking our proposals into the policy arena and using specific issues identified by LINK members to demonstrate discussions and arguments.

1. Summary of main activities

Briefing to National Performance Framework Roundtable

The joint LINK/FoE/Oxfam/WWF briefing, *Revising Scotland's National Performance Framework*, was finalised and signed up to by 37 organisations, including many LINK members, trade unions, the Church of Scotland, and organisations with interests in poverty, development and the environment. The briefing was submitted to the Roundtable in February 2014 and was well received. In April it was emailed to a wide range of stakeholders who were invited to use it and refer to it in their own work and it was put on to the LINK website public pages.

The Briefing was an agenda item on LINK's February meeting with Scotland's Environment Minister at which the Project Officer emphasised its key messages.

On-going input to the NPF Roundtable

The Project Officer provided on-going support and backup to the LINK representative on the Government-led Roundtable. The Roundtable has been in abeyance for the period leading up to the Independence Referendum and the change in First Minister, but is anticipated to resume in the first quarter of 2015.

Papers researched and written for LINK Economics Taskforce as well as for LINK members and LINK's other Taskforces (attached to this report)

- *GDP and its flaws* - a short paper with a succinct message about why GDP is inappropriate as a sole indicator for progress.
- *Sustainable development and its relationship to other concepts* – a short paper explaining how various economic related concepts relate to the overarching framework of sustainable development.
- *NPF/Scotland Performs and related areas* – this longer paper is more closely tied to the Flourishing Scotland Project aims of reforming the National Performance Framework. It covers the broader context of the National Performance Framework and other initiatives that seek to assess

wellbeing and sustainability. It is to inform the Economics taskforce in its on-going work, as well as other interested LINK members and taskforces.

- *Economic policies and LINK* - this broader paper looks at a range of economic policies and instruments and how they affect the environment. It also discusses areas where LINK taskforces are engaging in economic debates. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion within and between taskforces with the potential to lead to new areas of work.
- *DRAFT paper on Revising the National Performance Framework*
This paper uses a Sustainable Development lens and suggests indicators to gauge success in remaining within environmental limits, ensuring economic activities are sustainable, and gauging people's wellbeing. This is part of our preparation for on-going contribution to the Roundtable process.

Party conference fringe events

LINK held fringe events at the Scottish Green and SNP party conferences in the autumn on '*Beyond GDP*'. LINK invited Oxfam to share the platform at both events. We were delighted to have Patrick Harvie MSP speaking with us at the Green Party fringe event and John Swinney MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth) at the SNP event. Both events proved popular and were full.

LINK manifesto

The Economics Taskforce provided input to LINK's broad environmental manifesto for the 2015 UK parliamentary elections, to cover Beyond GDP, the Carbon Bubble, a Green New Deal, the Circular Economy, TTIP and a Green Infrastructure Bank. The manifesto will be published in early March.

Conferences and meetings – developing contacts/allies and keeping abreast of emerging fields of thought and policy

- Regular LINK meetings and events: Economics Taskforce meetings (quarterly), LINK networking meetings (quarterly), Joint Links biennial conference and Scottish Environment LINK annual Congress.
- Conferences/workshops on wellbeing.
The Project Officer attended the GLADS (Good Lives and Decent Societies) workshop series which examined policy initiatives on various aspects of wellbeing.
- Conferences/workshops on ecosystem services and natural capital.
The Project Officer attended the conference *Privatisation of Biodiversity* which largely explored off-setting and potential provisions for it in the planning process. The Project Officer presented at the ESCom (Environmental Services Community) Scotland conference on how LINK and members engage with the Ecosystem approach and Ecosystem Services. The Project Officer now sits on the 'ESCom Central' group, representing LINK members. The Project Officer attended the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital: *Natural Capital: Getting from A-B* which heard how the Natural Capital approach can be used in a range of types of

initiatives (eg. peatland restoration, urban greening, agri-environment measures) to demonstrate their value.

- Conference: *'Reinventing our Economy'*
This conference brought together highly respected speakers on a range of economic issues. The Project Officer spoke jointly at one of the break-out sessions on the Circular Economy.
- Other meetings and contacts developed with allies and individuals and organisations with overlapping interests including SEPA, and SNH.

Project management

Quarterly Project Development Group meetings are held to review progress and work plan (work plan attached). The project currently has a detailed work plan for the first quarter of 2015. This will be updated for the rest of 2015 after the next PDG meeting (February 24) based on timetable of and feedback from the NPF Roundtable and outcomes of the LINK Economics Taskforce workshop for members being held on 18 February.

2. Summary of main outputs

- LINK joint NGO briefing on National Performance Framework is finalised and published.
- Work plan and advocacy strategy drawn up and updated with the Project Delivery Group.
- ETF/LINK research needs identified and papers produced.
- The Project Officer advised active LINK taskforces through papers and meetings and ad hoc requests.
- Project Officer attended relevant events.
- Project Officer kept up to date with and attended Scottish Forum on Natural Capital.
- Project Officer fed into LINK's representation on the NPF Roundtable.
- On-going networking through events and contacts with environment and other sectors. In terms of the non-environment sectors, the Project Officer is developing relationships with individuals in Oxfam, NEF (New Economics Foundation), Carnegie, SPICe (Scottish Parliament Information Centre), individuals involved in fiscal reform.

Outputs not delivered

- We did not seek Carnegie funding for a LINK event around the NPF briefing. This was on the recommendation of the LINK representative who sits on the Roundtable who judged that the LINK briefing had been well received and any further action may jeopardise the goodwill being shown towards our suggestions.
- We have not agreed a monitoring approach to a revised NPF as there is still no clear timetable for the conclusion to the NPF Roundtable or for the Government to publish a revised NPF.
- Due to workload, the Project Officer did not prepare evidence for the Scottish Budget /spending review with members' input. We plan to do this in 2015.

3. Progress towards project outcomes

These target outcomes are for the full time period of the project. Progress towards some of them has been made in year 1 as noted below.

i) An improved NPF, which will be used more effectively as a tool for long-term decision making about resource expenditure – along SD lines

Work to improve the NPF is on-going under the Roundtable. We have every indication that our Feb 2014 Briefing was well received and that the NPF will be improved along SD lines. We have developed further thinking on the NPF and will be putting new material, building on our previous briefing, to the Roundtable in Feb/March 2015.

ii) Improved engagement with business interests, the professions and youth groups to make common cause about SD and long-term resilience. Business, for example, need confidence to invest in sustainable development 'goods' and to divest for unsustainable practice.

In December 2014, LINK published 'Scotland and the Carbon Bubble', commissioned by the Economics Taskforce. This report has attracted media interest and is adding to the debate on investment in fossil fuels. LINK is planning further advocacy on this which will include an element of business engagement. The ETF is planning to explore options to promote the Circular Economy which will provide further opportunities for business engagement.

iii) Progress against the NPF targets and indicators, as measured through 'Scotland Performs', will be interrogated regularly by Parliament and the media to assess progress against SD objectives.

For the second year running, parliamentary committees have used NPF indicators in budget scrutiny. We are awaiting a report on the use of the NPF in performance budgeting.

iv) Over time, social and environmental datasets as well as GDP will be a matter of public interest and scrutiny.

The Project Officer has been examining various datasets which is feeding into suggestions about what should be used.

v) LINK members will be able to make stronger SD/economics/resilience arguments across a range of audiences they engage with, including their own members.

Reports and papers have been produced for LINK members, and are available on the LINK members' website; these have received positive feedback. There have also been specific meetings with taskforces to discuss the options they have to engage in economic debates and to strengthen their arguments. The economics theme proved the most popular breakout group at the Joint Links conference where members could explore the relevance of economics to their work and how they might engage in economic arguments or discourse. The Economics Taskforce (ETF) is holding a workshop in Feb 2015 'Economic Policy and the

Environment: Opportunities for LILNK. Participants are being asked to bring examples of issues or campaigns on which they are working to the workshop. These will form the basis of on-going work by the ETF.

4. Unexpected outcomes

There have been no unexpected outcomes to date

5. Media interest

LINK published an article in the Scotsman in April: *Sustainable growth must include more than economic prosperity*.

There has also been media interest in the Carbon Bubble report.

6. Lessons

7. Financial report.

Please see attached. It will be noted that there is an underspend in year 1 of the project, particularly in the budget lines of 'travel and subsistence' and 'events'. Ambitions for the project mean that we plan to make up this underspend in the subsequent project years. In the case of 'travel and subsistence', most meetings and events attended have happened to be in Edinburgh or central Scotland during the first year of the project. In the case of 'events', the event envisaged for 2014 is being held in Feb 2015, and we anticipate a further event in 2015. In general, having done considerable groundwork in year 1, we plan a more 'outward facing' approach to the project in years 2 and 3 with increased expenditure on publications and events. This is reflected in the attached financial report.