



Scottish  
Environment  
LINK

## **Minute of Scottish Environment LINK 35th Annual General Meeting held on 23 November 2023.**

**Attending:** Charles Dundas (Chair), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer, Cairngorms Campaign), Claudia Gebhardt (Bat Conservation Trust), Aedán Smith (Trustee, RSPB), Karen Blackport (Trustee), James Woodhouse (Trustee), John E Taylor (WWF Scotland), Eric Baird (SCRA), Kathy Wormald (Trustee, Froglife), Claudia Beamish (Hon Fellow), Gus Jones (BSCG), Steve Micklewright (Trees for Life), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers), Shivali Fifield (ERCS), Kevin Lelland (Vice-Chair, John Muir Trust), Lucy Graham (Trustee, Scottish Wildlife Trust), John Thomson (SCNP), Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland), Frances Winder (Butterfly Conservation), Helen Senn (Trustee and RZSS), Alistair Whyte (Plantlife), Calum Duncan (Marine Conservation Society), Susan Ritchie (Woodland Trust Scotland), David McKay (Soil Association Scotland), Andrew Ramsey (Buglife), Sharon Gilburd (HWDT), Annie Robinson (CIEEM), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), Pat Monaghan (Hon Fellow), Catherine Gunby (FIDRA), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Sarah McKain (BES), John Mayhew, Simon Ritchie (Woodland Trust Scotland), Susan Davies (Scottish Seabird Centre)

Staff: Deborah Long (CO), Fanny Royanez (MPEO), Dan Paris (AM), Miriam Ross (CC), Juliet Caldwell (AO). Donna Banks (FOM, notes)

### **1. Introduction to AGM and any apologies for absence.**

Charles welcomed everyone to the 35<sup>th</sup> AGM. He checked everyone had received the AGM papers via email and everyone was provided with a link in the chat to all the papers. Everyone was asked to make sure their name was correct on zoom, including their organisation, to enable staff to count the votes effectively and efficiently.

Apologies had been received from Keep Scotland Beautiful and Alan McDonnell, Trees for Life.

Charles thanked everyone for their attendance. Scottish Environment LINK has had a busy year with new staff and undertaking many activities. Charles thanked Deborah for being a great CO and that Scottish Environment Link was very lucky to have her. The work of staff in supporting member bodies has been great and Deborah stays on top of everything. It has been an interesting political time and Dan has ensured that member bodies are feeding in and engaging with political developments. This work has ensured that our members and the network speak with a strong voice.

### **2. Minutes of last meeting on 24 November 2022**

The minute record of last meeting was presented and everyone was asked for any corrections required. No-one highlighted any corrections. The record of last AGM was then



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presented for approval; they were proposed by Helen Todd (Ramblers Association) and seconded by Diarmid Hearn (NTS) and accepted by those present.

### **3. Annual Report & Accounts for year to 31 March 2023 (Paper 2).**

Tim Ambrose introduced the accounts and explained that it was a considerable document which is an excellent resource and record for everything that Scottish Environment Link has undertaken over the past year. The report is in three parts; a narrative section comprising a detailed record of LINK's activities over the year, our audit report and statement of accounts from the auditors. He thanked Deborah for preparing it. Tim highlighted that no significant points had been raised by the auditors and that the numbers were true and fair. Tim highlighted some of the key figures, in particular the surplus at year end of £120,000 which was higher than had been expected due to an increase in the expected income and also a slightly reduced costs (due to shortage of staff, maintaining the decrease in the amount of travelling and keeping operational costs down). Tim highlighted income provided by Esme Fairbairn and reiterated that we are grateful to receive these funds until 2026. Tim invited comments and questions, and there were none. He recommended the accounts to the meeting. There were no questions or comments. Diarmid Hearn seconded. 20 hand votes were shown as accepting the Annual Report and Accounts for year to 31 March 2023.

### **4. Election of Trustees & Office Bearers; Appointment of Honorary Fellows**

One third of the elected trustees are required to stand down at each AGM. Tim Ambrose was retiring after serving the maximum of 3 full terms as Trustee and Treasurer. Helen Senn was standing down in rotation and completion of her first term and she is willing to stand again. Charles is required to stand down as Chair under Article 46(c) of LINK's Articles.

Charles thanked Tim on behalf of everyone for the professionalism and understanding which he has brought to the organisation. Tim was also thanked for his dedication to the vision and in the values of Scottish Environment Link. Tim was never shy in making his point known particularly in his support of staff welfare. Charles noted that the Board is recommending that James steps into the position of Treasurer (see below) and the big shoes James now has to fill. Charles thanked Tim for all his hard work, it has been greatly appreciated and that we all look forward to Tim's continued involvement in representing two of the smaller organisation members.

Charles Dundas was standing down as Chairperson but also willing to stand again as Chair under Section 46(c) of LINK's Articles of Association, with the support of the other Trustees on the Board. Charles reminded members and the Board that this is for a limited period of 12 months and that a new Chair will be required in 2024. He reiterated that the position of Chair at LINK was not onerous.

Charles reminded the meeting that the Trustee Skills audit had highlighted that there were three areas where additional expertise would be useful: Conflict resolution, EDI and Human Resources. Three nominations had been received for election to the Trustees, these were



Arina Russell (Senior Policy Manager, WWF Scotland), Alan McDonnell (Head of Nature Restoration at Trees for Life) and Eric Baird (LINK rep for Scottish Countryside Rangers Association).

Charles invited Arina and Eric to say a few words about their skills, knowledge and experience.

Arina stated that she is currently the Senior Policy Manager for WWF Scotland, managing a team of policy experts working across agriculture, food, climate and energy and marine restoration. Previously she has worked with Woodland Trust Scotland where she led the policy and advocacy work. Arina explained that her work within forestry policy and advocacy work had entailed the development and implementation of excellent conflict resolutions skills and knowledge to ensure an effective collaborative approach. Arina has over 6 years experience in working with Parliament in a policy and advocacy role. Arina has worked with LINK throughout her last role with the Woodland Trust as an active member of various groups and in the last two years as the vice convenor of the LINK Woodland Group.

Eric informed everyone of his experience of Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Conflict Resolution. For several years Eric was vice-chair of 'Inclusive Cairngorms' which was set up to represent the interests of minorities and influence institutional decision-making in Cairngorms National Park. Eric explained how he recently undertook conflict resolution work with stakeholders on behalf of the Portuguese Env Minister in the Tejo Protected Area. He also lectures to 3<sup>rd</sup> year degree students on managing community environmental projects where conflict resolution is a key component.

Charles presented Alan's resume to the members. Alan has worked in conservation in Scotland for 25 years, first with SNH on Islay and in Argyll and Stirlingshire, covering work with National Nature Reserves, woodlands and the uplands. Alan has been working with Trees for Life for the last 8 years and is now working as Head of Nature and Restoration. His skills and expertise are brought to bear on the challenges there in getting past the polarisations that divide land use interests and engaging meaningfully across those divides. For the past four years Alan has been Convenor of the LINK Woodland Group. Alan has excellent policy and advocacy experience, including working in a collaborative manner using conflict resolution skills.

Charles asked members to vote on the three candidates electronically. All three candidates were approved.

Tim Ambrose took over chairing the meeting at this point.

The Board recommends the election of Charles Dundas as Chair for a further year and re-election of Kevin McClelland as Vice Chair. This was proposed by Beryl Leatherland,



seconded by Gus Jones. 26 members approved, including 1 proxy votes. Charles noted that this would be his last year as Chair.

Re-election of Helen to the Board of Trustees. This was approved by 26 votes including a proxy vote.

Appointment of co-optees: The Board proposed to continue co-opting Karen Blackport and James Woodhouse. 26 members approved, including 1 proxy vote.

Membership were asked to vote to support the Board recommendation for James Woodhouse to take over the role as Treasurer. 26 members approved, including 1 proxy vote.

Honorary Fellows: there were two nominations for new Honorary fellows: Alice Walsh and John Mayhew. Alice had been a member of staff for 30 years and is always willing to help when needed. Alice has been a huge asset to the organisation. John has worked with LINK throughout his career and was Vice-Chair between 2006 and 2008. John has been a huge advocate in furthering Scottish conservation work and furthering the work in the voluntary environmental sector. 26 members approved, including 1 proxy vote.

#### **5. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiners / Auditors**

James recommended continuing to engage Geoghegans and Co as auditors on the grounds of their expertise and value for money. Charles also endorsed this proposal. James asked if there were any questions. No-one had any questions. Calum Duncan proposed, Beryl Leatherland seconded.

#### **6. Annual Subscriptions for the year 2024/25**

The Board has recommended no change to subscriptions for 2024-25. Charles commended this to members. It was proposed by John Mayhew, seconded by Sharon Gilburd.

#### **7. Any other business.**

Charles opened the meeting to any other business. There was no other business presented.

Charles closed the meeting. He hoped to see members in person on 28 November at Annual Congress. Charles thanked everyone for their participation in the AGM and thanked Tim again for his great work as Treasurer and how this had been greatly appreciated by all.