



Scottish
Environment
LINK

Annual Report Summary April 2024 to March 2025

A message from LINK's Chair, Professor James Curran MBE FRSE

This report once again proves how much Scotland needs LINK. Approaching 50 member organisations, we co-ordinate environmental expertise and practical knowledge across all aspects of our land, rivers, seas, and skies. We speak up on behalf of around half a million subscribers to our member organisations who want to see urgent progress in reversing the continuing damage to our irreplaceable environment.

This report demonstrates how we argue that Nature is not only our life-support system, but is also essential to our health and wellbeing and, as Scottish Government states, supports over £40 Billion per year to the Scottish economy and around 260,000 jobs. Each and every sector of Scottish society benefits, and every sector should work to preserve our natural heritage. This is vital since there has been, and there remains, a chasm between environmental rhetoric and reality. National ambition is not matched by delivery. Over the years this is dangerously undermining public trust in our political structures and public services.

Commitment, dedication, enthusiasm and optimism are the life-blood of LINK and its members. We know we can do so much better here in Scotland and we will continue to offer all of our skills in demanding and striving for a nature-rich, thriving, and lasting future for the people of Scotland.

24 October 2025

A message from LINK's Chief Executive, Dr Deborah Long, FRSGS

2024 into 2025 has been a year of challenge and opportunity. The need to protect and restore Scotland's environment has never been greater, and will become more so as climate change bites and the drivers of biodiversity loss remain so powerful. Resources available to support action for the environment are insufficient, whether that is public and private funding to restore nature and protect our environment or whether that is LINK member resource to retain and build the level of capacity required at this crucial time. LINK and our members are all feeling the squeeze between tighter resources and an ever expanding demand for our input and action. We are also in an era where society is distracted and political will is being diverted and displaced.

But we know that the public continue to value nature. Their support for the Scotland Loves Nature campaign is vital in helping us get our sometimes difficult-to-hear messages across to policymakers who are now facing tough decisions about land and sea management, access to nature and access to justice.

This last year and the coming one are both crucial as we look towards a new Parliament in Scotland from May 2026. It has never been more important for LINK members to be able to work together for a bigger impact over a wide range of priorities. That is why LINK is now focussing on what we can do as a network to achieve the best outcomes for Scotland's environment. LINK brings together huge amount of expertise, knowledge, commitment and passion and together we spend our resources wisely to share the burden and to try and make better policy for the environment. But that resource is not endless and with increasingly stretched public finances and ephemeral political commitment to long term solutions for nature and climate, we are planning more effectively and more ruthlessly.

This is necessary: we are fighting mis- and dis-information and we want to provide the space for public voices to be heard and for politicians to act. This is even more important as Scotland moves into a new Parliament. With LINK's network growing bigger, we can reach more widely and together we will be more effective.

24 October 2025



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

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The Year in Summary: Strategic Theme 1 - A Sustainable Scotland

2024 started with the environment as a clear priority in Scottish Government. However, the end of the SNP – Green Bute House agreement, the appointment of a new First Minister and an early election in Westminster increased concerns over commitment to the environment as the year progressed.

With just over 12 months to the next Scottish election in May 2026, LINK focussed on key priorities for Scotland's environment for the current Parliament. However, the commitment to a Natural Environment bill, covering deer management, protection on land and at sea through 30x30 commitments and targets to meet Scotland's commitment to the Global Biodiversity Framework, is a priority across all LINK Groups. This is also why LINK launched a new campaign, Scotland Loves Nature in the summer of 2024 to raise the political profile of nature restoration with the primary ask of including the Natural Environment Bill in September's Programme for Government.

Prior to summer recess, both the Agriculture and Rural Communities and Circular Economy Bills completed their passage through parliament. Both Bills were the subjects of LINK campaigns and our influence has been evident in their development – though, as framework legislation, the most important actions will come later. We have published reflections on the successes of the [Farm for Scotland's Future](#) and [Circular Scotland](#) campaigns.

While we know that public support for the environment and for positive action grows, it has been clear that we need to continue to demonstrate this public support to political leaders. This is why over the summer 2024, we commissioned Diffley Partnership to undertake a research project examining both Scotland-wide and rural attitudes to nature issues through opinion polling and focus groups. While we know that the public remain deeply concerned about climate change and the natural environment, environmental policymaking continues to be seen as sensitive and high-risk by policymakers, which requires ongoing high levels of intervention by LINK and its members. LINK continues to make the case for the planet and future generations by continuing to highlight the value of Scotland's natural resources and the need for urgent action to address the climate and nature crises.

LINK developed with members our 2026 Scottish election manifesto, which has a focus on delivery against legal targets and the ambitions of the biodiversity strategy, launched in September 2025.

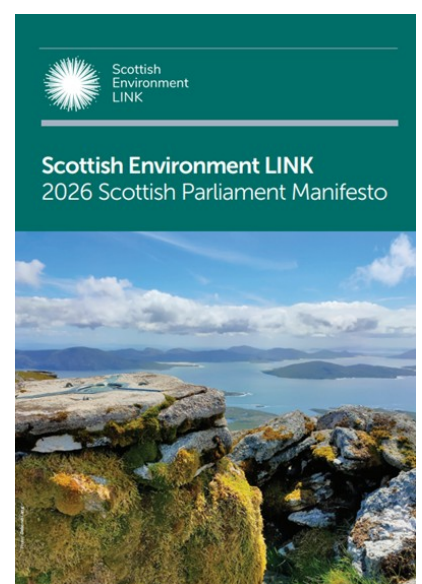
While demand for action increases from members and the public, LINK and our members remain resource-constrained so it is vitally important that we remain solutions focused, engaging with government and politicians on a cross-party basis, and working to keep nature recovery and the health of the environment as popular, mainstream demands. We do this through our regular interactions with Scottish Government and Parliament, support for the cross party group on Nature and Climate, events at Party Conferences, and publications, including on the Internal Market Act and Strategic Land Use for example.



Party leaders unite for action on nature

14 March 2025

Top representatives from the SNP, Green and Liberal Democrats came together at the Scottish Parliament this week to support the introduction of legally binding nature recovery targets in Scotland's Natural Environment Bill. Scotland ranks in



For a full description of all of LINK Groups work in 2024—2025, read our full annual report [here](#).

The Year in Summary: Strategic Theme 2 - Strong Voice

LINK has 15 active [working groups](#). Over the course of the year we published 12 reports, 19 briefings, 27 consultation responses, 6 pieces of written evidence, supplemented by oral evidence. We took part in a wide range of external stakeholder groups, listed [here](#); the member representatives and staff acting on behalf of the sector. We wrote to Minister and Government agencies, publishing 3 of these letters on our website. We published 26 Press releases, 30 blogs and commissioned 17 films. All of our work was posted on our website and information shared via social media channels [Instagram](#), [facebook](#), [Linked In](#) and [YouTube](#). LINK took the decision this year to no longer post on twitter, despite it being our most active social media tools. We now post on [bluesky](#) in addition to the channels above.

[Nature Champions](#): 2024 was another successful year for LINK's Nature Champion initiatives. This was marked when LINK's Nature Champion initiative was awarded CIEEM's NGO impact of the year award 2024.

This initiative goes from strength to strength: by the end of March 2025, there were 100 Nature Champions, 77% of MSPs, representing 106 species and habitats.



The [Save Scottish Seas](#) campaign runs alongside LINK's marine recovery and advocacy work. We launched 2 petitions about MPAs and fisheries management in MPAs. In January 2025, we published a selection of the powerful messages our supporters had written to Cabinet Secretary Gillian Martin about protecting Scotland's seas: ['Dear Cabinet Secretary, we love Scotland's seas. Please protect them before it's too late.'](#)

[Sea Scotland 2024](#), LINK's annual marine policy conference explored how to address the challenges and opportunities in sharing our blue space and explored strategies for its conservation and equitable use. An innovation this year included an in-person workshop dedicated to young people (18 to 30) to help young people to develop a personal strategy on how to get the most out of their conference experience.

LINK's latest campaign, [Scotland Loves Nature](#) was launched on 17 July 2024 with the backing of 37 LINK members and six external organisations. Our first e-action in August 2024 asked people to write to their MSPs, asking them to write to John Swinney, calling on him to bring forward the Natural Environment Bill in the Programme for Government in September. Every single MSP received emails from their constituents. This was followed by our first big win on 4 September came when John Swinney announced as part of his Programme for Government that the Scottish Government will introduce a Natural Environment Bill that will establish the framework for legally binding nature recovery targets. On 19 February the Natural Environment Bill, with provision for legally binding nature recovery targets, was introduced to parliament. In March we launched our ['Declare your love for nature'](#) e-action, which asked people to write personal messages about their love for Scotland's nature.



The Farm for Scotland's Future campaign accompanied the passage of the Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill through the Scottish Parliament, and the bill becoming an Act in June 2024 marked some significant wins for the campaign. [Farm for Scotland's Future: what we achieved](#) summarised what we achieved, how far the new Act gets us and what still needs to change.

LINK's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion project - Nature For All, delivered seven training sessions in this period. The [Nature for All resource hub](#) is a live resource and is well used by members. Members access all project materials, templates and links to helpful resources through the hub. The project also coordinates the Scottish Environment EDI Network.

The Year in Summary: Strategic Theme 3 - Effective Network

Membership increased to 48 organisations and interest in membership continues to grow. LINK's Congress took place in Perth on 9 October, themed Tackling false narratives: environment and conservation in the age of dis- and mis-information. The festive reception held in Edinburgh was well attended by MSPs and much appreciated by members as a networking opportunity. MSP Nature Champion of the year awards were made to recognise the dedication of MSP Nature Champions. LINK held a face to face meeting for member CEOS in August, providing the opportunity to exchange information and share experiences and use LINK's new strategic plan to support their own priorities. 21 member CEOS took part. LINK's Director of Policy and Engagement and the Advocacy team ran four highly successful advocacy training sessions this year. We held two briefing events one in September 2024, What's next for nature, and March 2025, protecting our seas and coastal communities.

During the year, LINK campaigns, including Save Scottish Seas and Scotland Loves Nature and Farm for Scotland's Future were supported by more than 46 other organisations. Collaboration with the Environment Links UK remained strong.

LINK remains an active member of the European Environment Bureau and IUCN. We retain strong relationships with all environmental agencies in Scotland and relevant Government Directorates. We continued our partnership working with environmental and heritage funders, including Environment Funders Scotland to broaden understanding of needs and opportunities in Scotland.

LINK in numbers

Our work was supported by:

14 staff members

43 Honorary Fellows

Oversight was provided by 10 trustees



59% of costs are supported in member fees and in kind support



Voluntary engagement within the network equalled 1515 days of work or £405,235 in financial terms



125 consultation responses, briefings, reports, position papers and press releases

34 press mentions

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

Scotland Loves Nature Campaign supported by 39 members and 9 other organisations



30 blogs and 17 films produced



**Nature Champions
100 MSPs support 105 species and habitats and were involved in 97 PQs, motions, mentions, site visits, meetings and media contributions**



99% of members engaged in at least one work area

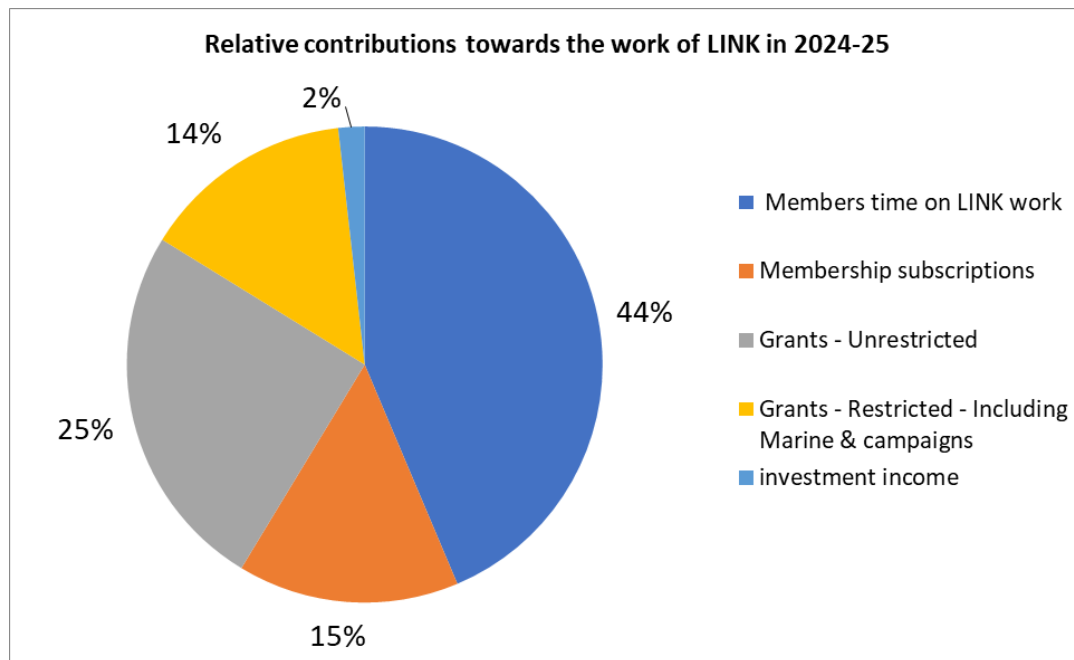
8 conferences and webinars held

6 organisational supporters engaged

LINK was engaged across 44 external stakeholder groups



Finances in summary



LINK's full annual account and reports are available on our website [here](#).

Looking Ahead

As Scotland moves into the final year of the current Parliament, the continuing squeeze on public finances and with more vocal, well organised anti-environment messaging, LINK will be focussing on agreed key priorities. LINK's corporate strategy and theory of change provides the framework for this. This includes ensuring that the public also has a voice in Parliament and finding ways to make sure policy makers hear that voice. This is a thread of work that we will continue, using innovative public opinion testing, campaigns to enable people to send messages to policy makers, the award winning Nature Champions initiative and supporting LINK members in direct advocacy work.

Adopting this approach helps LINK and our members target our limited resources effectively to have impact and to maintain visibility of the environment through the next parliament. This is important because 2026 – 2030 is the key period for change if Scotland is to meet the global biodiversity targets and the climate targets. Without action at this point, Scotland will miss the targets and even more importantly fail to deliver the scale of change needed to move us towards a sustainable future and one that is worth living for future generations.

A key part of success however will also be how we navigate as a sector, what we expect to be tougher times with mis and dis information continuing to try and distract attention away from difficult decisions that stand up to vested interests and that need to be made now if we are to see a sustainable future. These interests are invariably better resourced than LINK members and some are adopting aggressive misinformation strategies, which have been used recently to prevent the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme, Highly Protected Marine Areas and a new National Park for Scotland for example. LINK must be on its guard to be effective, swift in reaction when needed and careful to avoid being distracted or drawn into unhelpful or counterproductive arguments. The strategy above is the start of our journey and will, we hope, enable us to navigate the next four years as a strong voice and an effective and efficient network.

Thanks to LINK Funders

All of our work is underpinned by member and supporter subscriptions, additional financial contributions and voluntary time from members, supporters and honorary officers, which together account for 59% of total contributions. We are very grateful to all LINK's core and project funders over the period, including member bodies and to all those who donated to support LINK work.



Orsted, Howell Marine Consulting

And our members: RSPB Scotland, WWF Scotland, Marine Conservation Society, APRS, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, British Dragonfly Society, who also directly supported LINK work.

Thanks to LINK members and supporters

