

CEO get together 2025: Thursday 4 December 2025, 1000 – 1600

Birnam Arts Centre

Aim of the meeting:

The second LINK CEO get together is for all Scotland Chief Officers of LINK's member organisations. This includes CEOs, or a senior manager with responsibility for all activities in Scotland. For UK organisations, it is for those who lead in Scotland, which may be a UK based CEO or may be a Scotland based senior leader.

We used this safe space to build relationships and share honest and open conversations about priorities looking forward, challenges and opportunities with the likely significant changes following the Scottish elections in May 2026. We discussed priorities moving forward, building on network learning over the last 12 months on tactics and approaches to advocacy in a time of mis and dis information and possible direct attacks from right wing organisations looking to disrupt and distract Scotland from meeting climate and nature targets and building systems to live within our planetary boundaries.

Round table discussion:

1. After May 2026: what are our challenges and our opportunities?
2. What will our priorities be as organisations for 2026 – 2031?
3. How will we deal with mis and dis information and direct attacks on our sector?
4. How can we be more proactive and lead the public debate towards our priorities?

Opportunities		Challenges
New MSPs	No nature = hungry and homeless people	Working with Reform
Minority government – likelihood		High costs of public spending vs low budgets
More Greens – likelihood		New Greens = holding to nature focus
Chance to reset & reframe		Lack of people focus & Just Transition
Focus on delivery		Lower public confidence
Wins wins = resilience		Nature being pitched against people
Economies through NBS		Lack of presence of environment in media, Parliament & communities
Chances to tweak the system		Community movement building is challenging

Solutions	Mechanism / output
Natural Capital as a tool to use	Changing our approach
Accountability: hearing and reflecting community voices	Changing our approach
New partnerships	Changing our approach
Focus on coordination, facilitating and upskilling	Changing our approach
Nature Champions: visits; including community voices; an annual mascot race	Changing our approach
Use local examples to illustrate and change the system	Changing our approach
Reframe the argument through resilience and social justice, future generations angles	Changing our approach
Opportunity map and share assets: add questions to annual member survey	Changing our approach
Young people's voices through members	Using comms
Building public support	Using comms
Having an arsenal of shared messages & comms tools	Messages
Able to open discussions to coordinate messages	Messages

Organisational priorities	Actions	Active member (where relevant)
Demolishing the growth agenda: eg data centres	Use case studies to inspire action elsewhere Sector by sector: factoring in full environmental cost DRS expected December 2027: will be a priority 26 - 27	APRS KSB
Leaning into localism	Deer larder successes for nature & communities Local case studies: local projects with local engagement. Local MSPs awareness and action	
Bad actors targeting the sector	Finding a mechanism to coordinate and share info on: Funding advocacy Shared media enquiry responses that are humorous, quick messaging that provide opps for quick rapid responses for members to develop / use Lobbying register	LINK Media Group

	Website hacking	
Coordinated responses and lines to use	Shared lines for high level messaging	CEO agreed and available for Media Group / heads of comms to use
Using and reflecting public attitudes to nature	Amplify public support for nature Find out what people are talking about and why	LINK opinion poll commissions available to all via website

Member points shared

Member	Point for sharing
Ramblers Scotland	Rights to access Left behind communities and access to green space
ScotFWAG	Current agri-environment schemes and biodiversity audit opportunities and issues
fidra	Chemicals: Scotland monitoring requirements through proposed Water Reform Bill Artificial pitches and microplastics: not keeping pace with EU Circular consultation
Woodland Trust Scotland	Nature protection conversations in Scotland: Natural Environment Bill Part 2 Tree Equity and trees in urban environments Rewilding in central Scotland project Under resourced public agencies losing staff and expertise Species extinction e.g. ash
Scottish Seabird Centre	Policy campaign on marine renewables MPAs Seabird Action Plan First budget of new Parliament: needs to include NRF SG decision making process improvements; what would work better and faster: use Public Reform engagement
Archaeology Scotland	HES strategy: gap in land management given focus to date on NZ and buildings. Expecting early 2026 discussion on this. Capacity mapping to prioritise AS input
APRS	Planning and importance of planning for future resilience
CIEEM	Impact of Planning & Infrastructure Bill in England Rhetoric from Nat Env Bill discussions and INNS strategy NPF4 event on delivery and metrics with advisory group on implementation Repeating LA capacity survey and expanding to cover agencies Lots of guidance docs on ecosystem restoration, habitats and more.
ARC	Accommodating species needs into landscape scale projects to break the ecosystem vs species deadlock: new toolbox. Looking at species distribution by 2070 and what we need to do to conserve.
Bright Green Nature	Connectivity: local Nature Network roll out Young people skills in comms and advocacy. Private sector funding

Keep Scotland Beautiful	AI project for EPR vs data collection DRS trialling Marine litter and urban Disadvantaged community project. Youth projects Public agency gaps Implementing the Fair Work principles and SG funding
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Next steps:

We agreed that as a network we should be:

Action	LINK tools and assets
More proactive and actively addressing political jeopardy	Focus on delivery: Tracker tools: biodiversity tracker & new tool on public duties Hitting the targets: delivering Scotland's nature ambitions
Tackling mis- and dis information	Build political cost of inaction Have top level narratives agreed, including alternatives and benefits of action (below) Create new public space (below)
Creating public discussion space	Amplifying member activities
Reflecting public support to widen political space to act	Commissioned opinion polls eg attitudes to nature Campaigns: building on success of Scotland Loves Nature
Building more partnerships	Use Honorary Fellows and Organisational Supporters
Using Nature Champion initiatives and LINK campaigns	Nature Champions Current LINK campaign: protect Scotland's seas Future campaigns
Building member and Group capacity	Use of Discretionary Project Fund by Groups Funding advocacy for the sector Safety net reflex to fill priority immediate capacity gaps eg marine
Annual CEO catch up	Organise annually

Reference: [LINK's Strategy 2024- 2030](#)

Deborah Long
4 December 2025

Attendees:

Deborah Long	Scottish Environment LINK
Tony Gent	ARC
Sandra Stewart	ScotFWAG
Karen Blackport	Bright Green Nature
Gavin Macgregor	Archaeology Scotland
Harry Huyton	Scottish Seabird Centre
Jo Kerr	verture
Catherine Gunby	fidra
Shivali Fifield	Environmental Rights Centre Scotland
Peter Ewing	Scottish Wild Land Group
Kat Jones	APRS
David McKay	Soil Association Scotland
Pete Ritchie	Nourish Scotland
Barry Fisher	Keep Scotland beautiful
Annie Robinson	CIEEM
Clare Symonds	Planning Democracy
Alan Munro	Young Sea Changers Scotland
Brendan Paddy	Ramblers
Alastair Seaman	Woodland Trust Scotland