

## LINK Board 22 April 2010

### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

#### 3.1 Organisational Supporter proposal, for approval

This paper draws on several resources: the initial proposal to the January 2010 Board meeting; a record of discussion at that Board meeting; Mike Robinson's subsequent independent development of the business case; a summary of costs and revenue of current affiliation categories; and a meeting of trustees (Ian Findlay, Andrew Fairbairn) with staff (Alice Walsh) held 17 February to consider all the above and propose a way forward. Most of the content that follows has been already agreed in principle; the items requiring decision are highlighted at the end of relevant paragraphs.

#### Summary

- Pilot project for 3 years, to be reviewed during third year in time to continue/amend arrangements and advise all concerned
- One single tier level of affiliation priced attractively to start with
- 4 Organisational Supporters @ £1000 are required to break even, before December 2010; each new OS would bring £840 net profit thereafter.
- Target a core list to start which includes statutory and non-statutory organisations
- Offer full list of benefits (below) to Organisational Supporters for them to select
- Offer discounts, rather than free access on some elements of the offer
- Roll-out : use Trustees to recruit with no launch event, unless this approach fails to deliver
- Keep costs to LINK low, via a well-crafted letter with benefits attached, and information on the LINK website
- Remove current Subscriber category, retain current Individual Supporter category
- Propose any changes needed in Memo & Articles to members for June AGM

#### The Environmental Network – In Scotland this includes, inter-alia:

- national, citizen-led environmental non-government organizations
- local, citizen-led environmental non-governmental organisations
- the environmental parts of the Scottish Government and its Agencies (though it should be noted that much of our work is designed to influence these institutions)
- academics and freelance researchers working in environmental fields;
- the environmental parts of principally social and economic NGOs (such as within SCVO, the churches and trade unions);
- businesses creating environmentally beneficial products and services as a primary purpose; and
- organisations such as Trusts led by appointed voluntary trustees which have environmental objectives (which were sometimes established originally as parts of the governmental(including local) structure)

LINK provides a firm network for the first of these groups, our members, and provides many opportunities and benefits to the wider "network" which they have received for little or no cost to date. If LINK provides a forum for its member bodies enabling informed debate, and assisting co-operation within the voluntary environmental sector, with our core activities being information sharing, discussion, and joint action – then it should be recognised and acknowledged that the way we perform these functions frequently includes many of the other groups outlined above. Many of them:

- have become a part of our information sharing network
- share extensively in our discussions of policy; and
- are linked to us in taking joint action on a wide range of issues.



An “Organisational Supporter” affiliation would allow us to formalise our basic relationships across the rest of that wider network and any relationships that are largely ad-hoc. We receive grants from the Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage for our work providing a pivotal civic point – and much goodwill from the other parts of the environmental spectrum. The Board has agreed that LINK is well placed to be the centre of such a network.

It is proposed that the relevant agencies of government and businesses be offered the opportunity also. For some it may be an easier way to support LINK in their accounting processes. SNH and HS would be offered the affiliation at no charge (HS has agreed £5k annual support for 3 years for SEW; SNH grants aids LINK).

#### Current affiliation categories

We have existing arrangements for organizations (eligible or ineligible for membership) and for individuals to support the work of LINK – and to contribute to the costs of work (although very marginally): the current ‘Subscriber’ (£50 a year) for receipt of the newsletter and for parliamentary monitoring<sup>1</sup> Supporters are individuals who pay £15 a year for the newsletter only.

We also have arrangements for co-optees (ineligible organisations) to work with task forces, which were agreed in principle although are sometimes not strictly observed by members or policed by staff. For example current co-optees have not been asked to pay anything though our protocols state that they should. **Board to consider would it make better business sense to require that all co-optees after the first year become OS.**

#### Proposal

The new category of affiliation to LINK, termed ‘Organisational Supporter’, aims:

- a. To seek business and agency support for providing, as we do, a network for a larger environmental sector than that portion made up of our members (and other eligible, potential member organisations), all the while maintaining the boundary with membership *per se* and the independence that confers; and
- b. To clarify how we relate to that wider part of the environmental network.

On this basis the Board agreed in January that we can positively offer and market services to a wide range of organisations with links to our agendas, our work and our concerns.

In order to play an effective role at the centre of an inclusive environmental network LINK must have the capacity and wherewithal to contribute benefits to, and inform Organisational Supporters, on issues of most relevance to them.

1. What would these affiliates wish to access that LINK can provide? *Services selected from those we currently provide to members (see list of Benefits over).*
2. What appetite is there for such a service? *That is untested. It is proposed that LINK’s trustees use their contacts to sell the benefits of affiliation to a set of core potential organisations. If we fail to recruit some of these we need to review sooner.*
3. How can it be managed to make sure it does not undermine the core members and their perception of benefits? *This will require strict policing by staff and an understanding of, and support for, the rationale, amongst members.*
4. How can LINK make money from this? *By keeping it simple without adding significantly to staff workload.*

#### Benefits to Organisational Supporters

The proposed new status is not membership and extends no rights in terms of task force participation or access to executive or policy-making organs of LINK. Organisational

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<sup>1</sup> optional, additional £200 a year – only 2 customers

Supporters would be entitled to regular “benefits” which would formally involve them in LINK networking activities – all of which are currently available to members. The scheme would operate approximately as shown below. It will important that staff capacity to continue to provide these benefits is maintained.

The proposal is that there should only be a single tier in the first instance. On this basis, the costs have been estimated in the appendix, with corresponding income, on the basis of an annual fee of £1,000, or £1,500 or £2,000.

<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Organisational Supporters</u>
<i>Newsletter</i>	✓
<i>Parliamentary Reception (SEW)</i>	✓
<i>Congress</i>	✓
<i>Festive Reception</i>	✓
<i>Website listing</i>	✓
<i>Publications</i>	✓
<i>Meeting Room</i>	<i>free up to twice a year</i>
<i>SEW Reception</i>	✓
<i>Parl Monitoring</i>	✓
<i>Euro Monitoring</i>	✓
<i>Training days</i>	<i>25% discount (though not charged less than £50)</i>

Organisational Supporters (OS) would select from a list of all the possible options available as an affiliate of LINK, as follows:

*Newsletter:* OS would be entitled to up to six printed copies of the newsletter each quarter. (Note that this is also available freely on the website).

*Annual Parliamentary Reception:* OS would be entitled to two invitations to the LINK *Parliamentary Reception* (usually held as part of SEW).

*Congress:* OS would be entitled to one invitation to Congress.

*Festive Reception:* OS would be entitled to two invitations to the LINK Festive Reception.

*Website:* OS would be prominently acknowledged on the LINK website, with a link back to the organisation’s website.

*Publications:* OS would be entitled to up to six copies of each policy paper published by LINK.

*Meeting Room:* OS would be able to use the meeting room at LINK HQ free of charge up to twice a year.

*Scottish Environment Week:* OS would be entitled to participate in SEW within a framework laid down by the Steering Group. SEW involvement is potentially a large draw. Members will be offered first call on event planning with an expectation that OS would be involved where possible, and potentially contribute funding towards the cost of an event (catering, parliamentary staff support and technical). Organisations not signed up as OS would not be included in shaping events, other than as guests if the organizers judge it appropriate. This means for example that in 2010 SEPA and NHS HealthScotland would have been required to join as OS before being involved in SEW. If our OS base increases greatly we could not accommodate all who might want to actively participate – but we might be able to offer other “joint” events in Parliament across other parts of the year. **Board view sought on the nuances of this SEW question.**

*Parliamentary Monitoring:* OS would receive an electronic copy of LINK Parliamentary Monitoring – under the strict understanding that it was for internal distribution only.

*European Monitoring:* OS would receive an electronic copy of LINK European Monitoring – under the strict understanding that it was for internal distribution only.

*Training:* OS would be entitled to a discounted place on LINK Parliamentary (and other) training courses – although as training is currently free to members, training event rates (for non member bodies) would require to be set.

Application process



Any organisation (voluntary, governmental or business) could apply to the Board for affiliation (via the website as per membership). Organisational Supporter status will not be available to organisations eligible for LINK membership and this will be made clear on the website. Organisations that would otherwise be eligible except that they are local as opposed to national in focus, could apply for OS status. OS status is open to any organisation whose aims are broadly compatible with LINK's and which do not preclude the pursuit of sustainable development and the protection of wildlife, landscape and the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside.

The Board will retain discretion to refuse OS status at the outset or to end the relationship with an OS whose affiliation is proving harmful to LINK's mission, operations or credibility. Criteria will be needed (see first draft below, for comment and further development) and an exit strategy should be clearly laid out in the Terms and Conditions (also in draft below). **Board agreement sought**

Single Tier - Administering more than one affiliation tier for the OS category from the outset, especially if there is a low take-up, could be unnecessarily complicated, cost more to administer and lead to confusion. For the first 3 years it is proposed that a single clean offer is enough to test the appetite for this new category; if successful things should be reviewed within 3 years, when it might be more appropriate to introduce a tiered structure. The initial fee would rise in line with inflationary rises of subscription. What Organisational Supporters will pay needs to be balanced against the cost of administration and the value of what is being offered by LINK in the first place. £1,000 is comparably low in relation to LINK membership costs though is high in most other organisations' terms. The lower figure is likely to attract more takers and can be increased over time. The concern at the January 2010 Board meeting, that the price is not set too high, nor that it competes with our member organisations in attracting their affiliate members from local organisations, would be addressed with this figure. **The Board should agree on the figure.**

#### Transition for current Subscribers & Supporters

The current list of Subscribers includes some bodies which we will target for OS (Central Scotland Countryside Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful) and some that are presumably eligible for full membership as they were previously members (eg Seabird Centre, Borders Forest Trust). Most Subscribers are not likely to continue as OS, if we close the Subscriber category. Although their entitlement is for the newsletter only, for several years current Supporters and Subscribers have been invited also to receptions, though with relatively low take-up. There is a risk of losing some goodwill and sense of involvement from these bodies, as well as a revenue stream. It is therefore proposed that we write a tailored letter to each, explaining the ending of this category, with an invitation to apply for membership (for eligibles), for OS (for ineligibles), or, if they are not likely to want any involvement other than to receive the newsletter, and they wish to continue supporting us at low level or value the printed newsletter, that they sign up as an individual supporter (eg the librarian at Moray House library) and we quietly facilitate this without changing our individual Supporter arrangement.

Individual Supporters would no longer be invited to any LINK receptions, other than those who have an association for other reasons. Individual Supporters and several Subscribers are mostly long term loyalists who are paying for a product they can get free from the website. It is proposed that that Individual Supporters subscription be increased marginally, year on year.

#### **Board approval sought on proposed transitional arrangements**

#### Policing of benefits

It would be very important that LINK staff and project managers (such as Convenors, organizing TF events) police the distribution of benefits (a) to ensure that Organisational



Supporters were in receipt of their entitlement and (b) to ensure that Organisational Supporter status was not undermined by the benefits being conferred on non-Organisational Supporters (eg the latter receiving free invitations to Receptions which other such organisations had to pay for). This will mean that events like the Receptions and Congress will have fewer external guests, and this will have an impact on the experience for our members also. **Board view sought**

#### Timetable

The OS category could be open from September 2010 to coincide with the start of the parliamentary session, resumption of parliamentary monitoring, and the subscription year end for many of our current Subscribers.

#### Rollout

It is proposed that a letter and A4 sheet outlining the benefits is sent to current Subscribers and the core list of potential organizations (list A below) in late summer. LINK trustees would be tasked with approaching 2 potential organisations each, within 3 months, at a suitable opportunity. Word of mouth and face to face contact will be far more effective and administratively cheaper for LINK. SNH and Historic Scotland will be offered honorary OS status (and their permission sought to be listed thus). A more formal launch event such as a drinks reception/talk can be held later if judged necessary. Success or failure with List A will inform future action. All spontaneous applications will be considered on merit. LINK Board endorsement for all applications for OS will be necessary; as with membership applications now, would not necessitate Board meetings but could be administered by email.

#### Target

Aim to recruit at least 5 organisations before the end of 2010. If successful the Jan 2011 Board meeting considers modest target increase. If not, review.

#### Monitoring

LINK should maintain an overview on services to be available, keeping the costs to LINK and the pricing structure under annual review.

#### List A - Primary organisations for recruitment

Cairngorms NPA  
Central Scotland Countryside Trust  
EcoSchools  
Forestry Commission  
Forward Scotland  
Greenspace Scotland  
Grounds for Learning  
Keep Scotland Beautiful (and the organisations under its umbrella separately)  
Local authorities 'arms length' trusts  
Loch Lomond & Trossachs NPA  
Paths for All  
SEPA  
SportScotland  
Sustainable Development Commission Scotland

#### List B - Organisations/types of organisation to target at secondary stage

Academics and environmental consultants sector  
Development Trusts and Land Trusts  
District Fishery Boards, Deer Mgt Boards  
Environmental corporate sector  
Crofters Foundation, NFUS, SRPBA



#### Draft Criteria for affiliation to LINK as Organisational Supporter

"The applicant must not be eligible for membership of LINK. If the organization is eligible, please see the guidance on becoming a member.

The organisation should demonstrate on application that it broadly supports LINK's strategic objective of working towards a sustainable Scotland.

The business or activities of the applicant should not preclude the protection of wildlife, landscape and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

Applications for Organisational Supporter status must be approved by the LINK Board."

#### Draft Terms and Conditions

"The benefits LINK provided for Organisational Supporters are services which are provided to LINK Member Bodies. As such, these benefits/services are subject to periodic review and may be terminated subject to funding or staffing constraints, at the discretion of the LINK Board. Organisational Supporters will be notified immediately of any changes and offered alternatives if these are available.

The Scottish Parliamentary Monitoring service and the European Monitoring Service are delivered by LINK staff. The content aims to be relevant to LINK members' interests, covering issues of core relevance to Scotland's environmental sustainability. These services are provided by email. Organisational Supporters should ensure that the monitoring is not circulated beyond their organisations.

Scottish Parliamentary Monitoring is normally provided weekly. The average provision over the year is 45 weeks out of 52. The interruptions are mainly due to parliamentary recess and to some extent to staff holidays though these will occur where possible during parliamentary recess. The European Monitoring service is normally provided monthly.

The Organisational Supporter may deploy within their organisation as desired invitations received to attend LINK receptions, trainings and other events.

SEW" – *To be decided (see above) and included here.*

"The Organisational Supporter will be cited (if desired) as such on the LINK website, without any implication of blanket support for LINK policy positions and activities. The Organisational Supporter is welcome to cite its affiliation to LINK on its website or other materials, without implying LINK's support of its policy positions and activities.

Subscriptions are payable annually in advance of services received and will be invoiced thereafter at 12 month intervals.

LINK reserves the right to terminate the relationship with an Organisational Supporter if there is reason to believe the conditions of affiliation are being misused, in which case a pro-rata proportion of the annual subscription will be refunded (if appropriate) at date of termination.

LINK is a Scottish Charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296. Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company No SC250899.

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Website: [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org) email: [enquiries@scotlink.org](mailto:enquiries@scotlink.org)"

LINK







## Appendix - Costs

In administering the current scheme of Individual Supporters and Subscribers for receipt of newsletter only (already produced for members and funders), costs are estimated as:

	No of days	Salary	Overheads	Total	Notes
Admin	0.5	£60	£20	£80	Alice
Invoicing	1.5	£172	£60	£232	Hugh
Debt mgmt	1.5	£172	£60	£232	Hugh
Receipts	1.5	£172	£60	£232	Hugh
Printing				£32	20p per N/letter
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£577</b>	<b>£200</b>	<b>£810</b>	

### Revenue

	Number	@£15	@£50	Total
Supporters	15	£225		£225
Subscribers	39		£1,950	£1,950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>£225</b>	<b>£1,950</b>	<b>£2,175</b>

Therefore LINK would need to recruit **3 -4** organisations<sup>2</sup> to cover the costs of transition to a single tier of Organisational Supporter, which is proposed for clarity and simplicity of affiliation status.

A cost analysis is shown as follows:

### Cost analysis for Organisational Supporters

#### Variable costs per OS

	Time	Salary	O'heads	Total	Notes
Admin	0.25	£25	£10	£35	invoicing, debt mgt, maintaining dbases
Liaison with applicant	0.25	£25	£10	£35	
Liaison with Board	0.50	£50	£20	£70	trustees time uncoded
reception costs		£0	£20	£20	
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£160</b>	

#### Fixed Costs

production of promotional materials incl design	£600	
staff time initial promotion x 3 days	£480	
Lawyer's time	£200	fraction of annual legal fees
Trustees time in face to face contact uncoded		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,280</b>	

No of Org Supporters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Fixed costs</b>	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280	£1,280
<b>Variable costs</b>	£160	£320	£480	£640	£800	£960	£1,120	£1,280
<b>Total costs</b>	£1,440	£1,600	£1,760	£1,920	£2,080	£2,240	£2,400	£2,560
<b>Income - £1000 per OS</b>	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£4,000	£5,000	£6,000	£7,000	£8,000
<b>net profit</b>	<b>-£440</b>	<b>£400</b>	<b>£1,240</b>	<b>£2,080</b>	<b>£2,920</b>	<b>£3,760</b>	<b>£4,600</b>	<b>£5,440</b>
<b>Income at £1500 per OS</b>	£1,500	£3,000	£4,500	£6,000	£7,500	£9,000	£10,500	£12,000
<b>net profit</b>	<b>£60</b>	<b>£1,400</b>	<b>£2,740</b>	<b>£4,080</b>	<b>£5,420</b>	<b>£6,760</b>	<b>£8,100</b>	<b>£9,440</b>
<b>Income at £2000 per OS</b>	£2,000	£4,000	£6,000	£8,000	£10,000	£12,000	£14,000	£16,000
<b>net profit</b>	<b>£560</b>	<b>£2,400</b>	<b>£4,240</b>	<b>£6,080</b>	<b>£7,920</b>	<b>£9,760</b>	<b>£11,600</b>	<b>£13,440</b>

<sup>2</sup> though not in the fixed costs table, loss of £1950 from current subscribers is assumed when calculating net profit from new Organisational Supporters