

**MEETING WITH SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK
WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2007**

Attendance:

Scottish Government

Richard Lochhead	Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment
Michael Russell	Minister for Environment
John Mason	Director, Environmental Quality Directorate, and Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate (Chair)
Gabby Pieraccini	Business Manager, Environmental Quality Directorate, and Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate
Brian McGarry	Greener Scotland Directorate
Kate Perkins	Greener Scotland Directorate

Scottish Environment LINK

John Mayhew	Chair, Scottish Environment LINK
Jen Anderson	Scottish Environment LINK
Jane Herbstritt	Scottish Environment LINK
Eilidh Macpherson	Scottish Environment LINK
Roger Powell	Scottish Countryside Rangers Association
Hebe Carus	Mountaineering Council of Scotland
Gus Jones	Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
Calum Duncan	Marine Conservation Society
Rob Thomas	Royal Zoological Society
Craig McAdam	Buglife in Scotland
Nigel Hawkins	John Muir Trust
Judy Wilkinson	Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
Angus Yarwood	Woodland Trust Scotland
Deborah Long	Plantlife Scotland
Dianne Laing	Scottish Native Woods
Drennan Watson	Cairngorms Campaign
Dee McIntosh	National Trust for Scotland
Ian McCall	Ramblers' Association Scotland
Jonny Hughes	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Jonathan Wordsworth	Council for Scottish Archaeology
Stuart Hay	Friends of the Earth Scotland
Elizabeth Leighton	WWF Scotland
Lloyd Austin	RSPB Scotland

Welcome and Introduction

1. **John Mason** welcomed everyone to the meeting, and invited attendees to introduce themselves. **John Mayhew** provided a short explanation on the way that SE LINK operated, and highlighted the vision document which SE LINK had produced. **Mr Lochhead** wished SE LINK well for their 20th anniversary, and said that he hoped to meet all individual member organisations over coming months. He explained that all five Cabinet Secretaries were working to deliver all five of the Government's Strategic objectives in a joined up way. Each Cabinet Secretary had responsibility for a particular strategic objective, but all of the Government's policies across portfolios should contribute to all five objectives. Mr Lochhead was responsible for the Greener Scotland objective, and so all policies should have a greener dimension.

Climate Change

2. **Mr Lochhead** explained that the Scottish Government was committed to introducing the first Climate Change Bill in Scotland, and would be consulting on the Bill in due course. Government policies would have to take account of climate change objectives, as part of the delivery of the Greener Objective. John Swinney is the Cabinet Secretary responsible for Climate Change, and Mr Lochhead would be working in partnership with Mr Swinney to avoid a silo approach. **Mr Russell** added that the Strategic Spending Review which was due to be announced the following week would show that climate change featured strongly in the Scottish Government's plans. He indicated that there would be mutual reflection between the Westminster and Holyrood Bills. He also emphasised the importance he placed on regular meetings with environmental NGOs as a way of exchanging information and ideas.

3. **Lloyd Austin** welcomed Scottish Government commitment to the Bill and explained that SE LINK would be registering two suggestions for the Climate Change Bill in the forthcoming consultation. First of all, the inclusion of 3% annual targets, and second, that the targets should include all greenhouse gases, not just CO₂. He suggested that this was particularly important for rural areas, where land use resulted in emissions over and above CO₂. He also emphasised that the implementation of climate change policies for mitigation and adaptation must be achieved across all portfolios. **Drennan Watson** added that other factors, such as speed of crisis (peak oil) and energy prices, could influence climate change policy, particularly in the north east of Scotland.

Consumption and Production

4. **Stuart Hay** welcomed the zero waste acknowledging that this would be a difficult policy to implement and a challenge for local authorities. A particular issue for SE LINK was that factors such as landfill tax could make cheaper, off-the-shelf solutions such as incineration more attractive to local authorities. SE LINK very much favoured a more holistic approach, including increased recycling. There were good examples of local authorities in Scotland and in England and abroad (eg Flanders) with high recycling rates, which demonstrated that the challenge could be met.

5. **Mr Lochhead** indicated that he would want to take decisions on waste as soon as possible after the Spending Review was announced. The Scottish Parliament had been key to implementing policies to increase recycling rates, but he emphasised that incineration was not necessarily a cheap option. A dilemma arose when attempting to take into account message from local authorities, while developing policies that would help towards achieving zero waste and if Scotland could not recycle enough in the timescale some large-scale incineration would need to be permitted, he felt. **Mr Lochhead** acknowledged the desire for flexibility for solutions from local government, and emphasised that a zero waste policy needed to be consistent with climate change and energy policy, with **Nigel Hawkins** also emphasising the link between waste and energy conservation and the need to encourage the latter at all levels. **Mr Lochhead** also indicated that he was keen to improve recycling in industry and commerce, the source of 85% of our waste. **Mr Russell** alluded to Sarah Boyack's proposed Bill on Energy Efficiency and Microgeneration, which he described as an important innovation in the debate, and foresaw the need to encourage different, more local, models. **Stuart Hay** welcomed the expert panel and was pleased to see that the recent housing publication had a good "greener" element to it.

6. **Elizabeth Leighton** welcomed the Government's commitment to a sustainable development strategy and asked how the Government would know if we were making progress on sustainable development; and also asked what the process was for assessing the content of the spending review against sustainability criteria. **Mr Lochhead** explained that the administration had had very little time in which to deliver the Spending Review after the election. The Government had started work on measuring progress, and how the various processes take monitoring into account. But it was a challenge, and there was no quick solution.

7. **John Mason** added that the Government's Economic Strategy (GES), also due to be published the following week, would include a definition of sustainable economic growth, and would relate back to the Government's overarching purpose. This would provide a firm basis for monitoring sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, a lot of work had been done in the Spending Review on outcomes, performance indicators and targets and technical notes would be published to explain the detail. **Mr Russell** emphasised that Government was not reinventing measures, believed the right model would refer to responsibilities on both sides, and wanted to work with others who were pioneers in the field. **Judy Wilkinson** suggested that ecological footprint could be a useful measure, since many people understood the concept more readily than GDP, and hence it could be a useful in tool when looking for behaviour change.

People and Landscape/Promoting a strong cultural identity

8. **Nigel Hawkins** welcomed Mr Russell's positive message about working with environmental NGOs, and he was pleased about what Ministers had been saying. He noted that the UK Government had signed up to European Convention on Landscape, and wondered whether there would be an equivalent statement from Scottish Ministers. He emphasised the relationship between landscape and people, and said that he would like to see designation through NSAs strengthened. But there was a wider issue about integrating landscape with policies beyond "environmental" policies, across the board.

9. **Mr Russell** explained that he had met with the Scottish Landscape Forum the previous week, and they had agreed on a number of objectives – in particular to awaken a realisation in people of what is around them. He also explained that it was not just about landscape being unique and distinctive, but about considering whether landscape was simply a matter for specialists (such as local authorities or NGOs) or whether we should have a greater ambition about changing the way we live – through political pressure, debate and emotional engagement. **Mr Russell** said that he and the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Linda Fabiani, have already set out on the journey with communities, creative artists and through education to help bring about that realisation. There would be an event in February to which focused on this; issues need to be promoted amongst MSPs.

10. **Jonathan Wordsworth** emphasised how humans have shaped the historic environment, and influenced biodiversity. He indicated that agri-environment schemes and rural development contracts were core to culture policy, and **Mr Russell** agreed that biodiversity was also about culture and indicated that he wanted to work with NGOs on this.

People and Nature

11. **Deborah Long** emphasised that Scotland had a high proportion of biodiversity, with moss and liverwort as examples. Species and habitats, as well as people, would also need to adapt to climate change, and many of our habitats are very fragile, particularly from changes in land use. Scotland has world class biodiversity, and so it was important to have world class legislation and tools to manage it. The Nature Conservation Act was a good foundation, but to go further SE LINK would like to see full implementation of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and full implementation of the biodiversity duty and targets; sustainable economic development with ecosystem health as a measure; and the use of emotional engagement to enable involvement and appreciation of biodiversity, particularly through activities such as gardening and conservation.

12. **Mr Lochhead** supported the issues raised, and identified a challenge in getting the message across on what more we can do on biodiversity, and how unique Scotland is. He also explained that the effectiveness of Government policies were linked to what we could influence – for example global warming was obviously a global issue – and our biodiversity is influenced by others. It was important to identify where we can make the biggest difference. **Mr Russell** suggested that SE LINK could achieve more than Government in terms of encouraging people to

participate in volunteering activities. The biodiversity report would be going before Parliament, and it would show good progress, but with more to do. He was keen to talk about designation, and the complexity of the system meant that there was a need for a means of helping the public to understand the layers of importance, and to make Scotland's special features "real" for people. **Mr Russell** had spoken with his UK counterpart, and was convening a meeting with other Environment Ministers to discuss the way forward with the 2010 targets and would be happy to report back to NGOs on this.

13. **Drennan Watson** noted that the Cairngorms often brought issues into focus, particularly the economic value of Scotland's iconic species, and **Mr Russell** agreed that there could be a potential tension between tourism and wildlife. The Minister then went on to say that land reform was not over in Scotland, and it was now time to look forward. On wildlife crime he emphasised that the Government was taking a very tough line, with lots of organisations coming on board.

14. **Calum Duncan** welcomed the Scottish Government's June announcement and explained that Scotland also had important marine wildlife and habitats, noting the opportunity for a UK Marine Bill, but that Scotland could go further. He hoped that a Scottish Bill would build on the work of the Advisory Group on Marine and Coastal Strategy (AGMACS) and on the Environment and Rural Development Committee Inquiry, with success measured in relation to marine ecosystem objectives. Site protection played a key role here. He indicated that LINK would welcome the opportunity to contribute to AGMACS' successor group. **Mr Lochhead** said that the Scottish Government was committed to a Marine Act, and although he did not yet have a firm timescale, scoping work for a Bill was planned in 2008. A successor to AGMACs would be established in the next few months, and while there was support for effective, meaningful marine legislation, negotiations continued with the UK Government on an extension to 200nm, to ensure appropriate planning for the important activities and livelihoods around our coast.

Sustainable Places

15. **Ian McCall** emphasised that it was important that Land Reform legislation be allowed to bed down, and it seemed to be doing well at the moment. The access element of legislation sets a framework which is potentially the best in Europe, providing a unique selling point for Scotland. SE LINK was working with both local authorities and with SNH, and also looking at cross-cutting work with health, transport and communities. Some test cases were coming forward, and they would be useful in order to consider whether issues were arising that would need to be addressed in future. Funding too was an area to watch.

16. **Mr Lochhead** recognised that there were funding issues with access, and emphasised the importance of land reform legislation for energy, climate change, and health and fitness policy. He thought it would be helpful if the planning and energy Ministers (Stewart Stevenson and Jim Mather respectively) were to speak at a future meeting with SE LINK. **Mr Russell** emphasised that Ministers had made a commitment to review legislation if required, and would also consider the next steps forward. But he said that this was only part of the issue. For example, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) are a big player in that they provide access services, but also do much more – for example, hosting sporting activities, rallying, and the Woods In and Around Towns scheme. There is scope to do lots more with the 10% of land in Scotland owned by Scottish Ministers, and a responsibility to ensure that land could be used for health and other benefits (eg. Biomass crops, reintroduction of species).

17. **Hebe Carus** expressed concern that the focus on paths meant that some other areas were falling away, for example general access. While local authorities have had to focus on core path plans, the broader aims were important. **Mr Russell** said that he was happy to listen to such concerns, while acknowledging that local authorities have to prioritise. Roger Powell explained that the 350 rangers throughout Scotland were charged with delivering a message about responsible access. Rangers were a key interface with the public, and there were concerns that

the review of this service should not be compromised due to funding issues. **Mr Russell** emphasised the Scottish Government's commitment to a Scottish Environment and Rural Service (SEARS), and noted that if there were a number of agencies with ranger resources, it would be sensible to pool them. He hoped that SEARS would lead to better and more joined-up services, and hence to better delivery.

18. **Angus Yarwood** welcomed the Scottish forestry strategy and noted that woodlands played a part in the implementation plan. An increase in native woodland was a high priority, as was improving management of woodland, and the SRDP was an important vehicle for an increase in biodiversity and native woodlands. It would be important to ensure that FCS grants were set up properly, and while there is an increase in funds in the SRDP, he was still worried about resources for a full range of activities, including the roll-out of improved management guidance and of certification for public procurement. **Mr Russell** acknowledged the role of forestry in helping to meet number of objectives across the sectors, including in relation to climate change targets; he referred to a balance of commercial purpose of the industry and others eg climate adaptation and biodiversity.

Arrangements for future liaison

19. The Ministers emphasised their commitment to meeting with SE LINK on a regular basis, and thanked members for attending, and **John Mayhew** recorded SE LINK's appreciation for the opportunity to meet with Ministers. **John Mason** thanked everyone who attended, and drew the meeting to a close.

Environmental Quality Directorate
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