

Scotland, the best small country in the world?

Report on LINK Members' Congress 24 & 25 November 2006.

Friday 24 November

Fred Edwards warmly welcomed everybody to the 5th Annual Members' Congress reminding us that the environment movement's message has come a long way recently. There is increasing recognition that the environment is the context in which all other spheres of human activity operate, though much work to be done, not least by all those attending today, to change the culture in which the environment is treated as an 'add on'. Fred introduced Ed Douglas, journalist and mountaineer who was commissioned to write a report on the theme *Scotland, the best small country in the world?* for the Congress, and Paul McAleavey, a Scot who works with the European Environment Agency, to give a European perspective on the issue.

Scotland, the best small country in the world? Ed Douglas presented his findings. The report is available on the LINK website www.scotlink.org under Publications.

European Perspective – Paul McAleavey, summary (pp presentation available on request).

There are various ways of gauging a country's environmental performance, none of them foolproof. One can look at it in terms of:

Infringement - how frequently the Commission is asked to look into possible infringements of environmental Directives. This can be also a reflection of how well the citizenry/groups are educated in EU legislation and procedures.

Reporting – example of EIONET data flows for the previous year. The UK's performance is c85%.

Response – public sector expenditure on environmental protection as a percentage of GDP. In Paul's example from 1990-99 data, the UK's spent 0.4% in a range of 0.2 to 1.5% .

DPSIR approach of the European Environment Agency:

DDriving forces of environmental change (causes)

PPressures on the environment (pollutants)

SState of the environment (quality)

IImpacts (health, ecosystems, materials)

RResponse of the society (policies and targets)

State of Environment Reporting examples *Change Tomorrow Today* (SEPA 06), and *The European Environment; State and Outlook 2005*. Paul had brought 20 e-copies along to distribute to those attending. The report is available for download on the EEA website.

Two examples of country ranking were given

Living Planet (source <http://www.panda.org>)

1. United Arab Emirates
2. USA
3. Finland
4. Canada
5. Kuwait
8. Sweden
10. Norway
15. Scotland

Environmental Sustainability Index (source www.yale.edu/esi)

1. Finland
2. Norway
3. Uruguay
4. Sweden
5. Iceland

The EU Shared Environmental Information System consists of 4 elements which interlink:

Member states, regions

EU bodies (EEA, ESTAT)

International Organisations (UN Conventions)

Others (Research, NGOs)

Final remarks: Is the country

- “Best” in terms of what?
Pressures, State or Response?
- “Distance to Target” measurements
- European Environmental Policy – The Pioneers (1997) by Michael Skou Andersen and Duncan Liefferink.
Seven case studies of Sweden, Austria, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and Norway

Paul finished with a slide of a November media headline ‘EU looks to Scotland for Energy Template’ – a very positive note.

Panel Discussion

After the break, John Mayhew introduced the panel, some of whom were standing in at short notice for others: Peter Burman (NTS) chairing, Ed Douglas, Tom Brock (Scottish Seabird Centre), Paul McAleavey, Maf Smith (Sustainable Development Commission), Ian McCall (Ramblers Association Scotland).

Maf Smith had been director of the SDC for 4 weeks, and had previously been director of Scottish Renewables.

Questions and discussion covered:

Access two years on. Is it working?

Ian McCall noted this was a good example of what Scotland has done very well – the best in Europe. As to why, he felt this was due to personal commitment to the agenda particularly from the late John Smith. Is the commitment still there with the politicians? Within the local authorities the responsibilities are falling to junior staff, with budgets not ringfenced in some areas. The core path network is very important. Some authorities are taking a minimalist approach. SNH has done a very good job on raising awareness of the code. The access option (under Land Management Contracts) is popular with farmers. The challenge can be to get people to use their rights, there is no evidence that there is much of an increase in getting folk out to engage with their environment yet. The English experience is that landowners are using their legislation to bar access; our legislation is great. SNH research shows greater awareness of the Code. Further (SNH) research on whether behaviour is changing is ongoing.

If you could give the new First Minister one specific task to do, what would it be?

ED: Politicians don't yet understand the extent to which environment is the context.

Most problems stem from that basic problem.

TB: Tourism – people in fragile areas depend on it for their livelihoods. We need real sustainable development.

MS: Half of government gets it, the other half does not. Need to link them.

Is the Parliament's Committee System working for sustainability?

SDC is looking at it and how different governments work.

PM: no magic bullet. Scotland has an opportunity to learn from other country's mistakes, eg it has come late to waste management. We can be ahead of the game on eg Justice.

From practitioner view, use economic instruments to change behaviour, procurement, taxes.

Simon Pepper: The question trades on the assumption that the environment sector is directing its attention towards government. Alongside a better informed society we have an administration and some politicians who are ahead of the public on some issues. We need to bear in mind how this dynamic is changing things. If the public vote with the politicians they would be willing to change. The voluntary sector has public trust, it is not in it for power or profit, and has longer time horizons. We need to capitalise on this attribute and use our voice with the public so that they vote for change.

There was some disagreement: ED felt the environment sector should target business better as there is little leadership from Scottish business or understanding of the environmental context. TB drew on experience of the Scottish Seabird Centre which had needed to explain why its operations were being carried out sustainably. This was new in the last decade; now people take it for granted and would question unsustainable practices. He felt there is a long way to push government yet.

Green tourism: Drennan Watson considered the tourism industry was led by the profit motive, eg there was not much sustainability involved in flying to Scotland. He asked if there would be a strategic environmental assessment of VisitScotland's target of increasing tourism by 50% by 2015. TB responded that there was baseline work still to be done on the National Tourism Strategy, and that whatever the motivation it was beneficial if the private sector wants to green itself.

IM: Landscape is what Scottish tourism relies upon. People need to be helped and barriers removed for them to make the choices they want to. Is a rail link to Edinburgh airport a green option??

ED: Doncaster aims to become a zero waste city. Canberra has achieved recycling rate of 73%. It was dispiriting working on the transport section for today's report.

Dan Barlow: In the examples of where we had success, eg access, Strategic Environment Assessment, microgeneration – we need to identify and support the individual who is taking a risk. Some people in positions of power are willing to push things through. Are there areas where the panel have identified people who would do this?

IM: The factor for Callander estate had seen the legislation coming and worked towards it; now forms basis for other estates.

Paul Tetlaw: Reopening of the Edinburgh Glasgow canal was pushed through by two individuals. Waste minimisation is an obvious area where business should see what is coming, yet the 'can't afford it' attitude prevails, even where doing the right thing is cost effective.

PMc: In Europe some clear examples of demand for new legislation came from business eg Coca-Cola for the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive as it wanted a level playing field in the European market for recycling.

International Conventions eg Climate Change Framework is a driver. NGOs pushed legislation on Chlorine and PVCs.

Disasters: sinking of the Erica led to Maritime safety legislation.

Politicians: M Wallstrom was committed to the Chemicals legislation; otherwise it would have fallen under years ago.

Petitions – signatures of over 1 million will trigger some action by EC.

MS: Steven Salter who invented early wave technology inspired a new generation of students who are now in the forefront of the renewables industry.

TB: Costa Rica redirected most of its defence budget to sustainable tourism.

PB: World Heritage Cities could give a lead on waste, transport etc, eg Fribourg.

Scotland's landscape: what is its value, can it be valued?

ED: If we don't look at the energy issue holistically, we will make catastrophic mistakes.

MS: need to be clear what you are valuing. Landscape provides many things. Eg Lewis wind farms. Difficult discussions ongoing. China – we in the west benefit from the production, the problems are global.

TB: Happiness and quality of Life are very important. Scotland-Malawi Initiative photo exhibition illustrates that material goods don't equate to happiness.

B Wright: Scotland's landscape is truly world class. A problem is the short-term views of politicians. We should not make the same mistake as we did previously with forestry.

People are influenced by what Scotland does. Our great landscapes are close to deprived areas – people relate to landscape.

C Peyton: Micro credit can help people get started, eg Grameen Bank in India which is lifting people out of poverty. If blockages make progress too difficult for people, they lose hope. Need to look at empowering people through small amounts of money.

M Robinson: Despair at the rabid nimbyism of some anti-wind campaigners. If we don't want the infrastructure, we need to change behaviour. Example of Edinburgh congestion charge – we could have done better. The Scotsman has a campaign promoting a second Forth Road Bridge. We need to engage the public.

H McDade: if windfarms are about carbon reduction, LINK should be opposed to any development on peatbogs because of the destruction of the carbon sink.

IM: Politicians still see environment as a middle class issue. We need to communicate better what it means to people.

Reasons to be cheerful:

PM: he left Scotland in 1990 when Scotland image was part of the UK Dirty man of Europe. Now he has nothing to be ashamed of as a Scot – people in Europe will be looking to us for good example.

Summing up – Michael Scott

There are hard decisions ahead for individuals and for charities. Our supporters are part of the problem, including myself. How do we make us part of the solution?

Environmental NGOs need to provide leadership like never before. Scotland has a dispersed population, we need different solutions to the rest of the UK, for example distance from recycling plants. LINK has a key role here to provide credibility, and provide no place for sceptics to hide. We need The National Trust for Scotland to be as radical as Friends of the Earth Scotland on these issues. The National Parks boards need to ask the same tough questions. Climate change is a health and economic issue. We need to get much better at making allies for all of us to wake up to the consequences of inaction. We all need to make major personal sacrifices. That is a hard message for politicians. We need new leaders; some will come from business, some may come from academia though disappointed at their spinelessness so far this year. Maybe even the quangos will stand up and be counted.

LINK and all like-minded organisations need to be ready with ideas, options, innovations. We need to have a vision and clear focus. Ed's paper has thrown down some gauntlets which we will pick up at tomorrow's discussions. The consequences for other parts of the world if we do not act are unthinkable – failure is not an option.

Saturday 26 November
Chaired by John Mayhew

Campaign update

Ylva Haglund brought members up to speed with the Holyrood 2007 everyone campaign. Please see www.everyonecan.org for details.

Tourism Scotland and LINK – Some key issues. – Bob Aitken.

What we're aiming to achieve:

- To refresh LINK's awareness of, and engagement with, evolving issues in Scottish tourism
- To validate and sharpen up LINK's role on the new Sustainable Tourism Partnership
- To identify common objectives, agendas and themes that LINK should pursue in relation to sustainable tourism – and the means for pursuing them ...

Tourism in post-industrial Scotland

- The scale and dynamism of the industry
- The diversity of the "industry" – *including the role of many LINK Members*
- The role of the Executive and VisitScotland
- Towards 2015: ambitions for the global marketplace

Towards sustainable tourism

- Environmental sustainability :
Green tourism, ecotourism, nature-based tourism, activity tourism
- Social sustainability : who benefits ?
- Statements of intent :
TEF, Green Tourism Business Scheme, European Charter for Protected Areas, STP, and STF's latest position
- The elusive concept of carrying capacity

LINK's engagement with tourism

- Tourism & Environment Forum
- The LINK Audit
- ORL Task Force and VisitScotland
- Sustainable Tourism Partnership
- Scottish Environment Week 2007 event

Key questions for our breakout sessions

- How – and how far – should LINK push forward the Scottish sustainable tourism agenda?
- What roles can or should LINK members play in promoting sustainable tourism?

- What are the key indicators for sustainable tourism that we should be pressing?
- What should be the key messages we contribute to the Sustainable Tourism Partnership?

Tom Brock gave some background on the Sustainable Tourism Partnership which was housed in VisitScotland and had no budget or staff allocated to it. Any actions would have to be taken forward by the membership, so would be dependent on their willingness to move forward. Wild Scotland had formed out of the Tourism and Environment Forum, its AGM was held the previous day. An article from the Scottish Tourism Forum, calling on the Executive for more action on sustainable tourism, especially on transport, had emerged from its recent conference. The Tourism Strategy document has good ambitions for sustainable tourism.

Drennan Watson, former LINK delegate to the Tourism and Environment Forum, raised the issue of Scotland being 30 years behind the times academically and research-wise on sustainable tourism. He noted tourism's dependency on ecological services and how it always tends towards overdevelopment and damage. He noted the importance of considering local autonomy versus dependence (multinationals), the 2:1 ratio of residents to tourism beds above which local identity crumbles, the small part that marketing plays (around 3%) in attracting visitors versus word of mouth (30-40%).

Plenary Session

Workshop outputs - Flip chart points from each group:

Bob Aitken's Group – reported by Helen McDade

1. Scale – hierarchy micro vs macro. Indicators should be common across the scale and common across the whole sector.
Other view is that locally selected indicators have more meaning and usefulness locally.
2. LINK needs to have a way to bring together tourism-related points from different task forces (SSTF asked other TFs for SD strategy), particularly SS and Transport.
3. LINK's role to encourage nearer Scottish/UK/ferry travel tourism versus foreign origin. Economic benefits. Transport most significant.
4. Clarification of 'sustainable tourism' and promotion (accreditation).
5. Different types of area would have different targets within same set of indicators (eg Glen Affric – St Andrews).

Branding

Sustainable tourism is very cross cutting so different groups looking at different aspects.
Is tourism always positive?

Urban vs rural tourism – LINK focussed on rural

Is green tourism focussing on micro-scale eg construction of hotels vs macro eg travel of people/goods?

What is 'sustainable' differs with site, social structure.

Should indicators for sustainability be different for different types of site? Eg pristine wild land vs more developed.

What about visitor limitations – policies in eg US Nat Parks, unofficial limiting eg car parks, bed numbers.

Attracting local/Scottish/English tourism. LINK should encourage this. Economic benefit of keeping more Scottish /UK tourism vs concentrating on foreign market (x3? Scottish £ spent overseas than comes in).

Is one of the most important things LINK can do is oppose increasing air traffic/runways/rail to airport links.

Is tourism then part of other mainstream LINK work eg transport.

LINK hasn't got way of taking these arguments from one sector of work to other areas.

So LINK takes arguments to tourism industry

Should sustainable tourism indicators derive from /be subset of SD indicators (in practice different approaches).

Should be looking at tourism's effects within individual SD indicators?

Indicators exist to be used as a management tool so in eg NP might use different indicators in eg Aviemore vs top of Cairngorms.

Indicators in themselves should not be considered a result.

Bill Wright's group reported by Sam Gardner

Tourism definition? Small numbers coming in. Lots going out (Helen's x3 factor?)

Timescale 2015 – 2050.

Threats? Fuel prices in Scotland. Opportunity: vehicle engineering in Scotland.

Hydrogen, LPG, Biodiesel

Organisation of public transport – expansion and integration. Connections to surface and sea based international system.

Airline fuel tax

Imbalance in fuel duties across borders.

Are these questions being asked in other regions – can we learn from others?

Research requirements / data deficiencies. Also access to existing data.

Policy gaps

Mechanisms for LINK to employ – new task force? Commission report. Existing task forces, Seminar in SEW.

Is sustainable tourism a priority for LINK and its members – YES

How much do LINK member bodies depend on tourism?

Increased communication and integration of member body messages and activity.

Promotion of good /; best practice.

Where do potential tourists get their information / plan trips?

A code of practice for Scotland!

Extend current branding of Scotland's high quality food produce.

Link to health!

Natural allies eg Greenspace Scotland

Indicators

Can full sustainability in tourism ever be achieved? - impact reduction.

Focus on key locations: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highlands.

Transport

Procurement

Social sustainability 2:1 ratio factor.

Overseas ownership as a financial sink.

Dan Barlow's group – reported by Rob Thomas

4 points are: Transport, Marketing, Best Practice and Community Ownership.

Key messages to take to the STP

Offer 'solutions' and explain how sustainable tourism can be done.

Articulate that there are limits and point these out as necessary – be challenging.

Context needs to be 'big picture' special and timescale

Carbon offsets a non-starter. Tackle source not symptoms

Travel challenge – do you need to travel? The time to travel by train/ferry/bike etc is part of the 'holiday'.

Key Indicators

Think about what the tourist wants

Employ and retain local people who have a pride for their place (and who have good manners!)

Aim to have tourism year round – problems with seasonality.

Proportion of visitors who arrive (to place and into Scotland) with minimal footprint.

Proportion of 'domestic' tourists

Measure stays in homes of local people experiencing local produce.

Procurement actions – travel, accommodation, goods etc.

Promote sustainable tourism to members – include incentives eg reduce entrance fee if arrive via public transport/foot/bike.

Celebrate fantastic rail lines – make them a 'destination' in themselves.

Provide information by habit on how to get to places/sites/reserves by public transport/bike etc.

What roles should LINK fulfil re sustainable tourism?

Use to communicate an environmental/sustainable message.

Case study/demonstration and pin to the 'business rationale'.

Timescales – short term politics, life cycle, for ever and ever.

Make message easy to understand/digest – target audience is everybody.

How and far should LINK push sustainable tourism?

Task Force?

Must have own (LINK) practice in order. Practice what Preach

Tourism – biggest industry therefore should engage/influence.
 Travel a huge challenge.
 Existing LINK mechanisms need to consider sustainable tourism.

Drennan Watson’s Group – written up by Drennan – reported by Stuart Hay

Levels of Operation of the Industry:-

Sustainable tourism has to be considered at all the levels it operates at and within the context of broader society. These general levels are in Table 1 Below.

Level of Operation	Who Involved	Comment
Individual Business	Individual business owners and operators	Green Tourism operates mainly at this level
Destination	Collective of businesses and agencies within the locale.	Destination Management Organisations must not simply act as marketing tools The Special Qualities of the place/destination must be particularly protected (EG wild landscapes)
Whole Industry (EG Within a country)	Whole industry and government	Must particularly look at the overall Green Footprint of the industry, with transport particularly entering into the equation.
Whole Society	All of industry and rest of society	What scale of green footprint that can be afforded by tourist industry partly decided by the overall green footprint of that society. Things like overall transport policy and provision within the society particularly important

General Rules etc About Indicators

- 1) Sustainable tourism has to operate at all levels above and the indicators will differ at different levels, so a range of indicators is needed and some of these will be society wide ones.
- 2) Tourism should be marketed as offering life supporting experiences and not just as a way of stimulating consumerism and hence manage expectations of tourists.
- 3) There need to be both social and environmental indicators and these two are closely linked. Social indicators should take account of things like the level of local benefits delivered to people in tourism destinations.
- 4) Some indicators will be specific to tourism or apply more strongly to it than to other industries. Ones that more specific to tourism would be:-
 - a) Impact on local communities.
 - b) Impacts on special local qualities – including local cultures and local environments.
 - c) Impacts of travel.

Next steps

Bob Aitken noted the clear latent concern about the issues and the extent to which tourism related issues are implicit in what we already do. We could continue as we are though raise tourism on our horizons in considering other issues eg agriculture, transport, landscape. It would be helpful to incorporate sustainable tourism indicators into overarching SD indicators.

Within the Sustainable Tourism Partnership many organisations represented have different assumptions – many see Scotland as a product. He and Tom Brock agreed to feed today's discussions into the next STP discussions the following week. Tom noted that tourism can be a lobbying tool for LINK members to engage with a large audience. Also we should practice what we preach. Drennan pointed out that indicators are not necessarily a measure, they are also an indicator of health. They cannot tell you what is wrong though can prompt an inquiry into what is wrong with the system. Gillian McCrum invited member bodies to take part in further discussions on Indicators.

Acknowledgements

The Congress steering group were Ian McCall, Bill Wright, Dan Barlow, Deborah Long, and Alice Walsh. Speakers and panellists Ed Douglas, Paul McAleavey, Maf Smith, Ian McCall and Tom Brock. Thanks to Paul for the gift of 20 e-copies of the SoE report which were snapped up by Friday's delegates (if you did not get one, it is available on the EEA's website). Thanks to Fred Edwards for his welcome and to Michael Scott for summing up. Thanks to John Mayhew for chairing Saturday sessions. Thanks to Bob Aitken for masterminding the discussions on the sustainable tourism, with additional help from Drennan Watson, as well as the steering group. Thanks to Perth and Kinross Council for a grant towards the costs and to the Craignish Trust for funding the report *Scotland the best small country in the world?* Thanks to the Birnam Hotel for hosting the event and for playing its part as a sustainable tourism destination by sourcing the food locally, seasonally and organically where possible.

Taking Part were:

Name	Organisation
Speakers	
Fred Edwards	LINK President
Peter Burman	National Trust for Scotland, Chair
Paul McAleavey	European Environment Agency
Maf Smith	Sustainable Development Commission
Ian McCall	Ramblers Association Scotland
Tom Brock	Scottish Seabird Centre
Ed Douglas	Journalist
Michael Scott	LINK Honorary Fellow
Guests	
Mike Cantlay	Loch Lomond & Trossachs Nat Park
Gillian McCrum	Macaulay Institute
Pete Wishart	MP
Doug Flint	Perth & Kinross Council
Mike Robinson	Stop Climate Chaos
Jane Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
John Mason	SEERAD
Sandy Cameron	SEERAD
Damian Killeen OBE	Sus It Out
Jeni Mackay	Sus It Out
Helen Ansell	Sust Dev Forum
Chloe Smee	Sustainable Scotland Network
George Tarvit	Sustainable Scotland Network
Courtney Peyton	Thirdwave
Paul Tetlaw	TRANSform Scotland
LINK Members and staff	
Simon Pepper	LINK Honorary Fellow
Bob Aitken	LINK Honorary Fellow

Neil Rankin	LINK Honorary Fellow
Jen Anderson	LINK Chief Officer
Adean Lutton	LINK Staff
Alex Hopkinson	LINK Staff
Alice Walsh	LINK Staff
Hugh Green	LINK Staff
Ylva Haglund	LINK Staff
Bill Wright	APRS
Gus Jones	BSCG
Tessa Jones	BSCG
David Jamieson	BTCV Scotland
Drennan Watson	Cairngorms Campaign (and LINK Hon Fellow)
Jonathan Wordsworth	Council for Scottish Archaeology
Stuart Hay	Friends of the Earth Scotland
Peter Stevick	Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
Alison Russell	John Muir Trust
Becki Dunning	John Muir Trust
Helen McDade	John Muir Trust
Toby Clark	John Muir Trust
Caroline Halliday	National Trust for Scotland
Peter Holden	National Trust for Scotland
John Mayhew	National Trust for Scotland & LINK Chair
Su Cooper	Plantlife Scotland
Deborah Long	Plantlife Scotland
Rob Thomas	Royal Zoological Soc of Scotland
Andrea Johnstonova	RSPB Scotland
Clifton Bain	RSPB Scotland
Lloyd Austin	RSPB Scotland
Mandy Gloyer	RSPB Scotland
Sam Gardner	RSPB Scotland
Sena Mackay	Saltire Society
Dianne Laing	Scottish Native Woods
Gordon Gray Stephens	Scottish Native Woods
Bill Gardner	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Dennis Dick	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Jonathan Hughes	Scottish Wildlife Trust

Rob Bradley	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Stuart Brooks	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Toni Clark	SCRA
Tony Wilson	SCRA
Carey Coombs	Soil Association Scotland
Andrew Fairbairn	Woodland Trust Scotland
Angela Douglas	Woodland Trust Scotland
Angus Yarwood	Woodland Trust Scotland
Tim Hall	Woodland Trust Scotland
Dan Barlow	WWF Scotland
David Downie	WWF Scotland
Julie Stoneman	WWF Scotland
Betty Pentland	WWF Scotland Council
Ros Pearson	