

LINK Climate and Energy Review

Report of workshop – 19 October 2015

Elizabeth Leighton and Simon Pepper, consultants

This report provides a fair representation of the workshop discussion and conclusions.

1. Introduction:

This report provides a summary of the workshop, with key findings, an outline for a potential consensus statement, and suggestions for next steps. The report aims to present the discussion and results objectively, representing the views that were expressed by the participants – both individually and collectively.

The workshop was informed by a survey of all LINK members which concluded that very nearly all agreed that a consensus position on climate and energy would make the network more credible and effective. This was confirmed through 1:1 interviews with nine member organisations. These organisations were selected to represent the range of opinion on climate and energy issues, as well as the different types of organisations within LINK. All of the organisations indicated a willingness to commit to the process of exploring a consensus on climate and energy and were invited to take part in the workshop.

The workshop participants included: Mary Church (FOES), Calum Duncan (MCS); Sam Gardner (WWF Scotland); Diarmid Hearn (NTS); Beryl Leatherland (SWLG); John Mayhew (APRS); Alexa Morrison (RSPB); John Thomson (SCNP); and Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland).

In addition, the consultants conducted informal (and off the record) interviews with individuals external to LINK from government, industry, agencies as well as independents, to get a sense of how LINK is perceived externally on the topic of climate and energy. These views helped inform discussion on the benefits of consensus.

1.1 Workshop purpose:

The workshop aimed to produce proposals for the wider membership in terms of:

- 1) The benefits of a Link consensus on climate and energy
- 2) LINK's added value to the climate and energy topic
- 3) The foundations of a potential consensus statement
- 4) Suggested agenda for any follow-up work.

The report looks at each of these topics in turn, reporting the discussion, main findings, and outcome of the discussion.

In addition, the participants offered their personal expectations for the workshop, which can be summarised as:

- A positive conversation on climate and energy and move LINK on from past disagreements.
- Shared frame of reference for LINK membership.

- Clear understanding of the common ground – a focus for LINK.
- An understanding of what to say about issues LINK doesn't agree on.
- Consider how this exercise can help organisations that have internal disagreement within their membership.
- Greater clarity on LINK's role/niche on climate and energy.

These expectations confirmed the need and desire for a solid understanding of the areas of common ground within LINK on this topic. This report documents a range of statements that represent 'areas of agreement' and a further set of issues that warranted further discussion. While time did not allow for a full discussion of these topics, most participants expressed an appetite to do so and explore what further common ground might be established.

In terms of how the exercise can help organisations build support for consensus within their membership, these organisations were encouraged to provide feedback on how they might use the results, and share with other members.

Finally, some thought it would be useful to explore LINK's niche on climate and energy more fully to ensure the process, and any future consensus statement, has a clear purpose and value.

1.2 Workshop agenda

The agenda was designed to build the foundations for a potential consensus statement by developing mutual understanding of each other's positions; followed by a discussion of the benefits of a consensus statement for LINK and individual member organisations. With this shared understanding, the discussion moved on to exploring what might be included in a consensus statement, starting with headline principles.

2. Mutual understanding

2.1 Seeing ourselves as others see us

In this exercise, the workshop set out to explore the potential for better mutual understanding by exploring external perceptions of LINK and its member organisations on this issue. This was approached in the context of acknowledging that:

- While we will inevitably start by referring to the current onshore wind controversy, we should not limit ourselves to this issue; it will be important to widen the discussion;
- As a network we need to be aware how we come across to others – in and outside LINK;
- Disagreements in this area reflect tensions we all feel as individuals;
- The issues are not black and white;
- People out there yearn for clear articulation to help reconcile tensions, and understand what the principles should be to guide understanding and decisions;
- External voices have expressed some disappointment and frustration with the lack of LINK consensus;
- In reality, democratic decision-making is based not only on scientific evidence, but also on a popular mandate, so a persuasive position needs to accommodate both evidence and popular feelings.

Participants were asked to consider how some perceive the positions of ENGOs on climate and energy – and whether they could express their organisation's position in a more rounded way. The following characterisations were provided to prompt discussion, and are not a description of

any particular organisations' position. They express how polarised the debate has become to external audiences/voices, and in their view, unhelpful to the cause.

'no windfarms anywhere no matter what'

Opponents of renewables (windfarms) are characterised as:

Objecting from a single-issue (landscape protection) perspective, apparently denying the crisis of climate change and opting out of a collective responsibility to play our part. This seems to go beyond the legitimate question of where the balance lies, to raise doubts over renewables' contribution to emissions reduction. This feeds a public debate based on misunderstanding, creates huge costs in dispute resolution and hampers the real need for growth in non-fossil fuel energy – something we should be seeking to encourage.

'as many developments as possible no matter what'

Proponents of renewables (windfarms) are characterised as:

Relying exclusively on objective scientific evidence, apparently ignoring people's values and the way that policy is made – by reference both to evidence and to a public mandate. This seems to overlook the fact that politicians serve their electorate, and many voters have strongly held values - often including a passionate concern for Scotland's natural environment and landscape – something we should be seeking to encourage.

2.2 Discussion and comments

Most participants recognised these characterisations and agreed they are unhelpful. However, their responses were varied, representing their organisations as:

- already 'in the middle' (with most *perceiving themselves* in this way); but
 - having to work hard to represent the middle position; a constant struggle to be understood by the media and their membership;
 - unable to move towards positions which would dilute their position and/or were founded on misleading evidence;
 - unable to exert discipline on their own members who had very varied views;
 - already subscribing to a common approach (the ACME¹ report) which expresses support for renewables development, subject to certain clear requirements for environmental protection;
- (in the case of FoE) not accepting the framing of this challenge; this isn't about compromise between the two positions, but about climate justice. Scotland has a historical / moral responsibility to act. The issue is global.

Other comments related to:

Ways that we could change

- The extreme positions are unhelpful, negative, and lazy. Media likes this shorthand of for/against;
- The benefit of an agreed position means you can be robust in these situations;
- We should be cognizant of each other's expertise/workstreams and not speak on issues where we don't have expertise;

¹ *Avoiding Conflict in the Marine Environment*; LINK 2010

- Terms like ‘well-sited’ and ‘in the right place’ are difficult as they are open to interpretation. LINK needs common criteria/principles that are objective (ref John MacKay Scotland’s Beauty at Risk);
- we all have a responsibility to offer dispassionate and objective contributions to a confused public debate;
- we should be committing more to this kind of exercise to ‘close the gap’;
- we already have LINK operating principles² which include an obligation to negotiate over disagreements, but this has not been enforced;
- We would be willing to negotiate internally if the prize was big enough.

The direction we could take:

- We mustn’t get ‘stuck’ on wind; let’s go wider;
- LINK statement should create a new frame – going beyond yes/no to where we want to be, e.g. decentralised energy, demand and generation.

And one key area for discussion

- What is our (Scotland’s) responsibility (moral, historical)?

In summary, none of the participants recognised themselves as representing either of the extreme positions, in contrast to what is perceived externally, and agreed they were unhelpful. Instead, they considered themselves somewhere in the middle (or rejected the frame of either/or altogether in the case of FOE-S), although it should be noted this would represent a broad spectrum of opinion.

The discussion reminded participants of perceptions ‘out there’ and re-opened a lapsed dialogue about the potential of a consensus, and confirmed a willingness (albeit conditional) to pursue it further. At the same time, the exercise also revealed that there is a loss of trust and some undercurrents of hostility amongst the participants due to disagreements on the climate and energy topic which would benefit from further discussion.

3. The case for developing a consensus

3.1 In principle, most agreed that:

3.1.1 Consensus can benefit the network³ by enhancing its reputation and influence³. This is mainly because a coherent voice across a range of interests always yields more influence, but this is especially true if it:

- Reconciles differences of view;
- Offers a clear rationale; and
- Is led by strong, clear voices.

3.1.2 This influence is weakened by division, contradiction and inconsistency in the way that bodies voice their separate views.

² See page 14 in <http://www.scotlink.org/public-documents/operating-principles/>

³ *Consultants’ observation: Some differences of view may relate to whether participants are thinking of ‘the cause’, ‘the network’ – i.e. the combined reputation of all environment NGOs – or LINK itself, which some argue is only a vehicle for the member bodies and therefore doesn’t have, or need, a ‘reputation’.*

3.1.3 Consensus-building is regarded widely as a key function of LINK, creating an expectation (internally and externally) which weakens the network (or at least fails to capitalise on its potential) if it is not fulfilled.

3.1.4 The LINK network offers unique attributes which add value to the debate, including:

- Bringing together a range of environmental and related expertise;
- A uniquely environment-focussed commentary on the issues;
- A position of trust in the eyes of the environment 'community';
- An ability to engage others in issues (such as this) through their interest in nature.

3.1.5 Consensus also benefits individual organisations, especially the smaller ones: by providing a 'hymn sheet' for all, adding to the capacity; by helping to inform them; by demonstrating wider support for their views; by providing a framework within which to develop their views on the next level of detail; and by helping awareness and understanding between member bodies and therefore enhancing a sense of cohesion and mutual support.

3.2 In the specific case of climate and energy:

3.2.1 External voices generally agreed that the obvious lack of consensus had damaged the network's reputation and influence; several also assumed that this was a major cause of JMT's departure from LINK, signalling a further decline in LINK's core role.

3.2.2 A consensus could be powerful if it were to:

- Focus on outcomes;
- Represent all views, reconciling but not diluting any; aiming to 'pull up' rather than 'water down';
- Concentrate on what Scotland can/must do, but in a global context;
- Address the whole climate-energy debate, not just climate vs onshore wind;
- Offer a clear and responsible rationale (e.g. more credible than a single-issue campaign);
- Be developed soon, to capitalise on the current mood of change (democratic renewal, Paris);
- Respond to a particular political opportunity (e.g. new energy statement in next government, post-Paris vacuum; new government; a campaign against fossil fuels);
- Inspire the reader with some vision and passion.

3.2.3 A consensus would also reduce the likelihood of further resignations from LINK, and/or the rising influence of alternative groupings such as Scotland Against Spin.

3.3 However, views varied on the prospects of a consensus:

3.3.1 With particular reference to the debate over renewables (especially onshore wind), one or two representatives still need to be convinced of the case for a consensus and whether the effort would be worthwhile. Principal concerns were:

- Doubts as to whether any meaningful agreement was achievable, given fundamental and long-unresolved differences of view on the validity of other bodies' arguments;
- Scepticism regarding the views of outsiders⁴ who said that a consensus would be influential and that the lack of a consensus damaged the network's influence.

⁴ See introduction

3.3.2 These doubters felt that they were able to be effective without a LINK consensus – and (for example) there is evidence that pro-renewables and anti-wind campaigns have both scored significant policy successes.

3.3.3 Against this, others argued that these narrow victories have been at the expense of informing the bigger debate which was needed about climate change itself, the need for a more rapid low carbon transition, and more widely the promotion of the core mission which unifies all LINK bodies – the love of, and proper care for, nature.

3.3.4 Nevertheless it was agreed that further work to develop a consensus would be worthwhile if the prize was big enough. So a statement on which to base next steps might read as follows:

3.4 Proposed statement:

- We acknowledge in principle the potential power of a consensus to wield influence, and the role of LINK to facilitate such a consensus.
- We agree that a LINK consensus on climate and energy could be a powerful contribution to the ongoing debate, especially as Scotland develops its new approach to energy policy.
- We agree that the considerable effort required to reach such a consensus could only be worthwhile if it aimed to fulfil all the conditions listed under 3.2.2 above.
- A 'lowest-common-denominator' consensus would be useful internally, but for external purposes a more robust and ground-breaking consensus would be necessary.
- There would also be a need to discuss how to deal with any unresolved disagreements.
- It would be necessary to create a grouping to undertake such a project.

4. Building a consensus

4.1 Process

Workshop participants were provided with set of core principles (annex 1) which could act as 'building blocks' for a potential consensus statement. These were drawn from the survey and interviews as likely common ground amongst all the participants.

In addition to these core principles, participants were provided copies of a LINK consensus statement on climate change from September 2005⁵ – exactly 10 years ago. Working with these two documents, the participants came to agreement on the general wording of each principle, as well as some suggested additional points to elaborate the headline principles. The participants also identified some other topics that might be included at a later stage, though these would require further discussion. The workshop was not able to explore these topics further, but have noted them here for possible future work.

The participants agreed an outline statement that was presented for instant 'peer review' by Simon Milne, now Regius Keeper at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, and formerly Chief Executive of Scottish Wildlife Trust. This outline statement is provided at section 4.6 and provides a starter set of principles and underlying statements which could be developed into a draft consensus statement for sharing with the wider membership. This draft should be for internal use initially, with the potential to explore its use with external audiences as a later stage. The following sections summarise the discussion towards building the outline statement.

4.2 General points:

⁵ <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/ClimateActionplanSept05.pdf>

- The 2005 LINK statement gives a useful reference point and can help inform a possible consensus for 2015. On one hand it shows how slow progress has been, but it also demonstrates the strength of consensus within LINK at that time;
- The consensus statement should include a preamble or a 'chapeau' articulating an inspiring vision statement about the value of Scotland's environment; the need to live within environmental limits; and the need to safeguard the environment for future generations;
- This preamble will provide the rationale for a LINK statement on climate and energy, and make the connection between climate change and nature.

4.3 Principle 1: - Climate change is real

Areas of agreement/points to be added:

- Language and urgency of 2005 statement is preferred. Climate change is a major threat and is happening now. It is already impacting people and wildlife globally and in Scotland. Provide examples of impact to justify urgency – e.g. biodiversity loss, disease.
- Inaction is leading to consequences now.
- A context statement regarding the continuing rates of emissions (production and consumption), and extraction for export.
- Scotland should play a lead role in tackling climate change.
- A positive statement about solutions – we can do something about it.

Areas for discussion:

- Moral responsibility: There was agreement that Scotland should play a lead role, and has a responsibility to act. There was some discussion of using the term 'moral (or historical) responsibility' and 'climate justice'. However, it was felt there needed to be a better understanding of what 'moral responsibility' would mean for Scotland's actions.
- Climate change is anthropogenic: there were differences of opinion as to if the term 'anthropogenic' is needed or useful to include in the headline principle. Some thought it useful to refer to 'anthropogenic climate change'; others thought it might just provide an excuse to argue with the detail.
- Social impacts: some wanted to include social impacts of climate change such as the rising number of refugees. While there was agreement that there are, and will be social impacts, there was not time to discuss what examples would be used, along with evidence to support the connection to climate change.

4.4 Principle 2: Transition to a low carbon Scotland

Areas of agreement/points to be added:

- The language should convey a greater sense of urgency and reference the need to meet the requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act and a credible and fully funded Report on Proposals and Policies.
- The transition should be within the carbon budget advised by the UK Committee on Climate Change.
- The headline statement should refer to low carbon Scotland, not economy.
- The transition should be by the people not to the people (e.g. strong community engagement, although this does not preclude regulation to drive change).

Areas for discussion

- Peatland, agriculture, forestry: These were not discussed as they were not thought to be in the scope of this review. However, there may be a need for a wider climate change statement, to provide a context for a LINK statement on climate and energy.

4.5 Principle 3: Action on energy

Areas of agreement/points to add

- Scotland needs to up the pace of transition to play its part in a global solution to the climate change threat. A rapid transition from fossil fuels is needed. There are greater risks if we delay.
- Action on energy is essential because 85% of emissions are due to energy use. It is a substantial part of the solution. Every sector must play part (e.g. transport, homes, and public sector).
- LINK should reframe the energy trilemma to better reflect sustainable development goals⁶. Make links with delivery of other government priorities, e.g. tackling social inequalities. This can be a positive energy revolution.
- Energy efficiency and reducing energy demand is critical.
- Phase out fossil fuels, say no to new fossil fuels (this would include fracking, UCG), and end fossil fuel subsidies. It is also important to tackle current production and extraction which also causes environmental damage.
- Renewables are an essential part of the solution, while protecting the environment. LINK's ambitions for decarbonisation should be consistent with views on restrictions/criteria for siting. More local generation should be part of the mix - community owned and/or enabled. Targets should be treated as the minimum action required, not the maximum.
- We have most of the solutions now – need leadership and investment to unblock. Also need R&D for new technologies for the future – generation, storage and demand. Foster development of innovative technologies which are environmentally friendly or even offer gains (e.g. oyster cultivation on floating wind?)

Areas for further discussion

- **Energy hierarchy:** while all agree with the energy hierarchy, the feeling was it should not be included as it could imply that actions should be taken consecutively, or that it would determine resource allocation. Action on all levels is needed simultaneously.
- **Divestment** – there might be support for a position on divestment of public sector funds – though recognise there probably would not be consensus on a wider divestment policy.
- **Timescales** for decarbonising the power sector, heat and transport were not discussed; though the statement could refer to Scottish Government targets.
- **Renewables growth:** we did not discuss how much growth, but there was an understanding that LINK's ambitions for decarbonisation and meeting climate change targets need to be matched by LINK's position on renewables. In terms of criteria, this

⁶ Currently the energy trilemma is described as being about securing our energy supply (keeping the lights on) at the same time as keeping bills affordable, and meeting climate targets. LINK could suggest that in addition to just meeting climate targets, there is a wider need to decarbonise in harmony with the environment. And in addition to affordability, there is an opportunity for consumers to engage and benefit from the energy revolution e.g. through community ownership – not just passively as bill-payers.

was an area participants thought should be discussed, and if consensus can be found, included.

- **Renewables beyond 100%:** There was some discussion as to whether Scotland should generate more renewable energy than it consumes (reference discussion about responsibility under principle 1). Some argued that as Scotland has the renewable resource, it has a responsibility to use it and play its part in solving the global problem of climate change. Others thought we needed to know more about the level of growth, and the implications in terms of transmission requirements, landscape impact, etc. There was a reluctance to promote growth which exonerates England from playing its part.
- **Independent commission:** Some supported the establishment of an independent commission which would take responsibility for strategic thinking and evidence-gathering on climate and energy. Others were concerned this could lead to delays, which are not desirable given the urgency of the situation.
- **National strategy and plan:** Some argued a strategy could promote the principles in the consensus statement and it would avoid vast costs, delays, conflicts and distrust arising from 'free for all' development. Others thought it might be difficult for LINK to advocate unless it could agree on the detail.
- **CCS, nuclear:** there was no agreement on whether or not CCS should be included as a new technology. Nuclear was not discussed, though one participant expressed support.

4.6 Outline consensus statement:

Preamble:

- Value of the environment
- Live within environmental limits
- Safeguard the environment for future generations

1) Climate change is real, happening already, and has serious consequences for environment and people. Urgent action is required.

2) We must make a rapid transition to a low carbon Scotland to (and) play its part in a global solution to climate change.

- Every sector must contribute.
- Transition includes changes to extraction, consumption and demand.

3) The transition to a low carbon Scotland requires urgent action on energy. Energy use is responsible for 85% of Scotland's emissions.

- There are risks if we don't act, bigger if we delay.
- We have the solutions – need the political leadership and financial investment to make it happen.
- Phase out fossil fuels and no new fossil fuels.
- Energy efficiency and demand reduction are essential.
- Renewable energy is an essential part of the solution, while at the same time protecting the environment.
- Our need for energy should not be a limit on generating capacity if done with proper environmental protections.
- There are opportunities to meet other government priorities with energy revolution (co-benefits).
- There should be a precautionary approach to new technologies (e.g. CCS)

4) National Strategy and plan (this could form part of 3)

4.7 Peer review comments/questions

- Biodiversity should appear in preamble. LINK members – ‘we are the bridge between science and the nature people love.’
- Scotland-focused, but need to acknowledge UK issues e.g. National Grid.
- Scotland is part of a global solution – so explicit link to international policy drivers. (and note if failure to act at Paris, we can still/must act).
- Underpinned by evidence (need references).
- Communication – how to engage external audiences. Provide more prominence to co-benefits?

Areas for discussion:

- Natural capital – should this be included?
- What about collaboration with business? There was not agreement on what dialogue LINK should have with business, and what support it should give, though acknowledge industry is part of the solution and the problem.
- Baseload and keeping the lights on? WWF has evidence to show this is possible with decarbonised grid, but needs more sharing and discussion before getting agreement.
- Adaptation – not in scope for this exercise but need discussion how this would be referenced.
- Land use and carbon sequestration: is this within scope as this statement focuses on climate and energy? There may be a need to reference the wider climate change context, and land use issues.

5. Next steps

5.1 Development of the consensus statement:

The participants discussed the possibility of a two- step process, with the first step being the production of a high-level consensus statement based on the results of the workshop. This statement would be for internal audiences only, at least initially.

The next step could be to respond to external opportunities or needs with a LINK position. For example, LINK could produce a statement reacting to fracking, the forthcoming reviews of energy and planning policy, and/or reaction to the Paris COP. It would be important to ensure these statements operated within the framework of the high-level statement, had a clear purpose, and matched LINK’s understanding of its niche/added value to the debate.

One suggestion was that LINK could produce a document that would replace/update the 2008 document, *Time to Act*, in the context of the post-Paris negotiations.

5.2 Relationship to the Landscape Task Force statement on energy

Participants thought it important that the Landscape Task Force review its statement and consider how it relates to the workshop results and progress towards a broader LINK consensus on climate and energy. Representatives of the Landscape Task Force agreed that they would prefer to present the landscape statement in the context of a more general LINK consensus document. However, timescales are likely to be an issue.

5.3 LINK mechanism for taking forward

There was some discussion regarding decision-making and how LINK could progress this work. Some felt that a task force on climate and energy (or just climate change) was needed. Others thought the climate change issue is so important, any consensus should be owned by LINK as a whole. If that is the case, clarity is needed as to how agreement is reached by the membership.

6. Conclusion:

The workshop results represent an important milestone towards achieving a consensus statement on climate and energy. However, all participants agreed that in a sense, the conversation had just begun, and some need to be convinced that the result will be worth the effort. In addition, more thought needs to be given to identifying LINK's added value in this debate, and how such a statement would be used. In sum, significant time and effort will be required to achieve a consensus statement which would be credible, influential, and win the support of all LINK members.

The workshop achieved the following outputs, which are provided in this report:

- Understanding of the benefits of consensus and LINK's added value to the climate and energy debate.
- Draft outline consensus statement, with headline principles and suggested statements to elaborate each principle.
- A list of areas for further discussion which could extend the common ground amongst LINK members.

There was agreement amongst the participants that the process should be continued in order to complete a draft statement for internal use as a starting point. The results of the process thus far, and in particular the outline statement drafted during this workshop, provide a useful foundation for these discussions.

Annex 1:

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Core principles

(drawn from survey results and interviews – provided to workshop participants as a starter for discussion)

- 1 Climate change is real, largely anthropogenic and a major threat to people and the environment.**
- 2 Scotland needs a transition to a sustainable, low carbon economy (a “zero carbon future”) through:**
 - Aligning development with the robust and binding climate targets as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.
 - Action to ensure we meet these targets year on year.
- 3 Action on energy should be part of this transition, requiring:**
 - Energy efficiency and demand reduction.
 - General move away from fossil fuels, through more actions on:
 - Energy efficiency and demand reduction.
 - Decarbonisation of the power sector, heat generation and transport.
 - Renewable energy technologies are part of the solution but avoiding significant harm to wildlife, habitats and landscapes through strategic planning, sensitive siting and robust EIA.
- 4 Adaptation is also a priority to minimise the impacts of inevitable climate change (but outside the scope of this review).**