

## LINK's linkages to the social justice agenda, December 2015 discussion

### Actions:

- 1 Responding to the Fairer Scotland conversation
  - Members respond individually and contribute to commentary online (SG website)
  - Matthew revise the submission and re-circulate to this group by Christmas
  - Group comments and signs up to Mathew's revision by 7 January
  - Final version circulates to all LINK members by 11 January
  - Members sign up ('no edits' basis) within week to ten days
  - Submit 20 January, cc. to Env't and Justice Ministers
  - January bulletin flags intentions to members
- 2 Set of questions around members' responsiveness as organisations to the social justice issues
  - Pete to circulate draft set of questions to circulate to this group
  - Members to discuss these with their organisations ahead of the next meeting
- 3 Develop symbolic aims connecting environment to social justice (every kid in Scotland should .....)
  - Members to make suggestions relevant to their mission
- 4 Our capacity to establish a group to coordinate necessary arguments and conduits, eg via our Trustees
  - Members involved in December discussion to consult their organisations on whether they want to engage in this area, how, and in relation to which of the options covered in the note below
- 5 Making connection in other ways to the social justice agenda
  - Members keep in touch with one another with ideas via the email group
  - LINK staff flag thinking to date to the Network at its Jan 28<sup>th</sup> meeting
  - Raise Fairer Scotland submission points with Minister at the early Feb meeting with her

### Note of the December discussion

Participating - Matthew Crighton FoES, Vicki Swales and Rea Cris RSPB, Pete Ritchie Nourish, Eila Macqueen SCAPE, Tom Leatherland SWLG, Denis Mollison HWDT, Eilidh Nicolson NTS, Jenny Mollison SAGS, Helen Todd RS, John Thomson SCNP & APRS, Staff - Esther Brooker, Alice Walsh, Nick Underdown, Jen Anderson  
Apologies – Lillian Kelly Soil Assn, Charles Dundas WTS, Sheila George RSPB, Beryl Leatherland SWLG, Phoebe Cochrane (Staff)

### Background, context

LINK reached the view by 2014 that its work should orientate more to Scotland's social justice narrative. A survey of TFs' linkages was carried out. Autumn 2015 meetings reiterated the need for LINK priorities to resonate with relevant social and economic considerations. LINK's work was being restructured, with 6 priorities – land, marine, planning, economics, governance, social justice – setting parameters for the new Groups. This SJ discussion aimed to identify in what ways LINK can move forward on social justice.

### What we mean by social justice

Inequality	Fair access
Rights	Justice
Decency	Inclusion
Poverty / money	Needs/standard of living for all

Equality of opportunity (environment, health, education, etc)

Wellbeing / welfare of all in the social and private senses

### Who are the focusses of social justice

Everyone

Time

Children

Old people

Poor people (inequality)

Levelling – some lose a bit, others gain

Rural and urban – though there are differences to the issues

Community – in some communities people are isolated (disconnected isolation), while other communities build strong alliances and actions

Unemployed

People with disability

Minority groups, BEM, LGBT

Carers

Gender can affect

Today's focus is more on self-organisation and representation rather than previously where people were represented by well-to-do charitable outfits speaking for them

Who has access to levers of power? Is equality of opportunity or outcome more important?

What are relevant measures? Are these about air or noise pollution and landfill or rather, procedural things like access to justice – so not a question of poor neighbourhoods lacking greenspaces so much as not getting near/on to community councils. Same goes for access to influence change in education, health, etc

Is equality for all a better focus – if social justice boxes things in too much?

The offsetting that goes on in the developed world is part of the debate – our global responsibility

Direction of travel now is about opportunity to access wellbeing, not just money, and this opens things up more, as a political concept.

### Where are we in Scotland now?

FM's focus on a socially just country where all matter, picking up theme from previous leaders. Ministerial portfolios reflect this. Stated aspirations tap in. New economic strategy talks of inclusive growth as an objective. Labour's Sarah Boyack is spokesperson for environmental justice. However Scotland's ability to deliver on this agenda is limited by many of the issues / powers being reserved.

SG's Fairer Scotland conversation is opportunity to post views; so far few mentions of environment though it is referenced also through responses on greenspace for example.

Latest Scottish budget is not a demonstration of these SJ priorities however.

Aim of national transport strategy is also equality of access to transport and so far this is being missed by Govt's spending plans relating (focus on more road building while some local communities have zero bus services to access jobs, shops and leisure services).

What is more, Govt is not measuring its progress on the transport strategy.

Should we provide critical commentary of where and when the Government *is/is not* meeting its priorities?

Doing this with other allies on a set of wider perspectives? Who are they?

The Scottish referendum debate encouraged visioning about the country and world we want to live in, while subsequently we have shifted to an SNP vs. Westminster political competition. Can we return the focus to the more forward-looking one?

LINK's survey of TFs – revealed some connection with the issues, limited engagement in SJ projects in part because of charities' constitutional remits, though good awareness of the issues. Should we submit our activities to scrutiny through an SJ sieve – who is benefitting from our work - or is this a process which esp., the larger orgs could not do (multiple aims, many departments, UK in nature in many cases). Perception of

us as well to do middle class is a challenge to us. LINK has looked at its diversity profile in the past; it is the way it is and may be hard to significantly change.

Do we need to do that, or are we anyway focussed on the public realm which is in principle available to everyone, though in practice there are problems with this, where trends are (economically, culturally) for opportunities to benefit the better off (private realm) and not the poorer in society?

Many of our members' charitable purposes include education, where we are active on SJ, doing our best, though it is tricky to address the poor, by our habitual reliance on volunteers; we would need access to funding to support project officers. Funding is one of the realities affecting our focus.

SJ work is and has to be a journey we are on. There are clear developments with members' campaigns and literature and aims referring to social issues, benefits of accessing nature, concerns about lack of such access; some are supporting Wellbeing and Nature Act (England) on inequality and exclusion. LINK work on Food Coalition is focussing beyond nature on social issues too, and is being done in allegiance with other social stakeholders. Even if essentially focussed on the conservation aspects which are many of our members' core objects.

Need to frame what we do in that context, more.

Can we change our recruitment patterns? Unlikely? Some are working with Project Scotland (interns) and SNH (apprenticeships) to actively engage with people from poorer backgrounds. There are limits to what these initiatives can achieve.

So, what do we need to take to the social justice debate?

Our (humans') reliance on nature

Need for clean air to breathe

Right to beauty (but costs of this)

Spatial planning for where people live and work

Wellbeing depending in part on quality of environment, mental health links to quality of and access to nature/environment

Look at environment through lens of what is affecting people themselves - obesity, diet issues, chemicals in food causing illness

Educational attainment links to your access to quality environment and all that involves

Transport and its impacts on people – aim for our public transport system to be used by the rich as actively as it is by those who have no option

Consider/ profile the links between private interest and its damaging effects to our environment / Private money – public assets

Should we survey sample communities about what environment means for them, how much it matters, on what aspects they would want to see change most?

Allies for LINK on these issues – a big territory of discussion and alliance, including

NHS Place Standard is useful material

Oxfam Humankind Index

Trade Unions (transitions from old industries, H&S, fuel poverty)

Academics esp in terms of research

Public agencies which all have duties in respect of wellbeing

Community Empowerment – players such as Development Trusts, Scottish Community Alliance, Scottish

Rural Parliament

Planning

Tourism

Faith groups

Youth (Young Scot, Youth Parliament) groups, Schools  
Poverty Alliance  
Urban regeneration players including housing associations  
SCCS  
Champions across political spectrum  
SCVO potentially

## **What actions do we want, can we take, and what are the mechanisms**

### 1 Responding to the Fairer Scotland conversation

Andy Myles had drafted a submission, circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

We agreed to finesse and submit noting that the audience is anyone reading the conversation online, including political, civil service, wider stakeholders and respondents.

We would submit in later January, after the following steps:

SDGs need referenced in a short general intro, as they do put environment and social justice together

Intro should also carry our view that the vision is currently inadequate, and omits environment; core ambition needs to include environmental goals – what kind of environment do we want all to be living in by 2030 – especially in view of the climate change agreement fresh from Paris

Potentially as part of that intro, food points could be better expressed – relating to health and wellbeing

Shift content bringing 2<sup>nd</sup> half upfront and shortening/summarising first half to its essence, to encourage people to read all.

Differentiation – frame our approach constructively in this way, ie fundamental injustice of the poorer benefitting less from good stuff and much harder affected by the bad stuff we do as a society, therefore there is a need to level where some will have less (though lose no quality of life) and others will get quality of life, all will have enough.

Illustrate the public v. private realms, the well-off enjoying largely public realm ‘goods’, good environment is better for everyone

Include reference to the key role of planning to all of this

Give some examples of what LINK/its members do (now) which relate, positive action – food coalition, upping the ante on ERA, etc.

Bullets – Climate change needs to be at the top of our bullet points (currently further into the response).

Education bringing understanding of equal/inequal so as to achieve attitude-change. Food beefed up (as mentioned above – possibly shifted to intro)

### **Actions:**

**Members respond individually and contribute to commentary online (SG website)**

**Matthew revises and re-circulates to this group by Christmas. Group commenting on and signing up to his revision by 7 January. Final draft circulates to all LINK members 11 January. Members sign up (no edits basis) within a week to ten days. We submit 20 January and copy to Env't and Justice Ministers.**

**January bulletin flags intentions to members**

### 2 Other activities and mechanisms

Options were:

- having had this useful discussion, to do nothing;
- aim to engage via the other 5 LINK Groups and Subgroups, perhaps arming them with a set of principles and asking them to consider what these mean in their work, how they could embed SJ; or
- to establish a group which takes SJ work, as one of LINK's priorities, forward.

We noted that LINK's current economics workstream had developed out of 3 years' discussions by a small forum of members, including a workshop and a commissioned report; LINK had aspired to connect with the economics agenda for years before that. Would asking other groups to embed our aspirations be effective?. Whilst FoES has some relevant staff remits (ie., Mary Church's work on access to courts, and Eurig

Scandrett's chairing of the Environmental Justice Network), few of LINK's members have relevant posts. Some of LINK's Fellows would likely be interested in supporting this area of work and new President, Joyce McMillan, was clearly interested in linkages across society.

Suggestions of next steps aired at the meeting were:

Align with bodies like TRANSform and SCCS, who are having similar conversations, do joint work on some issues, support them on others, since changing our own direction significantly is not an option. This level of action would require us to know views on issues and have a conduit to these other coalitions.

Develop a mutual solidarity where LINK supports social groups' responses on consultations that are not our usual 'fare', if they will submit responses to those we focus on? This would require us to have views and strategic arguments ready. However, we could do more to frame our arguments around social justice and get other stakeholders to frame theirs around environment, with the SJ grouping in LINK mapping the different communities. And mapping organisations which contribute to SJ such as green TUs, CEMVO.

Focus our SJ effort around supporting the Fairer concept in ways that come up, so long as it embraces environment more than currently.

Consider whether we have common ground enough to join the Environmental Justice Network (a loose coalition sometimes meeting).

Commission external scrutiny of our work and potential for linkages, to inform us on what action we can take. Eg., via Poverty Alliance. The feeling was that we should pose ourselves a set of questions and look to answer these before we discuss this with Poverty Alliance. It may be that the relevant actions we can take are more suited to individual members than to LINK collectively – eg recruitment, living wage, affordable memberships, board diversity, selection of organisations' focusses, what we achieve (aim to achieve) for people less well off. Having done this internally, we can then invite an external look at our individual and collective work. **Action: Pete to circulate draft set of questions to circulate to this group**

Scope projects which would bridge the gap between our core missions and the social justice mission (ie., if we want to take SJ more seriously, what steps would organisations take to connect to geographical communities or other communities of interest most excluded at the moment).

Develop symbolic aims connecting SJ to E aspiration – such as every kid in Scotland should have..... **Action: Any member to add suggestions**

Establish a group, if we have capacity, to coordinate the necessary arguments and conduits? Could pull on the time and input of trustees as an additional resource. Those present agreed to consult their organisations on whether they want to engage in this area, how, and in relation to which of the options above.

**Action: All members involved in December discussion to consult with organisations on this**

Meantime, we agreed that

- as organisations think of ways to make connections to SJ, they keep in touch via the email group
- we flag thinking to date to the Network at the Jan 28<sup>th</sup> meeting
- we raise our Fairer Scotland submission points with Minister early Feb

A further meeting will be organised for March 2016. **Action: Staff**