

Scottish Environment Week

6th–12th February 2006



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ENVIRONMENT LINK LAUNCHES NEW FARMED ENVIRONMENT AUDIT AND WELCOMES RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION.

Scottish Environment LINK has launched a new audit “The State of Scotland’s Farmed Environment 2005” at a special Parliamentary event as part of Scottish Environment Week. The audit, carried out by the Macaulay Institute, is intended as a web-based resource and aims to provide an independent assessment of the state of Scotland’s farmed environment in 2005, by collating the best available data and information to give a national overview. It will provide a sound base of information upon which politicians, policy makers and others can make informed decisions about our countryside.

Mandy Gloyer, Convenor of LINK’s Agriculture Taskforce, said “There has been varied success, in recent years, in improving environmental trends in Scotland’s farmed environment. While it is clear from the audit that some environmental issues, such as bathing water quality, have been improved during the last few years, a range of important environmental issues such as the contribution of agriculture to greenhouse gas emissions, water abstraction and pollution, and habitat and species decline remain a major concern. The new Scottish Rural Development Plan gives us a perfect opportunity to create and improve the means of tackling these environmental priorities in the Scottish countryside. The “State of Scotland’s Farmed Environment 2005” gives us the background information to do this”.

Dr Gerald Schwarz from the Macaulay Institute, the principle author of the report, said: “This audit has highlighted where there has been progress in improving the farmed environment in Scotland, and where there are still opportunities for improvement. There is a real need for such comprehensive environmental auditing, especially as the management of the Scottish countryside becomes more integrated. Scottish Environment LINK has shown considerable initiative in enabling this audit to be produced. The audit fills a gap in the way we organise information about the Scottish environment. There is certainly a lot of information available but it is not that easy to access. By making it available on the Web we hope that it will be accessible and useful. It can be easily updated and we hope that there will be a commitment to doing this.”

LINK Agriculture Taskforce particularly welcomed the launch of the Scottish Rural Development Strategy consultation document by Ross Finnie, Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs, at our Scottish Environment Week event. The Strategy consultation rightly recognises Scotland’s natural resources as a key asset of the country, and one of its central themes is enhancing rural landscapes and the natural heritage. Mandy Gloyer went on to say: “The commitment the Minister has shown to meeting the environmental challenges in Scotland’s farmed environment, by the

emphasis on environment in his consultation, and its launch here this evening, must be followed through in the detail of the Strategy and the Scottish Rural Development Plan itself. This is not least because the taxpaying public will increasingly expect improvements in the Scottish countryside in return for the funding they put in to agricultural subsidy payments”.

Rob Morris, Land Policy Unit Manager for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), said: “Agriculture depends on excellent air, soil and water quality so maintaining and improving our environment must be a shared goal for everyone involved in land management. SEPA believes that the wider adoption of 'best management practices' needs a supportive approach and targeting farm support to help deliver this is essential. Only through partnership working 'on the ground' by SEPA and all partners will an integrated and effective delivery be possible.”

For more information, contact:

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Scottish Environment Week 2006 is

Organised by:



and has been supported by contributions from Scottish Environment Protection Agency, SNH and LINK members

Editors notes:

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the network for voluntary sector environmental organisations in Scotland. LINK has 36 member bodies that cover interests across the natural and cultural heritage, and are supported by around 500,000 people. The **everyone** campaign is an initiative of Scottish Environment LINK, enabling people who care about their environment to find out about current issues and take action online or at events in their area.

(2) The Macaulay Institute is the premier land use research institute in the UK. Two hundred and seventy staff are based at the Macaulay Institute at Craigiebuckler in Aberdeen. The Macaulay Institute aims to be an international leader in research on the use of rural land resources for the benefit of people and the environment and is involved in research across the globe; from Scotland to Chile and China. More about the Macaulay Institute can be found at www.macaulay.ac.uk

(3) The Scottish Environment Week event, "Getting the most for the environment from the new Scottish Rural Development Plan" was hosted by Rib Gibson, MSP, and held on 8th February 2006 at the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood. Ross Finnie, MSP, Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs, launched the Rural Development Strategy Consultation. Gerald Schwarz, from the Macaulay Institute, presented an outline of "The State of Scotland's Farmed Environment 2005". Rob Morris, SEPA, and Becky Shaw, Scottish Crofting Foundation spoke about the opportunities presented by the SRDP.

(4) "The State of Scotland's Farmed Environment 2005"-key findings.
<http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/LINK/>

The audit reviewed a comprehensive range of contemporary issues and environmental obligations and incentives related to the farmed environment in Scotland. While it is clear from the audit that some environmental issues, such as bathing water quality, have been improved during the last few years, a range of important environmental issues such as contribution of agriculture to Greenhouse Gas emissions, water abstraction and pollution, and habitat and species decline remain a major concern. For example, 28% of Scottish emissions are estimated to result from agriculture, land-use change and forestry, a disproportionately large contribution to UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions. With respect to habitats and species, by 2002, from 173 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and 31 BAP habitats considered, 29% of the habitats and 18% of the species were in decline. Moreover, the audit also showed land use diversification related issues have grown in importance and new land uses, e.g. horsiculture, have become regionally important or, as in the case of energy crops, are expected to become regionally important in the future.

A continuous process of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy changes the incentives for the management of the farmed environment, moving away from production-related incentives to income transfer and public good provision. However, although with the introduction of the Rural Development Regulation (Pillar 2) in the Agenda 2000 reform and the introduction of decoupling and compulsory modulation in the 2003 reform more emphasis and funding has been put on rural development and agri-environment, focus is still mainly on farm income effects and the CAP remains a sectoral policy. While new environment schemes, e.g. Land Management Contracts, have been developed, lack of local targeting (spatial instead of sectoral focus) and lack of integration between the CAP and other new directives, the Water Framework Directive, constrain the benefits of environmental policies. Environmental benefits would be improved by a catchment-based approach and an integrated land use strategy bringing together different land use sectors (e.g. agriculture and forestry) and taking more account of the objectives of the WFD and Kyoto Protocol and designing CAP policy tools and incentives accordingly.

(5) The Scottish Rural Development Strategy will form the Scottish component of the UK's Rural Development Strategy from 2007. The consultation, launched on 8th February, will conclude on 29th March 2006.

(6) The new Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP) will cover the period 2007-2013, and contain provision for Scotland's rural development measures for that period. These will include agri-environment, forestry, Natura 2000 and Less Favoured Areas Support

Scheme (LFASS) provision. The Scottish Executive will consult on proposals for the new SRDP in Spring 2006.

(6) Find out more about Scottish Environment Week and view the Programme by visiting the Scottish Environment LINK website – www.scotlink.org