

Dear Simon

The tragedy of your early death has not sunk in. Having known each other for around three decades, I cannot let your death go by without remembering you: as a cheerleader for the environment, as an outstanding public figure, and as a caring and compassionate friend and colleague.

No one can possibly doubt your achievements as the cheerleader for the environment in Scotland over so long. When many others hid behind formulaic responses of their organisations, your voice was clear and loud for what you thought was necessary whatever the circumstances. In the early days, this was even harder than more recently with politicians, and dare I say their civil servants, suspicious of the shrill voices and who they represented. But your practical down to earth, common sense approach, spoken with measured passion and backed by sound evidence was not to be thwarted. As a result, you gained listening ears in places that environmentalists had not penetrated previously. And, you did so successfully to the end of your days. As a leader of an NGO not before really heard in Scotland you excelled. Not only did you bring new ideas and thinking to the attention of us all, but you also fostered creativity among your staff so that they, in turn became thought creators, action activists and organisational leaders. Your credibility in Scottish Environment LINK was never in doubt working cooperatively with the leading figures of the day and moving the organisation forward. To me, the turning point was your espousal of sustainable development thinking and developing it into a whole Earth, whole Scotland approach, and pursuing it with the relentless vigour and determination that was your hallmark.

Since retiring from WWF Scotland, you have played a very formative and formidable role in government circles: at the Forestry Commission in Scotland, SNH, the Deer Commission and HLF Scotland. Your willingness to work within the system in the hope of gaining traction for new thinking and a change in the conscientiousness of organisations has been another of your hall marks. You did not always find it easy, as I recall from our many private conversations over the years. But you persevered with that resolution which showed so well in your eyes and in your facial expressions. It was a determination that the system and those who slavishly adhere to it would not defeat your positive and progressive attitude. Added to that was the enlightened thinking which came from the wider world of global conservation and environmentalism that you brought to us. You always had in the forefront of your mind the importance of people, not just the furry emblem of your own employer or other such iconic species, but a ready recognition that without people recognising their role and their responsibility for caring for our earth we would not bequeath a meaningful future for our successors.

There were inevitably times when we disagreed. But we always knew the basis of it and respected each other's views and why we held them. It made it easy for me to rely on you for reflection and counsel when needed. And when you needed a listening ear my phone would ring. That two-way sharing and seeking of advice happened often over the years of our friendship. And you were always caring about others, your family quite clearly and your friends and their spouses, as I know well myself: 'how's Lindsay' you would always ask at the beginning of a conversation.

My regret is that we did not spend enough time together to discuss fundamental issues in more depth. And, more particularly, to view the far horizons and how we might persuade others to share that view and to help make it the new reality.

In our sadness at your far too early death, our consolation is that we heard your voice, and shared your wisdom, thoughts and ideas. We are all the better for having known you as a campaigner, as a public figure and most of all as a friend. Thank you. Roger Crofts