

Minutes of the LINK Board meeting held on 22 April 2010 at the LINK office, Shore Road, Perth

PRESENT

President: Helen Zealley

Trustees: Ian McCall (LINK Chair), Deborah Long (LINK Vice Chair), David Downie (LINK Treasurer), Andrew Fairbairn, Mike Robinson, Jonny Hughes, Eila Macqueen, Dan Barlow. Lloyd Austin, Paul Ritchie, (Treasurer designate, observer)

Staff: Andy Myles (Parliamentary Officer), Alice Walsh (Development Officer), Hugh Green (Finance Officer).

1. Apologies

Jen Anderson (Chief Officer), Vicky Junik, Ian Findlay (Observer).

Ian welcomed Paul Ritchie to his first meeting of the Board.

2. Minutes of last meeting on 21 January

The draft minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Organisational Supporter Business Plan

The proposal brought to the January meeting had been worked up (paper 3) to the satisfaction of trustees involved (IF, AF, DD and MR). There were a number of items for discussion and approval. Trustees agreed that organisations which are wholly statutory in nature; eg government agencies and NDPBs as a distinct target of our advocacy, should not be required to join as Organisational Supporters as a condition of inclusion in any LINK events, although the affiliation should be open to them if desired. Otherwise trustees approved the proposals as set out in the paper; a single tier cost of £1000, the transition arrangements for current Supporters and Subscribers, discretion to refuse or cease affiliation, and the requirement for non-statutory organisations ineligible for full membership to join or cease to be invited to LINK events. Trustees undertook to approach potential Organisational Supporters as follows:

Central Scotland Countryside Trust, Grounds for Learning - Andy Fairbairn

Keep Scotland Beautiful & organisations under its umbrella, Botanic Gardens – Mike Robinson

Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority – Eila McQueen

Sustainable Development Commission, Zero Waste Scotland – Dan Barlow

SEPA – Helen Zealley

Architecture Design Scotland – Jonny Hughes

Paths for All, Greenspace Scotland – Ian Findlay (in absentia).

Approaches would begin once a written invitation was sent to these bodies from the Chair. Trustees were asked to send comment to Alice on the draft criteria and terms and conditions. **Action: AW, trustees**

3.2 Fred Edwards Trust update & funding request

In addition to the update circulated Lloyd clarified that the FE Trust will potentially be both a fundraising and a fund disbursing Trust. As yet it had no resources, the LINK and other funding being assigned to the establishment and launch costs only. The funding request for £3,000 was approved by trustees.

4. Operations

4.1 2009/10 Quarter 4 and KPI reports

The updated plan was approved, the two items marked for Board discussion covered. On the KPIs Andy Myles noted that the outcome for face-to-face exchanges with MSPs was difficult to measure; the group which had developed the KPIs and annual targets had focussed on outputs owing to this difficulty. The value of the plan for keeping an overview on overall activity was re-affirmed. The value of the KPIs for reporting to funders was less evident, as new targets had been agreed with SNH.

4.3 2010/11 Operating Plan

Trustees had not had sufficient time to consider this paper before the meeting, so agreed to discuss it at a further meeting. The plan captured the workplans of current task forces as submitted for the November strategic forward planning meeting or since updated, the aspirations of that meeting and staff core actions and reflected reduction in areas on which it had proved difficult for staff/convenors to provide progress updates (eg member bodies' responsibilities); trustees agreed this was sensible. Trustees were asked to send any initial comments on the plan to Jen, and it would be discussed fully a further meeting aligned to a meeting with SNH (see under 4.5 below). **Action: staff, trustees**

4.2 Political Strategy Report

Andy M introduced the report. Discussion covered:

5.6 The major Government Agencies, how they are held to account for their performance and structures. It is likely we will be asked opinions of agency structures in the manifesto process. We need to be quite clear what outcomes we want as our top line, and demonstrate what will not be achieved with cuts, what has been achieved from SEARS. It was agreed that Andy should produce a first draft within a month as a basis for discussion with several trustees. **Action: Andy to draft by end May.**

It was noted that a protective cost order had been awarded in the Scottish courts (for Hunterston appeal).

General election outcomes – opportunities to influence. Top line Scottish asks were: delivery of Calman taxation measures, fiscal measures to move to a green economy, and modal shift from internal flights to rail. Andy would liaise with colleagues in sister Links to discuss joint asks and these would be promoted to the Scottish Secretary of State and Shadows. **Action: Andy to contact other Links**

Subjects for Inquiries: Andy had sent an email round recently seeking members' ideas.

Engagement with local councils and activism at local level: Andy had set out the case for better engagement and a recommended programme for action should resources be prioritised for this work. SOA TF would continue with its excellent work plan, though capacity is limited and engagement is at national level with bodies charged with delivery of national outcomes to be taken forward via SOAs, and that a better way of engaging with CoSLA was needed. Trustees agreed that this is an important area of work, that we needed at the very least to keep our focus on the current work of the SOA TF, and that action required more detailed discussion by a subgroup including resourcing. Lloyd, Dan, Maggie Keegan (volunteered by Jonny) and representation would be sought from a smaller organisation in the SOATF. Suggestions included using high level ambassadors known to particular councils, who may be members of LINK bodies to promote our agenda. Regarding Andy's recommendations, it was agreed engagement with CosLA was first, and that mapping members' supporter bases and targeting key councils would be a useful. Paul suggested from the funding perspective that it might be possible for an aspect of helping them to achieve their objectives could be fundable.

Action: staff to arrange sub-group meeting.

Constitutional reform: trustees agreed that LINK would not participate in the consultation on the Referendum Bill.

4.4 Congress theme, for discussion

Trustees proposed Environment and the law as this years theme, taking a wide view of it, from implementation of legislation since Devolution, environmental crime, access to justice, regulation of pollution, and an international biodiversity perspective from Rio until the present, with an assessment of whether legislation has helped to conserve biodiversity or not, and the question of legal rights beyond humanity. It was agreed that Andrew Thin should be invited with an active role (see below). Deborah, Jonny and Lloyd volunteered to take part in the steering group. **Action: AW to take forward.**

4.5 Relationship with SNH

Ian reported on his and Helen's meeting with Andrew Thin, following LINK's meeting with SNH staff. Discussion covered publicity surrounding members concern about SNH priorities and the SNH Board reaction to this. Andrew had been keen to take up the offer of further discussion with LINK trustees. The Board agreed that discussions should be based on SNH's new corporate objectives, and should involve other SNH board members. Staff will explore dates before the summer. **Action: staff to progress meeting**

4.6 Principles re LINK support for member applications

Trustees discussed the rationale behind trustees' recent concerns about supportive letters regarding members' funding applications and approved the criteria set out in Jen's paper.

5. Annual General Meeting

5.1 Standing item on Board succession, for discussion

Trustees approved proposals 1 to 4 in the paper circulated, to maintain a percentage of Trustees for rotation, to reduce the number of elected trustees to 9; introducing the option of a trustee serving a fourth term if elected chair; and induction of an option where the Chair may be elected 'ex officio'. This last option was also agreed for Treasurer. **Action: Staff to progress.**

Ian McCall confirmed his wish to stand down as chair at the AGM. He and Deborah would talk to trustees individually regarding succession. **Action: Ian, Deborah**

5.2 Draft Trustees' annual report.

This was noted. Trustees were encouraged to send their detailed comments to Jen within a fortnight. **Action: Trustees**

6. Financials

6.1 Final outturn for 2009/10

Hugh reported that the figures had been approved by the auditor. In summary the end of year figures were very close to the last forecast. Cost recovery from projects for core was good. Part of the SNH grant (£4,000) was deferred to July, due to SNH rules, and will appear under 2010-11 income.

The FSG had discussed a proposal to add a further £30,000 to LINK's contingency fund, to allow for further fundraising in case one of the core grants should cease, all three up

for renewal in 2011. The rationale was set out in the Trustees' draft annual report. There were no issues raised about this by the auditor. There was discussion of the impact on fundraising approaches. The measure was agreed as sensible financial planning by trustees, with the proviso that it be revised when circumstances change. It would require formal approval by LINK's accountants Morris and Young. The accounts were approved. **Action: HG to auditor**

6.2 Carbon accounting for LINK

Hugh invited trustees' feedback on the carbon accounts which were developing year on year. There was an increase in Perth office emissions due to the presence of new computer services, an extra part-time person working (CES), and the exceptionally cold winter. It was agreed that a paragraph be added to the trustees' annual report. Lloyd suggested presenting the figures in terms of FTE staff, as RSPB does. **Action: Hugh to develop and add to annual report**

7. AOB

Jonny Hughes thanked staff for the consistently high quality of all the board papers.

Next meeting 22 June morning Perth.

Board meeting with SNH and to discuss operating plan tba.

Alice Walsh

23 April 2010.