

DRAFT MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD 9 AUGUST 2012 AT LINK OFFICE IN PERTH

PRESENT

Trustees Deborah Long (Chair), Eila Macqueen (Vice Chair), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Jonny Hughes Helen Todd, Angus Yarwood, Lloyd Austin, and Mike Robinson

In attendance Ross Finnie - President
Mandy Orr - Observing
Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh, Andy Myles – LINK Staff

Eila introduced Mandy Orr, a friend of long standing, whose career had been in fundraising and the local authority sector, and who was now a professional fundraising consultant. Eila recommended Mandy to the Board.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Ian Findlay (Trustee), Diarmid Hearn (observing during the year), and Hugh Green (Finance Officer).

2. MINUTES, MATTERS ARISING & OTHER REPORTS

2.1 Minutes of 26 April meeting - Approved for accuracy.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 G6 meeting rescheduled to 19 September; Helen Todd to attend for LINK. G6's history and function outlined to Mandy.

2.2.2 Appropriate level of liaison with SNH was proving challenging to sign off with the agency: LINK was keen to allocate staff for grant progress discussion, TFs for policy contact (with trustee input as necessary), and chair-to-chair contact once annually. SNH sought contact at high level in LINK to discuss how the network planned for a future without SNH funding and what it saw as priority issues for LINK and SNH. The Board agreed LINK was already taking appropriate action re future funding challenge with its business model assessment in later August. The meeting agreed that delivery of SNH's statutory remit should be included on the agenda for the next liaison as well as the different purpose of LINK's grant, to other grants which SNH makes. It was agreed to ensure the meeting took place ahead of the meeting with the minister in November.

Action: Subgroup trustees & staff resolve plans, secure date before mid November

2.2.3 Government funding The need to make the case for continuing public funding for services delivered by the movement had been agreed at the Board's away-day. The meeting noted that this issue had been added the agenda for the minister in November. It was agreed to meet Keith Connal (SG) for discussion in advance and to highlight the mixed messages given by Govt about funding at this stage.

Action: DL seek discussion with Keith Connal

2.2.4 A meeting with CBI Scotland, part of the Board's relationship building with a wider policy sector, was likely to take place on 2nd October. Deborah could not attend. Helen Zealley would be approached to attend in her stead. A draft agenda and briefing had been prepared and Andy Myles would coordinate.

Actions: JA & ABM finalise meeting details and coordinate agenda

2.2.5 Promoting the environmental narrative – February's summit with agencies and others had agreed that the environmental narrative as presented by the sector is not good enough to

win arguments. The issue was felt to be how the sector can communicate key messages to better effect, rather than content (ABM suggested LINK's referendum strategy as a good recent example). DL advised a LINK lead was needed. LWA suggested involving Simon Pepper, Roger Crofts later in the discussion. An internal post-summit discussion would be held first, to involve Lloyd, Eila, Dave Morris, Dan or Richard at WWFS.

Action: JA arrange post-summit telecall

- 2.2.6 AGM planning – DL updated the meeting seeking volunteers for a short-term subgroup on succession planning. Two trustees would stand down (Eila and Jonny). Helen Todd was willing to stand as Vice Chair as Eila stood down. DL proposed that current co-optees Ian and Mike be proposed for election, leaving co-opted places free for the Board to fill as needed. This was approved. DL asked trustees to submit any updates to the skills audit circulated recently so that, in inviting member nominations, LINK guides members on particular needs on the Board. The meeting noted that Calum Duncan was willing to consider joining the board, though was currently managing two project posts for LINK and might wish to defer his nomination; the Board hoped he could be encouraged. Helen suggested encouraging Sustrans to consider nominating. DL and HT offered would form a subgroup to consider succession, including for chair, vice chair and treasurer.

Action: JA arrange sub group telecall August

- 2.2.7 Harnessing the support of individuals The meeting discussed a proposal to harness support of people who, working in wider aspects of public life have engaged with LINK and are likely to want to support its broad objectives. This resonated with the Board's May away-day idea of enlisting wider contacts in Scottish life to help communicate our narrative. The meeting felt honorary fellowship was not the right route (that is for internal players who are moving out of the network's radar) and agreed that the appropriate mechanism, remit, and a list of players should be developed by the post-summit group. Ideas to come to October's Board to agree how LINK and TFs should use this resource.

Action: Post-summit telecall

- 2.2.8 Congress theme and content – AW outlined the theme, to consider NGO and business contributions to the SD agenda; workshops would explore energy, transport, food & drink, and drivers for change. Ian Marchant SSE was already involved and each section of the programme would be co-facilitated by NGO and business.

- 2.2.9 Discretionary project fund The Funding Subgroup had made no recommendation to raise the level, as had been anticipated in April; its June meeting had concluded that the Board's business model assessment should guide any thoughts on increased spending.

3. REPORTS BACK

- 3.1 Rio+20 - Jonny reported on a very good event, for which the preceding effort in Scotland had ensured that the Minister's attendance in Rio. Though Rio itself has been a damp squib, there has been some positive moves by corporates on valuing natural capital. The Scottish group behind the Flourishing Scotland document, to which LINK had contributed, is continuing, based in SNIFFER with a secondee from BT working on the agenda for a year. Priorities are progressing 'beyond GDP' work, Scotland's voice in development and international relations, where our reputation is good, and Ecocide – the latter would be useful if related to the Human Rights agenda which has legal clout, and this UN related issue may interest CIFAL. J Hughes is happy to continue to loosely represent LINK on the steering group. He and Dan Barlow are assisting SCVO work on a shadow budget.

- 3.2 IUCN – Jonny reported that IUCN was focussing on agenda collusion. The Jeju congress offered a good programme; Jonny would attend under SWT auspices and report back. Clifton Bain would attend under LINK auspices, on IUCN peat-lands business. Jonny felt LINK would benefit in terms of profile and felt that UK NGO work is considered important within

IUCN; with Andy's assistance he would ensure circulation of various recent LINK material. Jonny also thanked the Board for LINK's support with his nomination as an IUCN regional councillor; he was standing against Roger Crofts – a good humoured competition!

- 3.3 Europe – Andy had met with Scotland Europa and discussed European dimensions of LINK's work with Jonny. They had looked at SWT's positive experience of membership of Scotland Europa, as well as LINK's involvement over the years with EEB. A possibility was for LINK and SWT to share membership of Scotland Europa. However, Andy proposed that LINK resources might be as well spent building up a network of local environmental and community groups in Scotland and reviewing scope for affiliation with that local dimension; with this in mind he would bring a paper to the October Board. Jen suggested the October discussion should also cover membership opportunities (a review of potential membership organisations was afoot led by Alice) and scope for business-level affiliation to LINK (proposed by Hugh) - on which papers would also come to the Board.

Actions: Staff papers on linkages, business, membership, for October Board

- 3.4 Financial report – Paul Ritchie reported that finances were in good shape at this stage in the year (ie first quarter); LINK was fairly well funded to late 2013, though with definite challenges thereafter. Angus Yarwood proposed we ensure good discussion time in October on the financial situation and implications for 3-4 years' operations ahead. The meeting noted that the Board's Employment Subgroup' would assess LINK's business model in later August, ahead of that Board discussion.

- 3.5 Funding subgroup report - Paul reported on the FSG's June meeting. This had signed off the annual accounts and informed LINK's accountants Morris & Young of our intention to review them this year and consider options for future accounting services. The FSG had also discussed the discretionary project fund, making no decisions, pending the ESG's business modelling in later August and wider board discussions of outcomes of that. Future subscriptions policy had been well discussed with some support for the view that a 5% rise per year for subscriptions on an on-going basis would be appropriate; the argument that this might lose members was unlikely: that members might be in financial crisis or might disagree with LINK over a particular service was more likely, neither of which would be much affected by a small percentage rise in subscription. The FSG expected to have a more detailed discussion of subscriptions after the ESG had met, so as to draft a proposal for subscriptions (2013/14) for the AGM, and ensure sign-off by the Board in October. The FSG had also discussed LINK's healthy reserves and felt the Board should discuss the appropriate use of these which might include: allocation to the DPF over several years; helping to fund marine posts and/or cover a gap in funding for these posts next summer; under-writing deficits in budgets for future years.

Action: FSG meeting ahead of October board to draft a subscriptions proposal

- 3.6 Trustee meeting with John Muir Trust – Angus had met Stuart Brooks and Helen McDade of JMT in July, subsequently reporting to LINK trustees, as agreed with JMT. Angus summarised the process and the recommendations in his report. The LINK meeting agreed:

3.6.1 There is merit in a 'super TF' idea (as an ideal) esp. as we advocate against working in silos; has been tried before in LINK and a cross-cutting SSTF didn't have great influence; strategic planning and networking meetings are where integration should be bottomed out by all. We will ask members and TFs to use strategic planning meetings to explore more integrated ways of working, and we will encourage members and TFs to start thinking about this in September with a view to constructive discussion in November.

Actions: Staff, Members, TFs for strategic planning

3.6.2 Disagreement happens naturally in organisations; the Board's away-day on refreshed strategy had concluded that members and task forces, board and staff should all recognise this, avoid seeing disagreement as failure, and acknowledge it as a manifestation of our celebrated diversity. **Action: implement strategy action plan**

3.6.3 Despite time constraints at strategic planning make time for members to flag own work.

Action: strategic planning agenda

3.6.4 In line with the Board's decision in early 2012, LINK would be progressing the planned workshop on energy issues, to bottom out disagreements and confirm areas of consensus, as soon as the LTF's draft statement became available as a plank for that discussion.

Action: LINK staff, once LTF confirms timing

3.6.5 Task forces should consider using, more, the opportunity/scope for policy seminars in Parliament to promote key messages / concerns. **Action: Flag at strategic planning**

3.6.6 Clarify the status of the marine project to members: ie., that as a result of successful advocacy by NGOs over more than a decade from the 90s, charitable trusts offered to fund Links' marine work towards legislation in 2006. This work has been fully funded across the UK by 2 trusts, with dedicated policy and advocacy staff, no reliance on LINK to fundraise, and where LINK core time has been committed (mainly for recruitment, reporting, HR, parliamentary advice) any cost including core staff time has been fully recovered from the project to LINK. This has meant more funding available for LINK's other task forces through LINK's DPF over the last six years. Any TF can choose to profile its issues and encourage trust or other support for that work.

Action: Angus would respond to JMT in liaison with Deborah

4 STRATEGY

4.1 KPIs – The meeting noted that the draft KPI proposals (section 8) would see further development to determine 1 outcome and 3-4 output indicators per objective, and the means of reporting on these. **Action: Jen**

4.2 Revised strategy for approval – The document reflected key points from a member survey (early 2012), survey of external audiences (spring 2012), report on Chair's meetings with trustees (2011/12), and discussions of a Board away-day (May 2012). The meeting approved the refreshed strategy subject to revision at 4.1 above. It was agreed that the revised strategy be circulated to members in early September. **Action: staff**

4.3 Implementing refreshed strategy – The meeting considered early actions in the draft action plan circulated, which aimed to highlight actions new or pressing for the three years ahead. It was agreed to:

- Remove annex on wider policy community and keep for own reference as a network
- Regularly encourage TFs to assess the range of available tactics and know which to use when, safeguarding basic relationships of trust and respect but having the scope to express dissatisfaction clearly when called for
- Develop skills of people in the network for robust advocacy and effective negotiations:
 - developing current advocacy training to identify and develop skills needed to pursue an advocacy strategy;
 - establishing a mentoring scheme to provide opportunities for people to develop effective skills (negotiation, advocacy, chairing, fundraising) through coaching with 'elders', hon fellows and other willing contacts who can offer these skills;
 - regularly checking whether LINK TFs are operating without that expertise and need to be put in touch with people.

Mandy Orr observed that this was an area which was fundable as a project.

- Use strategic planning, networking meetings, and also the post-summit discussion, to assess appropriate targets in wider policy community (ie our existing 'map', and proposals to come from staff on local linkages, international routes, the business community, and could-be members).
- Organise lunch with wider contacts to discuss narrative and its promotion in Scotland.
- Encourage engagement by:
 - inviting members to request a one-to-one with trustees if this would be helpful;
 - targeting members least engaged at this point;



- reviewing membership each year at board level and offering contact where members have concerns.

Overall aim is to offer a meeting with each member of LINK over the course of one corporate strategy.

- Pursue current approach to evaluation and do better where this is called for; evaluation matters, helps. Make sure any proposed initiative is capable of evaluation, and that the intent to evaluate informs objectives at the outset.
- Continue to interrogate operating plan which incorporates aims and evaluation means.

Actions: revise action plan; implement above actions; October board revisits action plan

5 OPERATING PLAN 2012/13 - FIRST QUARTER REPORT

The report had been circulated and the meeting noted that its discussions to that point had already addressed all areas highlighted for Board discussion.

6 AOB

- 5.1 It was agreed that all papers relevant to Board agendas would go on a protected page of the members' website and trustees circulated in good time with links to them there. We would avoid split circulation of papers, late circulation, or mixing hard with electronic copy. **Actions: all staff**
- 5.2 Trustees were circulated in July, as they had requested, with brief bullet points summarising 'asks' from TFs, to inform them for opportunistic conversations with decision-makers. This would happen each quarter. Feedback on value welcome.
- 5.3 Mandy Orr offered observations on scope for LINK to engage with funders including the corporate sector, and encouraged consideration of a strategy for attracting this support, perhaps looking at different packages and at how member bodies could engage within these. She observed that CBIS has a vast network of contacts and felt this could be an issue for future discussion with them. LINK's current available financial reserves put it in a strong negotiating position wrt. funders, eg in terms of match funding.
- 5.4 Dates for 2013 meetings would be confirmed. **Action: Jen**

5 NEXT MEETINGS

Next board meeting would be a **full day discussion on 18 October 2012**, from 10:00 to 15:30.