



Minutes of a meeting of the LINK Board held on 25 June 2009, in Perth

Present

President: Helen Zealley

Trustees: John Mayhew (Chair), Lloyd Austin, Andrew Fairbairn, Ian McCall

Staff: Jen Anderson (CO), Hugh Green (Finance), Andy Myles (Parliamentary) and Alice Walsh (Development)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Trustees Deborah Long (Vice-Chair), David Downie (Treasurer), Eila Macqueen Dan Barlow, Ian Findlay, Mike Robinson and Jonny Hughes.

Rather than postpone the meeting, the Chair explained that he had decided to go ahead, albeit inquorate, and to ask absent trustees to homologate decisions made. Those present supported this decision. Absent trustees would be contacted (**Jen**).

2. Minutes of last meeting (22 April 2009) were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Succession planning JHM, IM and JA had met for handover. Ian was happy to go ahead, though his future with RAS was uncertain, and he would need to balance the demands of LINK with his own career needs.

Deborah Long and David Downie were able and willing to continue as Vice Chair and Treasurer, respectively, for another year, though David would like this to be his last year in the role. Effort to identify his successor had solicited initial inquiries from Paul Ritchie (SWT) who was expected to confirm his position during the summer. If willing, Paul would be able to attend Board and Subgroup meetings as an observer up to the AGM in 2010 when he could be formally elected. Approaches had also been made to FoES, JMT, SNW, to all of which and others we could return if Paul Ritchie declines.

3.2 Nominations to the Board Vicky Junik had been nominated by NTS, to one of the two ordinary vacancies created by the resignations of Françoise van Buuren and John Mayhew. Calum Duncan was not standing for election given additional responsibilities he continued to carry for the marine project. Nominations for trustees standing down in rotation and willing to be re-elected had been received from Lloyd Austin, Jonny Hughes, Deborah Long, Ian McCall and Eila Macqueen.

A suggestion from members was to look to member body boards in future; however, the meeting agreed the need to ensure a balance of people with sufficient operational knowledge of the network.

Further discussion during 2009 would be useful towards the aim of replacing up to two ordinary trustees per year (**Board**).

3.3 Post AGM tasks The skills audit and workload division tables would be circulated to trustees for update / completion (**Jen**).

The Board had agreed previously to co-opt Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson for a further year and the approval of other trustees would be sought. Contributions of Ian and Mike on the Board and the Employment and Funding Subgroup work were much valued.

Staff would liaise with Ian McCall to provide him with the same support, working from home, as LINK has been able to give John Mayhew over the last year and half (**Hugh**).

3.4 Commemorating Fred Edwards LWA reported that the group had followed up suggestions of other contacts, received from Mary Edwards. These were Bill Grieve and Alan Dickson who had known Fred from other areas of his working life. The group would meet them during the summer and keep in touch with Mary Edwards, working up a proposal to celebrate Fred's life on the basis of the principles agreed earlier in 2009. Helen Zealley suggested the involvement too of Alison Elliott with whom Fred had worked through the Centre for Ecology and other church-related areas (**Jen, Lloyd**).

4. Operating Plan

4.1 KPI report Thanks were recorded to Adean Lutton for the report. The meeting agreed progress was good. For the FWTF to remain active, commitment was needed from members willing to play an active part going forward and this would be flagged at the Networking meeting. A WTF email grouping remained in place of the active task force, which had no forward plans. WNE work was led by Lloyd Austin. Land use strategy would need leadership (**Networking**).

4.2 Quarter 1 report

The decision of Soil Association Scotland not to rejoin LINK meant that subscription income would be lower than planned and this KPI would need monitoring as the year went by and members responded to subscription invoices. Members had been invited to flag concerns a.s.a.p. with David and Hugh; in fact, 2010/11 could in fact be a tougher year for turnover amongst members. The KPI reflects network's ambitions to retain independence from funders and minimise the risk of withdrawal of funding packages.

The meeting discussed the quasi NGO sector, with larger budgets than the voluntary sector, the same access to charitable status, and often with interests, aspiration and commitment in common. The issue considered was whether LINK could develop a category of *affiliation* to harness that energy, satisfy that sector's interest in engaging with the network and its concern for the environment, and benefit from the considerable funding available there, without compromising the principle we apply to organisations seeking *membership*, ie that they are citizen-led and established by voluntary effort. This principle has benefitted LINK in terms of demonstrating our independence of public and private sector in relation to advocacy, we know it is appreciated by decision-makers and we should think very hard about changing tack.

That a further stream of income would make our KPI relating to membership subscriptions even more challenging, was noted: such new funding would be for non-essential activity rather than for any of our essential work.

The meeting agreed, subject to other trustees' support, that space for further discussion should be arranged amongst a subgroup involving some staff, some trustees and honorary fellows, to give further thought to these issues (**Staff**).

Andy Fairbairn proposed that afforestation be addressed soon by LINK as an issue on which early consensus would be important (**Networking**).

Lack of capacity on water issues gave concern especially in view of LINK's effort on both WEWS and Flood Risk legislation and the need for continued eNGO monitoring of implementation. There were opportunities to lobby Scottish Government to use its powers: if LINK members did not pursue these the value of earlier advocacy would be undermined. The meeting felt it was important to get a mandate from the network for continued work and would raise this at the Networking meeting (**Networking**).

The meeting considered whether the Board could be more proactive in advising the network about priority areas, given the differences between Scotland in the 1980s under a distant UK administration, and the country now, with its more proactive Holyrood Parliament and much sound environmental legislation.

Integration of LINK positions by member bodies was discussed: some are more proactive in this regard; LINK does not have authority to influence member operations. However, member communications in the media on issues relating to common positions matters; whilst members must pursue their own particular positions, ideally they should not at the same time be critical of other members or undermine the common positions in the media.

5. Financials

5.1 General situation Overall, the meeting was aware of some drop in members' capacity to engage in LINK operations over the last six months, probably owing to recession and the need to focus more than usual on internal operations. Visible down-sizing was afoot in a number of organisations; spending by private individuals was changing with giving currently up and legacies and corporate giving both down.

5.2 Discretionary project funding for 2009/10

The FSG's proposal to increase the level of this fund to £15,000 for the year to March 2010 was approved, subject to other trustees' support. If not allocated to TF and other projects however, the meeting felt the funds should be allocated towards the end of the calendar year towards standing projects such as SEW and Congress.

The FSG recommendation that SEW be supported to the level of £10,000 (rather than £5.5k as budgeted originally) – to underwrite staff time and overheads, was approved, subject to other trustees' support; this would relieve staff of some fundraising pressure.

5.3 Marine project CTs funding for Phase 3 to March 2010 was confirmed and both CTs anticipated a further bid from the Links for funding to 2012. MTF would discuss work in early July including options for replacing the advocacy role carried out by Ylva Haglund, who had now moved on to Waste Aware Scotland. The meeting noted that LINK must continue to ensure full cost recovery for all core staff time invested in the project.

6. AOB

Thanks were recorded to John Mayhew for his contribution to Board and Management Team over a lot of years, and his chairmanship over the last three. John thanked the Board and indicated that he had greatly enjoyed working with trustees over this period.

7. Dates of future meetings

Dates circulated were approved with one change, to shift June meetings away from dates for Royal Highland Show. Dates for 2009 and 2010 are as follows:

22 October 2009	Full day Board, Perth
19-20 Nov 2009	Full day Congress, Dunblane
16 Dec 2009	Evening Festive reception, Edinburgh
21 January 2010	Morning Board, Afternoon Networking
22 April 2010	Morning Board, Afternoon Networking
22 Jun (Tuesday) 2010	Morning Board, Afternoon Networking, Evening AGM
21 October 2010	Full day Board
18-19 November 2010	Congress
17 December 2010	Evening Festive reception