



DRAFT Minutes of a LINK Board meeting held on 21 October 2010 at the LINK office, Shore Road, Perth

PRESENT

Trustees: Deborah Long (Chair), Dan Barlow (Vice Chair), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Helen Todd

Staff: Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh, Hugh Green

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Lloyd Austin, Andrew Fairbairn, Lloyd Austin, Vicky Junik, Jonny Hughes, Mike Robinson, Ian Findlay, Eila Macqueen and Helen Zealley. Since the meeting was not quorate Deborah indicated that the draft minute be circulated to all trustees for email confirmation of approval for decisions reached.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING ON 22 JUNE

Those present had not all attended the meeting. Trustees would be asked to confirm accuracy of the draft June minute by email. **Action: JA**

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM JUNE MEETING

3.1 SNH liaison - Continuing the liaison with Simon Pepper (SNH Board) a meeting with Andrew Thin was scheduled for 26 October (Deborah and Jonny). There had been no time to progress the LINK Board proposal to meet SNH senior staff team; the meeting agreed this could be helpful, in the way that current ministerial contact helps to flag issues affecting both sectors. Initially, spending cuts would be an item for discussion though in the longer term LINK would need to ensure agendas convince SNH of the strategic need for more regular contact.

Action: DL to flag interest to Simon Pepper and follow up Chair-level meeting in writing to the senior staff team

3.2 Fred Edwards Trust report - In the absence of FET trustees Lloyd and Helen, Jen indicated her view that LINK, having initiated the establishment of the Trust, would need to continue to offer some support to the young organisation until it was more firmly established and had secured funding to enable it to look to the medium term. She was currently company and minute secretary for FET. The meeting noted that Capability Scotland was also looking to fund FET a little further (*JA note: further £10,000 offered by Capability Scotland in late October, and £1500 towards short-term fundraising effort*). Jen's proposal was that LINK contribute a further £3000 (towards launch, early development of Trust's action learning programme, including contribution to short-term staff post for the programme - possibly Kate MacColl on the LINK staff). Whilst FET had brought in some thousands through appeal, this was a modest sum which the Trust would need in the months ahead. The meeting approved this allocation (see 4 below). Dan Barlow hoped the Trust's impact on LINK staff would be managed carefully and felt LINK should be ready to stand back at the right moment. Jen indicated that beyond the launch (25 October) she would ensure Trust business did not impact other LINK roles than hers and that any work which Kate MacColl might do for FET would relate to days when Kate does not work for LINK.

3.3 Organisational Supporter roll-out - Regarding the primary list of bodies approached: PfA could not come on board at present though sees the value and



will consider post funding award in Feb; Helen Zealley had reported on SEPA (no reply yet, Campbell Gemmell had commented that they are facing cuts); Dan Barlow had discussed with Zero Waste Scotland, who are also facing reductions and he would prompt a reply; Jonny Hughes had emailed Architecture Design and would prompt reply. Alice Walsh reminded the meeting of the agreement to follow this up proactively.

Action: Trustees to report by email on initial approaches asap

Regarding the additional target organisations (circulated) the meeting noted that since Changeworks' funding was under question that approach should be tentative until March, and otherwise approved the list.

Action: AW to follow up in writing

Hugh Green proposed LINK also target the Scottish renewable energy commercial sector. The meeting noted that such an 'extension' could initially cause concern to members who may not appreciate the opportunities for LINK. The initial plan had been to see if primary targets would come on board before extending further and the Board had agreed that screening would be needed to ensure against encouraging bodies on board who promote contrary positions to ours, at our own events with decision makers. It would be important to assess whether the original objectives were being met especially in a time of cuts. The meeting agreed to put the proposal to approach commercial organisations on the back burner until the primary 'pilot' completes and the Board can assess outcomes (January 2011). That discussion could be followed up with a proposal paper setting out the case for extension to the commercial sector (including renewable energy companies but also wider) in terms of benefits for LINK network, probably for circulation in February for discussion at April networking meeting – and that might require review of opportunities/services on offer. **Action: AW & ABM**

3.4 LINK President - Helen Zealley would stand down in 2011 and had offered to talk with any potential successors about the role. The meeting agreed to ask a subgroup potentially comprising Deborah, Dan, Jonny, Eila, in liaison with some Honorary Fellows, to coordinate a search. The current climate could be helpful in terms of identifying people retiring from across the sectors; whilst LINK had reasonable social links the network could benefit from better links with business.

Actions:

JA circulate brief to Subgroup for amendments eg re business

JA invite Hon Fellows and others to suggest names

Subgroup convenes before Christmas

3.5 Network carbon accounting - Since the network's climate discussions of 2008/09 and development of its carbon accounting tool, there had been little exploration of whether ENGOs are able to fully practise the policies they support and keeping ahead of the curve. The meeting agreed LINK should commission a survey of members' progress in addressing own environmental performance, any shareable good practice, challenges on which members wish support/advice. A report on the survey should go to the January Board which would assess whether to offer a workshop (possibility of Carbon Trust funding being explored with SCVO). The meeting agreed to manage the findings carefully. Members would be advised on 19 November of the plan.

Actions: HG develop & cost proposal; DL report to Strategic Planning

4. FINANCE

4.1, 4.2, 4.3 Budget outturn & revised forecast - For the current year Hugh reported good progress towards a likely surplus which would leave LINK in good health for 2011/12 which might be more uncertain. Income was coming in well



and expenditure was under firm control. Most projects were likely to spend out by March 2011 although agriculture work might slip into the 2011/12 financial year and marine would run on to 2013. With Alan Wells' departure there would be additional recruitment costs which Calum Duncan confirmed could be met from other headings in the marine budget. It was noted that some members were experiencing funding pressures which might impact LINK's budget ahead. The meeting thanked Hugh for good clear accounts.

4.4 'Bids' to Discretionary Fund - Jen spoke to bids outlined in the paper circulated relating to: the Fred Edwards Trust; and LINK's local government work (as discussed by Board reps and SOATF reps earlier in the autumn). The bids were approved though it was noted that stretched capacity in the network might prevent local government work going ahead in this timeframe; several trustees undertook to liaise with the SOA task force to clarify. Since funding was needed for the survey of members' environmental performance and further support (3.5 above), the meeting agreed that if the allocation to local government work were not returned, a further allocation should be made to the DPF from LINK reserves.

Actions:

**DB, LWA, HT to liaise with SOA TF and report back to Board soon
JA & HG to develop the bids for FSG's approval**

4.5 Financial planning

4.5.1 KPI & subscription proposals - With the additional £30k in contingency reserve, spending pushed down, and a recent review of Essential/ Discretionary/ Project division, LINK was in a good position in relation to a more uncertain grantaid future. The FSG's proposal (circulated) regarding the KPI for this area of LINK's operations was agreed, i.e., to continue to aim to raise around 50% of costs of Essential service from subscriptions. The meeting also agreed that LINK should definitely look to apply inflationary increases to subscriptions from 2011 onwards, in the wake of several years in which there had been no rise. The meeting discussed whether a 3% rise in subscriptions could trigger some members (especially the 'squeezed middle' and the larger bodies) to reconsider membership or whether these organisations might prioritise a LINK subscription for the services it brings. For 2011/12 LINK could afford less of a rise though longer term this income must rise as costs go up. Trustees felt it important to propose a model of rising subscriptions but also to demonstrate solidarity with the membership at this stage. Members would be informed that the Board was minded to limit the increase in subscriptions to 1% in 2011/12, though might need to revise that early in 2011 (if LINK's grant bids fare worse than currently anticipated) and anticipated higher inflationary rises in future years. The letter would also outline the Board's decisions on a response team (see 4.5.2). **Action:**

HG letter to members

4.5.2 Financial scenarios; LINK response plan - Hugh spoke to papers circulated which outlined (a) a modest, and (b) a worse case scenario. These were based on the current year forecast, assumed inflation at 3% (perhaps a little low) unless otherwise stated and should be amended (for VAT rise impact) to show a further £1-2000 spend. Both showed deficits in all three years between 2011 and 2014; the deficits were manageable in the modest scenario where a discretionary fund could be continued at current levels over the three years to 2014; deficits were higher in the second scenario, where LINK would be drawing on its contingency heading from year two and would not be able to offer any discretionary funding from 2011. Discussion noted that: the day's news might mean that SG's cuts were not so severe for eNGOs; LINK might be able to find a few more cost savings in a couple of headings; the scenarios were guestimates but helped to highlight the point at which LINK would need to be proactive in reducing costs



and services. The response plan outlined by the FSG for a worse case scenario gained approval. A first meeting of the response team would be organised for December to prepare for discussion with EFF's rep in February.

Actions:

HG to set date for response team

AW to provide team with EFF questions

4.5.3 Status report on grantaid (near future) - Alice spoke to the paper circulated indicating that though the first bid to EFF had been rejected, in a follow-up conversation Jo Rideal had offered a February meeting with LINK. This would require preparation of our 'case', demonstration that we could choose between priorities and were prepared to cut services if need be. ABM offered to input to AW for the information going to EFF before the meeting. Alice understood LINK's Scottish Government grant was relatively safe for a further year. She was working on the application to SNH for early November in relation to SNH's revised priorities and in some cases challenging exclusions. Alice had applied to the Craignish Trust (which had supported our SLU work) for a contribution towards LINK's core costs over the next three years. The meeting was pleased with fundraising successes for Scottish Environment Week - c£7-8k had been raised towards SEW 2011.

5. OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Quarter 2 report on Operating Plan & KPI progress – points covered

Economic alternatives – This was a complex area for LINK bodies; work was ongoing via Carnegie Commission on reform of GDP (reporting Feb 2011) on which WWFS will have more information soon. SDC are aware of eNGO interest in this. Meantime Dan Barlow would liaise with SWT, RSPB, FoES with an aim to bring a version of existing member positions on economics to LINK's strategic planning discussion for wider sign up. **Action: Dan Barlow**

After Action Reporting – The meeting felt quarterly networking meetings provide a degree of peer review of policy work and task force approaches even if this is only in brief and of a verbal nature. For some work, the qualitative and retrospective nature of AARs is important and it was agreed that in future this should be a principle of any DPF funding to LINK work areas. **Action: JA to ask existing groups in receipt of DPF funds to bring completed AARs to the next networking meeting**

KPI progress – The report on the Operating Plan showed that we were on target to or exceeding all KPIs. Points noted were that

- our engagement in stakeholder groups is impossible to track accurately (things change; we rely on TFs to report to LINK);
- in some cases engagement becomes counter-productive and we should avoid legitimising processes that are dubious. **Action: relevant players should keep wider members informed of such trends/decisions**
- A case in point is the 2014 Games Legacy group; the meeting agreed that the LINK delegates would make one final punt before pulling out soon. **Action: Dave Morris**
- MSP exchanges are on the low side although recess may have played some part this quarter. **Action: Parliamentary staff**
- Advocacy training is welcomed by members: SAGS had used the guidance to run successful events involving politicians
- Engagement in the philosophical aspects of lottery funding tends to fall to SEFF members; more strategic input is needed from Board level. It was agreed was to organise a one-off meeting for LINK with Lottery reps, to be



preceded by an internal discussion involving Andy Fairbairn, Mike Robinson, Steve Gardner, Anne McCall. **Action: AW to organise**

5.2 Political strategy report

Governance / Budget cuts ABM had been asked to address the mechanism of how government/ parliament/ judiciary/ civil society work together, in a governance paper. This linked to the paper on environment and spending cuts. ABM had flagged various questions which he would use to draft a paper for comment in November / December, and then revise for discussion at January networking. He was advised to focus the paper on a small coherent set of priorities. Various trustees (DB, LWA, VJ, JH) would ensure their CEOs saw and engaged with the proposals. The meeting discussed the possibility of a mid-December discussion for LINK reps around this. **Action: ABM, JA**

Paper on spending cuts and environment The meeting discussed the UK announcements on budget in relation to the latest draft of the paper ABM had prepared for the network. To ensure that LINK and its members were speaking from the same brief, the meeting agreed:

- A parliamentary briefing (potentially for press too) should be developed, illustrated with statistics, in draft for comment ahead of the Scottish Budget Bill, with a view to briefing all parties;
- Potentially a more detailed briefing provided as the Bill is published – though tactics should be revisited nearer that time
- The ATF might draft briefing on the EU section?
- Members to be invited to provide case studies illustrating what's possible for their organisations in terms of service delivery
- LINK discussion opportunity needed (January networking) to discuss with members strategic choices regarding their/the eNGO network's capacity

As the paper is published it will go to SG, political contacts and relevant agencies. LINK has pressed officials for a meeting (Ian Hooper) and awaits a response.

Impact of austerity on members/the environmental agenda The points Andy had flagged in the PSR would be discussed at the next Board meeting alongside revised financial scenarios. **Action: next Board meeting**

5.2.3 Elections work – The meeting noted the outcomes of LINK's October elections discussion and agreed that manifesto 'asks' should be up on the public website by end of October if possible. **Action: ABM & SG**

Trustees indicated interest in attending the meetings with the political parties on manifesto asks including budgetary points. **Action: ABM**

5.2.4 Joint Links – The meeting agreed that the Links should keep each other informed of initiatives re budget cuts, though were stretched for any more active liaison.

5.2.5 Local government work – See 4.4 above. The Board would review progress in January and consider how to develop strategic liaison with CoSLA, SOLACE, etc, as well as exploring whether these bodies would consider part funding LINK to resource the network's monitoring role. **Action: next Board meeting**

5.3 LINK and members positioning on energy issues - The meeting considered whether there was merit in bringing members together for further discussion of consensus around energy / energy development issues, concluding that although there are differences amongst members on some of these issues, there is considerable consensus. It was agreed to remind members of the consensus and the importance of keeping in touch with each other about likely differences with a view to avoiding criticism of one another in the media. The recent consensus over marine renewables was worth highlighting.



Action: DL to report to members on 19 November

5.4 Future LINK strategy - Jen had outlined a proposal for a modest review and assessment of progress and direction to establish LINK strategy from 2012 to 2015 and this was approved. The work would involve independent consultancy and an awayday for trustees and staff to develop the strategy, later in 2011.

Action: JA to develop a plan

6. AOB

Ministerial meeting Jan 2011 - The meeting approved a proposal to focus again around spending cuts and environment, rather than raise detailed issues of policy. **Action: Jen to report to TFCs**

7. NEXT MEETING

Next LINK core meetings 2010/11:

18-19 November: Congress & Planning

15 December: evening Festive reception

Approved dates for 2011:

27 January: Board & Networking

1-3 March: SEW as now set by Holyrood

21 April: Board & Networking

21 June: Board & Networking

Date to be determined: AGM

20 October: Board full day meeting

17 November: Congress

18 November: Strategic Planning

Deborah thanked everyone for their contributions.

JA/LINK/3.12.10