

LINK and SNH liaison meeting 14 December 2005. Note of main discussion and action points.

LINK: Fred Edwards, Lloyd Austin, Andrew Fairbairn, Jane Herbstritt, Alice Walsh
SNH: John Markland, Ian Jardine, Amelia Morgan, Jane Clarke (item 4 onwards)

1. LINK's New 3-year Strategy

LINK's review of the year prepared for the LINK Congress was shown which gave a brief run-down on the broad range of activities carried out over the past year. Fred noted that the LINK Task Forces were a great asset to LINK and a resource for SNH, the Executive, Parliament and other agencies. The review reflected increasing congruence with the development agenda. LINK has a loose axis with NIDOS, and made more input to the EEB. Fred suggested it may be useful for SNH to take soundings with some of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition.

John commented particularly on the values section of the LINK Corporate Strategy. The draft had been agreed by members with a few minor amendments. It had been a very participative process. SNH had contributed to the review of LINK's performance *Informing our Future* that preceded the Strategy. Many strands continued from the previous Strategy, the emphasis was on building on strengths. On the issue of containing workload, Lloyd noted that the Task Force work adds value to members individual efforts, that leadership on an issue comes from the membership, building on synergies between members rather than generating significant extra work. Staff support and facilitate this process. Fred explained that on the Sustainable Development agenda, LINK has been consistent with Ministers on the approach on economics and that we would hold government to their commitment to 'economic growth, *though not at any cost*'.

2. SNH Corporate Strategy and Future Priorities

SNH's Corporate Strategy tied into the political decision-making process so next developments expected in summer/autumn 2007. There would be fairly extensive refreshment of Natural Heritage Futures next year. The Strategic Review of SNH contained much useful material which is being implemented with the Executive and other agencies; possible savings to be made by sharing back room services, regional premises with other agencies in the SEERAD family, and aligning and joining up their services better – a project identifying the potential was in train. Over 140 staff were now located in Inverness. John Markland would be stepping down as Chair next year shortly along with one-third of the Board. Adverts would appear in the press in the New Year.

Future Priorities: Though very much aligned to Scottish Executive priorities (Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Nature Conservation Act implementation) the Deputy Minister Rhona Brankin was keen to set the agenda; political will and support would create more opportunities. The Strategic Review raised the issue of boundaries between SNH, SEERAD and other agencies vis a vis duplication and leadership. The project referred to above would assist here. SNH would maintain pressure on reform of Species Licensing. SNH was keen to keep momentum on Access. It was agreed that a meeting with the LINK Access Network would be useful as LINK was also keen that strategic direction on Access was maintained by the agencies charged with implementation of the Act. The Access Forum was felt to be useful for

communications and flagging up issues. **Action: LINK Access Network to liaise with Andrew Bachell**

Rhona Brankin had committed to a Species Framework which both SNH and LINK should keep in sight; there may be an event to stimulate ideas. LINK's Biodiversity Task Force would be interested and would also flag up the need to address the threat of non-native species.

Landscape was an issue frustrating both SNH and LINK; there was a possibility of taking forward NSAs in Stage 2 of the Planning legislation which LINK would promote.

Andrew asked about SNH's approach to issues like Quality of Life, climate change and the people-oriented agenda generally. Ian was keen for SNH involvement in the Greenspace agenda, important for urban Scotland's quality of life, and that there was an awareness of SNH's impact on rural quality of life also. Anything to translate environmental issues into concern for people was helpful, and there was good scope with health. Soundings indicated that the natural heritage is more recognised as an economic benefit to Scotland. Lloyd noted that Quality of Life was likely to be the overarching theme for LINK's Holyrood campaign.

3. Brief overview of LINK's progress in relation to grant aid commitments

LINK remains extremely grateful for SNH support and is on track with budgeted spend for year 1 and 2 of the grant, expecting to exceed spend in relation to percentage from SNH income in year 3, due to the Holyrood campaign.

Communications between SNH secretariat and LINK staff were good and the reporting was useful enabling SNH staff to keep track of congruent opportunities. On LINK funding generally, the picture is much as expected, a new grant from SEERAD to be applied for from April 06, no opportunity yet with Lottery. The Fundraiser's Task Force, which SNH is engaged with, is concerned at the level of funding in general for the environment – agencies as well as NGOs – and intend to bring it up with the Minister at a liaison meeting. LINK's main funding challenge will be to deliver the campaign which we intend to start in the first half of 2006, which relies largely on additional membership funding.

4. General liaison with Parliament and update on the SNH Government Team

There have been lots of staff changes within LINK member bodies though settling now. Jess Pepper has moved to WWF Scotland. Jane Herbstritt's priorities will be on marine (preparation) and planning (legislation). SNH and LINK would both be keeping a weather eye on the England and Wales legislation with regard to reserved matters.

SEA: Fred noted that all the parties had praised LINK and member bodies' constructive engagement on the SEA bill.

A four person SNH Government Team with remit of Europe and International, Westminster and Scottish Parliament would be headed by Karen Wright, with intention to increase engagement with the Scottish Parliament. It was agreed that an early meeting with Jane would be useful, and a meeting with LINK's Parliamentary Forum. SNH's legislative priorities include Marine, Planning, Environmental

Liability and taking forward SEA, and would be trying to raise landscape up the agenda. It was agreed that we keep each other informed on positions, even it not in total agreement.

LINK's contact on the grant would be Karen Wright from Spring 2006.

Action: Jane H and Jane C to liaise on meetings.

5. Continuity Planning in relation to relocation

SNH had put a lot of work into continuity planning, which had been validated by external consultants. Current contacts should be maintained and there would be plenty of notice of changes. A stakeholders' newsletter was planned for the New Year. Fred congratulated SNH on its work here and agreed that any glitches arising from personnel changes were inevitable and transitory, though John wished to be informed if there were any particular problems from our perspective.

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