DRAFT MINUTES OF THE NETWORK's 24th AGM HELD ON 30 AUGUST 2011, AT THE SCOTTISH BOOK TRUST, ROYAL MILE, EDINBURGH

Present

Deborah Long (Chair, Plantlife), Dan Barlow (Vice Chair, WWFS), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer; SWT), Lloyd Austin (RSPB), Jonny Hughes (SWT), Eila Macqueen (ArchScot), Andy Fairbairn (WTS), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Helen Todd (RS), Calum Duncan (MCS), John Mayhew (APRS), Francis Stuart (FoES), Roger Powell (SCRA), Diarmid Hearns (NTS), Eddie Palmer (SB), Angus Yarwood (WTS), Charles Strang (SCNP), Karen Froebel (MCoS)

In attendance - Helen Zealley (President), Ian Findlay (Co-opted Trustee)

Staff - Jen Anderson, Rea Cris, Kate MacColl, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh

Deborah Long opened the meeting at 5pm, welcoming all.

1. Apologies for Absence

These had been received from Beryl Leatherland MCoS, Robert Maund SCNP, Callum Sinclair RAFTS, Kathy Wormald Froglife, Keith Irving Living Streets, Paul Kirkland BCS, Helen McDade JMT, Dianne Laing SNW, Hugh Green LINK IFO.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The draft minutes of the June 2010 meeting proposed by John Mayhew, seconded by Jonny Hughes, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

Noting the excellent work of member bodies, reps, trustees, convenors and the small but very effective staff team over the year, Deborah Long recorded a very big thanks to all. She drew members' attention to the annual report which for the first time calculated that voluntary input.

4. Annual report and accounts for the year 2010/11

Reviewing an active constructive and successful year, Deborah noted that since this had also been a period of funding uncertainty, the sustained engagement of members, convenors and task forces was the more noteworthy. Collective effort had kept the environment on political and policy agendas and members were pursuing better implementation of Scottish legislation, some of which broke entirely new ground. Whilst there was still a lot to do the network was having greater impact. A wide range of task forces had been working on policy including marine, agriculture, water, single outcome agreements.

The loss of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland had been unfortunate and sad but on the other hand, LINK had welcomed Scottish Badgers and Froglife as new members during the year.

Looking ahead, the future was challenging for LINK as for members, Board and staff were scenario planning, anticipating tighter constraints by 2013, though the organization was in good shape at this point. LINK had relied slightly on reserves recently and would need to prioritise even more in future, making some tough decisions, potentially, from 2013. As noted earlier in the meeting the monetary value of members' engagement in LINK was captured in the report, valued at around £250,000, illustrating the significant effort, and member contributions as by far the greatest support stream to LINK total activity.

The Board had previously allocated an additional £30,000 towards contingency and the year had ended with an unrestricted funds balance of around £158,000, of which £90,000 represented the total reserve for contingency.

On future funding, Scottish Government grant commitment was uncertain and this would at a minimum be reduced by at least 5% per year, SNH's grant to LINK was already decreasing year on year, core support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation was under negotiation, Craignish support continued and an application had been made recently to the Gannochy Trust. Subscriptions which had been kept flat for two years were set to rise by

1% for 2011/12, and Deborah gave indications that the Board anticipated increases in line with inflation being necessary from 2012. Further detail on the Board's thinking would follow and would relate to the outcome of our funding applications.

5. Election of Trustees and Office Bearers, appointment of President and Honorary Fellows

5.1 Trustees

The Board was sadly saying farewell to Dan Barlow and Andrew Fairbairn both of whom had served LINK well over many years and who were now standing down. Deborah thanked them for their contributions.

There were 6 trustees continuing as indicated in papers circulated and 1 nomination, for Angus Yarwood, which was proposed by Jonny Hughes, seconded by John Mayhew and approved by the meeting.

The Board's proposal to re-co-opt Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson was proposed by Lloyd Austin, seconded by Calum Duncan, and supported by the meeting.

Deborah reported that the Board had invited Diarmid Hearns (NTS) to be an observer over the coming year as he got to know the network better, with a view to standing for election at the next AGM; also that Diarmid had accepted.

Deborah reminded the meeting that there remained two vacancies for elected trustees. The Board maintained a skill matrix and would pursue people in relation to one or two skills areas; if this succeeded the Board would invite them to take part as observers during the coming LINK year, and ask members to approve their election at the next AGM.

Jonny Hughes indicated his intention to stand down, though not with immediate effect, and encouraged members to consider others to fill his place on the Board in future. Deborah thanked Jonny for his work on the Board to date.

5.2 Office bearers

Deborah Long and Paul Ritchie were willing to continue as Chair and Treasurer respectively; Eila Macqueen was proposed for Vice Chair. The recommendations were proposed by Charles Strang, seconded by Helen Todd and approved by the meeting.

5.3 President

The meeting gladly endorsed the Board's proposal to reappoint Helen Zealley until November when Helen had indicated she would like to move on (proposer: Calum Duncan; seconder: Dan Barlow). Deborah reported that the Board had a process in place to recruit Helen's successor, had approached 8 people from a longlist, received 1 expression of interest so far, had 3 more responses to gather, and hoped to have a recommendation to make to members in time for Congress in November.

5.4 Honorary Fellows

The meeting had pleasure in approving the Board recommendations that LINK appoint Alastair Lavery and Helen Zealley (proposed by Ian Findlay, seconded by Roger Powell).

6. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner

The Board proposed to continue to rely on Morris & Young CA of Perth and would be carrying out as good practice a review which might result in proposals for change in future years. Members were invited to contact staff with any recommendations of firms which should be considered. The Board proposal was proposed by Andy Fairbairn, seconded by Ian Findlay and supported by the meeting.

7. Proposed Subscriptions for 2011/12

Jen explained that following Board consideration, members had been contacted in the winter with the proposal that subscriptions would rise by 1% for 2011/12, and that, since no concerns had been raised by members in connection with this, the meeting was being asked to formally approve the rise. The proposal was proposed by Paul Ritchie, seconded by Calum Duncan and supported by the meeting.

Eddie Palmer asked when higher increases would take effect and Deborah reported these would be from 2012/13 onward, subject first to detailed analysis of LINK's position during the coming months by the Board.

Francis Stuart reported that FoES was going through restructuring with potential impact on subscriptions and advised LINK staff to keep in touch with his Director, Stan Blackley.

8. AOB

8.1 Helen Zealley asked about progress with LINK's promotion of organizational supporter category. Alice Walshexplained that there are currently 2 (Paths for All, KSB) and encouraged members to consider organisations which do not meet LINK eligibility criteria but which welcome services including parliamentary monitoring and receptions, and to advise LINK staff to approach them.

8.2 John Mayhew and Andy Myles cordially invited LINK colleagues to join them in further discussions of, and in contributing to, Scotland's GDP, 3 doors up the Royal Mile at The Mitre, immediately after the meeting.

8.3 Helen Zealley greatly valued her connection to the network and the meeting joined her in a very nice appreciation of the amazing job done by trustees and staff at the centre of LINK.

8.4 At Deborah Long's invitation the meeting recorded a very big thanks to Dan Barlow and Andy Fairbairn for all their work on the Board over the years – noting Dan's level-headedness, and Andy's clear-headed input and commitment to LINK funding policy and effort.

8.5 At Jen Anderson's invitation, the meeting recorded thanks to Deborah Long as Chair over the past busy year.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.

Draft/JA/LINK/1.9.11