



Networking Meeting, 23 April 2009: Discussion and Action Points

Present

Helen Zealley (President)

John Mayhew (LINK Chair & APRS), Ian McCall (RAS, LINK trustee), Deborah Long (Plantlife, BTF convenor and LINK Vice-Chair), John Rosser NTS, Beryl Leatherland MCoS, Dan Barlow WWFS & LINK trustee, Angus Yarwood WTS & WTF convenor, Sam Gardner WWFS & CTF convenor, Katrina Marsden RSPB & ATF convenor

Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Susan Guest, Adean Lutton

1. Apologies

Received from Lloyd Austin (RSPB, LINK trustee), Jonny Hughes (SWT, LINK trustee), David Downie (WWFS, LINK Treasurer), Andy Fairbairn (WTS, LINK trustee), Jon Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland), Helen McDade JMT, Steve Gardner SEFF, Andrea Johnstonova FWTF, Duncan Orr-Ewing DTF, Jenny Mollison SAGS, Craig Macadam Buglife, Jolin Warren NTS, Sarah Dolman WDCS, Gordon Gray Stephens SNW, Alice Walsh on the staff.

2. Board Updates

AGM – Scheduled for 25 June (Perth): invitation now circulated for nominations to Board to ensure fresh blood and various important balances; Ian McCall willing to take over the chair from John Mayhew with full support of the Board. Deborah Long and David Downie were willing to continue as Vice Chair and Treasurer.

KPIs – our progress is regularly checked by Board; no real concerns; engagement of member bodies slightly lower than the target (10% do not really engage). Meeting noted that some of these members sign up to submissions and our proformas should seek that information (**Staff**).

KPI monitoring for coming three years will involve more in the way of survey internally and beyond LINK to gauge perceptions of our impact/effect and how well we are regarded by decision makers various. Sam G supported our challenging own assumptions about how our work affects and suggested we seek Evaluation Support Scotland advice (**Staff**).

Budget 09/10 - Revisions had been made (downward) to keep essential spend, and related subscription fees, lower than forecast, in these leaner times. This included a freeze on increments to staff on salaries over £18k pa.

Useful carbon accounting work by Hugh Green at LINK, following guidance for LINK by Jolin Warren, demonstrates reductions in costs at LINK offices following heating changes and insulation. Spreadsheets will be publicised round the network (**HG**).

Membership issues:

SCNP's change of name was noted (to 'Campaign' from 'Council').

The Board was keen to reiterate LINK's rules about co-opting other interests to task forces: ie. that this should only be for bodies which are not eligible for membership. Current members and TF Convenors were asked to help Board and staff hold this line firmly with all eligible bodies and ex-members who may be keen to engage in / useful to LINK's operations. (**TFCs, Reps**)

Consideration was going into the potential to sell various packages such as parliamentary monitoring. Whilst this had stemmed from discussion of how to encourage eligible bodies into membership, Board and staff were persuaded that products should be promoted only to non-eligibles, and all eligible bodies should be asked to join and pay a subscription.

3. TF Evaluation

The Woodland TF has tended to be reactive; 'thin' spread of policy staff makes proactive work planning difficult. Was inputting to Review Group – affected by revision of SPPs so still ongoing. Has not engaged yet in implementation plans.

Very engaged early 2009 in debate over proposal in the CC Bill to lease 25% of forest estate; pressed for opportunity to give evidence and did so, some of which has since appeared in policy statements of all political parties. Notably, support across parties for a sustainable land use strategy. TF consensus was achieved despite some very different viewpoints within the group. Other areas the TF could address included carbon sequestration. However, there was no clear and urgent driver for this TF and a sense that the effort could be allocated to more urgent priorities.

Angus invited views on the suggestion that *an over-arching LINK land use task force* might pursue thinking on sustainable land use strategy (SLUS), linking to other relevant think-tanks, using ATF, BTF, WTF, FWTF and potentially LTF to feed in expertise on detailed policy areas.

The meeting was not persuaded that this would be more effective than a dedicated workshop, taking the view that TFs are not so rigid as to prevent joint work happening when need be and that the bottom-up, grass-roots nature of TF effort is critical. However there was agreement to consider gaps in LINK's TF complement each year in relation to upcoming policy and other opportunities or imperatives, and also to review TF capacity. **(November agenda)**

There was support for developing network thinking on a SLUS via a workshop and scoping research (eg on international models), refocussing 'sustainable' and covering all relevant issues. Andy Myles, Katrina Marsden, Angus Yarwood and Deborah Long would draft a plan. The SG's 'summit' in November might be a milestone at which to offer views **(Andy, Angus, Katrina, Deborah)**.

JHM thanked the WTF for a report on useful work and noted that a decision to focus on lending expertise to other TFs was a valuable course of action.

4. Political Strategy Report

The circulated report fulfilled aspirations of a central document to pull thinking together for the network; thanks were recorded to Andy. Andy felt the process was very important and having heard comments from Board (including on what is resourceable) and others, was keen to have the views of reps and task forces esp. on policy and tactics.

Points raised in discussion:

The Board had supported the PSR's observations on EU work and the value of a review of how we engage.

An 'elections group' of trustees and tohers would convene soon to discuss preparation for UK elections **(Election group)**.

Andy would draft a paper for the next parliamentary forum meeting (May) towards asks for the 2011 Holyrood elections; this would circulate to TFs; the aim was to have it completed for late 2009 to feed in to manifestos **(Andy Myles)**.

Loc Govt/SOAs – The Board supported a review of our engagement here too, though for next spring, and was keen we consider networks beyond CoSLA with which to work. LINK's SOAs work would be relevant 'new ground'.

Parties assessments – useful.

Other legislation – LINK WNE group noted. Crofting might require a lead role in LINK depending on content; Andy advised a watching brief to avoid contradictory positions.

Protected areas – Leith Agency had been commissioned by SG to review how designated areas are promoted. APRS and RAS were amongst those who had been interviewed. It was understood that the review included historic designations. LINK had asked SNH to keep members informed of progress of the review.

Health – an event for members was scheduled for 26 May, to identify LINK goals and asks, after which there was potential for discussion with other voluntary sector interests. SNH was keen to meet LINK again in the autumn, together with FCS, PfA and others.

(Interested members contact staff)

Horizon administrative issues – The Board had noted and added to this list but advised a pragmatic course between ideal aspirations and what is achievable on available resources. TFs were advised to keep an eye on previous legislative achievements and on the reporting into how these were delivering, where necessary taking steps to remind government about proper implementation of existing laws in pursuit of sustainable development.

LINK ministerial liaison – postponements of meeting dates is a nuisance, though otherwise there is broad satisfaction with the arrangement of meetings, selection of delegations and agenda. Andy Myles can brief delegates on getting the most from these meetings, and in giving evidence to committees.

Despite original intentions by the international community that environmental decision making be open and accessible, with review opportunities, implementation of environmental justice in UK including Scotland has been very slow and piecemeal, and access to justice still costs too much for most to pursue. Several LINK members want to see a comprehensive approach developed including expansion of the land court to be a land and environment court, and this could be an ask in LINK's next 'manifesto'. LINK workshop with Frances McCartney and Aidan O'Neill QC on 11 May to discuss further.

Westminster – the potential outcomes of the UK election are worth discussion with the other Links, in relation to how the NGOs can make the most gains, esp from negotiations between the political parties.

Constitutional reform – LINK has given evidence (x 2) to the Calman Commission. A workshop to consider key points in relation to the 'National Conversation' consultation is to be planned for the late spring/summer **(Staff)**.

Reps and TFCs were encouraged to circulate the political strategy report further **(Reps, TFCs)**.

5. TF key priorities ahead and integration needs

Climate TF - There is not much surplus energy/commitment to separate LINK TF meetings beyond the current SCCS Bill-focussed discussions. SCCS asks being taken on board though in some cases 'timidly'. Post-Bill it will be important that a fully functioning TF is ready to pursue implementation and scrutiny and holding government to account.

Agri TF – Areas of interest: SRDP review whose recommendations are good though will need funding, and there are concerns between targeted and less targeted schemes; LFAs review; CAP Healthcheck consultation just out; cross-compliance; replacement for setaside; long term EU budget and impact on various areas; whether food policy now; soils strategy; position statement on climate change and agriculture to be agreed in ATF and then circulated wider (WWF research may relate). RSPB involved in steering group for review of land use (don't expect much of Nov government 'summit' - any LINK input will be useful).

Bio TF – Working on RBMPs with FWTF, on SRDP with ATF, on SOAs and will feed into wider LINK SOA process. Concerns over new integrated planning guidance and working through RSPB on this. Developing ideas around the biodiversity duty in relation to the proposed Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill.

Marine TF – Scottish Marine Bill due imminently. Campaign team had new draft briefing on standby and was arranging to meet committee clerks and SPICe to discuss Link asks. TF meeting Marine Directorate early May to discuss details. TF press release ready for launch. Frances McCartney, lawyer, on stand-by to analyse the Bill. TF had interim funding proposal (this June to March 2010) in preparation for charitable trusts. UK Marine Bill as amended was now published and would be debated on 5 or 12 May. F had met with Scottish Renewables which was seeking clarity on Link's position in energy vis. grid/onshore vs offshore etc. MTF had repeated our line about a strategic approach being necessary and support for renewables in the right place. Government had to lead on where 'right places' are for trials and not industry etc. The meeting noted the marine renewables position paper, RAS' comments in relation, and historic environment issues for which John Rosser to provide weblink. **(MTF)**

FWTF – Stage 2 a success esp given sound LINK asks. Stage 3 still ahead; LINK reception likely around 13 May. RSPB and WWF were considering raising with the Water Industry Commissioner the sustainability role (ie not just cheap water) in relation to Scottish Water. SWT and RSPB were drafting a response to the RBMP consultation for wider sign-up amongst LINK TFs. **(FWTF)**

LTF – Some focus on prep of Scottish landscape charter (importance of landscape and responsibilities for protection). A ministerial foreword had been requested: Minister's response awaited. TF pressing for EU Landscape Convention (now signed by UK government) to be implemented in Scotland; the charter would address this in part, would be the formal recognition of policy that the EULC requires of countries. LTF was in discussion with BEFS about how to roll the work of the now disbanded Scottish Landscape Forum forward under a different name; may require prep of a funding proposal. TF concerned about the new SPP, esp wording on landscape and working with PTF to address. Had responded to the NPs review to flag the importance of NPs and the value of a more thorough assessment of what these deliver. Helen McDade had stepped down as convenor, Jon Wordworth was acting convenor and John Mayhew would take over the convenorship in late June.

PTF – No report available. The PTF was however coordinating the TFs collation of critical text from the previous planning policies which had 'gone missing' in the newly collated and much reduced SPP. The intention was to take this to Ministers and if necessary to the media. Sustainable development had been relegated in the SPP despite the 2006 intentions that it underpin planning policy.

Congress – strong preference for theme of economics and environment/alternatives to GDP available to Scotland now; potentially with link to wellbeing/health. Meeting requested confirmation of date as soon as possible: *NB now confirmed as 19 Nov for Congress and 20 Nov for Forward Planning.*

SEW – report and evaluation of 2009 in prep and early planning afoot for a 2010 Week.

Parliamentary training - planned by parliamentary staff for August. Details to follow.

LINK meetings 2009

- 11 May Access to Justice workshop
- 26 May LINK Health event
- 25 June, Networking 1315-1615 tbc
- 25 June, AGM, 1715-1845 tbc
- 19-20 November, Congress & Annual Forward Planning
- 16 December, Festive Reception, 6-8pm Edinburgh