



LINK Network meeting note, 26 April 2012, held at the LINK Perth office

Attending: Deborah Long (Plantlife, LINK Chair), Dan Barlow (WWF Scotland, Convenor Economics Group), Calum Duncan (Marine Conservation Society, Convenor Marine TF), Lloyd Austin (RSPB Scotland, Convenor Governance Group), Vicki Swales (RSPB Scotland, Convenor Sustainable Land Use TF), Angus Yarwood (Woodland Trust Scotland, Convenor Woodlands TF), Ron Payne (Mountaineering Council of Scotland), Carol Swanson (Assoc for the Protection of Rural Scotland), Lisa Webb (RSPB, Convenor Freshwater TF), Jim Densham (RSPB, Convenor Climate Adaptation TF), Ross Finnie (President), Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (LINK staff).

1. Apologies

These were received from: Kathy Wormald (Froglife) Paul Kirkland (Butterfly Conservation), Ben Darvill (Bumblebee Conservation Trust), Dave Fairlamb (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) Craig McAdam (Buglife), Helen McDade (John Muir Trust), Janice Gray and Keith Irving (Living Streets), John Mayhew (Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Convenor Landscape TF), Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland, Convenor Agriculture TF), Jonny Hughes (Scottish Wildlife Trust), Bill McDermott (SCNP), Alistair Beeley (North East Mountain Trust), Aedán Smith (convenor Planning TF), Alison Swanson (Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society), Mary Church (Friends of the Earth Scotland, Convenor Legal Governance sub-group), Sarah Archer and Lindsay Roberts (LINK Marine Project officers).

2. Political Strategy Report Spring 2012

Brief introduction, key points and questions It was apparent that Government was light on policy development as constitutional matters occupied attention. LINK's manifesto for local government elections *Acting Locally* had some influence on the parties, prompting several to use it for their positions.

The Board agreed that LINK's rolling manifesto should be updated and gaps filled over the course of the next year, when no elections were to be held. The Parliamentary Forum was asked to review the way LINK is involved in elections, how it coordinates with its members and others on hustings, cyberactions etc. The after action review of the everyone campaign was pertinent here. **Action: Parliamentary Forum**

The Board will ask the Landscape TF to proceed with its Energy Statement as the bases of wider LINK discussions. **Action: Landscape TF.**

Andy would submit proposals to the Board on how to widen the LINK net to include local environmental groups that are not attached to our member bodies. **Action: Andy Myles**

A point of correction to 5(d) bullet 2 should refer to the Fife Structure plan.

Discussion and questions covered:

Should we distill priorities down from a large document at election time? *Action Locally* was useful for parties for information, it did not prioritise.

Learn from the *Everyone* campaign to focus on a few key themes, and not to get drawn into areas which members are not working on.

The need to be ready after elections with materials that can help implement policies. (for discussion at Parliamentary Forum).

The Sustainable Procurement Bill – SCCS chair is on the board of the steering group. SCCS was asked to raise issues on sustainable food and fish procurement at the next meeting.

AM was majoring on the Community Empowerment Bill and will reciprocate information exchange with SCCS.

Since PSR was written the Legal Governance Group had met civil servants and presented ideas on the Gill Bill. It was a useful meeting which may lead to further discussions on environmental justice issues.

Andy was thanked for his excellent report.

3. Roundtable Task Force catch up.

TF reps looked ahead, noting what other TFs and members should be aware of, and any changes re Rolling manifesto (RM), Campaigning, input needed from other TFs over the next 6 months, events or other opportunities, and TF support needs from staff or the discretionary project fund (DPF). Please also refer for recent updates to the Operating Plan 2011-12, and for current/future plans to the Operating Plan 2012-13 on the members' part of the website.

Agriculture (VS reported): RM remains the same. CAP reform is at EU and national levels. There has been a feeling among members that it should be stronger/more campaign focussed; a subgroup would meet on 4 May to discuss. This was a long game with 2 year timeline. There have been at least 2 meetings jointly with SLUS TF, as it involves the same people and has good policy linkages. LINK has a rep on all the relevant stakeholder groups relating to the SRDP, so to some extent is running to the government's agenda. If people are interested in the content there is a discussion forum on the members part of the website where people can comment. Resources – may be clearer after the meeting on 4/5.

Climate Adaptation (JD) First goal was the Framework which is in place. The Programme will be consulted upon in autumn/winter 2012 to introduce in 2013. TF is influencing or meeting SGov on landuse and biodiversity aspects. As well as older initiatives repackaged, there are new proposals. TF cannot focus on detail and looks to other TFs to take on board different sectors, though CATF keeping track of it all. There was some feedback from civil servants stung by the recent Parliamentary briefing which JD responded to, with justifications for LINK's reservations, including lack of a stakeholder forum, there was no high level drive for it or for co-ordination. AM noted that the briefing was useful in provoking reaction, to keep LINK a bit ahead of the game. DPF funding (agreed by Board that morning at £3k) will be useful.

Deborah reported that the Board had agreed it would be useful to know key TF issues, like the lack of a stakeholder forum, for trustees to have in mind when opportunities arose to speak to influencers. This would be added to the TF reporting pro-forma. **Action: Staff**

VS noted that the lack of a stakeholder forum for the SLUS was a continuing issue. We could not persuade ministers and officials are against it too. AM noted that these forums remove power from officials, though as DL noted can be a means of dissipating action. The Government is not coming up with long term ideas, so we need to keep ours flowing.

Summary and timescale: The template has gone to officials to get common response on risks, responses and objectives. This does not drive thinking of a common sustainable approach and there are no guiding principles. The leads for each sector should be completed by the end of May, which will slip as it is not being prioritised. All will be amalgamated and published later in 2012. The marine sector is ahead of most, the approach being trialled there.

Deer (LA /email from DOE): The Code of Practice is the main issue. The TF will be discussing the SNH Wildlife Management Framework with SNH in May, and making a formal response to the consultation. AM noted that Ministers are still being briefed by officials that Human Rights legislation is a barrier to reform.

Economics (DB): The group is drawing out LINK's vision and commissioning a document for member bodies to support, to use in their own work and for LNK to feed into the debate on the future of Scotland, hopefully drawing out some steps on the way, and feed it into the narrative of a flourishing Scotland. The other strand is Indicators - though the National Performance Framework is fixed for a couple of years – if we can come up with short term indicators to in behind GDP statistics in real time. Also will be useful for informing our work around the budget, and for briefing the Finance Committee. RM – will refine text for this. Project is more advocacy than campaigning. Other TFs: anticipate they will be able to pick up on some of the messages to include in submissions, and will need help on data that can be used for Indicators. Resources: useful to have staff support on commissioning the report and for integration with the Governance work and feeding into the Future of Scotland debate. There is a sense that debate is opening up with Oxfam Humankind Index on guest slot of SPICe briefing – Oxfam is happy to work with us and Carnegie Trust also aware and approve of our plans.

Freshwater (LW): RM- up to date. Campaigning: TF is reviewing River Basin Management Plans in advance of Gov report. Water Bill will be introduced next month, it will be useful to have some of PO time for this. The consultation on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones is contentious, FWTF will lead, though

needs input from Agriculture and possible marine (or individual members of the TF) and Woodland. The TF is fairly well rep'd on various stakeholder groups. It could be useful to join the SRDP discussion forum.

Governance (LA/AM): Met Government the previous day on Legal Governance Issues; 2 big issues are Aarhus Convention compliance and discussion around environmental courts (not necessarily the best mechanism), a positive meeting. The SNP have a manifesto commitment to publish an options paper. The Referendum leaflet: Board has approved some DPF funding to produce a flyer version of Governance Matters to be used as a leader into the doc, and for events, to be published along with the Referendum Leaflet. There are plans for a conference in autumn on GM thinking taking forward dialogue with other parts of civil Scotland. All input from TFs welcome. The group decided that SEA is an example of failed governance, not scrutinized or implemented properly. RM is in the PO's hands rather than this group (for OP).

Landscape: CS reported for John Mayhew that the APRS/SCNP National Parks report would soon be coming out. Energy Statement: needed to build common cause among members, though progress within the TF is difficult; both dealing with comments on the draft which the TF agreed to work on, and from members unwilling to compromise. The Board had reiterated its support for the process and awaited production of the Statement as the basis for a LINK workshop. RP noted that MCoFS was concerned at the time it was taking, though appreciated the difficulties. It was suggested that members who do want to achieve a consensus might press ahead together.

Local Governance: The TF had reviewed activity and renewed efforts to work with government on duties and monitoring without success. The TF is drafting several documents to move the agenda forward; a briefing for Parliament and new councillors letting all know that LINK is still concerned and watching, the links with the National Performance Framework. There is also a briefing in prep on the Community Empowerment Bill for MSPs and councillors. Comments will be sought from Convenors and Board members. AY noted that councils have land which could be useful for amenity and contribute to woodland creation targets.

Marine (CD): RM – will check this out. Key issues are Marine Protected Areas, the National Marine Plan, Renewables and Fisheries. TF concerns were on resources as a lot of stakeholders need to be brought up to date on what has already been agreed on MPAs.. There is pressure from socio economic interests influencing at early stage on search locations, not based on scientific criteria. Concerns have been communicated to the Cabinet Secretary and Marine Scotland. Also concerns on mobile species wrt ecological coherence of the MPA network and a further 5 offshore SACs. LINK prepared a video to speak up for the positive aspects and counter negative voices, and will have website available to steer the public to member body actions to demonstrate communities of interest, and hopefully, of place, TF is also providing briefings to MSPs. The consultation will be on all areas at once, but it will be at a smaller scale than first envisioned. The National Marine Plan will be consulted on in Spring. There is lots of opposition from industry to proposals within the Aquaculture & Fisheries Bill. TF is being supportive. Also lots of work on renewables; a licencing manual for offshore renewables is due and is important. Also a consultation out on scallop gear; members reiterating the need for a strategic approach. Other TFs: Climate Adaptation, Landscape and some crossover with Freshwater, though Alex Kinninmonth being on FWTF and MTF was a great help for integration.

National Parks (email update from BMD): The broad thrust in these initial meetings is to try and get past the CNP difficulties and move on to strategic issues. We will do that haltingly while we have a live court case. There is a rumour going around that Lord Glennie will publish his judgement in June, after which there will be considerable work in reacting to the details. In the first instance this will be for the 3 NGO appellants, but clearly it will have importance for the whole of LINK.

Timing is everything here and the strategic meetings that we are planning, to develop national park issues with Government and agencies are best pitched in the aftermath of the judgement so that we know what we are dealing with. If we largely win the case it will have crucial importance to the interpretation of sustainable development. SD therefore becomes a main plank of activity as we investigate how it should apply to developments in protected areas. Discussions across LINK and with Government will be important. If we largely lose, the appellants may apply to Europe, having exhausted the domestic procedures, so there will be an on-going issue.

Making use of the paper on affordable housing in the Cairngorms is probably best pitched in the period after the judgement. The TF is contemplating publishing an expanded version with comparative statistics and photographs. It is a risk since it will probably be immediately irrelevant if we lose but it

will be absolutely relevant if we win. In the long term, win or lose it will remain relevant to the long term issues with housing in the Cairngorms.

The last NPTF discussed a communication strategy looking ahead over the next few years. Each TF should at least acknowledge the opportunities available for promoting environmental issues.

Two of the outcomes of the Pitlochry meeting facilitated by Deborah - a polemic and a conference are still being developed. SCNP and APRS are mulling over the possibility of a one day conference in Spring 2013 to publicise the NP strategy and also boost the IUCN UK Handbook on protected areas. It would be appropriate for the NPTF to be involved in that opportunity. However our long term strategy should still look to developing a strong connection between the political process in the Parliament and the stewardship of the country's best environmental assets. The historical figure of John Muir remains relevant to this.

Planning: There are 5 consultations just out until June. The withdrawal of Permitted Development Rights to hilltracks is one of these – Aedan is compiling a response. C Bryne of WTS is working on another (reported AY). LA noted that withdrawal of PDR is very important. It is simplest to withdraw all rights subject to planning permission like anyone else. Important to encourage Government to do the right thing – member bodies need to broadcast their position in other forums eg NFUS and SLE. AM noted that it is an acid test re SNP's relationship with landowners.

Sustainable Land Use Strategy: RM – will check. The TF has been following what should be the implementation of a 5 year strategy. March was the first anniversary, and there should be an annual report by summer on progress. It is important to keep reminding people of the objectives of the strategy and multi benefit land use, to get it embedded in all policies eg agriculture, forestry, climate adaptation. VS sits on the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (not as LINK), The ScotGov event on 27 June for which invitations have been issued, will likely report on the first year of the LUS. LINK's report on the benefits should be ready to feed into that event. We will remind officials that LINK is watching, will do a 'school report'. This is also an issue for the Ministerial meeting. The lack of a stakeholder group for the SLUS is a glaring gap, and we should ask the Minister to justify why there is no group. **Action: for 9 May meeting.**

Wildlife Forum: There will be an event in the Parliament on 26 June following up the Wildlife Proclamation. The aim is to invite musicians, artists who are inspired by biodiversity. People have been asked to suggest invitees (to Julia Harrison, RSPB). The review of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is ongoing. SNH has been working well to improve it. The meeting discussed if there is a way to clarify whether founding statute or the National Performance Framework (with its mantra of sustainable economic growth) takes precedence with NDPBs and the public sector. **Action: LA, DB and AM to discuss.**

Woodland (AY) The TF is shortly meeting WEAG members to communicate LINK's position. The WEAG's report is due in June. There is potential for planning within designated sites – SNH has been asked to look into that. WTF report timescale has slipped. It will meet in June. FC papers on future governance and structures are still under wraps with no action expected until after the referendum. JD asked about FCS climate strategy (for discussion outwith the meeting with AY).

4. Evaluations.

NPTF housing research: see under NPTF above.

Rio+20 work, Email from Jonny Hughes:

Event in December 2011 has resulted in the document *A Flourishing Scotland*. This is being tabled at Rio but unlikely to be officially used by Scottish Government as too many challenging challenges in there. It has however prompted a response from SG and it now seems certain that a Minister will attend Rio. LINK board and main reps will shortly get an invite to a parliamentary event to be held on evening of 29th May on Rio and the question of What next for SD in Scotland?

The event was organised by the 'Rio+20 Scotland group' comprising me (LINK), Andrew Millson (SBC), Ruth W (SNIFFER), May East (CIFAL) and Philip Wright (former SG civil servant and now SNIFFER board member). The event on the 29th will be followed by a parliamentary debate on the 30th. The group will brief MSPs and be advising on Aileen McLeod's MSP speech. It'd be good if LINK could also brief. The motion will not be as strong as I hoped as it seems they already agreed on wording back in January and it can't be changed. The two big outcomes I'm trying to get from all this are Government action on the beyond GDP agenda and better SD governance through parliament (not SG) taking on an official scrutiny and reporting role. These of course link into LINK's rolling manifesto asks. However, it's also great to have brought SBC, and therefore some of the business community, with us already.

Action: AM can help with briefing though it should be issued by the group behind the document.

Scottish Environment Week AAR: Available on the website [here](#). The meeting noted that a very good programme had been delivered by Rea.

Agriculture TF File Notes: These short briefings were useful for having a LINK view on a number of topics and preparing the ground. They stopped after Katrina Marsden went on secondment to SPICe, as events were moving fast and the TF needed to be fleet of foot with positions, eg text only.

5. Other business

Hypothecation and taxes: any TF wanting to /able to put time into developing a position on this?
The Board had discussed in terms of the Political Strategy Report. AY will facilitate getting a LINK position on it. It was important to avoid being 'hard luck cases'.

Several Discretionary Project Fund applications had been approved by the Board earlier in the day, including SEFF, CATF, Legal Governance and Governance Matters. There was some funding remaining which TFs were welcome to bid for before June.

Next Political Strategy Report: any issues which people want covered in the autumn PSR?

The Board asked AM to look at how to bring smaller organisations into the umbrella.

A table of elections coming up would be useful.

Useful to have analysis of results of local council elections. Also if anything results from efforts to improve scrutiny of sustainable development. AM reported that the Scottish Parliament's Corporate Body has a researcher looking into better integration of SD into Parliament's work. AM and others had given him some ideas on looking at SD as a cutting issue. Ross Finnie noted that a mechanism which the former Cabinet Sub Committee had used which had useful criteria for examining the budget process may be equally usable by a Parliamentary Committee. AM will bring that to the researcher's attention. If anything emerges from that process AM will include in the next PSR.

6 Next meeting

This has moved to 19 June rather than 26th.

BEFS is lobbying members to sign a petition against raising VAT on repairs to listed buildings which has been circulated.