



LINK Network meeting note, 17 January 2013, held at the LINK Perth office

Attending: Deborah Long (Plantlife, LINK Chair), Simon Jones (SWT, LINK Trustee), Beryl Leatherland (LINK Trustee), Helen Todd (RA, LINK Trustee), John Mayhew (APRS, Landscape TFC), Lloyd Austin (RSPB, LINK Trustee, Governance, Economics TFs), Aedán Smith (RSPB, convenor Planning TF), Angus Yarwood (WTS, LINK Trustee WTFC), Calum Duncan (MCS, MTFC), Philip Taylor, Nick Underdown (LINK Marine Project officers) Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (LINK staff).

1. Intros and Apologies

Apologies were received from: Alison Connolly & Steve Gardner (SEFF), Vicki Swales (Sustainable Land Use TF), Jim Densham (CATF), Sarah Dolman (WDCS), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers), Ross Finnie (President), Dave Fairlamb (WWT), Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland, Agriculture TFC), Alan Fox (SOC), Alistair Beeley (NEMT), Mike Daniels & Duncan Orr-Ewing (Deer TF), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Mary Church (FoES, Legal Gov group), Dan Barlow (WWFS, Economic TFC), Lisa Webb (Freshwater TFC), Jim Densham (Climate Adaptation TFC), Helen McDade (JMT), Diarmid Hearn (NTS).

2. Horizon Scanning – what's ahead

Deborah identified three issues, a. Governance Matters agenda, b. engagement with local authorities and c. Sustainable Economic Growth, and in relation/additionally the high-scoring priorities from [Strategic Planning](#) meeting: changes to Forestry Commission UK and impacts on Scotland; the Land Reform review – LINK workshop arranged for 5 February in Perth Office; ensuring our TFs consider Climate Adaptation and Risk in their work, and gaps including transport.

Governance: Intention is to have a conference in the autumn, subject to getting good interest from other sectors to take forward, and resources. Board had discussed this as a fundraising priority as it requires external funding. It also requires more input from members. **TFs can be tackling aspects of the agenda using [Governance Matters](#) as a source.** LINK was invited to submit evidence on post legislative scrutiny, which Andy signed off via a subset of the governance group before submitting. It is likely we will be invited to submit oral evidence. There is a job to take the issues out into the wider policy community, with TFs being encouraged to read [Governance Matters](#) and use ideas there in communications. **Action TFs**

Local Authorities: LAs received notice that the next round of Single Outcome Agreements require updating by April 2013. Helen Todd has drafted a letter from LINK which will be sent to CEOs of LAs and other interests shortly, along with *Acting Locally*, to remind of LINK's work to date, flag up our issues and how they can be addressed in the SOA process. **Action: Staff**

Jen will circulate an 'aide memoir' to TFs on all the relevant actions from the new Strategic Plan. This will refer to the value of advocacy strategies per work area (along lines of that which Andy and Julia have developed with the Wildlife Forum and which would be helpful to other TFs.

Action: Staff

Sustainable Economic Growth: With Dan Barlow moving on from WWFS shortly capacity on this forum will be less, though we have the [report](#) and an aspiration to widen our engagement in the debate. The Economics TF would benefit from more active input from members, and those with **contacts in the business networks are asked to let staff know.** Calum and John flagged up the usefulness of LINK's Economics and Governance work for referencing in their own work as members (eg in APRS discussions with the Rural Commission) while acknowledging their lack of time to be more involved other than for integration needs (Marine TF); Calum was impressed with Andy's input to SCVO, noting that these are areas where LINK can add value, and that such effort to keep up momentum is vital. Andy observed that **Fracking** is another issue where the economic message can be shaped, in terms of investment in renewables, and a presumption against inclusion in NPF3, though this needs NGOs besides FoES to make a noise.

Action: Member bodies

Rolling Manifesto – 2013 refreshing planned: Andy reminded the meeting about the purpose of the RM in relation to feeding into the parties' manifestos, noting that it was vital to keep it updated. As an election free year 2013 gave the opportunity to complete and expand some sections, shorten others and address gaps. He will send this to TFs and relevant members at end January for review, aiming to have the basics completed by end March. TFs were asked to note these deadlines. **Action: Andy, TFs**

Scottish Environment Week: This was developing well, with some opportunity for members to contribute further to constituency visits. The [programme](#) is on the website. Rea was in charge of finalising all details.

Party Conferences: The strategy continues to be to hold fringes on Economics. The Greens and SNP are done and the LibDems and Labour will be done jointly with their environmental wings, and the Conservatives will be attended in June.

The [Referendum Challenge](#) leaflet has been sent to all the campaigns (May 2012), with no responses yet. They will be invited again by LINK to respond (later January), with the option of going LINK's public about any lack of detail on our issues in May 2013, should nothing be received by then. **Action: Staff**

3. Task Forces' key activities to Summer 2013:

A look ahead highlighting points for other TFs and members.

Please see the [Q3 update](#) of the network plan for reference.

Agriculture: CAP reform is the focus. TF is pushing government on environmental funding in the interim funding arrangements (SRDP), with danger that agri-environment measures will be overlooked. Confor is pushing for forestry to be funded outwith the SRDP. The public consultation was supposed to be out in April, the ATF is working with SGov on CAP, SRDP and on the Doing Better regulation review, where Vicki Swales represents LINK on the steering group. There is a facility for public to input, at <http://www.farmregulation-doingbetter.org>

Climate Adaptation: Jim had reported that the TF is attending Scottish Government consultation workshops on the Adaptation Programme and there was much to do to ensure the natural environment theme is in a good state. **CATF will need other TFs' support during the spring** consultation period, as it is not answerable by the TF on its own. There will also be areas in it where we have no TF for the topic. As one of our key messages to government is their need to be joined up on adaptation, we will need to be ready and joined-up. Meeting agreed Jim be asked to send an email round all TFs asking for relevant input. **Action: Jim Densham, all TFs**

Deer: Low key, meeting as required and with SNH on its Wildlife Management.

Economics: Covered above. This **group requires more volunteers from member bodies** and to know of member bodies contacts with the business and economic interests.

Food group: A correspondence group for members interested in wider food issues has been established, with Soil Association, SAGS and the MTF interested – **others very welcome**. The purpose is mainly to share information though there other opportunities which the current TFs have no capacity to deliver and members at this meeting could not volunteer any further capacity from their organisations. It was agreed that a brief position paper on food issues could be circulated for members to agree on certain principles, giving those who were active a basis to take forward a network position externally. **Action: Food Group**

Freshwater: Lloyd Austin reported that the Water Resources Bill Stage 2 amendments deadline was the following day, hence Lisa's apologies. This included sustainable catchment management and controls over abstraction; progressing fairly well with some Stage 1 amendments accepted and others looking positive.

Governance: covered above.

On **Legal Governance** sub-group, Lloyd reported the group had met the Justice Department and continued to monitor developments on civil justice reforms, pressing on Aarhus Convention compliance. Technical expertise from Frances McCartney was invaluable, and the DPF allocation

for her to liaise with Brussels was still required. Once FoES was back to strength Mary Church would have more time for this work area. It was noted that Planning Democracy were also working on the issues (on the LG sub-group).

Landscape: Still working on the Landscape & Energy (LINK) statement; after the useful member workshop LINK had organised in November, which had seen a certain amount of meeting of minds, comments from WWF and RSPB and FoES and the Marine TF had been received and will be integrated by John in a revision. Jen and Andy had offered assistance to the task. Hill tracks is a landscape issue with a planning solution, interesting both TFs, and perhaps needing a NGO champion/tsar at this point. A LINK delegation had met Planning Minister on 15/1/13, whose mind is not totally made up, and who is open to evidence; that needs to be provided and the Planning TF with LTF interests will consider how to take the issue forward on 14/2/13. John would step down as convenor of Landscape TF in May. SCNP and APRS were launching a report 'Unfinished Business' on NPs, on 10/4/13 which makes the case for more national parks, including marine.

Marine: Sarah Archer and Alan Fox worked hard to get the marine report on the [economic benefits of Marine Protected Areas](#) finished, ably promoted by Nick. The TF were digesting the SNH & JNCC advice on MPAs on which there would be a consultation in the summer, along with a consultation on wind, wave and tidal. The TF had a place on a new research group on renewables. There was some MTF activity on Inshore Fisheries which has overlaps with biodiversity, with good opportunities coming up on a social, environmental and economic review of the scallop industry. Next 6 months integration needs are with Planning (National Marine Plan), Climate Adaptation (input), Wildlife Forum (tie ins with Species Champions) and monitoring of designated sites. Also input to Governance and Economics groups where asked. Aedan flagged that planning applications for big offshore windfarms are in or about to come in; a big issue for the next couple of years. It was noted that members of the TF deal with casework as individual members, though could keep each other better informed on how casework is shaping. **Action: TF members**

National Parks (inc marine considerations): Grant Moir would start as CNPA CEO in March and the Board would seek a meeting with him. The SCNP/APRS report advocates a Marine NP off the west coast. Calum noted that the challenge by local opposition to the proposed Sound of Barra SAC, had led to a review of the science which had now been confirmed, and the SAC was to go ahead. Charles Strang (APRS) has offered to be depute convenor for this TF.

Planning: NPF3, review of the SPP and Fracking were the big issues over this year. On NPF3 the TF want to ensure less bad proposals are passed than previously (noting that the Central Scotland Green Network was a positive development). Various member bodies had put forward proposals before the December deadline. By March there should be a Main Issues Report and a draft NPF setting out what the government would like to do. Parliamentary scrutiny is due in September, which was very intensive last time round and needs careful preparation by the TF. Mary Church, John Mayhew and Aedan met the Minister Derek Mackay on 15/1 following on from the wider meeting where the news on hill tracks was broken. The meeting was reasonably constructive. The review of the SPP, the remainder of planning policy apart from the NPF where SGov sets out its criteria based policy, and where all member bodies' interests lie, is all subject to change. Local Development Plans do not always restate the SPP though they do have to accord with it, so the SPP is very important in challenging bad planning decisions. The SPP currently has the best official definition of Sustainable Economic Growth which can be useful. It would be useful to know how it relates to the Marine plan. It was agreed that a LINK meeting on the SPP would be useful before the end of March, including other interests for part of it, to develop our principles. **Action: Staff/Aedan**

The review of the Environmental Impact Directive by the European Commission was critical, as it is the process by which environmental harm from all projects has to be made public. It looks broadly quite good so far, though the UK government, where it goes first from the EC, is using it as a political football. The PTF had encouraged the Minister to have a different approach from that of Eric Pickles flagging positive outcomes of the EIA process in Scotland. LINK has 4 places on a workshop on EIA, which have been allocated among members to cover the range of interests. Fracking is a key issue and controls are unclear even to Government. There are lots of issues impacting on the environment and local democracy. Andy met David Wilson head of the Climate Change Division, who considers NPF3 could have a presumption against fracking, similar to the Scottish position on nuclear, though the case needs to be made by orgs additional to FoES.

Environment Fundraisers: The SEFF landfill tax event in Parliament was held on 15/1, well attended with a good turnout from MSPs including the Environment Minister. SEFF did a submission to the consultation and the bill is expected to go to consultation in the spring.

Wildlife Forum: The wildlife champions event on 24/1 in Parliament is part of the WF's advocacy plan to launch species champions (10 MSPs so far – *staff note, 18 MSPs signed up by late Jan*), and keep the champions engaged with their chosen species. The TF responded to the 2020 consultation and met officials, receiving lukewarm response to their ask for biological outcomes http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ParliamentaryBriefings/biodiversity_outcomesNov2012.pdf
A briefing was circulated for the Parliamentary debate on 17/1 <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ParliamentaryBriefings/LINKPBBioDebate17.1.13.pdf>
Andy had met the new Special Advisor, Malcolm Fleming (can be a useful way of getting policy advice to Ministers) and reminded him of obligations. Nick would coordinate press work around the LINK wildlife champions event.

Woodland Forum: The TF met in December (following up consultation response on National Forest Estate, meeting FE on access issues soon). The SG Tree Health group is to produce a report and action plan as SGov realises more is needed. It is likely to go ahead with 2 test areas for spraying. It was agreed that LINK delegates should flag up the links with Invasive Species, where there is a code of practice on prevention, and other with relevant groups (Deborah sits on a group looking at juniper disease), advocating a mechanism to bring these strands together.

Action: LINK Tree Health delegates

4. Member issues

NTS: Diarmid (who sent apologies) emailed that for NTS the bulk of the policy resource will be going to an update of our internal policy documents, quite a big job. In terms of external policy, there are major developments on the historic environment expected – the reform of Historic Scotland and the revision of the Scottish Historic Environment Policy – which will take up time. Otherwise, land reform, tree diseases, and planning policy, are all likely to feature this year.

Plantlife: A new UK report on the State of our plants, mosses and lichens is out 'Our vanishing flora, how wild flowers are disappearing across Britain',

Ramblers: Land Reform review and the LINK workshop on 5 February. RA is taking on Network Rail on crossings and trespass issues.

Scottish Wild Land Group: Beryl flagged a special edition of Wild Land News with a variety of articles on energy related issues, coming out soon, and intended to be a bit provocative.

5. Other updates

The Board had a discussion about LINK's internal planning and reporting process and welcomed views on the usefulness or otherwise of the quarterly operating plan (now network plan) to TFs and members. Views were that it was useful and necessary though its frequency could be reconsidered from TF perspective.

Next meeting is on **Thursday 18 April**. Task Forces are reminded that a spokesperson from each work area should attend.

AW/23 January