



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

Attending:

Deborah Long, LINK Chair, Plantlife, Wildlife Forum
Helen Todd – Ramblers Scotland, LINK Trustee, corresp. member of various TFs
Angus Yarwood, Woodland Trust, LINK Trustee, Woodlands Forum, ATF, SLUTF
Ron Payne, Mountaineering Co of Scot Director, Landscape & Access (on LTF pending staff apt)
Helen McDade, John Muir Trust, LTF, NPTF, PTF Gov Group, Economics Forum
Calum Duncan, Marine Conservation Soc, Marine TF, corresponding member of others
Bruce Wilson, Scot Wildlife Trust, Living Landscapes Policy Officer
John Mayhew, Assoc for the Protection of Rural Scotland, LTF convenor, PTF, NPTF, SLUTF
Lisa Webb, RSPB, Freshwater TF convenor
Jim Densham, RSPB, Climate Adaptation TF convenor
Dave Fairlamb, WWT, FWTF member
Jonathan Wordsworth, Archaeology Scotland, Agri TF convenor, SLUTF
Diarmid Hearn, National Trust for Scot, various TFs
Ross Finnie, LINK President elect
Jen Anderson, LINK Chief Officer
Andy Myles, LINK Parliamentary Officer
Alice Walsh, LINK Development Officer
Lindsay Roberts, Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer
Sarah Roberts, Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer

Apologies: Dan Barlow WWFS, Kathy Wormald Froglife, Beryl Leatherland MCoFS, Eila Macqueen Archaeology Scotland, Jenny Mollison SAGS, Aedan Smith RSPB, Lloyd Austin (trustee).

1. Updates internal and external

a. Board reports:

Strategic liaison Deborah reported on the Board meeting held that morning. Liaison meetings were planned with SNH and SEPA, in addition to the environmental summit also involving LINK players and others which LINK was organising for Feb: ie, a Chatham House Rules discussion around environment in an age of austerity. A meeting was also planned with the Minister on 22 Feb, which had a fairly full agenda (items reported). Members were asked to let Jen know by Friday of other items (next ministerial meeting May). Meetings with Bob Macintosh in his new capacity (see below) and David Henderson Howat for FCS would also be sought.

SGM plans: An electronic special general meeting would be held to: enable formal President election and amend the terms around timing of such an appointment; to amend the M&A to enable LINK subscriptions to be agreed before the financial year to which they pertained; and to stipulate that membership would be deemed lapsed at the end of the financial year in which a subscription goes unpaid.

Strategic review: Members were asked to complete the online survey if they had not already done so. The brief for the external assessment of LINK's impact would be put out to tender in February. The Board planned an away day in May and for the refreshed corporate strategy to be ready by early summer. **Action: Members asked to complete the survey asap**

International info/networks: The Board would explore with the Minister whether access to information from officials in Scotland House in Brussels would be feasible. The Landscape TF was asked to put its request to join Civilscape through the Discretionary Project Fund; the Board proposed the benefits of membership be monitored for one year before LINK made an ongoing commitment. **Action: LTF**

b. People, stakeholder groups, legislation/consultations/inquiries, events.

Bob Macintosh would head up the Directorate of Environment and Forestry within Scottish Government from February. David Henderson Howat, Head of Policy at FCS, will become

Deputy Director FCS, and there would be other shifts below that in the structures. Some concern was noted about potential conflicts of interest.

Andrew Thin would stand down as SNH Chair in June and members were encouraged to be alert for adverts for the chair and other places on SNH board, and to encourage applications amongst our contacts, noting that experience in governance and organisational management would likely be valued perhaps even over environmental expertise. **Action: Members to encourage good applicants**

The EET committee would conduct an inquiry into Scotland's renewable energy targets. RSPB planned to respond. Andy Myles (ABM) suggested that the high level statement expected from the LTF on the impact of current subsidy regimes would be useful in relation; the Marine TF and Planning TF had a keen interest also. **Action: LTF, PTF and MTF to coordinate LINK action**

The meeting noted that Ron Payne would cover areas formerly in Hebe Carus' remit for MCofS as best he can (LTF, NPTF) until her replacement was recruited. **Action: TF convenors please note**

Preventative Expenses Orders: Consultation now published. A number of members had expressed interest in contributing to a LINK response and this would be coordinated via the Governance group and Planning TF. **Action: Andy Myles to confirm plans**

Diarmid Hearn flagged an **SEA of SNH's plans**, also a UK Gov **consultation on lobbying** which would include NGO advocacy. The Office of National Statistics had just closed its **consultation on GDP and indicators** with results due in a couple of months.

2. Draft operating Plan for 2012/13 and specific issues.

With an eye to any changed priorities, integration and workshop needs, TF convenors and participants spoke to the forward plans which had been circulated and which included the intentions discussed at strategic planning in November 2011. Updates on work in the quarter to 31.12.11 can be found on the members' website.

Agriculture: The next few months are critical for the SRDP, the main method of funding land management, with framework due to reach Ministers by July. ATF and SLU TF joint meeting on 30/1 to discuss action plan.

Ramblers are talking to NFUS and SRPBA on access issues and would keep ATF informed. Brian Pack is chairing a group reviewing agriculture regulation in Scotland. SAC/Hutton Institute paper on implications of following the Pack model. Agreed LINK needs to keep watching brief. Jim Densham for RSPB is on the Govt's CC and agri group which will develop an agriculture renewables strategy and thought LINK may get an invitation also. LINK ATF had tended not to do goose management as this had been addressed by RSPB.

Climate Adaptation: aims to influence the programme via joint work on the 12 sectors within the plan, which will go out for consultation autumn 2012. LINK has published its 5 principles (see website). TF priorities for influence will be agreed at meeting in Feb. The risks/ops balance of climate change were briefly discussed. LINK will present a cautious point of view.

Consensus building: November's discussions had agreed to build in time for building consensus around important issues where there was lack of knowledge and/or variation in views. Three which had been highlighted were: housing; energy; SEA implementation. LTF was working on a draft statement on onshore wind and landscape which was intended to come round all members for consultation in the next couple of months. Andy Myles would scope out organisations and networks working on housing, as a first step on this issue, keeping members informed. The NPTF meeting in Jan had discussed housing, agreeing again that this was not just a Parks issue; their convenor was researching approaches in the Peak District and LLTNPA and would report back (discretionary funding awarded for this research).

Deer: TF working at lower level of activity than previously. Electric fencing an issue for Ramblers. SNH considering deer as part of a 'wildlife' management strategy. Calum asked if seals also included. Staff will inquire. **Action: Staff to SNH in Feb**

Economics: Group had met in November to agree plans; brief for consultant to draw up 'hymnsheet' was still being discussed, therefore time frame outlined in current plan will slip. WWFS, NTS, RSPB are also financing the work. **Action: Plan to indicate JMT's involvement**

Governance:

'Legal governance' group has met – FoES leads this. LINK is backing FoES petition which has gone to the Equal Opportunities Committee and LINK will brief this Cttee, as new convenor comes up to speed. Consultation on Protected Expenses Orders is published (see above) and this group will potentially coordinate a joint responses. Andy Myles is drafting a plain English guide to these complex issues, for our website.

Actions: Andy

Governance Matters – our report being discussed by the Churches, Electoral Reform Society; hope to take forward to the STUC and possible conference with the Constitutional Commission later this year.

Referendum strategy: Andy Myles' draft paper was tabled and met with support from those present. The fuller draft would go to members for consultation in February and the aim was to publish in late May/early June, after the local elections. This work came under the wing of the Governance group, which would meet soon. **Actions: Andy to circulate draft strategy to members; Governance group meeting to be set up**

Rolling manifesto: The plans were as outlined in Andy's autumn Political Strategy Report, to refresh, update and address gaps in our rolling manifesto (online – see website) – probably from this autumn into next year (election free). All members and TFs would be invited to be involved.

Freshwater: TF meeting next week. RAFTS leaving LINK March – this will have an impact. A key focus is River Basin Management Plan reviews: this is the year to get measures in place. Water Bill on future of Scottish water has potential to be of wide interest. SW has land holdings that could be better managed for biodiversity TF will consider gaps in existing legislation that require strengthening. RSPB will look at water efficiency, water metering, big energy user. SGov is keen to develop renewable energy - MTF and LTF have an interest too. MCS head office has some experience on the E&W experience. Should there be a governance role? What else could/should the Bill cover? **Action: Members & TFs keep FWTF informed even just of ideas**

Ross Finnie just appointed to Water Industry Commission.

Landscape: TF meeting to be held following week, where members will decide how to progress plans for the high level energy position statement which is now in draft and over which there are currently differences of view within the TF. At a UK level, common cause could be made with CPRE and NT. **Action: LTF to agree content to bring to LINK**

The TF had been usefully briefed by Sarah Archer on implementation of the Marine Act, renewables, etc.

TF receives papers from European Landscape Coordination group (involves government and agencies only, lest it become a successor to the Scottish Landscape Forum!) and TF will assess how to respond through SNH contacts.

SNH Protected Areas Review: Progress on this was unknown though LINK Wildlife Forum had met Angus Laing and understood there was a desire to involve people. **Action:**

Deborah/Sarah to liaise with Angus Laing and keep LTF posted

SNH Wild Land Map: due to appear in next 10 days.

The proposed review of developments' actual jobs with jobs promised, was on the back boiler.

Local Government: meeting civil servants with other LINK players on 27 Jan to discuss concerns around the National Performance Framework. The e-action for individuals on local government elections was now live on FoES site, on LINK's manifesto, Acting Locally. Andy Myles would follow up parties' responses to AL. Hustings guidance will be shortly on the website. **Actions: members to support cyberaction where possible**

Marine: As sheet – 2016 now the target date for effectively managed MPAs to be in place, instead of 2012. The MTF had just written to the Cabinet Secretary

Nat Parks TF: the TF was now established which was helpful; had met CNPA for constructive discussion in November, around the Park's draft plans but also some of the fundamental issues that concerned LINK bodies. Re: TF proposals in the draft LINK plan for a report and conference on Scotland's progress with Parks - the TF felt there were other forums better resourced than LINK to support such initiatives and were exploring with UHI and IUCN.

Planning: Consultation due on review of the GDPO and the TF wished for some robust content including making some hill tracks subject to permission. The TF had invited SNH to its last meeting for robust discussion of how its strategy to influence the planning process upstream (rather than submit objections) is working out, with agreement that this has worked to some extent, with SNH liaising more with Local Councils on policy, but no satisfactory answers as to why the Agency does not, on important occasions, make objections.

SEFF: Had planned to commission research on the landfill issue. No update available.

Sustainable Land Use: Meeting with ATF on 30 Jan. No Govt stakeholder group will be set up though there is the intention to hold an event one year on from the strategy's publication (ie in March 2012). The Action Plan has been published and a report is due in June, so this is a focus for the TF. The TFs plan jointly to commission work by spring on agri and forestry intentions of SLU, rather than 'agri as part of CAP, with add-ons'. SLU had also input to LINK's Woodland Expansion submission (see below). Andy hoped the TF would continue to pursue the 'proper forum' as an essential part of the strategy.

Woodland: Angus Yarwood had coordinated LINK's response to the Woodland Expansion Group's call for views which brought out LUS aspects well. Angus and Mike Wood (RSPB) planned to draft a paper around the future of the FCS and national forest estate, from LINK's perspective, for April. It was agreed Woodland should feature as a TF in the Plan. **Action: Angus /TF form**

Wildlife Forum: Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is under review and LINK is not formally involved though Jonny Hughes on review group as individual. Deborah would encourage members to attend the meeting on 15 February, to provide good support for targets and indicators. The Forum plans to hold a parliamentary event to follow up the Wildlife Pledge, in May, and promote biodiversity to politicians.

International: Board had discussed again how LINK could support members in relation to international opportunities and would explore further.

European Environment Bureau: Andy Myles had attended the AGM in October and met Elizabeth Heister, UK board member. Andy has learnt more about groups that LINK can take part in, there are some good opportunities to get good Scottish thinking into the mix, and travel expenses are usually paid. **Action: Andy will circulate a note to members**

IUCN UK: Stuart Brooks had taken the Chair of the committee, at least for six months.

3. Member body issues

APRS is more interested in environmental justice and working with the Governance group on those issues. Nina Sobecka has started as part time administrator. ARPS has a development plan on its website.

Ramblers has a new UK CEO from Feb, Benedict Southworth, who has a strong campaigning background. Scotland RS office now has 6 members of staff.

John Muir Trust has a 3-day-week staff member based in London focussing on strategic energy and landscape issues and looking to engage with NT and CPRE.

Plantlife has just published *Forestry Recommissioned* on strategy for woodland plants. Also just held conference on global strategy for plant conservation, which considered Scotland's progress and future targets.

Planning Democracy is holding a conference on shortcomings of the planning system in April and seeks suitable case studies from communities.

Marine Conservation Society has a new staff member – part of UK sea Champions team - starting with experience in supporting and coordinating volunteers from 21 Jan.

Scottish Native Woods has gone into administration.

4. AOB

Themes for Congress – the Board had discussed ideas around sustainability and transport, specifically to involve business and private sector, linking with the 20:20 group work. Alice would email round members seeking views. **Action: Alice**

5. **Next meeting** is 26 April, in Perth.