

**Proceedings: Joint Links Conference,
Belfast
26-27 September 2012**



Valuing Our Environment
Helping people to recognise what nature does for us

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Background

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the forum and networking body for organisations interested in the environment of Northern Ireland. NIEL was formally launched in 1990 to complete the network of four 'Country Links' in the UK: Scottish Environment Link, Wales Environment Link and Wildlife and Countryside Link.

Every two years the Links get together to discuss major environmental issues of UK relevance. This year the meeting was held in Belfast, on 26-27 September. Approximately 35 people from England, Scotland and Wales environmental organisations came over to Northern Ireland to join their Links colleagues in discussing environmental issues and investigate future possible areas of cooperation.

Aim of the two-day Conference

The overall aim of the conference entitled 'Valuing Our Environment - helping people to recognise what nature does for us' was to look at the attitudes to the environment across the UK, with the aim of identifying ways to promote its protection by all of the UK constituent governments. Exploring ways for the Links members effectively deliver their work within a devolved governance structure. Delegates also participated in a number of workshops around themes such as marine protection and legislation, CAP reform and environmental legislation.

Day 1: Wednesday 26 September

Facilitated Discussion

Delegates split into four main groups for facilitated discussions around four main themes namely: Valuing the Environment; Ecosystem Services, Conflicting Demands for Land and Sea; and Land Use Strategies. A summary of the context and outcomes of these discussions is provided below.

Discussion 1: Valuing the Environment. Putting a financial value on environmental outputs is a major advance over the 'we can't value it properly so it is *de facto* 0' approach. However, there are still issues around putting a 'cash value' on the environment.

- How can we put a 'cash value' on the environment while recognising its 'non-cash' benefits?
 - Very difficult on a large scale; easier on small scale but very specific.
 - Need to translate in terms of human effect (e.g. increased water charges due to dirty wells). Ultimately, the question is whether people can pay for environmental services.
 - Focus on why payment is needed.
 - Economists base their work on value to humans, not the wider services (e.g. clean air)
- Is it possible to assign an 'existence value' or 'moral value' within conventional cost/benefit analysis?
 - Conventional c/b analysis is basic – usually doesn't include existence value.
 - Difficult on a National scale – tends to be project-specific.

- Cannot apply Net Present Worth as the price of a habitat should increase over time, not decrease. (Value increases with less habitat).
- Could use Travel Cost method to try to incorporate extreme values.
- How do we determine 'cash value' of ecosystem services such as biodiversity, soil quality, purification, etc.? Defra's Natural Capital Assessment is one approach, though at early stage.
- National Trust undertook a study but this has been shelved – not in policy.
- How can we 'sell' the environment amongst all the other political and fiscal priorities?
 - The Chancellor sees it as a direct conflict of environment vs economic growth.
 - Access without influence is a major problem. Don't confuse access with influence.
 - Advocate the use of informers to influence government and highlight cross-departmental approaches. Advocacy through other, non-environmental organisations, for example Chief Medical Officer, the Churches, etc.
 - Practically demonstrate measures (e.g. SUDS). Need good hard evidence.
 - Need to be aware of timescales and best periods to influence (e.g. PfG and NIEL Manifesto: don't miss financial deadlines).
 - There would be benefits to a standardised approach to providing information – e.g. terminology, figures, etc.).
 - Environmental benefit timescales don't mesh with other priorities.
 - Advantages to focusing on one issue (e.g. flooding) to demonstrate multiple benefits.
 - Threats of EU fines (e.g. Strangford Lough Horse mussel damage) but we don't want to use this too often (afraid of half measures) - it's difficult to maintain good relations afterwards.
- Businesses
 - Very high degree of influence.
 - Construction aspects – using the environment as a resource leads to concern over abuse by businesses.
 - Use of environment in their marketing strategies?
 - There are good opportunities for interaction with large companies over where/how they source products and materials. (e.g. The Wicker Company in England have a 'customer challenge group' which detracts from environmental groups – a shift of audience focus.
 - There is the challenge of informing lay people of technical environmental measures.
- The influence of media and the potential for misinformation
 - There needs to be a focus on a storyline – the general public are usually unable to read/decipher statistics. Good visuals required.
 - It's vital to develop good on-going relationships with journalists and to ensure they understand the issues. Good to involve case studies, especially if they can be related to a personal, local angle. Consider timing – e.g. look at ES in the weeks after a flood.
 - Difficult to do on a broad scale; usually very specific.
 - One example would be to provide an urban and rural checklist for preventing flooding. Measures might even involve transferring ownership/responsibility.
- What are the dangers of putting a 'cash value' on the environment, and how can these be overcome?
 - There's a risk that a cash value on the environment makes it tradeable, losing its intrinsic value.
 - Any cash value is often based on 'shifting' science.

- Fixed value is based on a grading system which can lead to problems with having to 'improve' each year.
- Joint Links could use flooding to demonstrate benefits – combine to focus on one issue; talk on a large scale but not 'devalue smaller issues; simultaneous public awareness campaign on flooding issues, for example paving areas, etc.
- Pilot project on Sustainable Drainage could be widened in scale to other management issues such as reinstating wetlands.

Discussion 2: Ecosystem Services Approach. This new 'paradigm' has huge potential in helping people to understand what the environment does for them, and why it is vital to protect. However, it is a complex concept and needs to be 'oversimplified' to be understood, bringing with it a number of difficulties.

- How can we best promote the ecosystem services approach to public, politicians and land managers?
 - There's a significant gap in most NGOs' communications strategies – policy and on-the-ground action are not linked in a professional communications strategy.
 - Find a new name for ESA – what nature does for us (limited but more accessible)
 - Need simple, money-centred messages.
 - Approaches need to be multi-layered and sector-specific. The Forestry sell-off was a good example of motivated public, though motivation was more of the 'where will I walk the dog?' than any higher ideals.
 - Follow the money – e.g.
 - 1. Regulations on businesses re carbon sequestration mean fines for non-compliance so sell sequestration as part of ESA. Woodland Carbon Code - this voluntary code will encourage a consistent approach to woodland carbon projects, and offer clarity and transparency to customers about the carbon savings that their contributions may realistically achieve.
 - 2. Develop a strategy to link flood alleviation measures to insurance savings.
 - 3. Links between water treatment costs and wildfires in the Mournes.
 - 4. Investigate possible quantification of health benefits of Green Lanes, canals, etc. though no easy direct link to ES. Personal decisions required as well – get off the sofa!
- What are the dangers/difficulties of using the Ecosystem Services Approach and how can these be overcome?
 - Danger of ending up with concentration only on the most financially lucrative issues and solutions, e.g. flood defence not flood alleviation.
 - Danger of financial pressures skewing outcomes – e.g. a monoculture of spruce because it satisfies a particular environmental measure (CO₂ sequestration or runoff reduction) despite playing havoc with others such as biodiversity, etc.
 - There's a lack of identifiable outcomes with associated numbers – most plans and projects don't have financially related figures.
 - There's a danger that ESA could produce a lowest common denominator, e.g. with respect to biodiversity. Need to prevent financial aspects influencing the environmental standards required.
 - There are currently too many unknowns and not enough skills in the NGO sector to assess and interrogate government responses such as Natural Capital Assessments, No Net Loss Directives. These further complicate a complicated issue and make it

- much less accessible to the public. Links need to ensure they can cope and also interpret these to the public.
 - Danger of the loss of intrinsic, non-instrumental valuation in the rush to monetise.
- What messages are likely to be most effective in promoting policies and delivering attitudinal and behavioural change?
 - Address the 'what's in it for me?' Focus on the worth of Ecosystem Services compliance to the local and wider stakeholders. E.g. value of foresting parts of farmland, improved income, lower insurance premiums, compensation payments, reduced costs/rates.

Discussion 3: Conflicting Demands for Land and Sea. A finite amount of land has to deliver a huge range of outputs (food, energy, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, waste management, heritage, tourism, etc.).

- How can the land be managed to deliver a range and mix of benefits?
 - Water Framework Directive 2015; Marine Strategy Framework Directive – overlapping land and sea. CAP reform = huge influence on water quality through fertilisers on land leaking into the sea.
- How can we ensure that incentives and policies designed to deliver particular benefits do not deliver single outputs at the expense of all others?
 - Insufficient pressures on farmers e.g. regarding effluent, slurry, seasonal issues.
 - Cocktail of problems; Farmers – generational traditions. Farmers at mercy of weather.
- What messages are likely to be most effective in promoting policies and delivering change?
 - Restoration of floodplains – payments and if necessary, compulsory purchase
 - Debates with Farmers' Unions
 - Collaboration within EU – avoid being too isolationist. Learn from good practice from other countries. Acknowledge the political clout of the farming lobby. Similarly fishing has a strong voice. There's still a perception of environmentalists as tree-huggers. Need a new approach, engaging with local people.
 - Marine conservation issues often originate from damage done on land.
 - Sustainable drainage with separate waste systems is the ideal but there's limited scope for retrofitting.
 - Need effective waste management, a unified recycling strategy, monetised recycling, renewables.
 - There's an aesthetic element as well as environmental.

Discussion 4: Land Use Strategies. Some UK countries have them, some do not. How well are they working, and are they desirable mechanisms to bring about a more coherent approach to the environment?

- Do such strategies provide a mechanism to deliver an integrated approach across high value sites and the wider countryside, delivering public goods from privately owned land and balancing different outputs? What is the position across the four jurisdictions?
 - Scotland has one but lacks teeth and is disappointing; planning framework conflicts with Land Use Strategy. The Strategy isn't perfect but it is a start but may be difficult to get back on track. A hierarchy is needed with respect to strategic aims and directives. There's a disconnection with what happens on the ground.
 - NI has PPSs but no overall strategy and economic considerations seem to triumph.

- England has a National Planning Policy Framework which is 6 months in. There are various protections for designated sites, etc. It's very short. Local plans are required to conform to it but the strategic level seems to be missing. It's still an economics-driven agenda.
 - Valuing the environment still seems to be an issue. Climate Change could be used as a driver. Land Use Strategy needs to be over-arching.
 - Have to keep pushing - doesn't do it by itself. Just legislation is not good enough. Need to establish in government and developer thinking.
 - Are there other better solutions? Share best practice. There was a discussion about the need for SLU; what will it achieve; are there existing legislations in different places that would cover it?
- How have they been promoted and delivered? By which agencies?
 - Delivered in Scotland by Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.
 - In England by Natural England.
 - In NI – if we had one it would have to be delivered across government by DoE, DARD, DRD etc.

Q & A/discussion topics

- Scots got the SLU 'tightened' from what CSS wanted; need to be much more than general legislation. Scotland finds it useful despite flaws.
- Ratcheting up – one jurisdiction adopting and adding to other's strategy. First country adopting changes and best practice. Examples include learning from other devolved regions in terms of:
 - Putting wildlife crime on the political agenda
 - Rural development programmes
 - Introduction of Plastic bag levies
 - Marine Bill/ Acts
 - Land Use Strategies.

Drinks Reception and Tour Parliament Buildings

Delegates had the opportunity to visit the seat of Northern Ireland Government, to learn a little about the role of the NI Assembly Environment Committee. Delegates were met and welcomed by Mr Simon Hamilton MLA (Deputy Chair of the NI Assembly Environment Committee) who outlined the role of the Committee and provided examples of the recent, current and likely future scrutiny work to be undertaken by the Committee. Following the presentation delegates had some time for informal networking before receiving a tour of Parliament Buildings including the Great Hall, the Senate Room and the Assembly Chamber before returning to central Belfast for the conference dinner.



Valuing our Environment

Day 2: Thursday 27 September

Joint Link Workshops

Upon registering for the Joint Links Conference, delegates were asked to choose from two of four possible workshops. Each of the four workshops were held twice in order to facilitate attendance by the maximum number of delegates and to ensure as wide a geographical representation as possible. The titles of the workshops were: Measures of Societal Success; Working Together and Separately in a Devolved UK; CAP Reform; and the Marine Environment. A summary of the context and outcomes of these Workshops is provided below.

Workshop 1: Measures of Societal Success

Background

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a universal but crude measure of a country's economic activity and output. But it takes no account of the appreciation or depreciation of a country's building infrastructure, or of the condition of its natural capital (land, soils, the diversity of plants, animals and life) and the ecosystem services provided by the environment (such as crop pollination) (Natural History Museum, 2012). A number of eNGOs have contributed to the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, how do we harness this (and other work) in promoting an alternative to the narrowness of government's current economic policy?

Chair: Ross Finnie

Note-taker: Neil Halliday

Session 1:

- Concept of 'GDP+' being discussed by DEFRA.
- Scotland – National Performance Framework – viewed as an SNP project but ignored by other parties. Estimated that 1/3 of MSPs don't know it exists. Viewed by many as a non-serious review of economics.
- Business perception is that ENGOS want to completely dispose of GDP.
- Key papers: Stiglitz Report, Oxfam 'Humankind Index', Carnegie Trust Scotland.
- Scottish biodiversity strategy re-launched in 2012; puts sustainable economic growth as a priority, but is designed to maximise economic growth from the environment.
- 'Sustainable' is now a meaningless in government policy context.
- Natural Capital Committee – DEFRA. New report will be published soon. Chaired by Dieter Helm, who is widely respected.
- Need to move away from the need to 'just write another report'.
- Central government have outsourced much responsibility for sustainability to local authorities, accountability is outsourced accordingly.
- The Scottish government missed their carbon reduction targets, but no action taken.
- Discussion around high-profile court cases to raise issues in the public discourse.
- Natural Performance Framework – Scotland performance indicators website.
- Too many reports by similar groups all saying the same thing.
- Many disaster scenarios associated with climate change are beneficial to GDP.

- ENGOs must communicate more with other groups such as CBI, AgeUK etc.
- 'it's the economy, stupid!' is still the mantra of business and government, despite economic measurements being totally inadequate.
- We need a list of 'shovel-ready' projects to propose to government and other potential funders – low budget but with multiple benefits.
- Problem in Scotland – everything is now viewed through the 'independence prism' so SNP will not do anything that will threaten their majority until after 2014.
- Acceptance of GDP alternatives by industry must have the approval of CBI.
- ENGOs must be more financially literate.

Session 2:

- Happiness Index is focused on social wellbeing, not the environment.
- RSPB currently in partnership with NI Water to reduce costs and chemical inputs in water treatment by using ecosystem services approaches in land management.
- RSPB Futurescapes project is a good example of ways to boost the economy by enhancing the environment.
- Legal tests against the government – exact meanings of terminologies cannot be tested in court. Need more societal consensus before court cases?
- Options for future cooperation – communicate the crude nature of GDP to the public. More sharing of experiences between links.

WORKSHOP DELEGATES

Session 1

Name	Organisation	Link
Ross Finnie	Scottish Environment Link	SEL
Neil Halliday	Northern Ireland Environment Link	NIEL
Kate Hand	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Patricia Mackey	Sustainable Northern Ireland	NIEL
Helen Todd	Ramblers Scotland	SEL
Emily Keenan	National Trust Wales	WEL
Jennifer Fulton	Ulster Wildlife Trust	NIEL

Session 2

Name	Organisation	Link
Ross Finnie	Scottish Environment Link	SEL
Neil Halliday	Northern Ireland Environment Link	NIEL
Claire Cockerill	WWF Northern Ireland	NIEL
Diane Ruddock	The National Trust	NIEL
Katy Jenkins	TIDY Northern Ireland	NIEL
Louise Hartley	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Heather Galliford	Wales Environment Link	WEL
Elaine King	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Carrie Hume	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL
Andy Bridge	Lagan Valley Regional Park	NIEL

Workshop 2: Working Together and Separately in a Devolved UK

Background

This workshop considered if there are other environment policy issues delegates would like to propose as areas for closer cooperation other than those discussed in the other workshops? (i.e. Marine Issues, CAP Reform, etc.). Would this work be best done at Links or member organisation levels?

Chair: Tony Gent

Note-taker: Patrice Cairns

Session 1

The goal of the discussion was to identify areas in which each of the links can collaborate.

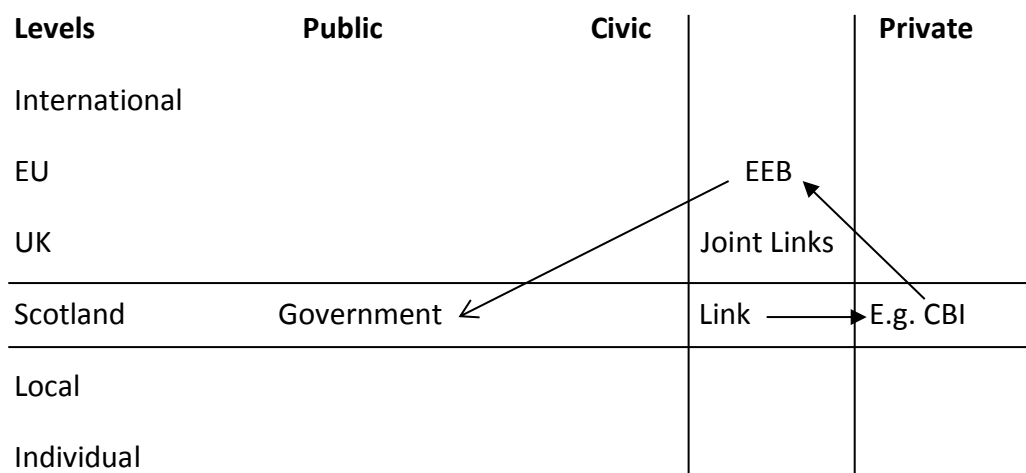
What are the 'links'? The majority of the links are based on a simple model -

Expertise → capacity → influence to government departments and agencies - legislation, policy and government process (UK and EN driven).

Previous discussions (on the 26th September) highlighted current issues within the links, including lack of communication, lack of economic expertise and working together and separately in an increasingly devolved UK.

Scottish Perspective

Scotland is currently developing and working from a new, more complex model –



Scottish link uses this interactive/linked model to identify priorities, barriers and gaps – then update the model accordingly. They are moving away from just focussing on NGO and government departments as many organisations are already lobbying on similar issues.

Scottish model highlights that the current simplistic linear model does not work effectively, it creates issues in communication.

English Perspective

Invasive species issue – identifying key players and where the government has failed, no collective thinking at present, task force set up to analyse GB strategy (used by DEFRA), government want guidance, but they are not hearing a UK level joint voice.

NI Perspective

Based on task forces (transport, freshwater, climate change, waste, planning, marine.) similar to the linear model discussed, providing a communication role to local government. WWF in particular approaches a more complex model. DEFRA miss the importance of specific issues for each country.

General Issues

DEFRA will be responsible under DA Acts, a lot of effort has went into influencing DEFRA but has not been worth the time resource – better to influence each DA parliament.

Start NGO discussions at the 'root' – working with own governments will give the most effect (do not wait until they are together under DEFRA). DEFRA focus in on agriculture, but not on less favoured land (which is the majority of Scotland).

Equality in each DA must be considered as a key issue. Not a constitutional but a federal approach – what mechanisms are needed to facilitate collaborative working?

Current joint links is very informal; there is no structure for establishing agreed principles.

Resources are in correct place, but there is a missed opportunity for collaborative working. UK links cannot work without DA links. Must realise that 80% of environmental legislation is created at EU level.

Proactive Approaches

Establish joint principles and then approach own government.

Create a 'map model' to assess the interaction of different levels.

Think on an EU level at borders, coasts, etc.

More contact between links – hold conferences to address joint principles at broader level.

Establish shared principles rather than specific mechanisms to overcome the difficulties in co-ordinating policies.

Possibly establish an executive board to meet a few times a year.

Establish areas for each link at the start of each year, identify gaps in evidence.

Identify key policy areas and identify where small resources will produce maximum impacts – seminars, conferences, bringing in wider expertise.

UK level property areas (energy fiscal policy set in Westminster).

Must change civic and private cultures in priority areas.

Increase PR and communications; ensure joint links are referred to in individual bulletins.

The lack of communication can be addressed by identifying task forces and using them to increase awareness across the UK.

Areas to Approach

Energy – largely driven by multi-national corporates, will UK level be able to influence this issue? Sharing principles (i.e. renewables) and experience, Scotland is setting targets, UK needs to set challenges. Need best practice and shared experience to influence decision makers. Must appreciate different influence levels in government; use a 'map' model to assess 'pressure points'. Links is policy driven, should data/monitoring/use of science be brought in?

Non-native species is there an opportunity for greater cooperation?

Session 2

Linear model (as previously discussed session 1)

Welsh Perspective

Government legislation programme, legally enforce definition of sustainable development.

Focus on socio-economic.

Environment central to portfolio, use of informers.

Bring environment back into sustainable development.

Expanding audience in government departments.

Scottish Perspective

Implementation of environmental legislation.

SEA, push government (climate change act).

Andy Myles - 'Governance Matters' paper - very informative.

Table of 'pillars of society' – what are our limits? Are there any members who can help set relationships?

NGOs who don't deliver services for government.

Add value to individual work of members.

NI Perspective

Good relationship with NIEA, who provide a 'challenge fund' for small organisations.

Use of taskforces (FWTF, Stop Climate Chaos, Marine Task Force etc. to promote environmental messages).

Freshwater publication – 10 Steps to Sustainable Water use in Northern Ireland.

SCCNI – major political engagement event at Stormont.

NIMTF – pushing for introduction of 'worthwhile' NI Marine Bill.

EPA 2007 with other organisations an example of members/ sectors working together.

English Perspective

Largely focus on government departments, engaging stakeholders through DEFRA.

Less policy than other DAs (not the driving force).

Agri-marine areas – freshwater and planning (blueprint – 10 steps to sustainable water).

Climate change is an area that is lacking– same in Scotland (e.g. transport area has Transform Scotland, but lacks input of environmental engineers).

Introducing animal welfare (6-7 new members), is this an area of other links?

Scottish balance of renewables and land use.

Forestry lacks a task force - but it is a democratic process, members choose the issues.

General Issues

Links – mitigation function to provide united front to environment would be effective in deploying limited resources.

Based on timescales and tackling conflicts.

Renewable split within environmental sector is unhelpful (Welsh Environment Committee) – need to employ mitigation.

Different policies but overarching mechanisms.

Do links actually drive the NGOs/task forces?

Collective thinking from links - Issues are the same, how to share best practice relating to each government?

Adequate funding or staff within the links. NI cut by £30k. Scotland possibly have funding issues two years down the line.

NIEL – provides funding for specific projects, lack of resources, possibly more involvement/ participation with members.

Proactive Approaches

Establish an evidence base across links, e.g. cost-benefit analysis.

Developing a positive narrative on issues.

Gathering case studies.

Policy work – shared principles.

Increase the level of output from links.

Focus on environmental Ministers to get issues picked up.

Ensure consistency in reporting.

Establish a Joint Links Forum - Joint links Secretariat. Meet three times per year, establish a website forum.

Areas to Approach

Planning, marine, water, agriculture, biodiversity.

Environmental and social benefits of planning e.g. transport.

Landscape/access/health/tourism – target informers, e.g. Chief Medical officers.

WORKSHOP DELEGATES

Session 1

Session 2

Name	Organisation	Link		Name	Organisation	Link
Tony Gent	Amphibian & Reptile Conservation	WCL		Tony Gent	Amphibian & Reptile Conservation	WCL
Patrice Cairns	Climate Northern Ireland	NIEL		Patrice Cairns	Climate Northern Ireland	NIEL
Dave Fairlamb	WWT Caerlaverock	SEL		Jen Anderson	Scottish Environment Link	SEL
Craig Macadam	Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust	SEL		Patricia Mackey	Sustainable Northern Ireland	NIEL
Claire Cockerill	WWF Northern Ireland	NIEL		Helen Todd	Ramblers Scotland	SEL
Veronica Chrisp	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL		Calum Duncan	Marine Conservation Society	SEL
Andy Myles	Scottish Environment Link	SEL		Lizzy Pinkerton	Belfast Hills Partnership	NIEL
Carrie Hume	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL		Hilary Allison	The Woodland Trust	WCL
				Raoul Bhambral	Wales Environment Link	WEL

Workshop 3: CAP Reform

Background

In Crunch Time for CAP the four Link organisations stated ‘As we enter this current round of CAP reform, the tools to drive forward more sustainable, humane and wildlife-friendly farming must be developed. It must not be hijacked by those who wish to legitimise the status quo through greenwash. The CAP must play its role in meeting UK, EU and global objectives and commitments, to halt and reverse biodiversity declines by 2020 and meet ambitious climate change targets, but this requires genuine greening’. So where are we now in terms of CAP reform? What are the steps we need to take to push for a genuinely greener CAP?

Co-Chairs : Julie Middleton (Wildlife and Countryside Link) & Jenna Hegarty (RSPB)

The two workshop sessions on CAP reform were run using the same format. Following welcome and introduction, Jenna provided an update on the current EU timetable for CAP negotiations and the

various points at which decisions would be made which would affect the shape and content of the next CAP.

Julie then reviewed current work being done in partnership by the four Link organisations in the UK, to develop a set of briefing notes for MEPs on CAP – setting out the areas of the CAP reform process which are most important for the environment and providing a set of ‘asks’ that all four Link organisations have supported.

These briefings were then used as a means of explaining the key areas of CAP of importance to the environment, under four headings:

- Rural Development Programmes.
- Greening: Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs).
- Cross Compliance.
- High Nature Value Farming.

[These briefings are now available on the Link website www.wcl.org.uk and have not changed significantly since the workshops]

A question and answer session then followed – which allowed participants to find out more detail about the CAP and the current negotiations.

Key discussion points:

- The current uncertainty about whether the EC proposals for the CAP will be adopted or to what extent they will be amended. Thus there is little ‘concrete’ at present to work on in terms of an understanding of what the next CAP will look like.
- In terms of elements of importance to the environment, there is therefore uncertainty about how significant the greening of Pillar I will be – and this has known on consequences for what might then be required of Pillar II.
- CAP focused on land issues but more needs to be done to link the impacts of agricultural practices to water and marine issues/impacts.
- There are two strands of activity which are currently of importance to all in the UK and are therefore key areas for Links and members to influence:
 - The current reality (i.e. what is happening to current programmes re. cuts in funding etc.).
 - The design of and funding for the next RDP programmes.
- It was acknowledged that all four countries are at different stages in the development of their RDPs but that it would be of value to share information on progress with these.
- HNV farming is an important issue in countries like Wales and Scotland and much more could be done to raise awareness about the need for support for those farmers keeping these systems going. This would be a useful issue to engage politicians on.
- In conclusion, the following areas of co-operation across the four Link organisations were identified:
 - **Information sharing.** There is real benefit to be gained from sharing information on CAP and in particular, on the emerging RDPs. Examples of information that could be communicated:
 - RDP programme design and focus – across the UK.
 - Case studies of what is working/not working.
 - Successes by link members (whether that is in influencing the shape/content of an RDP, engaging with a politician/MP; demonstrating best practice etc.).
 - **Coordinated messages:** It is important that messages on CAP from the Link community are as coherent as possible (and not contradictory), acknowledging that

there are significant differences in the needs and political contexts of the four countries.

- **Greater emphasis:** there are several areas in which all should place more emphasis (as a means of communicating stronger messages): what is needed to ensure effective delivery of benefits for the environment; a greater understanding of how agri-environment policy proposals (and our 'asks') will impact on farmers.
- We can all make better use farmers as advocates.
- We must keep the discussion going between the four Links and the four secretariats can work together to identify how best to address the points above.

WORKSHOP DELEGATES

Session 1

Name	Organisation	Link
Julie Middleton	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Jenna Hegarty	The Lodge	WCL
Hilary Allison	The Woodland Trust	WCL
Heather Galliford	Wales Environment Link	WEL
Raoul Bhambral	Wales Environment Link	WEL
Lizzy Pinkerton	Belfast Hills Partnership	NIEL
Diane Ruddock	The National Trust	NIEL
Andy Bridge	Lagan Valley Regional Park	NIEL
Louise Hartley	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL

Session 2

Name	Organisation	Link
Julie Middleton	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Jenna Hegarty	The Lodge	WCL
Emily Keenan	National Trust Wales	WEL
Dave Fairlamb	WWT Caerlaverock	SEL
Jennifer Fulton	Ulster Wildlife Trust	NIEL
John Martin	RSPB NI	NIEL
John Moore	Ulster Archaeological Society	NIEL
Craig Macadam	Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust	SEL
Robert Keirle	Marine Conservation Society	ALL
Kate Hand	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Veronica Chrisp	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL
Isabel Hood	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	NIEL
Hannah Freeman	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL

Workshop 4: Marine Environment

Chair: Beth Henshall

Note-taker: Lorraine McLean

Session 1 (General Session – open to all delegates)

Policy updates were provided by each Link covering the following topics:

- MPAs
- Fisheries
- Planning and licensing
- Campaigns and advocacy

Presentations on these topics were delivered by: Marguerite Tarzia and Richard Devlin (NIMTF); Calum Duncan (SEL); Gareth Cunningham and Daniel Crook (WEL); and John Sadler (WCL). Copies of all presentations are available electronically.

Session 2 (Technical Session – *Restricted to MTF members and officers*)

This session focused upon the achievement of a UK Ecologically Coherent Network of MPAs and discussions took place around:

- Existing research, including WWF & RSPB reports*, Defra/Devolved Administration position statement, Statutory Body advice.
- How should an ECN be assessed – at a national level, UK level, OSPAR level?
- Progress by UK and Devolved Administrations to meeting reporting deadline to Europe.
- What are the gaps that need to be addressed to achieve a UK ECN/ next steps and opportunities for Marine Officers (research bids, joint campaigning and messaging on ECN).
- UK MPA Stakeholder Forum – views on advocating for the forum to be re-established.

Members and Officers present were:

Beth Henshall	(BH)	WTW
Lorraine McLean	(LM)	UWT
Marguerite Tarzia	(MT)	NIMTF
Gareth Cunningham	(GC)	RSPB (Cymru)
Daniel Crook	(DC)	WWF (Cymru)
Richard Devlin	(RD)	NIMTF
Nick Underdown	(NU)	SEL
John Sadler	(JS)	WCL
Calum Duncan	(CD)	MCS

Summary of Actions

- LM Draw up notes from today's meeting to be circulated within the group and used as a discussion document to be added to by email.
- JS Arrange video conference (preferably Skype) as soon as possible for further discussion of actions.
- GC Work on draft for using Indicator Species /habitat data for ECN evaluation and circulate a rough copy for comments.
- OSPAR test idea – either used on indicator species or on a broader more general scale.
- MT Circulate academic paper by Robert Catchpole – Ecological Coherence in Policy & other ECN literature to begin sharing by all of literature. Possibly use Zotero as a method of sharing academic papers or other useful documents.
- All To warm up respective administrations to beginning the MPA Stakeholder forum to discuss ECN and make more links with other stakeholders.
Further issues to discuss about the Stakeholder forum;
- Forum 1st option or conference?
 - Include industries?
 - Objectives
 - Name change?
 - How to go about forming ECN, exchange with JNCC
- CD To circulate information on the release date for the JNCC report as soon as there is word from SNH.

Discussions

Existing research

- BH Asked for comments on ECN reports by RSPB, WWF, JNCC or any other current research.
- MT Suggested circulation of an academic paper by Robert Catchpole – Ecological Coherence in Policy. Also suggested looking at terrestrial examples for ECN.
- CD Awaiting with interest anticipated JNCC report for Ecological Coherence across the UK - not released yet. ECN in Scotland being considered at OSPAR scale. Not taking a species/area

approach to MPA designation. English process uses species/area approach to arrive at a range of habitat targets. Scotland has not articulated ambition as to what extent of sea area should be protected which is one element of coherence that NGOs in Scotland are pushing for (along with other major concerns about gaps in the network e.g. cetaceans, basking sharks and nationally important sites for seabirds). In practice we should be using OSPAR as a touch stone for that, looking at protection of threatened and declined features across 20 – 60% and representative 10 – 20 % of area. It is hoped that JNCC report will clearly articulate how coherence will be considered across the UK given the markedly different approaches to MPA network development taken in England, Scotland and Wales.

How an ECN should be assessed

- BH Evident from the report that there are two approaches, either a target based approach or condition of condition and quality of sites/how to get a site into a good condition. Looking at MSFD will give a program of measures by 2013-2015 which means that how we can assess ECN potential is still far away, but we should start thinking about what we want now.
 - MT Examples from other countries carrying out an assessment of their ecological coherence (as per WWF report)
 - CD Many countries are not as far ahead in considering ECN, e.g. NZ has many MPAs/marine reserves but are only recently looking at ecological coherence of their sites. Agreed we need to look at academic articles on this.
 - MT Australia has just taken a bioregional approach to planning Australian coast. They divided into bioregions for marine spatial planning and MPA designation. They already had existing site but it was to have the coherent approach. Trying to find academic papers on this and other examples. (Additional papers to be circulated with minutes)
 - RD Why has there not been much buy in to ECN around UK?
 - MT Not enough sites, or thought about connectivity from one administration to another or wider around OSPAR regions.
 - BH Must remember that Natura sites have limited consideration of ECN - introduced before principles of ECN were developed.
 - CD Steve Gains - California has done some good work on ECN in California (<http://scholar.google.com/citations?user=TmKrxPQAAAAJ>). Bill Ballantine (<http://www.marine-reserves.org.nz/pages/papers.html>). How much time should we dedicate to academic research when it is the work of JNCC?
 - MT We need to be up to speed with the literature on ECN so we can critique whatever guidelines we are presented with from JNCC.
 - CD Agreed that we need to be up to speed on literature & share references between each other. OSPAR checklist should also be a tool that NGOs use to help critique whatever guidelines/and network are produced.
 - GC The MCAA has three bullet points for what the ECN should look like
 - BH WWF's report analyses how each administration is carrying out ECN differently, with different interpretations and objectives.
 - GC And ultimately this has to work together at a UK level
 - CD The duty in the Scottish Act is to fulfil the network at a UK scale.
 - BH Welsh Government are working towards achieving ECN at a UK scale, Northern Ireland looks like it will do the same, how about Scotland and England?
 - CD That's the case in Scotland, but it has to fulfil UK level too.
 - JS It is not in the legislation, but it is doing its own network.
 - RD So everyone is doing their own thing, where is the joined up approach?
 - CD The JNCC report will hopefully take this into account and include the latest thinking from OSPAR. It is their job to join this all together.
- SNH emailed about the report, but no date as yet. When I receive it I will send it on.

BH That would really help for our planning of what to do.

RD Is nationally important features a recognised term?

MT The network needs to include these alongside SACs and SPAs.

BH However, each administration is identifying its sites in separate isolated projects.

MT There would be no problem if ECN were being developed at UK or OSPAR wide scale if everyone was doing it at the same time in the same manner. Northern Ireland is behind and so could end up without a proper network even if some sites would be the best example.

RD Could the administrations end up ignoring the 'boring' features, which are neither rare nor threatened?

CD Scotland will be including broader representative features in their network. This wasn't addressed at the 5th MPA workshop meeting, but we hope it will be soon. Outstanding work in Scotland on representivity includes determining the degree to which the draft network represents the broad EUNIS level 3 habitats, and we are still awaiting this. The draft network of MPA search locations includes MPA search features (species of conservation interest including some mobile species, although we have concerns in delays over the latter)

GC Wales is taking broad scale areas which best represent (and have best data) what Wales has, and then choose 3 or 4 sites from there.

RD Northern Ireland is probably looking to do as little as possible and looking at a UK scale.

CD Scotland will be coming up with features which are particular to Scotland, and will be focusing on what is important to Scotland - so this is not as concerning for us, but perhaps Northern Ireland may have this problem.

CD How do we manage across the UK when would politically insensitive to take up one way of carrying out ECN. There are lessons to be learnt from each administration. Scotland is taking a different approach to England, more focus on ecological processes, mobile species etc. whereas the English process has front-loaded the EUNIS level 3 representation. So just taking one administration's approach and applying it across the UK will not work.

BH I don't think we would ever want to do that, but yes maybe if we all used something like the OSPAR checklist could give us consistency across a broader regional level. That would be more politically acceptable.

MT It would be ideal though if every administration was doing it in the same way, and we should push for something that reflects the OSPAR approach to ECN.

GC If guidelines are from too high a level there is a danger of not protecting locally important sites due to other areas already protecting the same species /habitat type.

BH We should also look at the level of management of the sites, the condition that they are in. We will all be reporting on them next year.

GC A gap analysis may be useful.

RD Time pressure for response?

CD In Scotland we had hoped to get a consultant to look at whether Scotland was going to achieve ECN as JNCC prepared its report. However we can't achieve this under current timescales (supposed to be September). So maybe we should all wait till after the consultation for what they put in place. English consultation starts in December, Scottish consultation in spring 2013.

GC Welsh is similar time to Scotland.

BH We need to start getting our head around things at this stage, and then we could consider a gap analysis to prepare for the next lot of designations of sites, if additional sites are identified in the future. We should get an idea of what would be our ideal network.

GC Look at the species for which we have good data for, for mobile species etc. which would be particularly affected by all the networks.

CD That's a simple thing for us to do then, to start off. We can say to each Administration, how can this be coherent if you haven't considered the sites in the neighbouring administration. E.g. Scotland/England. Where there are features in both applying the OSPAR tests.

- GC Where there is evidence to back these claims up, for example Black Guillemots, cetaceans.
- CD Yes Black Guillemots and cetaceans are good examples. We have been dividing it that way in Scotland-RSPB has been looking at the sites for Black Guillemots, WDCS have been looking at cetaceans, I have been looking at the Lochs for flame shells etc. We could do this using a more formal approach across administrations.
- BH Important to include species which are not highly mobile, species with larval dispersal etc.
- CD Yes and sea bed features. Agreed other features aside from mobile species.
- JS So should the Joint Links response discuss this in our response in March 2013, and ask for UK wide guidance on ECN?
- NU Who would ask to produce a list, local, national, JNCC. Open to challenge still.
- CD How do we work together to have something to challenge JNCC? We want to be able to have high level guidelines but that would be able to illustrate gaps in our respective areas.

Stakeholder Forum

- BH Stakeholder forum was cut 2 years ago but could this group be an ideal vehicle to discuss ECN, and perhaps feed into the JNCC report?
- CD Used to be possibly too anglocentric and the rest of the administrations were too far behind
- BH However, now each administration is further along in the process we may be able to bring more to the table. Would need to be more than just an NGO talking shop, Need statutory bodies to attend e.g. CCW
- CD Speak to our respective statutory bodies and warm them up to the idea. Quietly get discussions going over the UK.
- BH Alternatively we could arrange a UK conference with ECN focus and get our statutory bodies to attend. Although the Stakeholder forum may be the more official route?
- CD With respect to timing - at the moment Scotland are quite internally focused and it although we could start to warm them to the idea it would probably not be something that would be able to go ahead until after the consultations. Its purpose should not be to try and get new MPAs but to achieve a more integrated and coordinated approach to the ECN.
- BH Good to get the ball rolling now as there will be quite a long lag time between the 4 administrations, so that we can be ready.

Further issues to discuss about the Stakeholder forum;

- Forum 1st option or conference?
 - Include industries?
 - Objectives
 - Name change?
 - How to go about forming ECN, Exchange with JNCC
- RD What about Republic of Ireland and Isle of Man involvement?
- MT Would be useful to work together but is difficult to get in touch and make a network over the border but will keep trying. Ireland is designating approx 80 marine SACs which is their special protection measures under MSFD. Not aware of any consideration of coherence across the sites and in terms of management there are 3 staff members responsible. Should definitely involve them as what they do will have an effect on all of our work.
- CD Would we like to push for more inclusion of Republic of Ireland and Isle of Man? Agreed yes

DELEGATES

Session 1 – General (9:00 – 10:15)

Session 2 – Technical (10:30 – 11:45)

Name	Organisation	Link		Name	Organisation	Link
Beth Henshall	Wildlife Trusts Wales	WEL		Beth Henshall	Wildlife Trusts Wales	WEL
Lorraine McLean	The Ulster Wildlife Trust	NIEL		Lorraine McLean	The Ulster Wildlife Trust	NIEL

Marguerite Tarzia	NI Marine Task Force	NIEL		Marguerite Tarzia	NI Marine Task Force	NIEL
Gareth Cunningham	RSPB Cymru	WEL		Gareth Cunningham	RSPB Cymru	WEL
Daniel Crook	WWF Cymru	WEL		Daniel Crook	WWF Cymru	WEL
Richard Devlin	NI Marine Task Force	NIEL		Richard Devlin	NI Marine Task Force	NIEL
Nick Underdown	Scottish Environment Link	SEL		Nick Underdown	Scottish Environment Link	SEL
John Sadler	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL		John Sadler	Wildlife and Countryside Link	WCL
Calum Duncan	Marine Conservation Society	SEL		Calum Duncan	Marine Conservation Society	SEL
Robert Keirle	Marine Conservation Society	ALL				
Isabel Hood	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	NIEL				
Katy Jenkins	TIDY Northern Ireland	NIEL				
John Moore	Ulster Archaeological Society	NIEL				
John Martin	RSPB NI	NIEL				
Hannah Freeman	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WCL				

Fieldtrips

Delegates had the opportunity to participate in two organised fieldtrips namely a boat trip on Strangford Lough and a walking tour on Belfast Hills.

Strangford Lough

Approximately forty delegates travelled to Portaferry to board the St Brendan for a trip on Strangford Lough to discuss marine issues, to see SeaGen (the world's first large scale commercial tidal stream generator) as well as the wildlife. Delegates received a briefing from Joe Breen (Marine Biologist, Northern Ireland Environment Agency) on the management of the Lough and the implications of the numerous environmental designations awarded to it. Delegates were also shown mapping video clips of the seabed highlighting the effects of disturbance and damage from specific types of fishing on modiolus beds. Isabel Hood gave an overview of the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership and its involvement with the Lough including how it represents local and specialist interests in the development, interpretation and adaptation of legislation affecting the Lough and how it promotes strategic, co-ordinated management designed to protect the environmental resource while encouraging appropriate economic and recreational activity. Richard Devlin from the Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce (MTF) also informed delegates of the on-going campaigning work the MTF was involved in to secure better protection for marine environment and habitats such as Strangford by pushing for an effective NI Marine Bill, the creation of an ecologically coherent network of Marine Conservation Zones and the introduction of Marine Spatial Planning based on sustainable development. Delegates also saw an array of wildlife including a small colony of Common Seals and their pups.

Belfast Hills

Delegates were provided with a presentation and escorted tour of Belfast Hills by Jim Bradley, Partnership Manager from the Belfast Hills Partnership. Jim Bradley outlined that while the Belfast Hills was not an AONB, nor a regional park and had only one small ASSI designated area, it possessed a wealth of biodiversity. Delegates heard about a number of projects the Partnership were involved in including species survey work, invasive species mapping and removal; grassland surveys; and a wildfire project to map, record and identify areas at risk and the production of Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Training and Tender Maps. Delegates also heard about the Partnerships efforts to secure funding to develop landscape scale projects in order to help biodiversity.



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