**LINK Governance Group meeting**

**Thursday 21 July 2016, 1330-1600, Edinburgh**

**Draft Minutes**

**Attending**: Lloyd Austin (Chair), Jen Anderson, Daphne Vlastari, Mary Church, Charles Dundas, Robin Parker, Deborah Long, Rea Cris, Lorna Scott, Cathy Pendreigh, Nick Underdown, Phoebe Cochrane, Eddie Palmer, Lisa Webb

**Apologies**: Roger Downie

1. **Post-Brexit review including update from members and next steps for our advocacy**

*WWF* – are having internal meetings with UK colleagues, and looking to work with Green Alliance. Will likely do joint letter to PM and to write to Brexit Minister. Feeling that WWF will focus on fisheries issues. Being careful to ensure their messaging does not, in future, make them look as though they are supporting one side or other in IndyRef debate.

*Woodland Trust* – internal working groups have been set up and currently information gathering. WT has been signing up to joint letters re safeguarding environment post-Brexit. A big concern to them is NFU/ NFUS trying to chip away at greening measures in CAP.

*Scottish Badgers* – they don’t have a GB-wide view as such, because quite distinct from E&W. Concerned that there is already some anecdotal reports of people overlooking badger surveys in development planning, although of course this is still a legal requirement!

*Plantlife* – lots of internal discussions, and risk analysis of Brexit.

*FOES –* launched an e-action after the result to call for environment to be at heart of any settlement. Looking ahead, considering whether to ask members for views on IndyRef2. May come out in support of one or other constitutional option if one is clearly better for environment.

*RSPB* – A Brexit project board has been set up and a project plan drawn up. Includes a range of workstreams eg funding, Birdlife, HR, constitutional repercussions (IndyRef/ Ireland), policy and advocacy (eg CAP, CFP, Natura).

*LINK* – press release was issued immediately after the result. Keeping in touch with UK Links re messaging. We have had feedback from ScotGov asking for us to be vocal on envtl issues in wake of Brexit. There will be a special network meeting on 6 September to further discuss LINK advocacy. Also, Daphne has been in touch with SCVO who are also keen on working together.

LINK is proposing a commissioned study on Brexit. It was suggested that would be useful to have case studies and examples to support any messaging on Brexit implications. Phoebe added that the Economics Group would be happy to support other groups on marine/ agriculture case studies if useful.

Many of the members in attendance were also attending the summit meeting on Brexit and environment taking place on 28 July at Battleby.

ACTION: Daphne to circulate any notes from that meeting to network.

**LINK messaging** - We discussed documents circulated by Daphne on LINK post-referendum messages and SWOT analysis. Some points:

* Another strength is that we have good relationships with pan-EU bodies (Birdlife, EEB, FOE), plus academia and other NGOs
* Threats in terms of Govt resources being stretched creates an opportunity for us to offer assistance
* RSPB legal team are currently assessing Directives and legislation and what is covered. This would be shareable with LINK when completed, although not likely to be very soon.
* It was noted that the Standing Council on Europe, set up in wake of referendum result, does not have environmental representation. We discussed possibility of nominating someone, or request that other groups are set up.

ACTION: All to feed back to Daphne with any comments on her messaging document (Update: DV recirculated this on 21 July asking for comments by Mon 25th July)

**Commissioning a study** – we discussed how best this might work eg should it cover policies as well as legislation?; is it necessary to commission someone with legal expertise to do this?; could it be an information gathering exercise that ‘interviews’ member bodies to collate info? It was noted that RSPB, WWF and WTS are commissioning a study by IEEP to look at various outcomes post-ref such as EU versus EEA.

ACTION: All to discuss with own organisations and think about what such a study could look like and be used for. Feedback thoughts and ideas to Daphne by 26 August.

**Party Conferences**

WTS are organising a panel discussion Fringe event at SNP, which will be chaired by Clive Anderson. WWF will be at SNP, possibly holding a joint event with RSPB. FOES will attend SNP and may organise a fracking protest at conference. RSPB will be observers at LibDems and have a stall at the Greens. LINK will attend all party conferences as an observer and are in discussion with Sustainability Hub, on low carbon economy/ Beyond GDP event at SNP conference.

**Local Government Elections 2017**

Discussed that we could ask parties to lobby central Government for sufficient funding to enable eg Regional Marine Planning Partnerships to be adequately resourced. We agreed we’d need to have something ready by early 2017 and we will revisit this at next Gov Gp meeting in the autumn.

**Legal Strategy**

It was noted that a response to the envtl justice consultation was submitted in June, and it was suggested that would be a good idea to get a PQ asked to find out how many responses were submitted and what the next steps are in taking this forward.

The legal strategy group, which consists of LINK reps plus Ian Cowan and Mark Lazarowicz, met in June. That group is seeking a meeting with Annabelle Ewing (Mary is setting this up).

The group is also proposing plans for a seminar in the autumn to scope idea of an Environmental Law Centre. This would help inform (i) models of governance and funding options, and (ii) what the Centre would deliver. Next meeting of Legal Strategy Group is 8 August.

ACTION: Mary to get PQ asked re EJ consultation and forward plans.

ACTION: Mary to further discuss seminar with Jen/ Daphne/ Lisa and capacity for LINK staff to help with organisation of this.

**Crown Estate**

The current consultation on “proposals to establish the interim body to manage Crown Estate assets in Scotland post-devolution”closes on 26 August. Some have concerns that the interim body will have powers to make decisions and appoint people, potentially without a backstop. Others thought that LINK should not necessarily get involved since, from an environmental point of view, the CE must comply with law in the same way that any land manager must. It was decided, however, that it would be worth setting out our views/ concerns in a letter or statement to Fergus Ewing.

ACTION: Nick to draft a letter and circulate to Governance Group, ahead of consultation deadline of 26 August.

Next meeting to be held in October

ACTION: Lisa to doodle for dates