

**LINK Governance Group meeting  
Friday 7 April 2017  
WWF Scotland office, Edinburgh**

**Meeting Note**

**Attending:** Lloyd Austin (Chair), Daphne Vlastari, Rea Cris, Sarah Dolman, Robin Parker, Bruce Wilson, Charles Dundas, Lisa Webb.

**1. Brexit**

Member organisations gave an update on their work on Brexit since our last meeting in January. Main points to note are that the Woodland Trust has become more involved in the Greener UK group, with CEO Becky Speight leading for WT. Whale and Dolphin Conservation have no ties with G-UK but have a petition underway re: bycatch and a call for laws to protect cetaceans post-Brexit.

Discussion followed about Greener UK and devolution-proofing its outputs. A G-UK advisory group will be set up with Amy Mount and two representatives from each of the UK Links. Meetings will mainly be via telecalls with a first meeting likely to take place this month. The group will ensure that discussion and outputs in the 4 different working areas are all mindful of devolution, particularly the agriculture and land use strand which can be a complex and challenging area to 'devolution-proof'. **The group agreed that Lloyd Austin and Daphne Vlastari could be reps for SE LINK.** G-UK is keen to have reps from a range of member organisations so all present at the meeting were asked to consider if their UK colleagues could participate.

**Action: Bruce to speak to Jennifer at Ulster Wildlife about potential reps.**

G-UK is coordinating a Great Repeal Bill e-action to target MPs. This won't be badged as a G-UK action as such, but will be hosted on websites of each member organisation involved in the coalition (including RSPB, WWF, Wildlife Trusts). Lloyd noted that RSPB have adapted the wording for the e-action that will be hosted by RSPB to ensure it is relevant to Scotland MPs. The e-action should be ready to launch by end of this month.

**ACTION: Rea to contact David Miller to make him aware that the e-action is in the pipeline and explain the rationale behind it.**

We then discussed whether there was any conflict, in terms of timing and asks being made of supporters, with the SCCS media work on climate bill and that e-action. Concluded that there was likely to be enough time between the GRB e-action in April and the climate one planned for June to minimise any such overlap/ conflict.

Engagement with ScotGov and Ministers on Brexit issues was discussed. Daphne has emailed Mike Russell to request a LINK meeting and will update when she gets a response. We agreed to review at our next Brexit telecall in May whether we need further contact with Roseanna Cunningham, Fergus Ewing and officials.

*IndyRef2* – Agreed that Gov Group will keep a watching brief on this, particularly as it's unavoidably linked to Brexit discussions! We can further discuss any LINK approach once there is more clarity on timescale etc.

A new think tank, [Scottish Centre of European Relations](#) or SCER, was launched in March. Daphne has emailed one of the SCER reps to request a meeting so we can discuss getting envt on their agenda.

**Action: Daphne to inform Gov Group of response from her SCER contact.**

## **2. Meeting with Bridget Campbell**

This meeting is set to take place with Bridget and Katriona Carmichael (Head of Environmental Quality) on Wed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2-3pm. There will be a pre-meet in SWT office from 1230. The LINK delegation will include Lloyd, Daphne, Jen, Helen, Charles, Jo Pike and Calum Duncan.

**Action: Lisa to ensure LINK records are updated with Katriona details**

**Action: Daphne/ Jen to send further details of meeting in due course.**

## **3. Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

A LINK delegation met with the Chair of the Commission in February. The Chair, John McCormick, had read Governance Matters and made some positive comments about it. LINK submitted its [response](#) to the Commission in March. The Commission intends to analyse responses over April and May and report to the Presiding Officer in June. It was agreed that the Gov Group will keep a watching brief, looking at recommendations as they come out and deciding if any action is required.

## **4. Legal Strategy subgroup update**

It was noted that Ben Christman (Ed Uni postgraduate) has joined this subgroup so membership is currently Lloyd, Mary, Ben, Mark Lazarowicz and Ian Cowan. Updates on the two strands of work are as follows:

- i) *Environmental justice* – there is not yet much happening from ScotGov's side on this. The PQs by Angus MacDonald about when the Govt will publish its response to the envtl justice consultation received vague answers along the lines of 'shortly' and 'in due course'. The group requested to meet Annabelle Ewing but have not yet had a positive response. However, Lloyd and Mary met David Miller last week and asked if he can help to secure the meeting with AE. Looking to get Roseanna Cunningham's help with this too. A letter to Roseanna is currently being drafted on this issue and Lloyd/ Mary will share with the group when ready.
- ii) *Environmental Law Centre* –A project brief to secure a consultant to develop a prospectus for an ELC has been circulated, with tenders to be sent to Mary by the end of April. The prospectus will describe the remit of the proposed centre and can subsequently be used as a tool to secure funding for the centre.

The subgroup is preparing a LINK response to the current [Protective Expenses Order](#) consultation. The Faculty of Advocates is also likely to respond. Lloyd will let Helen McDade know about this consultation as it may be of interest to JMT.

## **5. Party conferences**

We discussed highlights and lessons from the spring conferences. RSPB Scotland's fringe event at the SNP conference on 'food & farming' went well, and Woodland Trust Scotland had a successful forestry event there too. It was noted that there was a good Sunday morning session on the environment at the Labour conference.

At the autumn 2017 conferences, the climate change and forestry bills will be high on the agenda for some LINK members. It was also noted that RSPB Scotland is likely to do a fringe event at the next Conservative conference as they haven't for some time. LINK will look to do a motion on envt issues at the next Scottish LibDem conference and potentially a fringe event with the Conservatives.

There followed a discussion about the Greens and whether they are currently doing as much as we would like them to on environmental issues. Sometimes it seems they are focusing on socio-economic issues and perhaps they are not strongly emphasising the links between economics and the green

agenda? On the other hand, it was noted that the Greens have been criticised in the past for not being strong on social issues so they are simply raising their game on that. Also, that often eNGOs specifically target the other parties to champion our priority issues so that sometimes the Greens may feel left out/ confused by this.

**Action: all Parli Officers to think further about this and whether we can speak to the Greens - is there someone that we can have a Chatham House Rules discussion with? Something to cover in a discussion with Mark Ballard?**

## **6. Local elections**

There were updates from members on their plans for the May elections. RSPB have prepared a high level policy document for local councillor candidates in a 'how we can help you' style, and have been offering to meet with manifesto writers. Also, there will be a RSPB/ FOES hustings in Glasgow on Wed 19<sup>th</sup> April.

**Action: Rea to send details of hustings event to Daphne – done**

WWF Scotland don't have plans for hustings but may do some media around the elections. Woodland Trust Scotland will be doing an e-action for the local elections.

LINK will prepare an article for Friends of the Scotsman which will cover local council issues including eg regional marine planning.

**Action: Daphne will circulate FoS piece to LINK Groups for comment.**

LINK will do an analysis post-election to see who might be good allies for our work.

## **7. Lobbying Register**

The Lobbying Register Team are looking for people to be in the [Lobbying Register Working Group](#). Applications must be submitted by 19 April. It was agreed that Daphne could attend this on behalf of LINK (with Rea to stand-in when necessary). The Gov Group noted that it is important that small organisations, or rather the needs of small orgs, are represented on that group.

**Action: Daphne/ Rea to apply to be included in group by 19 April**

It is expected that the requirements of the Act will come into effect in 2018 – more details of the proposed timescale [here](#)

## **8. Dates of next meetings**

The next Governance Group meeting is on Tuesday 25 July 1330-1600, with a lunch meeting with Clive Mitchell of SNH beforehand (1130-1330). Venue tbc and Lisa will send details in due course.

There are two Brexit telecalls scheduled on the dates below. Lisa will send dial-in details in due course.

Wednesday 10 May, 10-11am

Thursday 15 June, 10-11am

*Lisa Webb  
10/04/2017*