

LINK Brexit Communications Campaign Briefing

Note of meeting on 23 July 2018 at Friends Meeting House, Edinburgh

Present: Sarah Dolman (WDC), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Charles Millar (APRS), Danny Carden (Ramblers Scotland), Roger Downie (Froglife), Anne McCall (RSPB Scotland), Lloyd Austin (RSPB Scotland), Charles Dundas (Woodland Trust Scotland), Mary Church (FOES), Sarah Cuthbert-Kerr (NTS), Suzanne Burgess (Buglife), Beth Webb (Soil Association), Pete Ritchie (Nourish Scotland), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Sam Gardner (WWF Scotland), Jen Anderson (LINK), Dilraj Watson (LINK), Daphne Vlastari (LINK), Lisa Webb (LINK), Jo Pike (SWT – by phone)

Apologies: Catherine Gemmell (MCS), Liz Ferrell (Bat Conservation Trust), Carol Evans (Woodland Trust Scotland), George Allan (NEMT), Maggie Keegan (BES), Paul Kirkland (BCS), Laura Stewart (Soil Association).

Barnaby Smith (BBCT) and Steve Micklewright (Trees for Life) attempted to join by phone but unfortunately there were technical problems at our end.

Welcome and Introduction - Charles Dundas (LINK Chair)

Charles set out the purpose of the meeting. He explained that the idea for a LINK communications campaign on Brexit and the environment had been initially suggested by LINK Board. This has since been further discussed and progressed by LINK's Governance Group, Brexit Subgroup and a Brexit Comms subgroup. An external consultant has been recruited to develop the campaign further.

Charles explained that there is a need for this campaign because, while LINK has done much advocacy work on Brexit issues (and had successes including positive amendments to the Continuity Bill), our work does not hit the headlines. This campaign will aim to use media opportunities to engage the public and make a strong ask to get the environment protected and enhanced.

We have already had financial commitment from some LINK members towards the campaign which is positive. However, we also need resource commitment and knowledge input from LINK members in order to make this work. The purpose of today's meeting is to gauge the availability of the latter.

Background to campaign – Daphne Vlastari (LINK Advocacy Manager)

Daphne talked through a [presentation](#) setting out the aims and objectives of the campaign. She reiterated that LINK has done a lot of inside track advocacy, and is continuing to work with Greener UK and ELUK on Brexit issues. However there is potential to do more to raise awareness among the public and decision-makers about the impact of Brexit on the environment, fisheries and agriculture.

The intention is to create the conditions where Scottish Government, and the UK Government, will ultimately support legislative underpinning of EU environmental principles with a robust environmental watchdog. LINK's Governance Group agreed that the best means of achieving this is via a Scottish Environment Act, in combination with a UK-wide policy statement on environmental protections.

It was noted that it would be helpful if public debate was shifted away from the 'power grab' and towards an Environment Act. This joint LINK member campaign would focus on key issues including environmental principles & governance, framework for future environmental policy ('right to a clean

& healthy environment'), nature protection (future of Birds & Habitats in Scotland), post-CAP rural funding and post-CFP fisheries management.

The campaign and its identity (so that audiences recognise where asks are coming from) have been agreed. Key aspects of the campaign would include a launch event (September), an e-action linked to the expected Scottish Government consultation, a series of media articles on key topics which will link back to the e-action and social media activity. The campaign would be launched in September and duration will be 6-8 months, though we might need to continue for up to 2 years to pursue a Scottish Environment Act.

Daphne reiterated that purpose of today was to ask CEOs and Directors for their staff and colleagues' time to support the campaign, to give the initiative optimal chance of delivering with impact. Such support will include: practical help such as providing expert knowledge on species and habitat statistics at the moments when that is needed; approving key messages and activities; disseminating campaign messages and e-action support via their social media and other means including their own newsletters. It will also be important to have member CEO support at key points throughout the campaign eg presence at media launch, signature on letters.

Discussion - all

Jen (LINK): the key lessons learned from LINK's previous Everyone campaign were (1) a simple message and clear identity is needed and (2) there must be proactive support from members.

Sam (WWFS): there is a risk of the environment suffering if we do not make a substantive case for its protection and enhancement – this lends itself to a campaign like this because there is a need for a collective voice. Hopes that all members will see this as important. WWF have contributed £25k to the campaign and there will be some staff resource for the campaign once the Food and Environment Policy Manager is in post.

Jo (SWT): Confirmed SWT supports, is involved in the Brexit Campaign Subgroup, acknowledges need for senior management level support from LINK members. Looking at the campaign's aims in the longer term, Couls Links is a test of Government's commitment to do as its rhetoric suggests it wants to do.

Anne (RSPB Scotland): noted that Brexit discussions have been dominated by issues other than environmental ones; at this point of potentially a societal and political shift, agrees we need to raise the profile of environment by making our voices heard. Supports keeping things as simple as possible. RSPB will do as much as often as possible to support the campaign.

Roger (Froglife): asked whether the political situation could be so unstable as to undermine such a campaign? For example, what if we were to face a General Election in the autumn. A discussion followed and while no one disagreed that these are unstable times, the consensus was that this just means that we need to be more 'fleet of foot' and responsive. Roger also felt we need to emphasise the current environmental crisis. Froglife is generally supportive but have limited resource to lend to the campaign, although should be able to help with simple aspects eg sign-up to letters.

Sarah (WDC): very supportive of the campaign but WDC have limited capacity. Since some of our asks will challenge other stakeholders, important to have the complex detail ready to back up at ministerial level our communications campaign level asks. And possibly links from the simple asks to that more complex advocacy.

Charles (APRS): supportive but APRS also has limited capacity as staff resource is linked to existing projects and work areas.

Daphne reiterated that some of the smaller members and those with limited capacity can help in the following ways:

- 1) Building on existing links with MSP Species Champions
- 2) Publicising the campaign and e-action via social media
- 3) Using member newsletters to publicise
- 4) Signing up to high level letters

Members with more capacity could also help by contributing info on reserves or projects where EU legislation is currently failing.

Sarah (NTS): NTS happy to support eg via social media and requested a campaign timeline to ensure that they can dovetail this with existing NTS campaigns.

Pete (Nourish): happy that one of the strands of this campaign is about future agri support and welcomed the fact that the campaign would knock on new doors, hoped it might also communicate some sense of Scotland's global footprint. Asked whether it would be possible to set up a robust framework without statute. A discussion followed and concluded that statute is needed.

Danny (Ramblers): Ramblers are keen to support and Danny will be able to contribute time to this. Suggested that we get the detail of the e-action sorted soon.

Beth (Soil Association): SA have a planned campaign 'Organic September' that month so this will tie their hands in terms of resource input and publicity.

Jenny (SAGS): SAGS are small and volunteer run, but can disseminate messages among their networks.

Mary (FOES): will discuss further with Richard but are supportive in principle. We should use Brexit to elevate the campaign but also aim to take it to the next level to raise awareness of the current ecological crisis and to align with our asks on climate.

Sam (WWF): important that we find a framing that motivates people. Discussion followed about messaging agreeing that it is important to give positive framing to encourage public participation rather than be dispiriting; to relate to the danger/risks at the same time as asking for public support in helping to reach a solution.

Conclusions

- There was broad support for the campaign from all members present.
- A number of smaller organisations highlighted limited capacity but would endeavour to help where possible. It was agreed that members with limited capacity can help in simple ways such as helping to promote the campaign via social media and existing newsletters, and by adding their signature to letters.
- Some members asked for a timeline to enable planning and to minimise clashes with own campaigns.

An outline of the campaign timeline is indicated below:

Date	Action
July	LINK letter to ScotGov on the 2018/2019 Programme for Government, including key ask for an Environment Act
Early September (before principles/governance consultation)	Official launch of “Fight for Scotland’s Nature” campaign with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At minimum: open letter from LINK CEOs on why we need an Environment Act ○ Working scenario: open letter with photo opportunity in front of Arthur’s Seat (exact date tbc asap)
September (once consultation launches)	Launch of e-action
October/November	Launch of weekly series of articles on agreed topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. principles & governance 2. biodiversity & funding 3. rural development framework (post-CAP) 4. fisheries management (post-CFP)

Further actions to take place as of October are being developed with LINK Groups and Subgroups. The lead is the Brexit Comms Subgroup with support on advocacy from the Brexit Subgroup.

Our ambition would be:

- Best case scenario:
 - Commitment for an Environment Strategy (already going to happen) and Environment Act in 2018/2019 Programme for Government
 - Consultation on an Environment Act: Q1 2019
 - Introduction of an Environment Act: Q3 2019
- Worst case scenario:
 - Building case for an Environment Act: Q4 2018 / Q1 2019
 - Commitment for an Environment Act in 2019 [OR] 2019/2020 Programme for Government
 - Consultation on an Environment Act: Q4 2019
 - Introduction of an Environment Act: Q2 2020

** Timings for the best case and worst case scenarios are based on reaching a deal on a future UK/EU relationship and a transition period to 2020 at least. Interim measures to address environmental governance gaps may be needed.*