

Scottish Environment LINK Network Meeting held 17 April 2014 at the LINK office Perth. Note of actions and key discussion points.

Attending: Deborah Long (Chair, Plantlife), Craig Macadam (Trustee, Buglife, Wildlife Forum), Charles Strang (SCNP, National Parks TF), Diarmid Hearn (NTS, Agriculture TF), John Thomson (APRS/SCNP, Landscape TF), Gina Hanrahan (WWF), Calum Duncan (MCS, Marine TF), Beryl Leatherland (Trustee, SWLG, Wildlife Crime TF), Helen Todd (Trustee, Ramblers, Planning TF, Hilltracks Campaign, Land Group), Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland), Ross Finnie (President), Phoebe Cochrane (Sustainable Development Economics PO), Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (LINK Staff).

Apologies: John Mayhew (APRS), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers, Wildlife Crime TF), Lisa Webb (Freshwater TF), Alex Kinninmonth (FWTF), Charles Dundas (WTS, Woodland TF), Jim Densham (Climate Adaptation TF), Tom Dawson (SCAPE), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Matthew Crighton (FoES), Lloyd Austin (RSPB), Eilidh Nicolson (NTS), Vicki Swales (Sustainable Land Use TF), Bruce Wilson (Planning TF, SWT), Nick Underdown, Rea Cris (LINK Staff).

Board Updates: (from the meeting held that morning).

Membership: LINK has a new member – Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion (SCAPE Trust), not yet a member of any TFs. Currently 37 member bodies, 2 Organisational Supporters (Crown Estate, Paths for All), and one Business Supporter just admitted (Scottish Power). RGBE, Creative Carbon Scotland, Boots and Scotrail were also being invited to become Supporters. Members were encouraged to flag ideas to Alice Walsh to take forward; board approval being part of the process. **Action: all**

Special General Meeting: would be held via email over the summer to allow more time between close of nominations for LINK offices and for members to vote in time for the AGM. **Action: Jen**

Succession planning: Several changes happening this year with Deborah Long standing down as Chair and trustee, and Helen Todd stepping up from Vice-Chair at the AGM on 28 November. A new Treasurer is sought as Paul Ritchie wishes to stand down before the AGM. The Board has asked Ross Finnie (and he has agreed) to stay on for another year as President. Nominations for 2 more trustees would be invited shortly, once a skills analysis is completed.

Honorary Fellows: The Board discussed ways of involving those of the Fellows willing to be more engaged in LINK's. They are a potential resource for task forces.

Local Communities work: The Board discussed the Elizabeth Leighton's report [Exploring Local Links](#), (on members' part of the website) looking at the need for improved networks between local groups, LINK and members. A SWOT analysis on the recommendations will be made for the August Board, and brought to the Network meeting on 21 August.

Reviewing our efforts to [map our links with the wider policy community](#) the Board notes that we have been doing well overall; around liaison meetings, the National Performance Framework review process, on Sustainable Economic Growth issues and the Regulatory Reform Bill. LINK is seeking a meeting with the new Chair Ian Ross, also will pursue a high-level meeting with SEPA (agenda items,

Sustainable Economic Growth and the Regulatory Reform Bill, National Performance Framework) and will seek a high level meeting with National Farmers Union(beyond CAP issues) with Ross Finnie's help. Charles Strang asked if we have high level meetings with Historic Scotland, which LINK currently does not, and the feeling was not to seek such until its new arrangements have bedded in. Charles also noted we may need to have more strategic liaison with the Defence department.

The Discretionary Project fund was set at £9.2k for this year, and is available for network priorities. TFs are invited to apply ([form here](#)).

Political Strategy Report and recommendations

Much is still on hold until after the referendum. The Governance Group feels LINK has done its bit with the Referendum Challenge and debate in February – our points have been well made.

The rolling manifesto was refreshed, with the draft for the EU elections out for consultation with member bodies and taskforces. All are encouraged to take a look and respond. **Action: all**

LINK has stopped going to the political party conferences this year due to benefits vs costs, with intention to focus on other conferences instead; potentially STUC, CoSLA, CBI.

The Board has approved a further seminar for members in January 2015, on the constitution. At that stage the dust will have settled a little and there may be more on paper. The content will be more on the political fallout rather than operational issues for members. **Action: Governance Group, Andy**

The Board discussed whether the Carbon Bubble work might be a base to stimulate discussion across the UK Links. There were concerns about the resource implications and benefits to be gained, though agreed it should be on the agenda for the Joint Links meeting in the autumn. **Action: Jen**

Andy clarified the background to our SCVO governance consultation. LINK and others have concerns that the lack of an intermediary for the social welfare bodies in SCVO means that the majority of the resources are spent on SW issues, to the detriment of campaigning bodies like LINK, the Sports and Arts sectors, among others. Andy is still represented on the SCVO Policy Committee.

Andy asked all to let him know if there are any areas he should cover at a strategic level for the next and following reports. **Action: all**

Actions for the January meeting not covered on the agenda

Jen reported that nobody had responded on the question of whether LINK needs to update *A Time to Act on Climate Change* (2008). There may be a case for looking at Marine renewables again (Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment), around the forthcoming energy statement from the Landscape taskforce and wider energy issues. **Action: Jen**

Appropriate Appraisal for designated sites, and environmental directives more generally had been raised in January as a concern and potential workshop focus. The scale of the problem and extent of members' interest would be explored before going ahead with planning a workshop, with Beryl's assistance. **Action: Beryl, Alice**

In relation to capacity Ross had been very complimentary in the Board meeting earlier about the range and level of work being done, and how member bodies marshal their resources to great effect, which was to the huge credit of the member bodies.

Network Plan 2013-14, progress and lessons in recent months.

Evaluations followed from Agriculture TF, Hilltracks Campaign and Landscape TF.

Agriculture: Diarmid noted that these were his thoughts rather than the TF's as a whole. The new SRDP would not change radically now, there was an expectation that it will have an environment component. The next focus would be monitoring the new programme. The TF (though RSPB is strongest on it) struggles with lack of an evidence base – you do this, it costs this, it will achieve that. The TF's vision document, which John Thomson had taken over to produce a think piece after the consultants withdrew, may be useful to have in hand before the Highland Show, to take the debate to a higher level. John was losing confidence in the point of the thinkpiece, as it is beyond policy level, how we as a society produce, buy food and relate to the countryside. What do we say about prescriptions and forge common ground with farmers, farming sustainably has got to be within the context of wider sustainability. A meeting led by Ross with NFUS later in the year to discuss higher level concepts would be useful. CAP takes up time resources and will continue to do so. John was encouraged to persist as the work will be a valuable contribution to advocacy. Charles noted that links to the Economic work and that the Cooperative Society would be worth meeting with, and a potential Business Supporter.

Hilltracks: Helen reported that this campaign had a clear focus, to change the Minister's mind. The report was produced which was only the start of the process, so remember that. Callum Brown as a member of SWLG as well as the report author was able to respond to the SLE, which would otherwise have been a great deal of work for the team. It was interesting having it sitting between both Planning and Landscape TFs, with deep discussion at Landscape meetings and broad support from Planning. If issues straddle several TFs it is useful to have discussions in them all. Lots of opportunities to keep the momentum up and the issues live. The pros and cons of offering to meet SLE had been discussed within the TF, unlikely to change their mind, are very sore at our response to their criticisms and their questions about appropriate use of public funding of LINK being picked up by Andy Wightman,. Andy Myles felt it would be worthwhile to meet, to explain that we are not going to go away and that we are aiming for sustainable land use – they can keep it narrow or put it on a broader spectrum, relates to wildlife crime, deer management and more. A meeting may need to be above the TF level, potentially involving an Honorary Fellow. **Action: Helen, staff**

If the campaign fails, members were content that the group come out quite negatively against the Scottish Government – fundamental issues of democracy and power, not a huge issue, but symbolic, relates to what will come out of the Land Reform Review, a good time to press the issue further than too. Beryl added that the civil servants were being very difficult; a consultation on siting of telecom masts mentions easing the 'bureaucratic burden', without awareness of the democratic deficit involved.

Landscape: John explained the TF has some broad high level aims and is poorly resourced. Highlights are the Hilltracks campaign and a level of Wild Land protection in the planning system, though it has

to be seen what the final SNH maps look like, though hopes are that there won't be too much backtracking. On the wider agenda, not much has been achieved. Interest in landscape scale measures is encouraging, as long as they are not solely biodiversity focussed. The TF needs more engagement with the Marine TF, landscape does not feature much except in aquaculture siting. The TF wants to see a new forum to pick up where the Scottish Landscape Forum left off. The Landscape Institute is coming to the next TF meeting, TF aware that the Forum should not be too professionally focused – problems cannot always be resolved with a designed solution. Another area of interest is Cultural Services within the context of Ecosystem Services.

The Landscape and Energy statement is with John Mayhew to progress and will be more limited in scope, and unlikely to be ready for discussion at the May meeting of the TF. There is the question of whether LINK is happy for it to go public badged as a Landscape TF product, or undergo the scrutiny of other TFs. Jen advised the latter. Andy suggested it be couched in terms of Landscape development, to mirror the economic and social 'development' of sustainable development, where we seek to change the frame of the debate, and that there was some useful material in the [ACME](#) report which could be used. An MTF rep would attend the next LTF meeting on 1 May. There were some joint members with NTS as a member of both TFs. There was no overlap with the Wildlife Forum where discussion is also needed. The Mountaineering Council of Scotland's statement for the National Planning Framework, to which several member bodies had signed up, may also be useful.

Action: MTF, WF, LTF.

Network Plan 2014-15, and the coming 4 months

Agriculture: as Plan and report.

Climate Adaptation: See Plan. Jim to be invited to August meeting for evaluation and advise other TFs of their part in future monitoring. **Action: Jim, staff.**

Deer: No TF member present. There is a plan to repeat the wider meeting with non-landowning interests in the Autumn. The meeting welcome that. **Action: Deer TF, staff.**

Economics: nothing to add to Plan. A lot is going on relating to the Round Table, and we must be sensitive not to jeopardise that process. The [Carbon Bubble](#) paper will generate further work. Phoebe has been in touch with all TFs on ecosystem services. Diarmid noted that the Historic Environment indicator was no longer mentioned in the recent briefing, though this was a tactic, not a comprehensive list. Deborah was on the Indicators sub-group, meeting in the next few weeks, still going through a process, with nothing coming out yet. The Roundtable is likely to go on until September at least, chaired by John Swinney, and keen to put the NPF on a legislative basis.

Freshwater: There is no convenor after Lisa leaves in April, as her replacement may not work on FW issues only, and Alex Kinninmonth cannot step up. Staff to circulate a list of the forums LINK sits on alert other members to the situation to see if anyone can step up meantime. Beryl noted that there is an important nitrates consultation out. The Scottish Water invitation to sit on a group on uses of sewage sludge has been circulated to some members with no take up. Staff will send it round the wider network to see if there is a volunteer. **Action: Alice.**



Governance: There was general support for a wider seminar on Governance structures. Andy will report back to the group to get this organised. **Action: Andy**

Land: The Land Reform Review Group will be reporting in May, rather than April. The Scottish Affairs Committee report was published with no mention of the environment. The LRRG was not going to meet LINK, signals are that it will be focussed on ownership. Access issues do not appear to be threatened.

Landscape: covered in Plan and above. Jonathan may stand down as deputy convenor.

Marine: The 29 best options for MPAs don't appear to be at risk. There is concern about the commitment to recovery being unambitious on historically hammered features. ScotGov's SEA team want to know information about displacement fisher activity from the MPAs, and its clear not enough fishing pressure is being removed from proposed MPAs, though the low level is distressing fishing interests. TF wants RACCE to look into it. MTF is helping to redraft some of the chapters of the National Marine Plan, references to better definitions in the Scottish Planning Policy document, ties in with ambition for the NMP to enable recovery. Not known when RACCE will scrutinise that. Also want more MPAs for cetaceans and seabirds. Joint Links work ongoing, the WCL secretariat has marine funding with work on behalf of all the Links in the job description. Links are working jointly on the EU Marine Framework Directive. Andy commented that it is a classic case of a decent bill with serious danger of Government reneging on it and ending up with nothing better. At some stage the TF will have to decide where lines are drawn.

National Parks: Charles had left before this part of the agenda. He would send content for the Plan. **Action: NPTF.**

Planning: as in the Plan. 60 days Parliamentary scrutiny of the National Planning Framework was too short. On wild land, there are communities against the wild land designations, misunderstanding about the level of what is excluded. The TF will write to the First Minister to clarify. Third Party Right of Appeal is being rebadged as Equal Right of Appeal (with developers), and pursued by the TF. TF may apply to DPF to research evidence of the recent arrangements being fairer to communities or not.

Sustainable Land Use: TF will take stock in the Autumn when the pilot projects are at a good stage.

Wildlife Crime: Awaiting the report, planning to meet in later May.

Wildlife Forum: Not got high expectations of the monitoring material on the Biodiversity Duty. Andy's group had suggested having the same pro-forma across the board, worth flagging with the Minister. Other TFs are reminded to bring in biodiversity benefits in their work, to help mainstream biodiversity. **Action: all TFs.**

Woodland: as in Plan.

Environmental Narrative: Andy reported on progress with this one side of A4 hymnsheet on SD. He and Paul Walton are framing it terms of Environmental Development, what we want, not what we are against. A seminar will be organised for a later stage with wide participation from members and taskforces. **Action: Andy, Paul Walton.**



Scottish Environment Week: Paper circulated. Staff will reconvene the steering group to plan next year's event. We need more involvement from members and MSPs. Members were asked to consider the opportunities, we need ideas from member bodies. **Action: members to feedback to Rea.**

Congress will be on the theme of Landscape scale restoration and rewilding, on **27 November**.

Festive Reception 17 December.

Network meeting is on **21 August**, and the AGM/Strategic Planning on **28 November**.

Next **Ministerial meeting** will have items on marine planning and renewables; biodiversity monitoring, agreed that we can do a reporting item to the Minister to save time for discussion.

Joint Programme Monitoring Committee: LINK has been invited onto this Committee by Scottish Government, and it has proven difficult to find a volunteer to take it on. Trustee Mandy Orr will attend the next meeting as LINK rep, and report back on its usefulness to the network.

Alice Walsh, 22 April 2014.