

Connecting People and Nature Stakeholder Event, 26th November 2018

This is a short LINK members only briefing note for the attendees of the SNH NGO stakeholder event on the 26th of November in Battleby.

Aim of the event- “Developing a shared agenda with more effective collaborations across the sector so that resources have more impact on connecting people and nature at a range of scales – for species and landscapes”.

The sessions are structured around the four outcomes of SNH (**benefits from nature, investing in nature, healthy and resilient nature and transforming how we work**). Below is a snapshot of existing LINK position on some of the outcomes.

Outcome 1 – Benefits from nature: placemaking and preventative spend

Under Outcome 1, Scottish Environment LINK members support the introduction of a National Ecological Network in Scotland, in line with Scottish Government commitments in Scotland's Biodiversity - a [Route Map to 2020](#) and [Scotland's Third National Planning Framework](#) . The National Ecological Network (NEN) would help protect and restore Scotland's nature, so that it continues to provide the life support systems we all depend on, particularly in terms of our health, wellbeing and economic prosperity. The NEN could do this by providing an overriding, holistic policy approach that integrates the enhancement and protection of nature into policies, proposals and funding streams, so that they can deliver multiple public benefits more effectively. Coordinated actions across different stakeholders will enable them to protect and enhance the natural environment, be it at a local or national scale. Amongst others NEN will help deliver priorities of:

Public health: improving public access to local greenspace and increasing people's use of Scotland's outdoors would significantly improve the physical and mental wellbeing of residents, tackling problems such as stress, anxiety and obesity.

Local and national economies: by building on and improving Scotland's reputation as a top destination for wildlife and outdoor activity, the NEN would contribute to local tourism and recreation industries. At a wider scale the network would recognise and protect the multiple benefits that healthy ecosystems bring to the wider Scottish economy.

Outcome 2 – Healthy and resilient nature: biodiversity leadership – 2020 targets and beyond

There is a pressing need for sufficient funding to deliver the post 2020 goals: With growing pressures on dedicated budgets for conservation, it is important that we avoid a situation where dedicated funding for biodiversity is used to deliver a variety of diverse goals.

- **Government funding:** The Scottish Government funding available to Scottish Natural Heritage and to the Forestry Commission Scotland is now significantly reducing and affecting statutory grants to the sector. The Landfill Communities funding is reducing too, as we all get better at recycling and waste management. The Heritage Lottery Fund alarmingly has reduced funding too. Against this backdrop Charities are being challenged by the new data protection regulations (GDPR) which is imposing new rules about how we contact our supporters to ask for funds.
- **SNH focus:** SNH grants are now increasingly focusing on the delivery of several goals beyond conservation. Over the last few years SNH focus has been on awareness raising and engagement with people as a way of recognising. Additionally, SNH grants require engagement in Scotland's central belt, however, this limits possibilities for rolling out projects in more remote areas where vulnerable habitats and species reside. However, it is unclear to LINK whether recognition of the

wider benefits of our natural environment has elicited financial support from relevant portfolios. For example, given the contribution of our environment to our health and wellbeing, it would be possible to envisage dedicated funding from the social policy portfolio to support the delivery of those benefits.

- **Framework agreements:** While only larger environmental charities were able to benefit from those agreements, they originally allowed for large-scale and more strategic support on a more long-term basis (initially over a period of 3 years, most recently reduced to yearly arrangements). These were focused on conservation and habitat and biodiversity restoration. These have been now discontinued and will be replaced by a series of challenge funds where biodiversity is relatively absent.
- **Partnership collaborations:** Environmental NGOs have a long and successful history of partnership and collaboration, where multiple stakeholder engagements/ partnerships are one way working on practical conservation. One example is that of the [“Flows to the Future Project”](#) in Caithness and Sutherland, where landscape scale conservation was delivered in partnership and made possible through the RSPB’s largest ever grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund of £4.6 million.

National Ecological Network and Protected Areas: Given the above context, it is unsurprising that we are moving away from the Aichi target on financial resources for biodiversity. In addition to Outcome 1 priorities, the NEN will help Scotland fulfil its national, EU and international environmental obligations, particularly those related to improving the condition of protected nature sites. LINK members recommend that there should be a comprehensive, effectively managed suite of Protected Areas that are embedded the NEN. The protected areas will enable Scotland to meet its international commitments including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and post-2020 Convention on Biological Diversity targets and deliver outcomes linked to Scotland’s National Performance Framework. The protected areas will also safeguard and improve the remaining most important and vulnerable areas in Scotland recognised for their nationally and internationally important habitats, species and earth science interests.

Final note for members it is also observed that the roadmap process worked well last time, but the process needs to be more inclusive and address mutually agreed priorities.