

Note of LINK Strategic Planning meeting held in the Quaker Meeting House, Edinburgh, 12 December 2018.

Attending: Charles Dundas (Chair, WTS), Sam Gardner (WWF, Trustee), Craig Macadam (Vice-Chair, Buglife), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), John Mayhew (APRS, SCRA, SCNP), Beryl Leatherland (Trustee, SWLG), Aedán Smith (RSPB), Matthew Crichton (FoES), Clare Symons (Trustee, PD), Helen Todd (RS), Calum Duncan (MCS), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer, CC, SWLG), Lucy Graham (SWT), Eddie Palmer (SB), Ellie Stirling (SB), Lisa Webb, Phoebe Cochrane, Jen Anderson, Daphne Vlastari, Miriam Ross, Alice Walsh, Calum Langdale

Gus Jones (BSCG), Tessa Jones (BSCG), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Maggie Keegan (BES), Karen Paterson in the pm.

Apologies: Sarah Dolman (WDC), Paul Kirkland (BC), Pete Ritchie (Nourish), Angus Miller (SGF), Helen Senn (Trustee, RZSS), John Thomson (SCNP), Paul Walton (Trustee, RSPB), Jim Foster (ARC), Alison Lomax (HWDT), Anna Brand (RSPB), James Curran (HF), Dilraj Watson (LINK).

1. Chair's welcome

Charles welcomed everyone, and particularly new LINK Campaigns Co-ordinator Miriam Ross, starting work with LINK in January.

2. Updates from the Board.

The Board had evaluated progress against strategic objectives, noting good progress by LINK but huge environmental challenges. Daphne's [Political Strategy Report](#) shows we need to be ready for different scenarios to be prepared for all Brexit outcomes. She had prepared a plan for the Governance Group for the various outcomes, and recommended we review with hindsight the position we took before the referendum.

Sam reported that WWF was preparing a manifesto for the likelihood of a General Election and suggested LINK might want to do similarly. The basis would be what we are calling for in the Environment Act. **For discussion later, and within the Governance Group.**

The Board discussed the new networking events, which aim to bring together senior people within member bodies who are seldom otherwise involved in LINK's discussions. Two events have been held so far, not involving all members though attendance would be reviewed according to subjects. They have discussed relationships at national and international levels which will matter post Brexit. The second meeting considered whether or not an environmental thinktank was needed in Scotland, concluding that in effect LINK provides much of this, but that an additional layer of operation should be developed for thought leadership. It considered what infrastructure we need to allow space for new ideas. That meeting also discussed the issue of political rhetoric not matching the action by Scottish Govt and how to deal with this, to be discussed today. The Board meeting took place after Simon Pepper's death. Sam is acting as liaison with the family about ways in which he will be remembered, where LINK will want to help. There are ongoing discussions with JMT to encourage them back to LINK have been productive, with JMT now exploring re-joining.

The generous unrestricted grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to LINK for the next three years (thanks to staff for their work on this) meant that LINK had a bigger DPF for network priorities, and that Groups and Subgroups should bear this in mind. There was a suggestion that the Board might take a more strategic approach to allocation, to avoid the risk of dissipating effort. Funding so far has been allocated to key priorities through the DPF bidding process, yet it was important to bear

in mind issues such as how to address the 'rhetoric versus reality' gap (potentially updating an earlier LINK report) and to be prepared to engage more strategically in discussions of the Scottish budget, potentially commissioning work on green budgets. Aedán added systemic issues which have emerged in work on the Planning Bill. **For Board to consider.**

Helen reported that the Mountaineering Council might also be interested in coming back to LINK, to the benefit of both organisations. **Trustee engagement with MS is being pursued.**

Charles reported on the improving relations with SNH which had been in decline for over a decade with frustrations from the network about its lack of delivery on its core remit and lack of championship of the environment. Members felt that the CEO Francesca Osowska was generally positive about championing nature. Two LINK meetings were held in June and November on three issues. 1. championing nature and the environment in Scotland. 2. the evidence base for State of Nature reporting where there was now acceptance of LINK's view on baselines, and 3. biodiversity post 2020. On 1. further discussions would take place between subsets of both boards towards a shared narrative. LINK trustees will meet in January, to prepare for sharing with SNH comms lead in February, and subsequently meet some SNH board members. On 3, SNH's ideas were unformed until the UN CBD meeting pointed to the direction of travel and where Scotland fits in. FO was keen work with us, sees LINK as the credible face of the environment movement, wants to improve the relationship, and is having to bring some of her staff along on this. Calum reported on the very different experience relating with SNH's marine team, and with the marine part of the civil service. This contrasted with relationships on the land issues, and may be partly about scale, marine being more marginal. Jen reported on a meeting in May with Bridget Campbell, Katriona Carmichael and Ian Jardine, and their review of stakeholder relationships. LINK collated [input](#) from members and subgroups on these relationships (on members part of the website), and shared this with Bridget.

3. Assessing the past year – achievements and Learning

Links to the progress updates on the [work programme](#) and on the [operating plan](#) were circulated (on the members' website). Charles invited reflections on successes and disappointments - what has made people proud to be part of LINK?

Calum: success on the commitment of £250k in the budget to run the consultation sooner on the 4 nature conservation MPAs. LINK's role was in organising a boat trip on the west coast for the Environment Committee in summer 2017, and the appearance of three minke whales on the edge of a big MPA, showed them what was at stake. It took about 5 months to get the Committee organised to come out. They loved it. A benefit was very productive discussions on the ferry back from Mull. There were follow up meetings with Mark Ruskell, leading on to negotiations with SNP to get the budget deal through. Daphne noted there has been something similar this year on biodiversity, highlighting to the Minister what is not working, though these are small things we want added, not systemic change. ECCLR's scrutiny of the budget was very well written. We haven't done enough to contribute well here, so we need a better evidence base and research into what a green budget would look like.

Craig & Calum: the very successful Species Champions 100 day challenge. The next step is to keep the SCs engaged and to do more on advocacy. The amount of events over the summer was as much as in the previous two years, and involved MSPs that hitherto inactive. There was good engagement from SCs on the CC bill and the Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign. There is no doubt it is a LINK success.

Helen: Hilltracks at the moment is an heroic failure. The campaign continues, after the cracking report, it is not over yet. There has been a huge amount of publicity and public interest. When Andy Wightman's amendment was voted down, the social media outcry was phenomenal. Hilltracks has become symbolic of land reform generally. It is good for LINK's profile. Hilltracks was not considered a LINK priority. Had it been, would the outcome be different? There has been really good advice from Daphne, some DPF funding and other funding raised by Beryl. Though subgroups do not get as much support as priority groups, when it comes to crunch points, the support of others is valuable. The campaign has been very good at communicating clearly and regularly to the rest of LINK. Work to date has raised awareness. If there is a concession at Stage 3 of the Planning Bill that will be a victory. It was disappointing not to have it considered as part of the Moorland Review. They have increasingly become aware of the need to emphasise the lack of democracy in the process, the fairness issue gets more support than the environmental impact. The campaign demonstrates the long-term nature of the issue for LINK.

Aedán: some good successes on the Planning Bill; now it has a statutory duty to deliver sustainable development, and many other technical changes. Success is due to our engagement with MSPs. The Bill is radically different from what SGovt wanted. Daphne's help has been invaluable. There is more to do, we hope for more success at Stage 3. Clare: we changed the conversation, from being about technocratic measures to a restatement of planning's purposes, how we create our places. We didn't do some of the transformative thinking beforehand which was why we are wanting to do more of that now. There is a huge mismatch of rhetoric and reality, from the community aspect. The Minister is completely in denial. She agreed with the need for a better evidence base. On planning it would include how much greenbelt we have lost, how many EIAs have not been conducted, how much development happens outwith the Development Plan; the driver for it being the market. The only thing planning authorities report on is the speed of their decision-making. There are now discussions with Heads of Planning. She worried about the tick box approach in legislation when what is needed is a culture change.

Diarmid: MSPs themselves want more land use strategy on housing, for reasons including disability access, there is a whole part of Govt crying out for a LUS. The SNP being put on the spot on Hilltracks, in contrast to their land reform rhetoric.

Calum reported on the NGO success on aquaculture, which had a LINK role to it. Both the ECCLR and REC Committees came out to halt expansion of aquaculture until meaningful action is taken to address the environmental problems. This came from a petition from Salmon & Trout Conservation, who became a LINK member hoping for support for a moratorium. Some members signed up to S&TCS's position, others did not. There was a good outcome from Committees. The intervention from Simon Pepper was very useful, and staff's role in raising members' confidence up in relation. The organisational member was vital, and not to forget we are standing on the shoulders of giants!

Beryl: success of the turnout for the launch of the Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign. Daphne said this was not all due to the actions the subgroup took. The network is very responsive. Sometimes there is inertia, but here they were not, with lots of social media activity, blogs, it's been a learning curve on how we do it as LINK. We had time to prepare, funds to do it for the longer term resources, and on the day we had very successful coverage. The challenge is to maintain the momentum in a way that doesn't make it appear we are politically tone deaf. This is why our preparedness on Brexit scenarios is so necessary.

Sam: great to see it come together under one banner, so visibly. We need to sustain it. The Cabinet Secretary is resistant, will not give any commitments, so we will have to be strong throughout 2019.

It will be challenging and we will get push back. There is a wider point that we still struggle, our wins are in the Chamber using the minority Govt to good effect. We are less successful with civil servants in Victoria Quay and Pentland House. We persist in pursuing change largely through that vehicle and get nowhere. We should reflect on this. The Programme for Government is where we can bring some pressure to bear. He referred to the tiny gesture made on the biodiversity fund which we felt to need to recognise. We have a huge mountain to climb in terms to get close to the level of political profile on biodiversity as we have on, eg, air pollution. Daphne agreed, noting that on civil servants we have identified the potential blockages, but if the Cab Secs do not want to move, civil servants cannot. Sam said we have never had a close collaborative relationship with the Cab Secretary. This is a cautious third term Govt with typically hesitant civil servants, so we need to have greater flexibility with our theories of change and what a good environment could look like, and not to put all our eggs in one basket.

Eddie: on this and the lack of progress on Wildlife Crime issues, noted the willingness of MSPs versus the blockages in the civil service included the police. The public is frustrated and contacts NGOs to report crimes.

Diarmid: our opponents are much stronger than us. How do we mobilise people, and how much can we as a group mobilise public opinion? Daphne replied that this is what we are trying to do with the FFSN campaign. The issue was how to broaden it from being solely an environmental issue. We are considering holding seminars across Scotland, and engaging with others like Oxfam, and we can learn from the marine, and planning experiences.

Aedán: Planning Democracy are doing much to make the space for other members to come in behind. He has often thought we could do with something more radical than LINK members are prepared to or can do. A related point is how we increase scrutiny of Govt implementation of legislation by the Parliament.

Calum: vested interests on marine is the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. The previous days fisheries debate was interesting. Instead of politicians quoting only the SFFs position, it involved the Creelers and Open Seas, set up to be outliers, and the wider Coastal Communities Network. FFI is funding CCN and LINK members sit on its advisory group. They can say what they want which creates space. It continues the type of relationship between the Marine Group and the coastal community on Arran. There does need to be clear water between the local groups and the NGOs. The community voice can say what it likes, whereas NGOs have to be evidence-based, credible etc. There is a lot of value in the experience, as with aquaculture. The Cab Sec saw LINK as sensible and the others as hysterical. This raises the wider question of our being 'in or out of the tent'.

Sam: its all very well being in the tent if you are making progress. When it's not working out, take a step out of it. On air pollution we rightly left the stakeholder group. Discussion then followed on tone, and the difficulties of context of the constitutional debate, the fact that we don't pose a threat to Govt. On kelp dredging, there was a groundswell of other interest groups, and some supporting of community groups to make it happen. It was a political response to what MSPs saw as a political risk. So build the voice and come in as the 'voice of reason'. It is also important where the voice is perceived to be from, eg, on Hilltracks, its best to ensure it is not from Edinburgh walking groups. Clare said that communities are not being aggressive. They are saying it differently, from different perspectives. They generally are well informed and coherent, and angry. Pointing out the problems gives us an opportunity to come forward with a solution. On Planning, Homes for Scotland have significantly changed their position on the Planning Bill, coming to PD for talks.

Charles said the thought space proposal may play a role in bringing forward those with more difficult and challenging views. Those discussions had concluded that there is an additional level of operation required, yet to be resourced. There needs to be a way for us to be in the same space as the opposition and with those whom with work on some issues. The proposal is for a 2-3 day lockdown with all these interests to discuss the future, removed from the angst of the present, and emerge with a shared sense on the issue being discussed, for each take to Govt through their own channels. Green Alliance was advised that there is no wish for them to open a Scottish operation. It should be done through LINK. **For Board discussion.**

4. Looking ahead to next 18 months.

Items circulated were the [Political Strategy Report](#) and the [draft Work Programme](#) (on members' website). This session was for discussion of what is coming up in the next 18 months, capacity, connections between work areas, and what is not going to happen.

Biodiversity: Craig: Post 2020, requires a lot of thought on the approach. We seek the National Ecological Network as the framework. Species Champions and working with them ongoing to get biodiversity better funded. There had been a workshop earlier that week on the NEN, and further planning to do for a document giving more detail on what it means for different sectors, habitats and species; how it would benefit people, nature, and climate change; how it would interact with landowners and decision makers and what tools and mechanism would be needed to deliver it. Rather than a joined-up corridor for wildlife, it is a series of stepping stones to allow species to functionally work together, adapt and be resilient. A key point is that must be based on the current protected areas network at its core. It's a response to the reality that protected areas alone are not enough, it looks at leveraging the different policy and funding to get the rest of it working functionally. It is hard to explain what it will mean on the ground. We need to pitch the social and economic benefits. The Cab Sec does not like the name, so there is an element of marketing to it. It was useful to have SNH attending to give intelligence on the blockages within the civil service, the desire not to designate. We are trying to link it to the international agenda, as that's a plus with Govt, to get fulfilment of commitments, and getting other countries to showcase and working with IUCN. The suggestion from CBD is that ecological coherence will be the next big thing. We are looking ahead at where others are at, Govt, business, and how our objectives fit in, synergies and conflicts.

Scenario planning on Brexit. Daphne: We have to be alive to all the possibilities. In a No Deal scenario we are considering asking the Scottish Govt to bring in emergency legislation, which covers two out of our three Environment Act asks. We are on the same page as Greener UK here. The reality is there are some things we will not be able to influence. We need to have a response prepared.

If things go as planned, we will roll out what we have said we will do. Having that certainty would be helpful to get Scottish Govt to engage.

The third scenario is a General Election or a People's Vote, which needs more preparation. Daphne asked if, in hindsight, members shared her view that we did not do enough as LINK in 2016? This was to issue the Referendum Challenge, which got a response from Remain but not Leave, which LINK published. Since the referendum there were questions about why the NGOs are not doing more on the benefits of the EU for environment. On balance it is the safest option for the environment to stay in and hindsight would lead us to tweak that position. Discussion followed about the need to ensure we have a constitutional basis for saying what we did. While we have said that there need to

be certain safeguards for a flourishing environment out of the EU and have said how the dangers can be mitigated, we did not ever refer to Brexit being an opportunity for the environment. On CAP, our advocacy for post CAP funding has promoted examples of what is happening in other EU countries still within the CAP, we were careful there not to speak of 'opportunities'. There is no difficulty on the Marine side with the CFP either. Via EEB and member networks such as Birdlife we have kept abreast with developments on these, though are not completely up to speed. There was general agreement in this meeting that remaining in the EU would be best for the environment. It is clear the provisions made for exiting with a deal are considerably less than current. This needs to be evidenced which the Governance Group is doing. On refuting the 'will of the people' Scotland voted by 62% to remain. If it comes to sign up, UK members and NTS will be very cautious. Advice from OSCR on a LINK position could be useful. Events are moving fast and staff and Board will need to be prepared to move quickly. **Action: Governance Group will get agreement on next steps before the holidays. Staff and Board will need to be quick off the mark in the next phase.**

Sam: Next year there are various legislative things happening in Scotland, the Climate Change Bill concluding, and possibility of a Good Food Nation bill. WWF will be pushing strongly for a global deal for people and nature in Beijing in 2020. On the topic of Theories of Change, his experience is that the only points of crisis are if a senior politician is speaking on a platform to their peers. How do we provide platforms for SGovt and it to assume a leadership role in the run up to 2020? The Global deal for nature will be pushed by others too. WWF and Netflix are collaborating on a programme to be narrated by David Attenborough. If it is as effective as Blue Planet it will permeate public consciousness. This could be the wave to ride.

In 2019 there will be various UK bills that have relevance or will create debate in Scotland. Agriculture and Fisheries Bills. We could progress arguments off the back of them. He noted that responding to our own domestic legislation, UK legislation etc, risks filling our programme. We need to focus also on what we do proactively, to achieve our long term objective to get more traction. We have to find ways of cutting through the noise.

Aedan: the next big thing on Planning will be the National Planning Framework. It is now due and SGovt is trying to put it off to 2024. It will apply up to 2050, so can be a useful advocacy tool. We put a lot of work into getting an NPF years ago, in order to think about things in the longer term. Working on that over the next year is timely.

Scotland' Environmental Strategy has been postponed. The responses have opened up the debate. We got commitment to work on the principles and strategy together. If withdrawal happens there is time for SGovt to consider the responses and conclude the need for an Environment Act.

There will also be Statutory Instruments, Scottish ones from January. Daphne will be speaking to the relevant departments.

There is also the possibility of a Circular Economy Bill, though at the recent seminar, Zero Waste Scotland could not say what would be in it, so concern is that it will be dropped because of Brexit. If we want to make it happen we will have to be very vocal on it, the Economics Group's next step. There will be a UK consultation on Extended Producer Responsibility.

What should we be doing on land, to up the ante on the land reform, land use agendas?

Helen: part of the issue is that landscape is seen in terms of a block of development, on renewables. There is resurgence of Community Land Scotland's agenda of repopulating the glens and seeing conservation as the opposition. On landscape, Stuart Brooks (NTS) is leading on forming a broader

than LINK Landscape Alliance with the Landscape Institute Scotland to be launched on 30 January. There will be a steering group including LINK members and subgroups on health, transport, etc, to point out the fundamental importance of managing changes with landscape and bringing in all the parties. SNH will be on board, and that could give confidence to other sectors. NTS and LIS have put resources into it. It is coming from a very low base of activity.

On land agenda, on land use and land reform, its more positive than last year. Katriona Carmichael at SGovt aims to take the LUS forward. The National Parks and Land Commission are keen. Vicki John and Sheila working to get some real changes out of it.

Clare has organised for Daphne to speak to the Scottish Community Alliance executive about the Environment Act campaign. CLS and PD are both on the SCA's executive. It is important to understand each others' perspectives. Beryl and Diarmid considered the CLS report quite positive. There are many issues involved in enhancing and managing Scotland's landscapes and on deserted glens we are all communities of interest. The huge participation deficit is being recognised. Daphne agreed it should be possible to involve some of the outdoor interests in the FFSN campaign and to reach out to some groups and mobilise them under the wider campaign objectives.

Eddie reported on the recent SEFF meeting, where the video made for funders was shown. SEFF is finalising its communication strategy before its official launch, though it available to view on LINK's Youtube channel.

Phoebe: in relation to SGovt's commitment to remaining aligned with the EU, have we the resources to keep up to speed with developments? Daphne considered we are doing this opportunistically, not seeking to influence these positions but using them where they apply.

Helen: new body Public Health Scotland is being set up which has relevance for environmental work, including designing places, mental health, physical activity. Health being a key priority of Govt the more we can relate to that agenda the better.

Daphne: Human Rights process and recommendations from the expert group, enshrining rights, including the right to a healthy environment. We will link to the Environment Act.

Helen: When there was discussion of a Scottish constitution there was talk about a right of public access.

Sustainable Development Goals. Are we aligning our work to fit with them? SGovt have revised the National Performance Framework to fit with the SDGs. We got quite a lot of what we wanted there, some helpful comments and are working with the SDG network alliance on national voluntary reporting on the SDGs. We are working with other charities to make sure the environment is not forgotten.

5. LINK forward programme of collective work in context of above discussions.

Gap between Rhetoric and Reality. Is it time to revisit the 2010 document? Discussion followed on making it more impactful this time around. We could consider joining up with others on it and ensure it lands in a way that leads into the Environment Strategy and Environment Act. It could be a pre-election tool, featuring case studies. There was general agreement that it would be useful, and there was time to think about it further. **Action: Daphne will lead and involve groups.**

SCVO are preparing a book on substantial pieces of legislation including the Access legislation and the Marine legislation. This was to be launched in Feb and now delayed to May. LINK is reaching out to SCVO on media strategy for it.

Diarmid: NTS was working on a research report on the effectiveness of regulators, looking at what Parliament sets bodies up to do and how this tails off over time. SEPA is the most effective. The legislative basis of regulators is one facet of the research. He can share this. **Action: Diarmid**

Planning Conference? Aedán: a lot of the difficulties we are facing are systemic. He and Clare have been considering how to broaden the discussion and bring the experience of what we faced in the Planning Bill to LINK and more widely. First thinking was a conference with LINK leading or in partnership with others to come up with a better model. Not necessarily wedded to the format. This has clear links to work the Economic Group has been doing on the NPF. Its about sustainability, and how its expressed in planning. How the market driven nature of decisions are effecting the result. There are other things we can do, eg the Local Governance Review, Community Empowerment Act, to strengthen community councils. He and Clare would speak to the Groups and Subgroups, and see where there are willing links to work with. If planning is about coming up with a vision about for a better future, it is struggling as most of the drivers are coming from other directions.

Matthew considered the planning system is a battleground as it regulates market driven development and is subordinate to the interests of capital rather than people. The system itself is woefully unambitious, so for a wider discussion we may need to go upstream from it.

The exercise could provide linkages between the different Groups and Subgroups. Calum would welcome that, in terms of principle. Marine has some wins, but still tinkering round the edges. System change not climate change, and a lot of people think we are not ambitious enough, hence Extinction Rebellion. Not sure of the format, and welcome direction of travel

Matthew, if you want to follow up on those fundamental problems, it takes you to a radical place. We saw this in the Community Land Act when you tried to uplift the value of the property for the people not the landowner. He completely supported LINK doing this, as long as people were aware where it leads.

Aedán: other bit to remember is the vision creation part of it. We have the marine vision. The National Planning Framework is due soon, and most obvious area is climate change which will be challenging for Govt to deal with, so scope for link to try an influence it. Maybe a bit of crossover with NEN and LUS, and set the direction of travel, so the regulatory function is to take us on that route.

This came up at the networking dinner, looking at the targets Govt has within the space of Scotland. May need an internal workshop first with some external experts. To form a forward plan. A larger wider discussion starting with ourselves.

Some crossover with Circular Economy work.

The Sea Scotland model is quite useful.

Clare, would like communities to be involved. 50 years since the Skeffington report next year. Not moved on very far.

Action: Planning Group to take forward. Clare and Aedan will contact the group convenors and work out the best way to engage with them.

Identify Research imperatives and opportunities

Daphne sought some join up in advance of areas of research members are doing and where there are gaps. If we are to be more proactive we would need to look into areas where research is needed, eg the already identified areas of budget and rhetoric. There is power in coming up with something new, linked to the advocacy, and LINK should be the forum in which these discussions happen.

Gus: keen to see things happen on environmental history. Conscious we are repeating mistakes. BSCG has a long archive. People who can provide the information don't last forever. Great to get a better archive.

Eddie: Biological recording, a massive and complicated subject. Scottish Badgers want to look at it in more depth.

Craig: The Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum review is interesting, fundamental information, a really good piece of work.

Clare: coming up for PD through enquiries, a trend for EIAs not been conducted for planning. Could this be an issue and do others have information on planning authorities letting developers off the hook?

Calum: Hot potato on Hunterston and more upcoming on oil rig decommissioning. There is reference in legislation re polluter pays, whoever harms or benefits pays for data collection, prompts thoughts on the fishing industry. Who benefits from the public good and how do those operators contribute to that public good, that ties it up. MCS not doing any research, will discuss in the Marine group.

Matthew: working with Oil Change International on how much or how little of North Sea oil should be extracted to be in line with the Paris agreement. Also how a just transition can create enough jobs to compensate for the loss of those jobs.

Aedán: RSPB research, some relates to offshore windfarms, a difficult area for nature conservation in Europe. From WF's already consented may result in 20-30% of seabird decrease. Real tension there coming towards us. RSPB is thinking how to tackle and will speak to others about it. Big challenge.

Beryl: on EIA, would we have capacity to analyse the quality of them and who does them. There should be a link between what was in the EIA at the start and the mitigation that was to be taken. There is a similar situation on the promised gains from development, and what happens on the ground. Is a long timescale there, so not feasible to research it, Could we instigate others to do?

Craig: Buglife research on emerging pollutants in freshwater, looking at pharmaceuticals, chemicals in sunscreen, effects unknown. Also access for fish on free flowing rivers, and where there are barriers.

Calum: great British Beach Clean report, biggest event last year for Scotland. Very proud of it. It supports a lot of advocacy. Most recently Marine Scotland wants to use it as a KPI. It's a rolling citizen science project that has shown its worth. On Beryl's point, if we are commissioning EIAs and SEAs, Marine Scotland told us that the bottleneck is that only one organisation does the work on it. It used to be done inhouse. Lack of strategic thinking for want of having an SEA team.

LINK is doing some work on the impact of climate change on species, literature review.

State of Nature report will be published next year in October.

Group and Subgroups plans and priorities. Are we happy with them, from what we have read?

Is there anything we are wasting our time on? Are we working on the important things. How do Groups come to their conclusions on priorities. Are we doing any prioritisation within the groups?

Eddie: Wildlife Crime trying to get such crimes reported as actual crime. We were told it was going to happen in 2017. Sense its being closed down. Some blockages in the system, an unsatisfactory situation.

Craig: a lot of what we are doing is for the long term, but they are still needing to be done. For groups and subgroups, it is hard when there is something like the Climate Change Bill coming in, having to accommodate it.

Daphne: From staff perspective, they do prioritise. Example of the Climate Change Bill affords an opportunity to beef up our original advocacy aim. In her view, some of it is to do with timing. At the moment its Brexit and the Environment Act, the biodiversity 2020 and the NEN. And fisheries which the Marine Group are doing. It does not mean that other things like the Circular Economy work are not going on.

Eddie: also unintended consequences. Example of increase in fly tipping increased due to charging policies of the local authority.

Calum: The Marine Group has an advocacy strategy which recognises where the strengths are, and thanks to Emilie and now Esther for doing it so well. There are also areas not within the MPEO's role, aquaculture the main one. One of the big areas we don't do as a Group is fisheries. We rely on Scottish colleagues who are working on the UK bill. We are working on pushing an Inshore fisheries bill, fisheries advocacy by proxy on priority marine features and MPAs. SWT is getting a new fisheries officer, probably only the fisheries officer in link. We are planning and prioritising, keeping an eye on the gaps and planning for the next phase. And a lot of effort is going into ensuring UK work is not a banana skin for Scotland.

Are we focussing on the right things?

Land Group needs a bit of thought. The high level group is not operating as was originally thought. In practice it's because the same people are doing the work. Maybe twice yearly meetings are not enough, or too often. Almost becomes the Land forum, as there is no work for the Land Group to do.

Jen: Are there ways in which LINK could be giving more to the outdoors agenda that is missing in the way we support work areas.

Beryl: its not lack of support. It is difficult to prioritise when there is so much on the agenda. Maybe not the time here, does it need restructuring. Find it quite frustrating, worry about the landscape subgroup, used to be very active.

Diarmid: on the question of dropping, it tends to become rescheduling instead. We don't work that way. Everything gets done just to a different level. How could it work better for the Board to have confidence that any Group is working to and achieving LINK's aims. An interesting offer. The board doesn't judge. That is a different and welcome indication to be a bit more directive. The Board has to be confident that it all adds up to something.

Charles: nothing is dropped, because nothing we do is not part of the core work of a member body.

Matthew: the reason we do some things as LINK, eg the Circular Economy through the Economics Group is because it is not part of the work of any member body. The period we are moving into, suggests we will be in a more outward, mobilising and campaigning mode. Mobilising is a very important part of achieving LINK objectives. LINK is not well known. Maybe we have to start thinking slightly differently. What we offer is to support each other. First of all something about LINK and how focussed its messages are. How joined up are we, and do we know enough of what other parts

of it think. And how do we each mobilise our supporters in different ways. And getting out there and persuading the public on 3 or 4 key issues, are we going in that direction.

Jen: we are going to conduct an identity review, relates Matthews point of what LINK is and what LINK asks.

Daphne: we don't want to be in a position where we are in competition with members. 35 members, environmental charities, on FFSN we are using the branding of the members to make it more easily understood by the public. Matthew is right about more campaigning, it is why we have the new Coordinator. And why we are looking outside the usual suspects, what works what doesn't, its not a fast one.

Charles suggested that as we have forums for Parliamentary officers, and fundraisers, and sometimes media, we might have one for campaigners? Craig said the problem is that for smaller organisations it's just one person. Daphne thought it works better if there is an identified aim to work towards.

Helen: The meeting ahead with SNH helping them to create a narrative, may be a possibility of helping the outdoor agenda. We are always having to demonstrate why it is important. Enjoyment of nature is part of SNH's remit. Out of 700 have 6 on outdoor recreation. The narrative could relate the work back to enjoyment, as a vehicle.

Clare: notice that we seem to be the same group year in and year out. This creates certain dynamics, sets up a lot of assumed knowledge. At the SNH meeting, she hadn't a clue what was going on. Feels quite high level, when first joined found it very intimidating.

Calum: agree, when you look at the kelp dredgers, they were just folk who got on with it. Something about connecting wider.

Daphne: we are a policy organisation, its our primary function. To achieve what we want from policy change, we need to widen out.

One of our audiences is the membership and talking internally. Over 30 years there is a lot of assumed knowledge. Its inevitable.

Craig: on Helens point of having only 2 meetings a year in the Land Group, its getting immersed. It is up to the Subgroups to develop advocacy plans. The work shouldn't stop if there is no staff capacity.

Diarmid: NTS have 500 staff, 4000 volunteers and 4 or 5 people who deal with policy. Have a big comms team, but most of its not policy related. Its useful to share things about organisational objectives other than policy objectives.

6. Member updates.

NTS: is being pushed by funders to explain the impact of their work better. Doing some work on the social impact of heritage of all kinds. Still developing. Planning will be big, rolling out the Act. Also the Culture strategy, research published yesterday, quite positive as some environmental related issues are highly flagged. On marine, not a big plan, some on aquaculture and on the Crown Estates, and landscape. Will take about a year to come up with outputs.

BES: it does not advocate or campaign. Within LINK Maggie tries to help with evidence, and helps its members understand the policy world. Next year will have a marine focus. Will get a meeting of MSPs and scientists 'in the field'.

MCS: works across 3 main areas. Ocean recovery, clean seas and beaches. Six staff in Scotland. Ocean Recovery is about MPAs, and MCS understands and is committed to Save Scottish Seas project work. There will be an SSS campaign for the next tranche of fisheries management measures, includes the big 4 MPAs, will be teaming up with SWT for the basking shark one. Clean seas and beaches is Catherine Gemmell's work, also plugged into Have you got the Bottle and the Skyscrap project. Further engaging with all the advocacy that these litter data can help support. Coffee cups, straws, etc. and building up for a bigger event next September. Sustainable fisheries - the big thing is the Good Fish Guide, and applying updated criteria on fish sustainability. Will continue to be a priority. 600 stocks and species, all done inhouse by 3 people. And have a public relations person in London working on the Greener UK issues.

WWFS: in July introduced its new 10 year strategy, and significant changes in emphasis. In Scotland have two policy officers and one head of policy. Public affairs manager, will be working on the Environment Act, the Environment Strategy, the Good Food Nation Bill and the Climate Change Bill. In WWF UK effort is on the 2020 Global Deal for people and nature. CBD, SDGs, the UN 75th General Assembly, Climate COP and the body that governs open seas, all are meeting in 2020. Have a reasonable number of people employed to build the movement for nature, will be in England in the first instance. Will be engaging businesses and other groups to emulate what has happened in climate. A fairly substantive theme of work. Sheila George is involved in all the right LINK groups.

Buglife: 3-4 staff, pollinators and freshwaters are the two themes. And trying to ensure the SGovt pollinator strategy does something. Next year some consultations, quinquennial review of the Wildlife & Countryside Act. Species protection is 20 years out of date. And JNCC report. Doing work on Invasive Non-native Species. The Scotland group not met for two years.

BSCG: main focus is An Camus More, the new town in the national park, decision is due any time which will give it permission in principle. The park will be doing a compulsory purchase order for the pedestrian bridge. The implications for access are unclear. Their condition for access to all the major pine forests round about will be restricted, due to the additional recreation disturbance on capercallie. Equal Rights of Appeal is a big issue for BSCG, so much unsustainable development. Gaps between rhetoric and reality could hardly be bigger. Problems with the Spey, a lot of reactive work. Woodland a concern, and while there have been some victories, they have not done enough to encourage landowners to buy land on which development was refused. Also issues to do with road development and green bridges.

SWT: Will be halfway through its 5 year plan. Using our sites to do some of the championing to feed into core advocacy areas, deer management, the NEN, also more capacity on the Living Seas work. Looking at different ways of financing for conservation too. And core work like Coul Links, and the coalition. Changes in the senior management team ahead as Susan Davies has moved and Jonny Hughes leaves in April.

Scottish Badgers: still small, two full time staff. One partly HLF funded post in South Lanarkshire. In partnership with SWT hub on the reserve. Lots of children involved. Volunteers carry out various roles. A lot of trail camera work, great footage, found a lot of setts and crime scenes. Other post is for 3 years, takes all the calls from public and agencies. SSPCA is having more success, have seized a couple of hundred dogs off people using them for badger baiting. Seeing an increase in planning related work, badgers, not dealt with well. And issues with farmers and taking out of landscape features disappearing, hedges, ditches, trees, hedges, due to the size of machines in the farms. Farmers don't have to keep to any standards in comparison to railways. Hoping to get more funding for the Central Belt project.

RSBP: Lloyd has now moved on. Vicki and Aedán covering. Lloyd will continue working a few days per week for next 6 months. Focus on planning for the CBD too. Coul Links planning case, if it goes ahead it is not a good precedent. Keeping in touch with other Link members, a critical case likely running into the summer, inquiry 22 Feb. INNS work, in Orkney stoat removal project.

PD: 3rd stage of the planning bill. Put in loads of amendments. Its the most amended bill since the Parliament began. There will be lots of secondary legislation. Got some funding for peer support service, to help each other with planning cases. Will put people in touch with each other on various issues and processes. Also conference for supporters next year. Thanks to Gus and Tessa for all their help on ERA. Some chance of getting era through.

Tim spoke for SWLG and the Cairngorms Campaign. On behalf of the SWLG we support and believe there is great value in wild land. Remember the phrase 'Scotland is saturated', when you speak to anybody. Bulldozed hill tracks, pylons -Thats the message. Cairngorms Campaign has a vision that once again the Northern Corries might be up to standard for World Heritage Site status. The slogan in relation to tows, lists, funicular, car parks, café, its Clear the Crap.

FoES: fracking, the proper ban on it. Climate bill. Investment and Just Transition. Air quality, and sustainable transport issues. Environmental justice, on the edge of some of the plastics work. Overlapping with Circular Economy and economics in general. Local groups which do what they want, so other stuff bubbles up. And a new youth group.

RS. Working with Scotways, on the last set of dunes on the east coast. Now 8 members of staff, just Helen on policy. Have a young adult walkers group and are setting up more. Walk leadership skills, a third of members are actively volunteering for RS. Set up with Eddie an Outdoor Recreation Alliance, to get the provisions of the Act implemented. And trying to make it easier for people to get out walking. Not many paths and not well mapped. Walking round lowland areas is difficult. No signposts. Are bringing together a coalition, to set up a really good mapped dataset of paths, long running project.

John spoke for SCNP, ARPS and SCRA. The national parks campaign by APRS and SCNP, most significant progress recently. Is backed by others. The report Unfinished Business is followed by Still Unfinished Business, 5 years on, being punted. Two lively campaigns in the Borders and Galloway. Galloway is meeting the Minister soon, will advocate for the Galloway national park, and are hopeful that it will be given 'full consideration' rather than completely dismissed. John is trying to encourage Labour MSPs who support more NPs to translate support into votes.

As president of SCRA, he helps them where he can. He updated on the state of the countryside ranger service in Scotland. Most are employed by local authorities. They used to be funded by SNH. Not ringfenced, lots of loss of jobs, stress on rangers, they are on the frontline of what we are all trying to do. Done a petition to the Public Petitions Committee. SNH was summoned and wrung its hands. It is not championing rangers. If anyone can help support please do. RS president Ben Dolphin, was a ranger and lost his job.

Beryl: SWLG following on from Tim. Entirely voluntary, no employees or premises. Use the Perth office for meetings, very good. Cttee is very spread out. Hard to have face to face time. Lots to do and low capacity. Membership is small and there is a wide range of views. Main focus is the magazines. James Fenton is current editor. Lots of governance things to get on top of. Try to deliver on objectives, listed on back of magazine. Concerned with landscape and its development. Hill tracks campaign has been a key focus.

WTS: in Scotland. The WT UK today announced their 250k member! Have a programme of new site acquisitions over the next year. West coast Argyll and Torridon. Working a lot within partnerships with SWT, JMT, Scottish rainforest alliance. If you have land to afforest or improve, WTS is very happy to talk to you. Advisers are free to any landowner. Have a team to look at plantations on ancient woodland sites and how they can be restored. Been working on the Forestry bill and Forestry strategy, and will continue to work on the strategy and how it is delivered. Pinning hopes on the action plan. New FC will be 2 separate agencies starting from scratch. Will be interesting to see how they are set up and deliver. Interested too in Diarmid's work on regulators. Recent meeting within WTS resulted in two issues. On deer, position is consistent with other LINK members, staff and some members feel WTS should be doing more, so be more vocal. Likely to have a greater focus on urban forestry and street trees, increasing canopy cover in populated areas, a new area, getting some traction with SGovt and FC, hits agendas of social inclusion and health.

7. Dates of next Network meetings.

9 May and 12 December.