

**Outcomes of Scottish Environment LINK Strategic Planning Meeting
29 November 2013, Birnam, Perthshire**

Present: Deborah Long (Chair, P'life, WF), Pete Minting (ARC), Jonathan Wordsworth (AS), Charles Strang (APRS), Craig Macadam (B'life), Helen McDade (JMT), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), Davie Black (P'life), Helen Todd (RS), Aedán Smith (RSPB, Planning TF), Jim Densham (RSPB, Climate Adaptation TF), Lloyd Austin (RSPB, Governance Group), Thomas Quinn (RSPB), Paul Walton (RSPB), Sarah Robinson (RZSS), Eddie Palmer (SB, W'life Crime TF), Susan Tierney (SB), Guy Harewood (SCRA), Roger Powell (SCRA), Nick Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Alex Kinninmonth (SWT), Simon Jones (SWT), Colleen McCulloch (SAS), Jonny Hughes (SWT), Charles Dundas (WTS, Woodland TF), Sam Gardner (WWF Scotland), Matthew Crighton (FoES, Economics TF), Jen Anderson, Rea Cris, Andy Myles, Nick Underdown, Alice Walsh (LINK staff), Simon Pepper (LINK Honorary Fellow).

Apologies: Calum Duncan (MCS), Sarah Dolman (WDC), Anne Youngman (BCT), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Denis Mollison (HWDT), Lisa Webb (FWTF, RSPB), Alistair Beeley (NEMT), Mike Robinson (Trustee), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Ian Findlay (Trustee), Michael Scott (Hon Fellow), Alastair Lavery (Hon Fellow), Drennan Watson (Hon Fellow).

1. Review how Scotland's voluntary environmental sector is doing – Deborah Long

TF's had been asked to evaluate their efforts against the outcome related aims of our corporate strategy. Feedback from active TFs indicates:

Strategic emphases

1	Consensus & divergence	9/10
2	Network integration	9/10
3	Reclaiming & promoting Sustainable development	3/10; 3 more need to review
4	Stronger environmental narrative	4/10
5	More robust advocacy	5/10 satisfied; 4 planning to review
6	Sophisticated negotiation	room for improvement
7	Investment in wider alliances	5/10 keep this under review
8	Influential relationships	5/10 = good
9	Monitoring impact & progress	4/10 happy with progress

Scottish Parliament increases its scrutiny of our delivery of environmental commitments – 3/10

Gov't expects to deliver x-compliance consistently across departments in ways that respect the needs and important of the environment – 4/10

LINK manifesto asks are increasingly picked up by parties' manifesto writers & are reflected in the manifestos of the main political parties - .5/10 (timing issue).

External stakeholder groups in which LINK is involved contribute to policy development for Scotland, which respects the needs & importance of a healthy environment - 2/10

LINK events attract desired audiences from amongst decision makers, opinion formers & wider civic Scotland, & contribute to development of policy that respects environment. - 1/10 (but there must be more)

Environmental input is sought via LINK to contribute to wider range of high level stakeholder groups – 5/10

LINK positions understood & influence national policy, environmental governance in Scotland improves as a result – 3/10

LINK continues to have good, regular access to decision makers including Ministers who want, or know they need, to know LINK's views – 4/10

Govt strategy on some issues key to LINK reflects understanding of the diversity of views across society & address these 'in the round' - Not Yet

Media coverage of some issues key to LINK reflects maturity of treatment about what is good for Scotland and its environment – 3/10

Network is live to diversity of member interests and views, robust about dealing with consensus & confident in expressing positions – 5/10

Recommendations from the board in relation to the above:

- All TFs need a convenor & a depute. The depute role should be to report twice a year to spread some of the considerable workload away from the convenor.
- Board & staff must ensure all TF members appreciate the link between what the TF is doing & how that contributes to the strategic objectives.
- Ensure TFs see the outcome of their reports to LINK
- Commission an external objective assessment every 3 years to support these internal evaluations.

2. How we come across to others: Thoughts from Simon Pepper, Discussion

The next 10 months especially offers opportunity of lifetime to change the narrative of what it is we are doing for the people of Scotland. The specialisms, expertise and successes have boxed us in to some extent.

We need to get the public to start thinking of the environment as theirs, they can contribute to have a sense of ownership. The Biodiversity Strategy is a catalyst, Government understands that a shift of focus is required across all sectors and society – shift of emphasis. Shift from specialist to general, from treating environment as being of fundamental importance to people.

Delivery mechanisms: Simon Pepper and Deborah Long are chairing parts of it. DL leading on Species and Habitats; SP leading on the communications side of the Biodiversity Strategy and Land Use Strategy – given panel of sectors to get delivery agreements out of them. It is a serious commitment/ DL and SP will do the job as long as it is well supported by Government.

Need help to deliver this from member bodies.

Government acknowledges what is being done is not enough, a transformation required.

What changes can our sector make to what it does (not to add to the workload)? What can we do differently?

Who are we doing it for and who are we doing it with? What impression do we convey? It is clear that many member bodies are doing work though this does not come across to people who contribute to Oxfam's Humankind Index, and rate environment highly. Are we allowing them to express their wishes for future generations?

Technocratic high-level government we do very well. Advocacy work is extremely effective and very good – 'head-in-the-cloud' criticism does not apply. We are grounded in reality. Our contributions are taken very seriously, more than we think. Officials are more onside than they have ever been. Make sure to get timing right, and the tone.

With reference to our Congress theme and to Pauline Gallacher's talk the previous day – important to give people themselves the ownership of the topic. How do we widen our audience? How do we get people to think the environment as theirs and not ours?

Discussion:

Land management – NFUS – top line seems to be 'no change'. How do we change these big organizations so they can also carry this message? Demise of FWAG an issue. Invite NFUS onto a TF? Are there tools we're not using?

Wildlife Forum and Agriculture TF rep'd on group targeting biodiversity in the SRDP.

NFUS see us as the enemy and vice versa. Need to have realistic solutions – draw from Species Champions success – roll out farming Ambassadors? Or a more political approach? Create a grassroot movement within the farming community – a practical movement from farming sector, which is pro-environment. Let's not blame ourselves – NFUS protected vested interest with restrictive economic interests.

LINK is talking to business and other organizations and in wider terms to other policy areas beyond civil servants – is this a factor to our expanding and moving out of our 'comfort zone'. Are we heading in right direction and is it bearing fruit?

Local communities : We don't like talking to communities or hearing back from them – there is ownership but not in the way LINK likes. We tend to explain to communities how they should think and it's not a two-way discussion. We should not assume our asks are shared by local communities. There will be some overlap. How to use our advocacy and deal with loss of control of the message. Risks and opportunities need identifying. It has to be at a very local scale for communities to engage well. Useful engagement models in the developing world.

Airth produced a community charter in response to fracking threat – positive outcome. What we are up against determines how to address it rather than who; we could strengthen our systems thinking capacity on sustainable development to look at the wider view.

Need a simpler message of what we are for, that is meaningful to ordinary people. A video aimed at ordinary people with a message they would value. See ourselves as others see us - a bunch of specialists is not accurate.

Urban communities don't have a sense of ownership – local government not being functional or given responsibility – real disconnection from nature there Opportunity for us if we can be the conduit, to tell the story of what our role is eg influencing how institutions interact with the environment.

3. Trust and cooperation – Ambitions in the next couple of years

This session aimed to ensure all are aware of what is coming up, and the good working relationships, procedures and guidance on how to manage disagreements can be put into place, and we can work out if we have enough tools to deal with the issues. LINK can help, so alert the most appropriate person (staff, trustees, chair) in good time.

Energy – Helen McDade felt there is a need to work out what is the extent of agreement on wider energy issues (Helen's view raised later stage in discussion, though not discussed) and wondered if enough resource is invested in this. The meeting noted that there is considerable agreement in LINK already in positions supported including:

Time to Act on Climate Change (2008 - consensus across a broad range of issues – may merit update)
Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment (2010) an important foundation and good reference point, worth reviewing

Anticipated energy and landscape statement (from the Landscape TF) in the wake of the members' 2012 workshop, which process it was agreed, was useful in re-establishing respect between member bodies and understanding of their different positions. Takes resources but worth it. *Landscape TF to progress.*

Agriculture - a lonely process. Getting others to engage is hard, though getting sign up is easy.

Environmental economics – Natural Capital is a complex concept with some contentious issues that we need to discuss together. *Economic TF to progress.*

4. Contexts of collaboration

Referendum & Elections: Pre and post-ref priorities at Scottish, UK and EU levels

Referendum Challenge – responses from both campaigns received and will be analysed. LINK public debate scheduled for 26 Feb. Referendum White Paper published - comments for 9 Jan. ?collective thoughts from LINK could comment on absence of environmental content. Definition of Scotland included which is new and potentially valuable for our agenda. Governance Group meets 5 December to discuss. Whatever the outcome we need to engage with both parties. Good job by LINK on RC though some MBs may change their minds (JMT trustees discussing position in Jan). There will be time for individual members to declare their intentions, and conflict between members can be avoided. Implications of both outcomes – EU membership – protected sites for nature threatened and seek commitment from both sides that this won't collapse.

LINK Rolling manifesto – slowly progressing, staff to prod, members to respond.

Hustings for EU - generally a member body initiative. Needs planning and MB commitment.

Wider International Dimensions

Emerging issues at EU level:

Mercury treaty

EU Forestry Strategy Agreed – by 2020 all EU forests will be sustainably managed. *Woodland TF*

Marine Waste Consultation ending December 2013 *MTF*

Fracking EIA obligatory, depending on agreement at EU Council.

EU Wilderness Directive -

Common approach to Energy Subsidies in the EU.

Natural Capital Accountancy and funding

Green Infrastructure Thematic Programme – with funding attached

IUCN new EU Policy Advisory Group. Opportunity for key policy issues that do not duplicate what other do; fill niches and bring policy experts together.

IUCN Council – 52 new members – IUCN role working with 'nasty business of the world' – not shy away from dirty polluters.

World Parks Congress in Australia 2014

Strategic targets – Aichi and Biodiversity Targets

Marine 10% - various categories of IUCN protection.

IUCN plan 2016-202 – chance to shape that strategic plan in 2014/15 and make a difference, priorities for Scotland. Regional conservation meeting in 2015 - would like a Scottish delegation of strategic thinkers.

Invasive Non-Native Species EU regulation in draft. . Key spoilers are cap of species at 50. UK position good.

From EEB discussions: 1. Carbon Bubble – UN Climate Change Expert Report – using known reserves 80% can't be used if going to stay within targets. All fossil fuel companies market base on those reserves and could have huge economic consequences. 2. EU/USA – negotiating quiet treaty about meshing regulations together – used as Trojan horse for corporate to scrap regulations to protect EU environment – consequences could be very dangerous. EU 2030 Energy Package – in the midst at the moment. UK – 4th Carbon Budget and CCC reporting soon.

World Wildness Congress (4 yearly) move to bring Directive to EU. UK doesn't have a definition of wildness, could be left out unless we get definition right.

Local Engagement: What Congress suggests and how the network can react; other ways of influencing locally

Simon Jones recapped on previous day's discussions, about building better bridges between our sector and communities of place. The two talks brought out different strengths of each sector, and that they are stronger acting together. The 4 workshops covered Fighting the Blights, Climate Change Action; Protected Areas and Understanding Land Reform (report will be on the website and circulated). There is an appetite for sharing expertise; success requires ownership by communities; eNGOs need to listen to and be honest with communities, sharing the heat, timing needs to be right and picking the right fights; broaden our horizons – food and health. Approaches for designated areas are different between marine and terrestrial – horses for courses. The Climate Challenge Funds Ideas Bank is potential useful mechanism to bring communities and eNGOs together (to be discussed at SEFF meeting on 5 December). The work Elizabeth Leighton is carrying out will be important to give steer how we might progress.

Other areas identified were:

Scope for working more with Built Environment Forum Scotland, which has access to local communities.

Single Outcome Agreements – lack of capacity since our LGTF disbanded. Aware that gap exists now. Empower local groups on specific cases. Rolling manifesto is relevant work. Planning TF provide meaningful context of outcomes for the environment. We need to keep the pressure on environmental outcomes. SOAs etc are mechanisms of government. If we can work with local groups to press for environmental outcomes the mechanisms will be put in place, without our needing to tackle SOAs as LINK.

Should we compile a database of what member bodies are doing at local level?

LEADER action groups have to produce strategy for the next 7 years by end March 2014 (most members not engaged).

5. Priorities for 2014-15

During the lunch break, members looked at the list of potential priorities and scored these. The agreed priorities were:

Our environmental 'story' - promoting the environment to the general public and grassroots members. No great changes required, but to actually use what we have got. The Agriculture TF vision relates. We could produce a video along the lines of Species Champions – communications / identification of needs/ provision of tools. May need DPF funding. The Board to develop.

Biodiversity Strategy – Wildlife Forum to pursue, with Species Champions and INNS consultation.

Advocacy of our story – identify ambassadors who can take environmental messages into other circles.

Referendum Challenge carry on with plans

Rolling Manifesto proceed with plans

Developing post election relationships with MEPs

Natural Capital accounting – Economics TF to lead on a workshop to broker discussion between World Development Forum and eNGOS.

Local dimension Take forward E Leighton's report in due course.

Some of this to be developed at 16 January Network meeting.

6. Member Priorities (time limited to those that volunteered)

SWLG: AGM last Saturday November 22nd 2013 – bottom-up discussion with members. Priorities are SNH Wild Land Map Consultation, Award scheme for landscape and follow-up of Wind Farms Gone Wild publication.

Buglife: Review UK organizational strategy. Teams concentrating on pollinators and looking for ban on neonicotinoids. Proper risk assessment of pesticides. Improve urban areas for pollinators (and not just brownfield sites) – provide guidance to planners. Wild flowers in green spaces and roofs. Bumblebees. Very active in PTF and WF.

SCRA: Project ending in 2014 – Junior Rangers. 40 years old in 2014, will have celebrations. Lots of things we'd like to do but have capacity issues – all volunteers.

Plantlife: focus most of our work on appropriate plant areas – vulnerable and in decline – 50 hotspots in Scotland – continue to map these areas, also zone of opportunity for expansion of these areas. Coastal pastures – focus on this thin strip. Advice to land managers; demonstration days; volunteer monitors. IPA walks for people to explore. Focusing people's attention on where there is botanical richness.

MCS: The Marine Litter Strategy. Scallop and Ecosystem Base Management. Sea Search.

FOES: Now a healthy organization – have a new strategy and will be focusing on: Environmental Justice and Climate Change, Fracking and Unconventional Gas. Community Renewables, Aarhus Convention, Convene an Environmental Justice Network. Campaign on air quality. Work on biomass in Dundee. Agreement with New Economics Foundation to look at alternative economics, can share.

RSPB: Heavily involved in LINK taskforces. Biggest driving force – State of Nature Report – identifying pressures that cause decline and activities needed. Need to enhance people's connection to nature. Connect in to narrative. Non-financial valuing of nature. Understanding economic value (eco-tourism) important but beyond that. IUCN Peatland Programme support and Marine work. LIFE projects, building up reserves. SRDP influence and NPF agenda.

Soil Association: Capacity grown this year. Expanding on what we're delivering – 'good food for all'. Recruit to do more advocacy and policy work. Based in the future – farming programmes. Increase farm network and guidance. Increase amount of citizen science rather than 'talk-down' research.

RZSS: Big period of turbulence, now a period of change and refocus; conservation group which own zoos. Education – influence choices. Science – conservation projects. Nature and Overseas networks – various species. Inputting into Scottish Wildcat Project – Darwin applications.

WTS: 2014 – several partnerships with Ministry of Defence – plant shooting range – WWI commemoration. Common Wealth Games link up. Restricted funds seed interest on landscape scale. HLF plantation on ancient woodland restoration. Community – look to give assets and empower small woodland management. Scottish tree of the year – March nominations – best story.

Ramblers: Common Wealth Games Legacy – Fit and Active inspired – catalyst. National Outdoor Recreation Day.