

Draft Minutes of a board Meeting Held on 23 October 2008, Perth

Present

President: Helen Zealley
Trustees: John Mayhew (Chair), Deborah Long (Vice-Chair), David Downie (Treasurer), Lloyd Austin, Dan Barlow, Francoise van Buuren, Andrew Fairbairn, Jonny Hughes, and Mike Robinson
Staff: Jen Anderson (Chief Officer), Alice Walsh (Development Officer)

Introductory points

The Board welcomed Helen Zealley, new President of LINK, to the meeting.

The recent death of Fred Edwards, with sadness.

Eilidh Macpherson would be leaving LINK for a job in Beijing after a successful year in the LINK parliamentary officer post; farewells also in order for Jane Herbstritt who would not be returning to this role from as her maternity leave closed. The Board wished both staff well.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Ian McCall, Ian Findlay, Eila Macqueen (Trustees) and Eilidh Macpherson (LINK PO)

2. Post AGM Actions

2.1 Register of interests

Jen would make this available to trustees at the next opportunity. Legal advice was to update declarations of interest annually and for the full Board to review these.

2.2 Division of responsibilities

Table of roles and responsibilities approved and will be available on the members' pages of the LINK website (<http://www.scotlink.org/clients/who/officers.php>).

2.3 Co-opted Trustees

The co-option of Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson as LINK Trustees was approved.

3. Minutes of the last meeting (26 June 2008)

These were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Operating Plan Progress Review (Report circulated)

4.1 Making the process work

The Board thanked staff for a useful 'first' quarterly report.

To encourage timely inputs from the task forces it was agreed that:

- Notes of 'not active' or 'report not received' in the OP should identify issues/stress
- Where there is consistent non-reporting the Board will consider forfeiture of resources when these are requested
- TFs should set meetings for each September at which the task forces' work plans are discussed, agreed and recorded
- Staff should remind convenors to arrange this, as early as July
- LINK should communicate with main reps and line managers about any serious concerns with reporting (by convenors and deputes)
- We need to use the quarterly networking opportunities to: encourage the OP process (selling the benefits of good business practice for the network, its staff and funders); expect presentations; if necessary identify persistent non-deliverers.

Action: John, Staff

We need to demonstrate that the Plan is a live process, encourage those who are not engaging to discuss with trustees what may be preventing this. John (LTF), Andy (WTF), Lloyd (DTF) and Johnny (MTF) would have a word with convenors or deputes of the Landscape, Deer, Woodlands and Marine task forces, respectively, reporting the essence of this discussion and advising them to prepare evaluative reports for the January meeting.

Action: JHM, LA, AF, JH

The KPIs report was looking positive as a measure of our overall progress towards LINK's strategic objectives. Link these more to outcomes where possible. That they don't link much to member body goals was to be expected of a process-oriented network. Funder interest in our KPIs is an issue which members and task forces should be aware of.

4.2 Issues arising from the work programme

Climate and behaviour - Agreed LINK should hold a meeting on communications; various trustees volunteered and FoES, JMT and NTS would be contacted. **Action: JA**

Carbon emissions reporting – Consensus was to commission annually a survey of members for a report illustrating examples of how ENGOs are implementing good practice in their operations; to be circulated to wider membership and available for public consumption. Priority for any available LINK funding. The FSG would take responsibility. **Action: FSG**

LINK environmental policy review - Internal review and upgrade of existing policy, and how this should relate to activities under auspices of LINK preferred rather than commissioned work. Dan offered to take a lead. **Action: DB**

Climate alliance and challenge fund – Recent meeting between SDC and LINK reps had noted gap between government expectations of a community lead and lack of grassroots capacity. Questions raised about the expectations of altruism by eNGOs, barrier of current criteria to proposals from eNGOs which could cut emissions. Points acknowledged by SDC who would report to Scottish Government. Potential eNGO action outlined. SDC to provide communications materials for members to use through their own channels. Speakers for events could also be organised via the SDC to promote the fund. SG still hoped to spend the fund, which now stood at £27m. Whilst criteria had been revised these still required partnership with communities on the ground. The Alliance's function was unclear; some technical questions remained unanswered; many projects were being rejected. These were issues to raise with the Minister. **Actions: Ministerial meeting; update members**

Manifestos work – LINK parliamentary forum had not met recently as a number of those involved had moved on to other posts or were just settling into posts.

Researchers event – Board backed the proposal to go ahead with this event during 2009 to test-run it as a possible component for future SEWs.

Elections – Noted that members were not yet indicating intentions or interest in joint work either for EU or UK elections. Until the parliamentary forum met, this was unlikely to get further attention. Staff resources would be constrained until after SEW, ie until early March.

Rural network – Board agreed this is not core to LINK strategic objectives and advised the network look to be involved in ways which don't entail helping to run the network.

IUCN UK Secretariat – Tenders invited for November. The Board agreed this was not appropriate for LINK and noted it might interest NGOs which are UK in scope.

4. Finances

4.1 Budget outturn to 30 Sept 08 (half year)

The outturn had been prepared in Hugh Green's absence by Lynne Macdonald at Morris & Young; Jen felt this gave a reliable bottom line though some modest mis-allocation of expenditure to the various nominal codes was possible during Hugh's absence from August. The Board queried the working deficit and asked that this be clarified by the FSG.

JA note: JA and DD have compared with last year's outturn for same period which illustrated a similar 'deficit'. The figure relates to as yet unraised, budgetted, income (mainly for SEW).

4.2 SEW funding – Progress and plans were discussed. The Board agreed with the proposal to drop (if necessary) the business breakfast (as well as the public event). An alternative would be to offer this to Go Greener in return for additional SG sponsorship this year. SCDI also surfaced in the discussion. LTF concerns about SEW's overall 'costs' were noted: the Board view is that SEW is a valuable additional route to promoting LINK concerns; whilst presented in celebratory spirit the events do in fact allow subtle lobbying. For future SEWs we noted the value of looking for initiatives that reach beyond the small network of people in Parliament – eg., site visits, business breakfast – and to start planning these even earlier in the year to attract the audiences.

SEW steering group March 09

4.3 Financial crisis – The Board noted the report and agreed that LINK's funds should remain in with Triodos at this stage.

5. Matters arising

5.1 Succession planning – JHM confirmed that he will step down in summer 09, has discussed the implications with a couple of trustees has spoken also to a number of CEOs in LINK encouraging them to consider the benefits of having their organisation engage at board level in future. He would pursue all these discussions in the coming months.

5.2 Parliamentary Officer recruitment - An ESG call had prepared, in the wake of exit meetings with Jane and Eilidh. The job description would be revised to reflect minor points though in general the role remained very much unchanged. Recruitment going ahead in Herald, GoodMoves and associated websites now. David Downie, Lloyd Austin and Jen Anderson would interview late November. Start date in early January was anticipated.

5.3 Risk review – The revised register was tabled and noted. JA and DD would consider how the various actions should be taken forward. **Action: DD, JA**

5.4 DINC Forum – Francoise had reported on the forum and recommended that LINK continue to take part for the networking opportunities eg with CoSLA as much as anything. The role of the forum was to look at how government should support the sector. Mike Robinson would attend the next meeting as LINK’s rep.

5.5 Joint Links on Devolution – Report on recent seminar flagged the view that the Links believed they should use/observe Europe more. Actions included more proactive use of WCL and SEL membership of EEB-UK. Jonny Hughes, LINK’s rep, pursuing.

5.6 Diversity – the January network meeting was the next opportunity to have a presentation on diversity training from BEN. Staff would organise this.

5.7 Comms Subgroup – Paper was noted. John suggested setting out a one pager on the benefits of LINK membership (on website). The sub-group was thanked for its work with particular thanks to Adean for constructing the user-friendly questionnaire.

6. AOB

6.1 Francoise van Buuren – The Board thanked Francoise for supporting LINK over the last years and wished her all the best for the future. Francoise indicated she was happy to stay in touch by email and to continue to help LINK if asked.

6.2 Fred Edwards – The meeting discussed ways of commemorating Fred and the outstanding contribution and effect he had given and made. A number of ideas were noted and Lloyd was asked to contact Bill Wright, Sam Gardner and Simon Pepper to take the thinking forward. Consultation with Mary Edwards, NGO heads and even other organisations with which Fred had had close dealings, would be in order. **Action: LWA**

6.3 CoSLA – JHM reported on the recent LINK meeting with Cllr Hay and CoSLA staff (note coming). CoSLA view on Single Outcome Agreements was that eNGOs must make a case for own areas of interest. Discussion covered setting out our asks of the local authorities and to report to the Forward Planning meeting for network discussion.

6.4 Ministerial meeting agenda – the SNH case work item would be removed although trustees considered the issue of designated sites being used as a planning tool should be discussed in another forum – once Planning TF capacity was up to strength.

7. Meetings 2008-2009

- 22 January, Board followed by Networking
- 23 April, Board followed by Networking
- 25 June, Board, Networking & AGM
- 22 October, Board all day meeting

JA/LINK/November 2008