

Note of the LINK Network meeting held on 18 April 2013 at the Friends Meeting House, Edinburgh.

Present: Helen Todd (Chair of meeting, LINK VC, Ramblers, Land Group, Hilltracks coordinator), Craig McAdam (Buglife, Wildlife Forum), Charles Dundas (WTS, potentially convening Woodlands TF), Jonathan Wordsworth (Arch Scotland, Agriculture TF), Lisa Webb (RSPB, Freshwater TF), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Beryl Leatherland (Trustee, SWLG, Hilltracks coordinator), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers), Aedán Smith (RSPB, Planning TF), Jim Densham (RSPB, Climate Adaptation TF), Calum Duncan (MCS, Marine TF), Mary Church (FoES, Legal Governance), Alan Fox (SOC), Guy Harewood (SCRA), Eilidh Nicolson (NTS), John Mayhew (APRS, Landscape TF), Simon Jones (Trustee, SWT), Robert Williams (Froglife), Ross Finnie (President), Jen Anderson, Andy Myles (Governance Group), Rea Cris, Alice Walsh (LINK staff).

Apologies: Jonathan Hughes (SWT, European Advisor to Board), Helen McDade (JMT, and others at JMT mgt team), Denis Mollison and Gemma Patterson (HWDT), Dave Fairlamb (WWT), Deborah Long (Plantlife), Eila MacQueen (AS), Sarah Dolman (WDC), Sam Gardner (WWFS), Vicky Swales (RSPB, Sustainable Land Use TF). Lloyd Austin (Trustee), Mandy Orr (Trustee). Ian Findlay (Trustee), Mike Robinson (Trustee).

1. Updates since the last meeting

Outstanding actions from January: There was nothing that was not covered on this agenda.

Board Updates

Members were advised there will be 3 **vacancies on the Board** and to strongly consider putting themselves or a colleague forward for election at the AGM in November. Jen or trustees are happy to discuss responsibilities in relation to skill gaps needed. **Action: Members**

Discretionary project funding allocated £5k from a £12k pot to the Wildlife Forum Conference, the Hilltracks work, and a feasibility study for a local hub. TFs were advised to put DPF bids in as soon as possible. **Action: Task Forces**

Inviting SNH Board members to LINK network: LINK would invite SNH board members to the August network meeting, following discussion at the last SNH meeting to familiarise them with network issues and value. This was approved by the meeting. Relationships with SNH were thought to be good. **Action: staff**

Business affiliation: The board had approved a trial of an affiliation for business along the lines of Organisational Supporter. Potential benefits include broadening the funding base, improving mutual understanding following on from the 2012 Congress, and providing opportunities for smaller members. The proposal is to hold a max of 3 meetings around Scotland over the year, on issues including the affiliation, and to invite businesses with whom LINK has an established relationship to sign up. Members agreed this was a positive development. **Action: Staff to progress**

Aide-memoire & KPIs monitoring: Jen had circulated a note to TF convenors to explain how work planning and reporting fits into the overall monitoring of outcome focussed KPIs where cooperation will be crucial to effective monitoring. Reporting will be twice a year rather than 4 x pa. The KPIs are still a work in progress. Convenors supported the principle, though did not recall the email which would be updated and recirculated. **Action: staff**

2. Horizon scanning

Political Strategy Report at Spring 2013: Andy spoke to this, noting in particular the rolling manifesto refresh which had begun (email of previous week). Convenors were asked to respond with additions, removals or any amendments to the basic structure. Andy would be enlisted help in drafting the sections from TFs/members, one side of A4 ideal length, so very basic. Those drafting the sections would get detailed guidance.

LINK was co-hosting a fringe event on economics at the Labour party conference the following weekend.

On section 5a, trustees had approved Andy taking forward a position on the **Regulatory Reform Bill** supplanting sustainable development with sustainable economic growth as an aim for agencies and branches, flagged by A Kinninmonth of SWT. A **Bill Team** was needed to progress this. Lisa Webb from the FWTF perspective had some other concerns. Aedán Smith noted that SNH's balancing duty was a close parallel, with consequent impacts on the environmental interest. Simon Jones would discuss SWT input with colleagues. **Action: Andy pursue.**

Jonathan Wordsworth noted that the Historic Scotland review, and Bill due autumn 2013 be included in the list of issues for LINK within the PSR.

SAGS were leading on allotments within the Community Empowerment Bill.

The **Governance Group** would be taking forward action on **FC restructuring** (Angus Yarwood's paper, circulated), via discussion and meeting Bob Macintosh.

Deer management: Andy Myles to speak to Deer TFC about bringing in other TF issues in relation to rising deer numbers. Landscape and Woodlands TFs are interested. **Action: Andy.**

Infrastructure and Planning issues: FoES is leading on fracking and unconventional gas which is a big horizon issue. A draft briefing had been circulated on the issues (later on agenda).

Referendum: There have been no responses to a letter sent in January requesting responses to the issues raised in Referendum Challenge. Another letter will be sent before June asking for the campaign's engagement on environmental issues, and LINK will go public in June (anniversary of RC publication). The meeting clarified that there was no intention for LINK to support one side over the other, though member bodies may choose to do so. Suggestions included a twitterstorm on the anniversary to raise awareness.

Members thanked Andy for the PSR which some members find useful to share with colleagues in other parts of the UK to keep them updated on Scottish issues.

European opportunities and developments: Apologies had been received from Jonny Hughes who had asked for this to be on the agenda. The board has formally appointed him as an advisor on EU issues, as he is no longer a trustee.

Andy would seek information on **EEB working groups** and alert TFs where there was value in linking up.

Jonathan Wordsworth noted that LINK had joined **CivilScape**, which performs a useful function for information flows on landscape related issues across Europe.

Mary Church had been to the meeting of **DG Environment** organised by Carol Day at WWF (see update Q4 Network Plan under Legal Governance). The Board proposed that future Scottish representation be coordinated by the Legal Governance Group and Wildlife Forum. Beryl

Leatherland suggested it would be useful to know what environmental issues are going through the EU courts, which would be added to the monitoring if there is a digest. **Action: Rea/Andy.**

Other contexts: Land reform – the LINK group met once after which Andy Myles developed a draft submission which has been around group members. The group wanted to submit it asap, to get the fundamentals right at this stage. It was agreed to submit it with the current sign up, and resubmit it with wider sign up later. The document followed the logic of Referendum Challenge, focussing on outcomes.

Eddie Palmer raised the issue of non-enforcement of wildlife and environment laws by the police asking if it was of interest to other members. There had lately been indications that the police had been told to pay more attention, and those with an interest were monitoring the effect. Other members were interested. It was agreed that Eddie would contact other members (including RSPB, SWT, Buglife, Bat Conservation, Plantlife) to establish interest in sharing experience, monitoring and possibly other aspects collectively. Craig Macadam provided this link afterwards to the wildlife crime reports produced by the National (UK) Wildlife Crime Unit on behalf of the Scottish Wildlife and Tasking Coordination Group. See the latest reports at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/paw-scotland/Resources/Reports/TacticalAssessments> There doesn't seem to have been a report since January 2012 despite a note saying that they will be produced biannually. **Action: Eddie Palmer**

3. LINK's forward plans for 2013/14.

Plans, 'asks', upcoming initiatives, resource needs of LINK TFs, Groups, Forums:

Please see alongside the progress reports on [Q4 update \(2012-13\)](#) and Forward [Plan 2013-14](#).

Agriculture: SRDP consultations expected at the beginning of May (basic, broad structure – deadline beginning June), and beginning August (outcomes and measures). General capacity issue for the TF to keep up with the EU, UK and Scottish levels. Jonathan asked how the wider network wanted to be kept up to speed, as several orgs had dropped off due to the volume of emails. JW can help organise a workshop on the 1st or 2nd consultation if members wished.

CAP follows in December with decisions on the underlying structure and finance (topsy turvy). Amy Corrigan (RSPB) did a great job putting the SEA Scoping Assessment together. The TF work is mainly reactive (and lots of it) and some member bodies considered it should be more proactive. Meeting Richard Lochhead on 25/4 on CAP and SRDP. Vicki Swales and Andy Myles had met the special advisor to prepare. As far as the Stakeholder Group is concerned, the objectives and outcomes were to increase farm incomes and productivity (B Pack) – current advocacy is clearly not having the desired effect. Andy advised getting a first draft for the May consultation agreed at the earliest possible time, to be the basis possibly of a **broader workshop**.

Climate Adaptation: Still waiting for the consultation expected spring. No high hopes, no extra money attached, looking for a good structure now, longer term future proofing. It has improved since the first sight, and CATF will need other TFs to look at some of the themes.

Deer: No rep present. TF plans to meet SNH soon on its Wildlife Management Strategy. Other TFs interests (wildlife, landscape, woodlands, land) overlap as deer numbers rise. **Action: Andy** will assist coordination.

Economics: lacks capacity and is not active. Some action continues; chair attending a round table on the National Performance Framework today, and fringes on the economics paper held or planned at all party conferences. Staff seeking a 'shepherd' to keep this strand live, possibly within FoES.

Action: Andy.

Food Forum: There had been a poor response to Andy's email seeking interest from members in a correspondence group (other than SAGS and SAS), while external focus on food had grown hugely. Members were interested but lacked capacity. **Andy would canvass again for interest.**

Freshwater: TF happy on the whole with outcomes on the Water Resources Bill, with some sustainability safeguards in place, eg Scottish Water to enter into agreements with land managers to get drinking water into a good state, and we would like that to extend into biodiversity benefits. Andy noted that this was a very good case of making the points early and strongly at Stage 1. There was little external input on amendments; just FWTF and SGov.

Governance: Governance Matters continues to be useful on grounds of principles. Still persuading other parts of the Scottish policy community (inc Poverty Alliance, Equalities Network, STUC) to engage in these broader governance issues regardless of the outcome of the referendum. Group will try out a corresponding civic forum on a selection of issues that LINK has prioritised: consultations, Parliamentary scrutiny, access to justice – ?adequate or not, collect answers in standard form and draw some conclusions. Andy seeking support from Joyce McMillan to help get other sectors involved.

Legal Governance: not much to add to Q4 update. The timetable on environmental tribunals is slipping, may be published after the summer as getting sign up from the broader network will take some time. Mary and Andy would collaborate on a written response to the points raised in the recent meeting with civil servants on the process for Statutory Appeal in the Regulatory Reform Bill asap, where the proposals on marine licensing were discussed. Calum thanked those who had been at the meeting and asked for a more detailed update. **Action: Andy, Mary**

Land Group: covered above.

Landscape: in contact with SNH about their research programme, invited to talk to the TF next meeting in May, also Simon Brooks. Other TF members followed with interest JMT's Wild Land campaign. John Thomson will take over as Convenor (as either APRS or SCNP). The energy position statement is proving difficult to progress. The SCNP/APRS report Unfinished Business was launched, next steps to be decided. Calum commented on the Harris case study, wrt fishing interests' role.

Marine: The EFF has delayed its decision on future funding of the project until June. Using available funding including from WWFS and LINK project staff contracts have been extended to November, as this is a crucial time for the added capacity, with big consultations ongoing. MTF has pushed for the RACCE to have MPAs on their workplan, confirmed 3 evidence sessions over the next 3 weeks; Marine Scotland, LINK and RSPB, and JNCC/SNH. The ask is for all 33 MPAs that were proposed to be all consulted upon this summer. Good work to have this scrutiny at the time when it is possible influence the outcome. We had not managed to get amendments to the Aquaculture & Fisheries Bill, where there are conflicts with wild fisheries interests.

National Parks: No action. John Mayhew offered assistance to organise a meeting.

Planning: Consultations on NPF3 and SPP expected soon, and would be circulated asap, with assessment on what level of response required. The next TF meeting would be put off until the documents appear. Broad asks had been submitted on the SPP and members had put forward good proposals to NPF3 – see how these have translated in the Main Issues Report. On Hilltracks, 9 organisations have signed up to the campaign; waiting to hear back from a trust to complement the resources from LINK and member bodies to compile a portfolio of evidence. Andy noted the lesson to have very good evidence to support our case, and commended members on being proactive on NPF3. Maggie Keegan has stepped down as depute convenor of the TF.

Parliamentary Forum: meeting Thursday 25/4, all welcome (not just POs) to opportunity to share experiences, intelligence, what has worked, what has not.

Sustainable Land Use: The next annual reporting event is due on 25 June.

Wildlife: Some committee scrutiny of the Biodiversity Strategy has been held. The TF is developing a benchmark doc with its own 15 targets as the strategy has none. The Species Champions initiative has been a great success, 45 MSPs signed up. Rea Cris has done most of this work and with Nick Underdown would be making video clips of 23 of the Champions, for publicity purposes. There will be a media launch in May tying in with the nature festival (formerly Scot Biodiversity Week). Craig thanked LINK for DPF funding towards the conference planned with the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Woodlands: Charles had recently taken over from Angus Yarwood who formerly convened the TF, and would arrange a meeting of TF members to discuss how to take things forward, including recent meeting with the minister to discuss plant health and tree disease; input to the ATF on SRDP; and the paper that Angus had drafted on the **future of the FCS**. The Board had discussed this earlier and agreed that this strand should be led by the Governance Group widened to include all interested members, for an initial discussion with Bob Macintosh who is leading the internal review. Angus was thanked for his work.

Fracking and unconventional gas

Members were asked to consider if a LINK position building on FoES work would be desirable. Mary explained some of the issues under consideration by other countries; to ban or have a moratorium; on fracking, unconventional gas, and/or coalbed methane. Important to distinguish as no companies curwant to frack in Scotland. The economic and political contexts were fluid with, in Scotland, a presumption likely in favour in NPF3 and SPP, and FoES was trying to at least neutralise this.

Inadequate strategic environmental assessment was an issue.

Eddie considered we should have a position. Beryl too, for a total ban on grounds of our cc targets and other environmental risks. RSPB had a position. Andy and Mary would work on the briefing and recirculate to members. **Action: Andy, Mary.**

Open cast coal: Aedán referred to recent Rob Edwards article

<http://www.robedwards.com/2013/04/the-opencast-coal-scars-that-may-never-heal.html> as

troubled coal industry may be let off their obligations to restore sites. This was of wide interest to members. The PTF could if needed develop a position. The issue has relevance for future restoration bonds by other industries, and ties into the Regulatory Reform Bill.

Plastic bag levy/Waste: Calum referred to the resource efficiency consultation last year to which some members responded, flagging the issue of waste generally to see if there is any appetite for joint work. Anne Saunders (MCS) works on marine litter strategy and is the LINK delegate on Zero Waste Scotland. Ross advised that in 2005 the threat of a tax galvanised the industry to introduce longlife bags. **Action: members contact Anne.saunders@mcsuk.org if interested.**

Theme for Congress 2013: There had been a strong response from members and Hon Fellows to recent call for themes. Of those which had been proposed, the Board recommended that 2013's event should focus on Environment and the Public including Communities, looking at how people in Scotland might take more responsibility for the environment, what community is. This should give scope for treatment of how to address perceptions of protected areas and how the national community sells the idea to local communities. . The behaviour change issue should not be a focus, though some treatment would be useful of Calum's suggestion that the public who indicate their 'liking/support' for the environment should be encouraged to consider how that might pan out in personal activity. The Board did not feel that Congress should not address the constitutional referendum in 2014 to avoid that becoming the main point of reference and being seen by others to be the purpose; however, it was felt that Environment and Public as a theme could include reference to LINK's challenge document and the value of knowing how environment will fare under the different political scenarios. **Action: Alice to progress with steering group.**

4. Member Updates and AOB

NTS: much effort responding to raft of consultations expected to start next week. Looking at joint response to NPF.

Rea: taking part in the International Young Scotland Forum (Queensferry) for people early on in their career born outside Scotland. As part of this will be doing a talk on waste in June.

Froglife: Scottish Dragon Finder project (Anna Muir), has sponden ot several member bodies about getting involved.

APRS: Unfinished Business report (covered above). Contact John for copies.

RSPB: UK wide State of Nature report, general biodiversity, in partnership with others, will be a Scottish launch on 22 May. Scottish Bird Fair coming up at Hopetoun House, wildlife festival.

SOC: Autumn launching the Bird Atlas in conjunction with BTO, update of distribution in UK and Ireland, undertaken every 20 years. Pre-publication discount offered.

SCRA: National Ranger Award, CPD achievement recognition for rangers. Also running a Junior Rangers Programme.

Archaeology Scotland: Scottish Archaeology month in September. Working closely with Built Environment Forum on the Small Towns Initiative.

Buglife: working with SWT to secure ban on neocotonids, reaching the endgame. New planning officer (Alice Farr), is a corresponding member of the Planning TF.

MCS: handing pledges over to the Cab Sec on Thursday 25/4 for a comprehensive network of MPAs to reinforce the case for all 33 proposed. Beach clean up soon with M&S Forever Fish initiative; several thousand staff and customers doing beach litter surveys. September is the Beachwatch big weekend.

FoES: winding down on corporates work over next few months, and got a year's grant to do more about fracking with communities. On 21 May, in the Parliament organising toxins expert from Australia to talk about impacts of fracking - would be good to have members at it, and also sessions in Falkirk. Will be doing work on community renewables, and work on air pollution. Staff restructuring is now complete.

Alice: raised Scottish Environment Web on which Paul Kirkland and Craig Macadam represented LINK and could not sustain. Process was bureaucratic with lots of meetings. Members agreed LINK should withdraw from the Steering and Management groups due to eNGO capacity, leaving the option of attending some workshops which had been of use to input.

WTS: HLF grant for the Trossachs Gateway, and gearing up on west coast site to tie in with the Commonwealth Games community health legacy.

Jen: next meeting with the minister is in June. TFs and members flag up items for the agenda soon please. NPF3 should be a live issue.

Ramblers: A new post funded by SportScotland starting shortly.

Several members had been at the launch of Clifton Bain's book on pinewoods, highly recommended.

Next meeting 15 August, partly with SNH board members, venue tbc.

AW/April 2013