



## **MINUTES of a meeting of LINK's Board, held in Perth on 27 October 2016 in Perth**

### PRESENT

Trustees - Helen Todd (Chair), Craig Macadam, Mike Robinson, Beryl Leatherland, Ian Findlay, Paul Walton

Staff in attendance – Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Charles Dundas (Vice Chair), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer), Lucy Graham and Sam Gardner.

### 2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING; MATTERS ARISING; REPORTS-BACK

2.1 DRAFT MINUTES of the meeting held on 18 August 2016 were approved as an accurate record.

#### 2.2 MATTERS ARISING

##### 2.2.1 AGM

Agreed to recommend Andy Myles for Honorary Fellowship, subject to his agreement to be nominated.  
Agreed to recommend Deborah Long for Honorary Fellowship on her recent resignation from Plantlife to move to a job with Dundee University. Deborah's involvement dated back 14 years including 4 years as Vice Chair and 4 as Chair, among other offices held.

Noted that subsequent to the August meeting:

- the Board had agreed to nominate Mike Robinson as a Fellow; and
- advice that LINK should involve Alan Fox as an observer in marine work (which LINK's M&A allow). rather than set a precedent in extending fellowship as the August meeting had agreed.

**Actions: Jen**

##### 2.2.2 Succession within LINK Board

Helen confirmed Charles Dundas was in principle happy to consider taking on the chair from next autumn although would not want to stand in the way of others who might wish to offer.

Should Charles become Chair in 2017 the position of Vice Chair would become vacant then.

##### 2.2.3 Tracking member health and satisfaction

Two recent resignations had been unforeseen: Sustrans Scotland and SOC, prompted by lack of capacity to engage, though for Sustrans also financial considerations and that membership of SCCS better suiting their needs. Trustees agreed the current onus on members to seek contact meetings with the Board should be strengthened, deciding to 'a finger on the pulse' through regular, informal conversations with members which should flag where formal discussion is needed. Trustees to be invited to volunteer to keep tabs on member bodies into which they have contacts at strategic level.

**Actions: Trustees' fingers on pulse of member health and satisfaction**

#### 2.2.4 Membership applications

Trustees had not reached consensus about Scottish Wild Beaver Group's application (September). Concerns about SWBG's expectations of membership had been further explored, in the main satisfactorily. However, whilst Trustees were aware that LINK seeks to be open to a wide range of organisations with missions in common, concerns remained about SWBG's mission, the essentially illegal reintroduction of beavers to Tayside, and the potential perception which admission to LINK might give about sanctions for that kind of activity. Trustees decided to fulfil their responsibility for making a recommendation to members, by holding a discussion with representatives of SWBG. A meeting in early 2017 would be proposed at which Paul and Craig would represent the Board. Sarah Robinson RZSS and Maggie Keegan SWT would be invited. The 6-month period for decision would be deemed to start from that point.

**Action: Alice**

#### 2.2.5 Updates to Operating Guidance

Trustees had been invited to read the proposed (tracked) updates to guidance which addressed the change from TFs to Groups, among other. Beryl's detailed comments had been taken on board. The meeting agreed the set of revisions currently online. Staff would accept all the tracking and publish the revised guidance to members, flagging the update process in the November bulletin.

**Action: Karen**

#### 2.2.6 Fundraising update

The report circulated reconfirmed the increasing challenge of raising funds for both core and project activity. The meeting recorded gratitude to Alice for her very good efforts and fully appreciated the frustration being experienced.

#### 2.2.7 Salaries Review 2016

The meeting noted that a review of jobs and salaries, terms and conditions for all staff had been carried out in August, led by Tim. Details were available from Tim Ambrose or Jen. The Employment Subgroup had signed this off, satisfied that salary levels and new T&C were both appropriate and competitive; annual leave was now set at 25 days for all staff (pro rata to hours worked).

The financial impact in terms of core salaries (ie, for 5 of current complement of 8 staff) was a rise of around £6k annually; that did not impact the 2016/17 budget where provision had been made for adjustments to staff complement as well as to salaries.

### 2.3 REPORTS BACK

2.3.1 MOD Beryl would ask SNH whether the erstwhile liaison group remained in operation.

**Action: Beryl**

2.3.2 LLT stakeholder group LLT had confirmed to Helen that LINK was invited to join. Trustees fully supported the proposal that Helen represent LINK so as to keep the network informed and that where necessary she represent RS views about the Park's bylaws.

**Action: Helen**

2.3.3 National Ecological Network Craig flagged that a LINK meeting of this new subgroup was taking part that morning with strong member engagement. A vision had been developed and members saw potential for this to be delivered through land use, planning framework, biodiversity route-map and

marine protection and management. A proposal had been presented to the Cab Sec in September. Trustees hoped that green path networks would also be part of the developing thinking.

### 3. LINK OPERATIONS AND WORK PROGRAMME

#### 3.1 Operational Plan Update

Helen had the impression that fewer meetings were happening at the Group level than at previous TF level. Transition to new structures seemed more streamlined, though active integration between work areas needed strengthened.

On the basis of evaluations from Group and Subgroup leads in October, Jen reported that progress was generally felt to be positive. There were reports of 'good and improving' about progress against many of LINK's KPIs. However, member capacity was more diffused with a correspondingly stronger reliance on staff, esp. Daphne as AO, and this which needed to be managed. In combination these suggested a need for even tighter prioritisation of work programme, come November's strategic planning meeting.

#### 3.2 Work Programme 16/17 Update

The report on the network's last 6 months' work had been circulated for information.

Hilltrack's group's success in raising funds was noted, as was a possibility of their approaching LINK for some DPF support to complement this.

#### 3.3 Draft Forward Work Programme 17/18

The circulated draft was based on plans submitted in October by the Groups and Subgroups, and also indicated plans for core events and initiatives. It would be considered and adapted at the November strategic planning meeting. Trustees observed that it was more strategic than previously. Whilst the marine group plans were not yet included in this particular document, Jen confirmed the Group works to a detailed forward strategy.

#### 3.4 Political Strategy Report

Trustees passed on their thanks to Daphne Vlastari for a very informative report. Their attention was drawn to the highlighted sections.

In respect of plans ahead of the local elections in 2017, the meeting advised LINK be mindful of and sensitive in dealing with the impacts of current funding constraints on both national and local government.

The impact of transport, travel, car use in terms of air pollution particularly, among other adverse environmental effects too, was noted. Economic trends were not changing, in spite of ENGO and other critical voices. The meeting supported the value of LINK's economics work continuing.

Both Brexit and a full LINK work programme meant that the staff's workload (and in particular that of the advocacy team) was now consistently busy and would need to be managed carefully.

Discussion then focussed on the EEB Conference in 2017. Jen tabled a paper updating the Board on progress towards the proposal that LINK co-host the EEB's next conference in November 2017. She reported on latest estimate of costs, likely commitment in terms of staff-time and fundraising, EEB financial contribution and approx. timescale for signing a collaboration agreement. The commitment in staff-time terms was estimated at £9-10,000. LINK might not be able to recoup this: on the other hand, staff time would normally be committed to planning an annual congress. The Board confirmed it remained supportive in principle supporting the objective of a high profile event attracting the First Minister among other. They noted that conference pricing ambitions remained as per tradition despite the out-sourcing of events to country hosts and despite stronger financial constraints. They asked staff to provide the following information in order to inform LINK's final commitment:

- Final point at which a decision (signing of collaboration agreement and budget) could be made
- LINK's business plan for the initiative, capacity required
- How this will sit in relation to other LINK priorities and total available capacity
- Level of Scottish government / public sector contribution (this is key in the Board's view)
- Benefits of using conference organisers
- Scope to consider charging fees should other sources not be available

**Action: Jen and Daphne**

#### 4. FINANCIAL REVIEW

##### 4.1 Outturn, Notes, Revised forecast

Karen Paterson joined the meeting and spoke to the half-year financial report. Income was coming in as expected, there were no surprises at this stage, cost recovery from projects was budgetted to reduce as both marine and economics funding packages came to an end (although fundraising was ongoing to extend both projects).

Incentives payments for the three project staff were being paid as planned from core between August and December 2016.

Edinburgh's new office costs were on a par with the previous premises and removal costs had been shared with APRS as co-tenant.

Some lines in the current budget could be dropped (professional training for members) or rolled into next year's budget (30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration).

In restricted projects nothing was amiss; LINK was allocating a contribution towards Congress as usual.

##### 4.2 Adjusted Five-Year Outlook

The meeting noted adjustments made since the last discussion, with realistic pessimism about likely income from public and trusts sectors. Also that a Funding Subgroup meeting set for December would develop a plan for these tighter times. Ian Findlay advised development of a realistic and a more pessimistic scenario to indicate at what points LINK would need to have made specific decisions about areas of spend/ambition. The meeting agreed to aim to have these available from the start of the next financial year.

**Action: Jen, Karen, FSG**

It was agreed to present the final lines of the 5-year budget more clearly within the budget and as a graph.

**Action: Karen**

The meeting noted that in terms of recommended practice LINK had chosen between FRS102 and FRSSE, opting for the former, which ensures we are compliant for a number of years to come.

#### 5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Mike Robinson The meeting thanked Mike Robinson who was to stand down at the AGM, for his support to LINK over many years. For Mike's part he had found the Board to be an extremely good example of a governing body. Trustees had nominated him as a Fellow and if accepted by members he would be glad to return and would hope to be involved in the network's activity.

5.2 Party conference fees The steep costs prohibiting many NGOs' attendance at various conferences including, recently, SNP's party conference, were noted. LINK would be supporting a letter from

various NGOs on this point, which would be directed to the head of SNP. Scope to publish on the subject through Friends of the Scotsman was also noted.

**Action: Staff circulate letter**

#### 6. BOARD MEETING DATES 2017

**Next meeting - Thursday 26 January 2017, Ramblers office, Edinburgh**

Further meetings –

Thursday 27 April 2017, venue tbc

Thursday 24 August 2017, venue tbc

Thursday 26 October 2017 OR Thursday 23 November (dep. timing EEB 2017)

JA/LINK/4 November 2016