



## **Scottish Environment LINK Networking meeting 23 April 2015. Note of main discussion points and actions.**

Present: Helen Todd (Chair, Ramblers), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer, CC, SWLG), Tom Leatherland (Freshwater TFC, SWLG), Matthew Crighton (Economics TFC, FoES), Vicki Swales (SLU TFC, RSPB), Paul Walton (Wildlife Forum, RSPB, Trustee), John Thomson (Landscape TFC, SCNP), John Mayhew (Landscape/Planning TFs, APRS), Simon Jones (SWT, Trustee), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG, Trustee, Hilltracks co-convenor), Eddie Palmer (Wildlife Crime TFC, Scottish Badgers), Ross Finnie (President).  
Staff: Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Nick Underdown, Phoebe Cochrane, Alice Walsh.

Apologies: Charles Dundas (WTS), Aedan Smith (PTF), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Craig Macadam (Buglife), Sarah Robinson (RZSS), Sam Gardner (WWFS), Charles Strang (National Parks TF), Calum Duncan (MCS), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Pete Ritchie (Agriculture TF, Nourish), Rea Cris staff.

### **Introductions and Farewells**

Karen Paterson, new Finance and Office Manager, was introduced. She has taken over from Hugh Green, with a revised job description and more hours. Hugh was retiring the next day after 10 years with LINK. He was thanked by Jen for his contribution over the decade and presented with a gift from the network.

### **Discussion of what we mean by sustainable development in relation to social justice, and the scope for top-line messaging around this.**

The underpinning for sustainable development as it is currently understood is:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong and sustainable society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Using sound science
- Promoting good governance

LINK and its members currently contribute to 4 of these strongly, through our engagement including via Economics TF, Governance TF. The main gap for our sector is engaging with 'Ensuring a strong and sustainable society' for which we have currently no mechanism.

Basic question of whether eNGOs interests do or do not coincide with the social justice agenda. Most people, including government do not see a link between *Living within environmental limits* and *Ensuring a strong and sustainable society*, and though it may seem obvious to us it is not an easy elision. Many member bodies are likely to serve the interests of the better off, in the way that society currently works, should we map how we relate as a network?

Member's action on the recreation side relates (recent paper by Nick Kempe referenced), freedom of access to the countryside is as important as freedom of speech; the historic links between environment and outdoor recreation have reduced, need to retrieve and build on it. Developing work on the food agenda relates, also promotion of active travel within NPF, opening access to land; it should be possible to define shared broad principles, have a common crib sheet.

Other useful sources include: 1983 Alan Blackshaw proposal for a new human right of access to nature, included in Ramblers' submission to Smith Commission; the Mike Russell and Linda Fabiani event in 2007 which some members attended; Scottish Sports Association work; and RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts joint push for Westminster legislation for a right to nature and high quality greenspace for everyone.

Dialogue with others is a must, although we first need to have our position agreed, no time for too much introspection as time is short. Poverty Alliance and the Scottish Association for Mental Health are potential allies, also strong overlaps with agendas of arts and sports sectors. The Commonwealth organisation does not consider environmental limits, and a similar discussion would be needed as with the Land Reform lobby.

Asking for legislation (on access to nature) has limitations when delivery and implementation does not follow, lawyers see to that if there is not political will, though it can be useful to pursue for raising the debate. All surveys about what people value, non-monetary wealth, happiness, well-being, support our position.

Environment versus human needs is still the perception, we need to improve our language in relation.

Sustainable development in practice requires a strategic and flexible approach, (ref Lawton report on protected areas).

There are much bigger issues like population growth which we will likely not enter as a network. The sustainable cities concept is not working, we should be more vocal for change when progress is not happening. Our manifesto for 2016 will be crucial for strengthening our voice, underpinning arguments and stating what we want changed (initial meeting of group on the following day). Timetable for the manifesto was to have framework with the big ideas sketched out for discussion with the political parties by June, referring them on to expertise within the member bodies.

For the purposes of showing the linkages to the SJ agenda we need to think of it in practical terms, though keep having these interesting discussions. It was agreed to ask all TFs to identify social justice issues within their areas of work, where living within environmental limits will have social justice benefits, and where there is conflict. **Action: Paul & Vicki, Matthew, Andy to draft.**

#### **Review Political Strategy Report Spring 2015.**

Andy introduced the [report](#). Legislatively members were asked if they wished to keep our focus on delivery, or propose new legislation, the proposal under previous agenda item was noted. Under 5 (d) there are areas where the law needs to be tested, which as a network we never have. A Scottish equivalent of Client Earth would be beneficial. A seminar on the Freedom of Information Act as a tool for members is planned with Kevin Dunion.

5 (e) Matthew noted that some potential exists for collaboration with SCVO on the economy, eg event at the Gathering.

6. UK – Jen and Helen had attended a discussion with the joint Links the previous day, on how to work better together federally. A memorandum of understanding is being produced, with better information sharing on work areas and leads in each country. Scottish LINK will share this with members via the website. Members with cross UK remits were asked to assist where they can.

Members considered that consideration of stance on EU was better discussed after the election, and agreed the Governance Group was the correct LINK mechanism. Andy was thanked for the very useful report.

#### **Assess the coming 4 months work**

There was no discussion of the forward plans matrix as all were assumed to have read the paper. There remain some TF areas where information or updates are needed. TFs convenors were strongly recommended to have Deputes to assist with the administration needs. Task forces who had not yet made contact with their SNH equivalents were asked to do so at the next opportunity, as basic liaison to exchange plans and discuss progress is a requirement of LINK's funding from SNH.

#### **Action: TF convenors.**

Energy workshop – the tender document was being sent out to consultants. Members were reminded that there would be a 3 month long process including 2 workshops which will require good engagement for good outcomes.

Congress – there was brief discussion at Board of the ideas which had been generated. There could be a twin focus on the role of the state in environmental protection, given the timing in advance of the Holyrood elections, with some examination of how the eNGOs engage, potentially using the protected areas debate as an example. **Action: Alice to recruit a steering group and begin planning.**

The next ministerial meeting was May (G6), and August (LINK), and the Marine TF continued to press for access to the Cabinet Secretary.

Protected Areas: SNH had requested LINK organise a workshop for members on its recent paper. The paper had been discussed at Wildlife Forum, and some feeling that a response should be produced. It was agreed that a late summer meeting with SNH should be organised to give feedback on the paper.

LINK was undergoing a staff functions review, which has informed the recruitment of Karen Paterson and Rea Cris' successor.

#### **Board Updates**

The Board discussed the Business Supporter join up process and agreed a more transparent framework. Members will be advised of all applications and if concern is expressed it will trigger further investigation.

Changes to the KPIs were in train, staff were working with a consultant to simplify and clarify the evaluation process. One to one meetings with convenors could be arranged to explain what is required and why.

President recruitment – members would be asked to publicise via social media.

Discretionary Project Fund. A sum of around £10k was available for the financial year.

Scottish Government funding had been assured at the same rate as last year, which was welcome news.

#### **AOB (covered at an earlier part of the meeting)**

**Beavers:** Simon Jones explained the position in relation to the forthcoming Ministerial decision following the Beaver reintroduction trial and members agreed LINK could be used to seek further support for a confidential SWT paper. **Action: staff.**

#### **Next network meeting**

27 August in Edinburgh – please put in diaries.